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Dear CIRM board,

As team lead and on behalf of our investigative team, I am writing to strongly advocate for our DISC-4 proposal “The Immune System of the Human Brain: A Platform for Neuroimmunotherapies.” Our grant brings together a dream team of stem cell biologists, neuroimmunologists, and synthetic biologists that have engineered entirely new ways to deliver immune therapies. In our proposal, we present promising unpublished data identifying a new immune-based therapeutic strategy for Alzheimer’s Disease and propose to discover immune modulators that can be applied to Alzheimer’s and many other brain disorders.

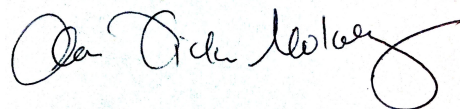
Why immunotherapies? The untapped potential to treat brain disorders is immense. Immunotherapies are transforming care for diseases from cancer to psoriasis to multiple sclerosis. Our proposal addresses a critical missing link: knowing what features of the immune system to modify for therapeutic benefit in the human brain. Our grant received a fundable score, reflecting reviewer enthusiasm for its significance and therapeutic potential, but it was not recommended for funding.

Why now? We are on the cusp of a treatment revolution for Alzheimer’s Disease. Just within the past three years we have seen the first glimmers of hope: the approval of the biologic lecanemab and new biomarkers that can detect earlier stages of disease. CIRM funding of discovery science that enables us to better harness the brain’s immune system is essential to developing more effective therapeutics.

Why CIRM? The number of federal grants issued for Alzheimer’s research decreased by 52% this year (1), and federal calls for collaborative proposals like ours have virtually disappeared (2). Even the notion that boosting the immune system can prevent disease (the main argument for vaccination) is being challenged at the federal level. The evidenced based, human focused, and team science approach in the CIRM funding model is needed now more than ever to support this critical work.

As a psychiatrist caring for patients with neuropsychiatric conditions, I have witnessed the tremendous need for new treatment modalities. Having lost my own father to Alzheimer’s Disease less than six months ago, I feel the urgency of this work more than ever. We are so close. It is my sincere hope that CIRM will invest in neuroimmunology now and in future funding calls. The potential benefits to many thousands of Californians living with neurological disorders are immense.

Sincerely,



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1. P. Pawar, The US slashed research for cancer, Alzheimer's, mental health — and nearly everything else. *Vox* (2026), (available at <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/482363/nih-medical-research-grants-cut-2025>).
2. F. Graham, *Nature* (2026), doi:10.1038/d41586-026-00897-y.