

## CIRM Leadership

### Maria T. Millan, President and CEO



**Dr. Maria Millan** is a physician-scientist who has devoted her career to treating and developing innovative solutions for children and adults with debilitating and life-threatening conditions. After receiving her undergraduate degree from Duke University where she first entered the arena of immunology research, she returned to her home in New Jersey where she obtained her M.D. degree and then went on to complete her surgical training and post-doctoral research in Boston at Harvard Medical School – Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. After a transplant surgery fellowship at Stanford University School of Medicine, she began her academic career with a busy pediatric and adult transplant surgery practice focused on technical advancements and optimization of patient outcomes. In parallel, she continued her bench research at Stanford and was promoted within 5 years to associate professor and director of the Pediatric Organ Transplant Program. She served on multiple leadership teams including the Faculty Senate and the Dean's faculty committee at Stanford University School of Medicine and served on the Children's Hospital operations committee. She has published in the areas of cell biology, immunology and clinical organ transplantation.

With early signals from the science that stem cell and regenerative medicine therapy was the new frontier for medicine, she ventured into the private sector in 2006 to join StemCells, Inc., one of the earliest stem cell organizations and the first to enter into an FDA-regulated clinical trial with a stem cell treatment for children with a fatal neurodegenerative disease. Dr. Millan then joined the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) in December 2012 where she led the formation of the Alpha Stem Cell Clinics Network, a network of California medical centers that specialize in rigorous and high-quality clinical trials and top-tier medical care for patients participating in these trials. This clinical network is successfully supporting over 45 clinical trials and was recently expanded to include 5 programs composed of 7 medical centers and their affiliated hospitals. As a key component of CIRM's bold 5-year strategic plan launched in 2016, which was designed to accelerate stem cell treatments to patients with unmet medical needs, Dr. Millan led the development of critical infrastructure, including specialized regulatory, preclinical research, manufacturing and clinical operations support for stem cell and regenerative medicine trials. In July 2017, Dr. Millan took on the role as president and CEO of CIRM, and she was formally appointed by CIRM's board in September 2017. Under her leadership, CIRM continues to drive the mission of accelerating stem cell treatments to patients with unmet medical needs, is on track to achieve its 5-year strategic plan, has now funded a total of 45 clinical trials and is continuing to grow this robust portfolio of high-quality programs by the month.

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### Jonathan Thomas, Chairman, Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee (ICOC)



Jon Thomas is a Co-Founding Partner at Saybrook Capital ("Saybrook"), an investment banking and private equity firm based in Santa Monica, California.

Long interested in the biological sciences, Thomas majored in Biology and History at Yale, where he graduated summa cum laude. As a George C. Marshall Scholar at Oxford, he then earned a PhD with a medical focus in Commonwealth History. He subsequently returned to Yale for a JD at the Yale Law School. While there, Thomas retained an involvement with biology by teaching courses on the legal implications of genetic engineering and the impact of disease on history.

Thomas has a long-standing commitment to patient advocacy. He spent more than 15 years on the Board of the Crippled Children's Society of Southern California and served as chair for four years. The organization, now called AbilityFirst, assists children with spinal cord injuries and mental disabilities that could be targets of stem cell therapies. Thomas is an Honorary member of the AbilityFirst Board.

[See his full bio here](#)

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### **Senator Art Torres (Ret.), Vice-Chair**



Senator Art Torres (Ret.) was unanimously elected statutory Vice Chair of the Independent Citizens Oversight Committee, the governing Board of the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine (CIRM). He is a colon cancer and osteoarthritis survivor.

Between 1996 and 2009, Torres served as the Chair of the California Democratic Party. He previously served twenty years in the California Legislature, eight as a member of the State Assembly and twelve as a State Senator. Torres chaired the Senate Insurance Committee, Senate Toxics Committee, the Assembly Health Committee, and the Senate Joint Committee on Science and Technology.

He is currently on the Board and Vice Chairman of "One Legacy," an organ transplant foundation in the US headquartered in Los Angeles.

He was recently appointed by the California State Senate to the five member board of Covered California which oversees Obamacare in California. He also serves as a member of the Board of Trustees of the UC Santa Cruz Foundation.

