

Parijat Bhatnagar, PhD
Principal Investigator, Cell-based Medicine and Biomanufacturing
CEO, Tribe Research
Belmont, CA 94002
+1-845-401-3427
xparijat@gmail.com

March 23, 2026

To the Members of the Board

California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM)

RE: Letter to the Board during March 26 ICOC/ARS Meeting on March 26, 2026

Dear Board Members,

I am writing on behalf of **Tribe Research**, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit incorporated in California in December 2024. Our mission is to develop a new class of cell-based medicines and an equipment line needed to manufacture them in decentralized, affordable, and equitable settings. As an early-stage organization without the resources to hire staff, we are currently a 100% volunteer-driven organization.

CONCERN: As a California nonprofit, we are eager to apply for CIRM funding. However, the current requirement that applicants must employ at least one W-2 employee at the time of application renders us ineligible (see [CIRM Common Requirements and Definitions v4.9.25 #\(1\)\(i\)](#)).

PREVIOUS COMMUNICATIONS: I have raised this concern on the following prior occasions:

- (1) In person at the Science Subcommittee Meeting (November 21, 2025)
- (2) By letter to the Board at the Governance Subcommittee Meeting (March 9, 2026)

PROPOSED SOLUTION: We respectfully request that CIRM permit early-stage nonprofits to apply without a W-2 employee in place at the time of application, with the employment requirement taking effect upon award — consistent with standard practice at NIH and DARPA.

JUSTIFICATION IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED SOLUTION:

- (1) Neither NIH nor DARPA requires a W-2 employee at the time of application; aligning CIRM with this federal standard would remove a barrier that disproportionately disadvantages early-stage organizations with strong scientific merit but limited operating budgets.
- (2) This flexibility would enable innovative California research organizations to compete on scientific merit, enhance the state's rich research ecosystem, and create the employment opportunities CIRM's current requirement is designed to encourage.

Thank you for considering this request. I would be glad to provide any additional documentation or governance materials that may assist the Board. Tribe Research is deeply aligned with CIRM's mission and eager to contribute to California's leadership in regenerative medicine.

Sincerely,
Parijat Bhatnagar, PhD