

DOCKETED

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Comment on EPIC 2026-2030 Investment Plan

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

June 18, 2026

From: Maia Cheli, Senior Development Manager, Schatz Energy Research Center

Re: Comment on EPIC 2026-2030 Investment Plan

Dear EPIC representatives,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the California Energy Commission's EPIC 5 Draft Initiatives and Research Topics. We are grateful for the leadership of the CEC in driving innovations that leverage clean energy systems to advance resilience, equity, affordability, and adaptability to climate change. The Commission has been a proactive partner with communities and Tribes across the state who are generating meaningful avenues for the energy transition.

As an energy research team – and community members ourselves – working on California's rural north coast, we want to offer our enthusiastic support for three initiatives & the following research projects in particular:

- Leveraging DERs and Load Flexibility for Affordability and Grid Reliability – *Equity-Focused DER Solutions for Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Communities (DVCs)*
- Community Led Clean Energy Capacity Building and Research Incubation for California Native American Tribes and Community Based Organizations – *Tribal Energy Capacity Building and Mentorship Incubator*
- Leading Innovation in Electricity Sector Resilience and Adaptation – *all three proposed projects.*

Comments and requests:

Developing equity-focused DER solutions is a critical component for enabling communities to mitigate and adapt to climate change without deepening existing social divides. Wildfire and weather extremes are prompting Californians toward a more flexible and responsive grid; in this period of reimagination and restructure, we can and should choose to design for equity and accessibility. We request that the CEC support innovations advancing equity *in both rural and urban environments* – and *to facilitate information exchange across DER projects*, so that regions can learn from each other's insights and developments. We are glad to see the proposed focus on microgrids, resilience hubs, and multifamily DER packages, with the goals of lowering the energy burden and increasing resilience for vulnerable communities through intentional, site-smart infrastructure development.

Tribal Energy Capacity Building and Mentorship: As a technical service provider in the design and development of microgrids and other resilient energy systems, we have seen the strong, positive impact of knowledge exchange and mentorship across Tribal communities. Ultimately, these exchange programs drive down infrastructure costs and increase implementation success, by enabling Tribal utilities and energy teams to learn from each other's experiences, and develop culturally appropriate energy systems that meet Tribal priorities. We request that the Commission *support at least two regional incubators*, reflecting the diversity and long distances between Tribes across the state.

Supporting Wildfire Mitigation that Manages Risk and Advances Affordability: We support this effort to include innovation at the critical nexus of fire risk, electric power infrastructure, and community resilience – and we *urge EPIC administrators to maintain a holistic view of these issues, including natural and landscape-level solutions alongside engineered ones.*

Supporting strategies and alliances that enable rural and Tribal landscapes to strengthen local resilience, advance Tribal energy sovereignty, improve system reliability, and shape future grid evolution: Rural landscapes are at the forefront of energy systems change, due to wildfire risk, weather exposure, and limited redundancies in available public services. These communities can also therefore be incredibly motivated and generative of novel, right-sized advancements to meeting climate change. We are excited for this proposal to *support strategies and alliances that will catalyze rural and Tribal strengths towards a clean and resilient next generation grid.*

Many thanks again for all of your work to date, and for consideration of our comments.

Yours,

Maia Cheli