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April 14, 2005

Chairman and Members of CIRM Site Search Subcommittee
California Institute for Regenerative Medicine
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Via: Melissa King

Dear Chairman Klein and Members of the CIRM Site Search Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Site Search Subcommittee's meeting on Wednesday, and for your vote to delay the acceptance of highly questionable scoring of the proposals and to re-visit the scoring process going forward. We intend to have a substantive response to you early next week.

We also want to thank you for accepting the open meeting format for the site visits, enabling all Site Search Subcommittee members to participate in a single visit to each site. As discussed by subcommittee members yesterday, this is the best way to do these critical visits, as it will help with the transparency of the process –something about which many have expressed concern in regard to the establishment of the weighting and proposal scoring.

However, I am troubled because my staff today received a call to schedule site visits between April 26 and May 1 – apparently knowing that at least two members of the Site Search Subcommittee, including one from San Diego, are not available to participate. In response, we have asked CIRM staff for a list of dates, unconstrained by the artificial May 2/May 6 deadlines, when all members of the Site Search Subcommittee are available. We recognize that unforeseen events can cause members to have to cancel, but the process should start with all members' availability.

The reason for meeting the May 6 deadline for selecting a site has been stated to be the need to recruit a President and other key staff members. We appreciate that the decisions about the facility and about hiring key staff members are interconnected; however, we also appreciate the seriousness of getting each decision correct.

Certainly these are among the most prized jobs in the administration of biomedical research in the United States today. It's clear that the opportunity to lead a groundbreaking institute overseeing an unprecedented amount of California taxpayer funds for basic research is a career plum. The location of the job should not matter to the right candidates and until the site is selected, all postings should be viewed as interim.

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We believe strongly that this site selection process needs to slow down. Answers to bidders' questions have been slow in coming. Yesterday's meeting did not answer all of Chairman and Members of CIRM Site Selection Subcommittee

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the questions in our March 30 letter, and answers have not yet been posted on the CIRM website. On at least two occasions – the issuance of the draft RFP and the response to the scoring – bidders had less than 24 hours to prepare their responses.

This pattern appears to be continuing. We were advised today by CIRM staff that the criteria for the site visits would be finalized on April 25, with site visits beginning 24 hours later.

In listening to Site Search Subcommittee meetings, it is clear that the committee members are doing a great deal of work and bring much value to this process. The CIRM should ensure that they all have an opportunity to participate in all of the site visits, conducted as open meetings, and to be part of the final review to carry out a mission in which they have already devoted much effort.

Finally, we understand that legal challenges have slowed bond issuance and that intellectual property issues must be resolved prior to making the CIRM's first grants. The RFP allowed 75 days for the CIRM Site Search Subcommittee to take its recommendation to the ICOC board for a vote on a primary and backup site. That means we actually have the entire month of May to determine the site.

We urge you to take advantage of this time to complete this critical process in the launch of the CIRM.

Sincerely,



Julie Meier Wright
President & CEO

Cc: Mayor Dick Murphy
P. Lamont Ewell, City Manager
CIRM San Diego Coalition