

12/12/10

Independent Citizens Oversight Committee  
California Institute for Regenerative Medicine  
210 King Street  
San Francisco, CA 94107

Dear ICOC Members,

We write in strong support of the nomination of Mr. Robert Klein to continue his service as Chair of the CIRM ICOC. We also enthusiastically support Mr. Klein's proposal to find a successor who has substantial scientific and medical experience as well as personal familiarity with the burdens of disease.

As California stem cell scientists and physicians, our support for this course of action comes from our experience and conviction that the ICOC Chair needs to have an understanding of how to support the best research with the greatest chance of creating the medical breakthroughs with stem cells that we all desire. Specifically, the ICOC Chair must understand that merit-driven support of the highest quality and most opportunistic scientific and medical research with stem cells is the most reliable way to find new treatments for currently untreatable diseases. This approach has been taken by CIRM thus far and has already built a strong research and development pipeline. This pipeline runs from basic research with stem cells, through the application of these new findings to disease biology, and is beginning to drive the development of novel clinical applications derived from a new understanding of disease and its roots.

Mr. Klein has exhibited, through the success of CIRM thus far, that he has the necessary qualities to guide the ICOC through this transitional time and to work with the ICOC to identify an appropriately experienced successor. During this transition it is crucial to maintain momentum and continue to capitalize upon and cement the successes of CIRM. Mr. Klein's leadership skills, and demonstrated understanding of the needs of scientific and medical research with stem cells, will help to ensure the needed and continued momentum. In fact, the recent outside review of CIRM strongly praised scientific and medical progress thus far and made several thoughtful and important recommendations for modifications of the agency's approach to achieve success in the next stages. Mr. Klein's experience will be crucial to begin implementing these changes during this transition, and a scientifically and medically savvy successor will be needed to drive CIRM to the successful achievement of its objectives.

In this regard, we stress, that our collective experience with the discovery of new approaches to the treatment of disease is that new solutions to currently intractable problems will come primarily from research that gives rise to new understanding of disease itself. On occasion, significant progress can also come from thoughtful application of existing knowledge, but either on its own is insufficient. Hence, it is

crucial for the next ICOC Chair to have a deep understanding of both scientific and medical principles in order to balance short and long-term investment in stem cell research and clinical application.

Finally, we note the need for the ICOC Chair to not only possess scientific and medical expertise, but also the financial and administrative sophistication needed to help manage the complex challenges of national and multinational collaborations, and to work with the CIRM administration, California scientists, and patients themselves to achieve success.

In conclusion, a combination of scientific, medical, and financial expertise tempered with the human experience of disease will be essential to ensure proper stewardship of California taxpayer investments in stem cell science and medicine. Selecting an ICOC Chair with these skillsets will be essential to ensure that California taxpayers receive the medical benefits and economic growth that will come from our investment in CIRM. The ICOC Chair must also understand that the breakthroughs we need will not be quick or easy, hence the need for an individual with an understanding of the challenges to come and the experience to help surmount them. Mr. Klein has brought this understanding to the position of ICOC Chair, and his continued leadership will carry us through to the time when an appropriate successor with comparable qualities can be found.

We thank you for your continued service to the citizens of California and to the many people who suffer from the many terrible diseases that we are all working hard to treat successfully.

Sincerely,

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