Senator Torres authored the California Clean Water Drinking Act, Proposition 65, and created the sole toxic reporting repository that helps scientists determine environmental and health impacts "a data source that really no one else has on the planet." On November 18th, 2010 he was sworn in by then Mayor Gavin Newsom, to a four year term on San Francisco's Public Utilities Commission and later elected as its President before stepping down.

Senator Torres holds a Bachelor's Degree from UC Santa Cruz and a Juris Doctorate degree from UC Davis School of Law. He also served as a John F. Kennedy teaching fellow at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

He previously served as a German Marshall Fund Fellow and was recently appointed as the University of San Francisco Diversity Scholar Visiting Professor.

[See his full bio here](#)

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### **Maria Bonneville, Vice President of Administration, Executive Director to the CIRM Governing Board**



Maria Bonneville is the Vice President of Administration and the Executive Director to the Governing Board (ICOC) at CIRM and has been with the agency since 2011. Maria is in charge of a team with a wide range of skills but a common goal; this includes Communications, Information Technology, Human Resources and Board Relations. She works directly with the CIRM Board to advance CIRM's mission, helping lead the development and coordination of Board policies and procedures. She also works with California state legislators and staff members to keep the public up to date on the full scope of CIRM's activities.

Before joining CIRM, Maria was the Special Assistant to former Treasurer Bill Lockyer at the California State Treasurer's office where she represented the Treasurer in state business matters with the state and local government and the business community in the Bay Area. She was also the Northern California Finance Director for the Lockyer Committee and was responsible for fundraising programs for the re-election of California Attorney General Bill Lockyer for Treasurer. Maria also has extensive experience with product development, product marketing, E-commerce, and public relations.

She received a Bachelor of Arts in political sciences from the University of California Berkeley.

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### **Abla Creasey, Vice President of Therapeutics and Strategic Infrastructure**



Abla Creasey is the Vice President of Therapeutics and Strategic Infrastructure. As a previous Associate Director of Therapeutics and most recently, as Sr. Director of Strategic Clinical and Regulatory Infrastructure, Abla has been instrumental in building up CIRM's clinical portfolio and in working closely with our grantees who attained three of the first 11 RMAT-expedited pathway designations from the FDA. She has worked with the Accelerating Center to launch novel accelerating resources for product development, regulatory strategy and pharmaco-economics. In her current role, Abla will ensure that the therapeutics team will continue to meet their big six strategic goals with integration of critical resources from the Clinical Advisory Panel program, Alpha Clinics and the Accelerating Center.

Abla has broad and extensive experience in science, technology, and pharmaceutical product development. Prior to joining CIRM in 2016, she was at Johnson & Johnson for 12 years. While at Johnson and Johnson, Abla was a Senior Scientific Director in Pharmaceutical Development & Manufacturing Sciences at Janssen and prior to that, she was, an Executive Director, heading drug delivery, pharmacology, analytical characterization, clinical & quality at Advanced Technologies & Regenerative Medicine (ATRM), another J&J company. Prior to ATRM, Abla was Vice President of Biological Sciences at ALZA Corporation, where she headed discovery efforts in formulation, preclinical and oral drug delivery. Before joining ALZA in 2004, Abla held senior-level positions in R&D, clinical development, and regulatory affairs within the biotechnology industry including Chiron Corporation and Cetus Corporation.

Abla received a B.S. in biology from the College of Notre Dame in Belmont California, and earned her Ph.D. in medical microbiology from the University of California, Berkeley. She completed a post-doctoral fellowship at the Stanford University School of Medicine in infectious disease, biochemistry, and immunology.

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### **Patricia Olson, Vice President of Discovery and Translation**



Patricia Olson, Ph.D., serves as the Vice President, Discovery & Translation, at the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) responsible for the development, implementation and outcomes of CIRM's Discovery and Translation funding programs. Previously, she served in a variety of positions at CIRM including Executive Director, Scientific Affairs, responsible for the development, review, implementation and management of CIRM's research funding program.

