UC RIVERSIDE
School of Medicine

900 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, SCHOOL OF MEDICINE EDUCATION BUILDING, RIVERSIDE, CA 92521

Independent Citizen's Oversight Committee,
California Institute for Regenerative Medicine

March 10, 2025

Dear Committee Members:

On behalf of ourselves and our co-investigators and community partners, we are writing to express our deep dismay and concern about CIRM's reconsideration of the funding of our *Community Bridge Center,* despite undergoing peer review and receiving a "Tier 1: warrants funding" score, and multiple communications with CIRM staff preparing us for funding.

We are also very dismayed that the priority for withdrawing and then reissuing the RFA will be placed on an RFA that funds sites that provide primary clinical trials with a year-long plan to then issue an RFA to support infrastructure grants like ours.

This will only *exacerbate disparities* in funding and in access to regenerative medicine and regenerative medicine trials by prioritizing funding to sites that already have significant infrastructure and grants to develop, research, and deliver regenerative medicine, but not community outreach. This will further leave our communities in the Inland Empire, a health professional shortage area, without knowledges of and access to regenerative medicine trials and therapies.

Denying and postponing funding Community Centers of Excellence like ours would be *in conflict with CIRM's mission* to "….deliver transformative regenerative medicine treatments in an equitable manner to a diverse California…" and "…address diseases with high unmet medical need…" Additionally, it would *violate Proposition 14* that mandates CIRM "…establish Community Care Centers of Excellence Program to fund where clinical trials are conducted and treatments and cures are available to all patients….[and] expand the capacity the capacity of the Alpha Stem Cell Clinic Program to promote access to human clinical trials and the accessibility of treatments and cures arising from institute-funded research for patients in California by establishing geographically diverse centers of excellence to conduct clinical trials and to seek to make the resulting treatments and cures broadly available to California patients."

Each member of the UCR team came to join the UCR School of Medicine because we have dedicated our careers to advancing health equity through clinical care, research, education, workforce development and leadership. We are dedicated to training physician scholars who will practice in the Inland Empire, including a workforce in

biomedical and clinical research that will expand knowledge of and implement regenerative therapies. This includes Dr. Caroline McGowan, who received CIRM funding to collaborate with the UC CIRM Alpha Center which has allowed 3 physicians in the Inland Empire to train the Clinical Trial Investigator Training Program. Our CCCE proposal is also designed to support advanced students, residents, and early career faculty in these areas, meeting Proposition 14 mandates in delivery. Our communities are very excited about the proposed Community Centers of Excellence. Through HARC and several community listening sessions we have already held in preparation for this award, we have generated *community expectations and enthusiasm* for bringing regenerative medicine knowledge, trials, and access to innovative therapies.

This award would allow us to continue to employ our expertise and experience, in collaboration with others, to advance the CIRM mission of increasing equity in access to innovative clinical trials and to develop a more inclusive workforce. We would not only provide critical access to state-of-the-art and novel treatments for the communities we serve but also strengthen the overall healthcare framework in the Inland Empire and reduce health disparities.

We are confident that the UCR School of Medicine would excel in meeting the objectives of the Community Care Center of Excellence program, which aligns closely with CIRM's mission and fulfills the mandate of Prop 14 to address disparities in access to regenerative medicine for the citizens if California.

We urge the ICOC to fund our CCCE proposal which was overwhelmingly supported in peer review to be funded.

Sincerely,

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