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Support for Cleantech San Diego's Southern California Energy Innovation Network (SCEIN)

My name is James Zanewicz, CEO of Connect, a nonprofit organization supporting entrepreneurs and strengthening the innovation ecosystem across the San Diego region. Connect works alongside Cleantech San Diego's Southern California Energy Innovation Network (SCEIN) to help regional energy entrepreneurs navigate the path from promising technology to market adoption, investment, and meaningful economic impact.

From our perspective, SCEIN is exactly the kind of proven regional infrastructure that the California Energy Commission should continue to prioritize through the EPIC 5 Investment Plan. Breakthrough technologies do not reach the market through funding alone. Founders need trusted pathways to technical expertise, utilities, pilot opportunities, investors, government partners, and customers. SCEIN provides that critical local on-ramp and helps ensure that innovative energy technologies are properly vetted, tested, deployed, and positioned to benefit Californians.

The results demonstrate the value of this model. SCEIN has helped 81 clean energy companies collectively raise \$727 million in follow-on funding, secure 494 patents, deploy 673 pilots in California, and create 853 full-time jobs—an estimated 80-to-1 return on the CEC's investment. Those outcomes represent not only strong stewardship of public funding, but also the creation of companies, technologies, and jobs that strengthen California's economy and energy future.

At a time when federal support for clean energy innovation faces significant uncertainty, California's continued leadership is more important than ever. Sustaining investment in SCEIN and the broader Regional Energy Innovation Cluster network will preserve the trusted, locally rooted infrastructure that allows entrepreneurs to move faster, reduces barriers to commercialization, and ensures that public investment produces measurable economic and environmental returns.

On behalf of Connect and the entrepreneurs we serve, I strongly encourage the California Energy Commission to continue funding SCEIN and the Regional Energy Innovation Cluster model as a priority within the EPIC 5 Investment Plan.