Prior to joining CIRM, Dr. Olson served in a variety of positions at Chiron Corporation (now Novartis) including Vice President, Protein Therapeutics Research and Vice President, Portfolio Management and Strategic Planning, R&D. While at Chiron, she participated in the research and development of several products including two marketed products. She is an inventor on 22 issued U.S. patents and an author of 31 peer-reviewed publications and book chapters. Dr. Olson received her Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Biophysics from the University of California at Berkeley and her B.S. in Cellular Biology (magna cum laude) from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

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### **Gil Sambrano, Vice President of Portfolio Development and Review**



Gil leads the team responsible for selecting the highest quality stem cell-based projects for CIRM funding from Discovery to Clinical programs. His team builds and cultivates a world class team of expert reviewers and directs a rigorous review process through the governing board-appointed Grants Working Group (GWG).

Gil joined CIRM in 2005 as the first Scientific Officer. During his tenure, Gil has contributed to building the vision of CIRM by leading and advancing the scientific review process, constructing grants administration policies, guiding early development of the Grants Management System, and managing the training grant programs. He has been a key point of contact to help applicants and grantees identify appropriate partnering opportunities and navigate the CIRM solicitation and application process. He leads the conduct of GWG review meetings and has been the primary liaison with patient advocate and scientific members of the GWG.

Prior to CIRM, he was an assistant professor in the department of Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology at UCSF. In 2001, Gil took on a notable position to coordinate efforts of the Alliance for Cellular Signaling, a multi-institutional and multi-disciplinary consortium of scientists led by the Nobel laureate, Alfred G. Gilman, whose goal is to understand the basic principles that regulate signal transduction in cells.

His scientific education includes a B.S. in biology from the University of Texas at El Paso and a Ph.D. in biomedical sciences from the University of California, San Diego. Gil trained as a postdoctoral fellow at the Cardiovascular Research Institute at the University of California San Francisco.

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### **Chila Silva-Martin, Vice President of Finance**



Chila Silva-Martin serves as the Vice President of Finance for the CIRM. In this capacity, she is responsible for managing CIRM's \$3 billion financial plan.

Chila came to CIRM with more than 30 years of California State service. During her career with the State, she served in several executive and senior management positions. Prior to joining CIRM, Chila served as the Chief of the State Personnel Board's Administrative Services and Consulting Divisions and the Deputy Director for Administration at the Department of Fair Employment and Housing.

Chila received a Bachelor of Science degree from the California State University, Sacramento (CSUS) in Business Administration, with an emphasis in strategic planning. In 2007, Chila received a certificate for participation in CSUS' Leadership for the Government Executive program.

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### **Gabriel Thompson, Vice President of Grants and Operations**



Gabriel Thompson is the Vice President of Grants and Operations at CIRM leading efforts to ensure the Institute's award and financial management processes are efficient, fair, predictable, consistent and most importantly, aligned with CIRM's mission to accelerate stem cell therapies to patients with unmet medical needs.

Gabe has worked in state and university research administration since 1998 and regenerative medicine specifically since 2007. Prior to CIRM, he worked at the UCSF Center for Reproductive Sciences as the Administrative Director helping oversee the doubling of the Center's research funding portfolio, recruiting 4 new faculty and renovating 6,000 sqft of wet laboratories in two years. He also worked for the University of Chicago as a Senior Budget Analyst for the Dean of the Division of Biological Sciences assisting, approving and monitoring 10 departments' annual budgets. Gabe received his Bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Chicago and holds a MBA in Finance from Golden Gate University.

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### **Scott Tocher, General Counsel**



As General Counsel, Scott works with the President and CEO of CIRM, the Chairman, the Governing Board, and the entire CIRM team in developing strategies to implement CIRM's mission, drafting and reviewing agency policies, advising the agency on conflict of interest issues, and interfacing with stakeholders on matters of concern to the agency.

Scott joined the legal team at CIRM in 2005 and advised the agency in the formulation of many substantive policies, such as Grants Administration, Intellectual Property, and Medical and Ethical Standards, and ensured their successful adoption by the Office of Administrative Law.

Scott graduated from law school and practiced complex litigation and appellate work in Sacramento for three years following graduation in 1995. He left the private law firm to join the Fair Political Practices Commission as a legislative coordinator and eventually became a Senior Counsel to the Commission, representing the agency in federal and state courts and drafting Commission opinions and regulations, and presenting legal and policy matters to the Commission as well as legislative committees, agencies of the state and meetings of interested groups.

Scott graduated from CSU Sacramento with a degree in Government and earned his Juris Doctor with honors from McGeorge School of Law, where he was a member of both law reviews.

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