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Comments in support of SCEIN in EPIC 5 Investment Plan

My name is Petra Stegmann, Head of Entrepreneurial Programs at Connect. We are a partner organization working alongside Cleantech San Diegoâ€™s Southern California Energy Innovation Network (SCEIN) to support regional energy entrepreneurs.

Regional Energy Innovation Clusters (REICs), including the Southern California Energy Innovation Network (SCEIN), play a vital role in advancing Californiaâ€™s clean energy economy by ensuring that innovative technologies are rigorously vetted, tested, piloted, and demonstrated to be cost-effective before widespread deployment. Through this work, REICs help accelerate the adoption of clean energy solutions that benefit all Californians while generating substantial economic returns. Their efforts have supported the growth of new businesses, strengthened regional industries, and contributed to the creation of thousands of high-quality jobs across the state, reinforcing Californiaâ€™s position as a national leader in energy innovation and economic development.

REICs also serve as the backbone of Californiaâ€™s clean energy innovation ecosystem by connecting startups and emerging technology companies with utilities, investors, government agencies, talent, and academic institutions. These partnerships provide the critical pathways needed to move promising technologies from research and development into commercialization and market adoption. By acting as trusted regional â€œlaunchpadsâ€□ for innovation, REICs help reduce barriers to entry, foster collaboration across sectors, accelerate business growth, and create the conditions necessary for a more efficient, resilient, and thriving clean energy economy.

Over the past decade, SCEIN and the other REICs have demonstrated exceptional effectiveness and adaptability as trusted drivers of the EPIC programâ€™s objectives. Their proven track record, deep regional expertise, and ability to deliver measurable economic growth, technological advancement, and environmental benefits, makes them invaluable assets to Californiaâ€™s clean energy future. The SCEIN program alone has an impressive track record of 80:1 return on the CECâ€™s investment. At a time when federal support for clean energy faces increasing uncertainty, continued investment in these established regional programs is more important than ever. Sustaining funding for REICs will ensure that California maintains its nationwide leadership in energy innovation while continuing to deliver tangible benefits to communities, businesses, workers, and the environment. I strongly advocate for the California Energy Commission (CEC) to continue supporting funding of the SCEIN program and the REICs in the EPIC 5 Investment Plan.