

Salinas, CA
January 23, 2024

To the CIRM Application Review Subcommittee,

It is my pleasure to submit this letter in support of Dr. Mohammed Mostajo-Radji and Dr. David Haussler. My name is Rebecca Ward and I am a teacher at Alisal High School in Salinas, California. Our high school is over 98% Hispanic and most of our students are children of agricultural workers.

I have worked closely with Dr. Mostajo-Radji's team for the past 4 years. Together, we have developed educational modules using stem cells, cancer cells and zebrafish to teach students in our high schools. In total we have trained over 100 students using remote microscopy technologies. To summarize the work: **It works!**. The students enjoy being able to interact with real life experiments and to work in groups to make true scientific discoveries that can inform our community. Watching the spark in the eyes of the students is truly amazing and this educational approach effectively fuels their interest to continue their education in STEAM. Indeed, several of the students have gone on to STEAM degrees, and I am excited to see that one of them is currently working in Dr Mostajo-Radji's lab.

In areas like the Salinas Valley, there is no access to stem cell models. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the technologies developed by Dr. Mostajo-Radji's team are crucial to train the next generation of STEAM scientists. Funding this work and scaling the reach of remote experimental education will have a tremendous impact in the stem cell workforce of California. Moreover, leaving these technologies behind will negatively affect the California communities which are often forgotten. Therefore, I kindly request that the subcommittee takes into account the needs of our communities and the mandates of proposition 14 and considers funding this proposal.

Respectfully,



Rebecca Ward
Teacher
Alisal High School