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Contact: Aurelio Rojas 213-280-6579
James Bolden 213-200-5314

**RIDLEY-THOMAS APPLAUDS FIRST 5 LA's VOTE
TO PRESERVE BLACK INFANT HEALTH PROGRAM**

LOS ANGELES -- Acting on a motion by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, the First 5 LA Commission today unanimously approved a nearly \$1.2 million, one-year agreement with the County of Los Angeles to support five community-based agencies that provide services to address disparities in birth outcomes among African-American women.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas applauded the commission's support of the Black Infant Health program and thanked Supervisor Don Knabe, who chairs the First 5 LA Commission, for his leadership and support. In addition to the Second District, the money will help provide services in Long Beach, Pasadena and the Antelope Valley.

"Supervisor Knabe is to be commended for his support for a program that provides preventive services to African American women," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said. "This money will allow us to continue addressing the issue of infant mortality and the disparities in birth outcomes between African Americans and other races and ethnicities in the County."

The First 5 LA money was needed because of a reduction in state funding. On July 28, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed an amendment to the Budget Act of 2009 in order to close a \$60 billion budget gap.

This amendment eliminated State General Funds for various programs including the Black Infant Health Program (\$3.9 million statewide). Los Angeles County received \$1.3 million to support five community-based agencies to provide services to pregnant and parenting African Americans.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said the funding reduction would have eliminated services to about 671 clients and put stress on the service systems currently in place in the First 5 LA Best Babies Collaboratives.

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