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Marty Turock Comments on Critical Need for Continued Funding of the CEC Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

CEC EPIC 5 Investment Plan Public Workshop

June 11, 2026
Marty Turock/Clean Energy Consultant - Public Comment

Good afternoon, I am Marty Turock, currently an independent clean energy consultant, but I was the Founder and Executive of the Southern California Energy Innovation Network (SCEIN) cluster back from its launch in 2016 through 2023. While I have to say that I am personally shocked and bewildered that renewal of funding for the Energy Entrepreneurial Ecosystem was not included in this initial budget for the EPIC 5 Investment Plan based on the outstanding start-up success rate, financial returns, and job creation, I can only assume that the decision-makers are not fully aware of the equally overwhelming ratepayer benefits that have been delivered to all Californians. So that is what I am going to address in my comments today. And I am going to start with benefits to Disadvantaged Vulnerable Communities.

Ivy Energy's Virtual Grid™ software platform makes solar PV monetizable for multi-family owners, so the 47% of Californians who rent their residences can now benefit from clean energy savings.

For just $399, anyone who has a 240V circuit for their clothes dryer can use **Neocharge's smart splitter** to have Level 2 EV charging at their home without a panel upgrade.

Nuvve was one of the earliest pioneers in deploying **bi-directional vehicle-to-grid charging (V2G) and virtual power plants (VPPs)**. In particular, they have been a leader in electrification of school bus fleets, which reduces both GHG and carcinogenic diesel particulate matter emissions.

Controlled Thermal Resources geothermal generation with lithium extraction has been delayed by legal and permitting challenges, but they are pressing forward and will create 480 construction jobs and another 220 direct operational jobs in one of the most economically and environmentally disadvantaged communities in the state.

SCEIN company **Znrg Innovations** is introducing an **affordable home water heater** that leapfrogs heat pump water heaters, and will finally enable the decarbonization of California's 77% installed base of gas water heaters, while also creating a dispatchable VPP that will load-shift the second highest residential appliance demand.

Xendee offers one of the premiere **DERMs software platforms** that uniquely combines long-term technoeconomic design with real-time operational control, being used by universities, military bases, and data centers for increasing operational resiliency and reducing cost, while off-loading demand from the grid.

Chilldyne's direct-to-chip, negative pressure **liquid cooling technology** is reducing energy use and cost for hyperscale and AI-driven data centers that are using higher power chips and high density GPU clusters.

And these are just 7 examples of the 59 SCEIN companies that are **ALL** delivering ratepayer benefits while contributing to California's growing clean energy economy.

Particularly at a time when the federal administration and DOE are prioritizing, and only funding coal, oil, natural gas, geothermal and nuclear investments, if California eliminates funding for the proven highly successful entrepreneurial ecosystem, please recognize this will severely rupture the pipeline of new, emerging, and pre-commercialized clean energy innovations that are essential for supporting all 13 of the EPIC 5 Strategic Objectives to be achieved, and significantly jeopardize reaching the state's 2045 energy, climate, and equity goals.

So I respectfully request that you strongly reconsider funding of the four Regional Energy Innovation Clusters and CalSeed in the final EPIC 5 Investment Plan.

After participating in the CEC EPIC 5 Investment Plan Public Workshop on June 11, 2026, I observed that the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem composed of the four Regional Energy Innovation Clusters (REIC's), CalSEED, CalTestBed, and RAMP, which has evolved over the last 10 years into a national, if not global best practice in clean energy innovation commercialization acceleration, is being phased out and being replaced by 3 newly created incubator programs focused on Pre-Commercial Grid-Tech, Tribal Energy Capacity Building and Mentorship, and CBO Clean Energy Capacity Building and Research. It should be noted that the current Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, provides a robust dynamic pipeline of newly emerging and pre-commercial innovations that support all 13 of the EPIC 5 Strategic Objectives, and already includes well-established working collaboration that prioritizes pilots and early deployments with Tribal Communities, Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Communities, and CBO's statewide.

I can unequivocally say that I would never have been able to have led and supported all of the successful innovative clean energy deployment initiatives that I was involved in, without the 360º support that was provided by our statewide entrepreneurial ecosystem which includes entrepreneurs, CEC technical and financial support, academic institutions, utilities and CCA's, climate collaboratives, regional economic development organizations, subject matter experts, OEM's, Contractors, CBO's, and investors.

Let me provide an example of how this is seamlessly working right now for one of the Southern California Energy Innovation Network's current start-ups, Znrg Innovations, a company that is commercializing an affordable technology that enables homeowners to replace gas and conventional electric water heaters with a 120V electric solution that provides comparable hot water performance while reducing peak electrical demand and creating dispatchable thermal storage capacity for utilities.

Through the SCEIN Program Znrg has been introduced to Groundwork San Diego, a DVC organization and the Tribal Energy and Climate Collaborative, both of whom have submitted Letters of Support to facilitate trials in their communities as soon as product is available. Cleantech San Diego has also introduced Znrg to the city of Carlsbad, City of Chula Vista, and County of San Diego for potential inclusion in the CPUC's SB 1221 program which will create voluntary decarbonization zones in priority neighborhoods. Znrg is also collaborating with one of the IOU's to validate the potential of AI-controlled water heater VPP's load-shifting the second highest residential appliance demand.

Znrg has been introduced to CalMTA and submitted an application for a Market Transformation Initiative (MTI) that will be affordable, and deliver energy reduction, decarbonization, NOx removal, load-shifting and social equity. This is just one example of how the current REIC's are already simultaneously addressing all 3 priorities for the creation of new incubators that have been identified in the EPIC 5 Investment Plan, but the REIC's are providing this type of holistic support for all 13 of the EPIC 5 Strategic Objectives.

As one of the few individuals still around, who has been involved with the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem since CEC solicitation GFO-15-306 was issued in September 2015, there is one other very key point that must not be overlooked – timing and continuity. Even after the NOPA for GFO-15-306 was announced on February 5, 2016, it took a minimum of 12-24 months for each of the REIC's to complete the following CEC EPIC GFO Agreement deliverables before they could actually commence member engagement and active support:

- Recruit and engage a Technical Advisory Committee
- Establish Strategic Partnerships and Execute Sub-Contracts
- Complete an Energy Technology Priorities and Needs Assessment
- Develop an Intake Process and Selection Criteria

- Develop a Member Customized Service Plan Process/Template

Recognizing that even if the CPUC approves the EPIC 5 Investment Plan before year-end, the currently proposed 3 new incubators will not be up and operational until some time in 2028. And in that timeframe, many of the key resources currently in the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem will move into new roles and new organizations and the cohesiveness and synergy of the current statewide clean energy network will be lost.

If there are specific new impacts that the CPUC and CEC are looking to accomplish with these proposed 3 new incubators, my recommendation would be to add dedicated resources in the REIC's and New Energy Nexus so they are embedded, and will instantly benefit from this synergy with the high performing Entrepreneurial Ecosystem that has delivered financial, environmental, and social equity benefits well beyond what was originally envisioned.

Thanks for your thoughtful consideration of these recommendations that are intended to guide the State of California to maintain and grow its leadership role in driving the equitable clean energy transition during a particularly challenging period for climate-tech entrepreneurs.

Marty Turock
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