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Regarding: Application **EDUC8-20282**

Dear Members of the Application Review Subcommittee,

My name is Karl Willert, and I am a Professor at UC San Diego. I am writing to you regarding our grant application to the CIRM EDUC8 – COMPASS program, for which I serve as the named Program Director.

I was disappointed to learn that our application was not recommended for funding by the Grants Working Group. I write today to respectfully request that the Subcommittee reconsider this decision. I hope this letter gives you possible basis for reconsideration.

In reviewing the comments provided on our application, one critique in particular was raised multiple times: that I, as Program Director, was also listed as Program Evaluator. As one reviewer noted, "This reviewer appreciated reviewer comments about conflict between program director and evaluator." This suggests that the issue was discussed at some length during review and may have been weighed as a significant, if not decisive, factor in the funding recommendation.

I do not wish to dwell on how this overlap came about. It was a grave oversight and a mistake on my part, and one for which I take full responsibility as Program Director.

While this error may have affected the outcome of our application, it is one that can be readily corrected. Within UC San Diego, and specifically within the Sanford Consortium, the Stem Cell Institute community, including people listed on this grant, we have a number of eminently qualified individuals who could appropriately serve as Program Evaluator. Resolving this issue would require only the designation of a suitable candidate for that role. I would welcome the opportunity to propose an appropriate person to fill the role of Program Evaluator.

I recognize that the review also raised additional points, but I believe these concerns are of a different order of magnitude than the conflict-of-interest issue of separating the Program Director and Program Evaluator roles. I would welcome the opportunity to address any concerns further if helpful to the Subcommittee's deliberations.

What weighs on me most is the prospect that local students may lose access to a valuable training opportunity as a result of an administrative oversight on my part, rather than any deficiency in the scientific or educational merit of the proposed program.

I ask the Subcommittee, with humility and respect for your time and process, to reconsider our application for funding.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl Willert', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Karl Willert
Professor, UC San Diego
Program Director, CIRM EDUC8 – COMPASS