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**Re: Written testimony in support of the New York State Stem Cell Science (NYSTEM) program**

To Whom It May Concern:

I was deeply troubled to learn of the proposed termination of the NYSTEM program in this year's executive budget proposal. I am a young female scientist whose research program is dedicated to finding treatments for arthritis and traumatic joint injury. Arthritis is a debilitating disease for so many people in our state and around the world. My lab is developing innovative approaches to regenerate joint tissues like cartilage and ligaments so that we can add quality back to people's lives. I chose to plant roots in New York State based on the culture and support for stem cell research that was fostered by funding from the NYSTEM program since 2007.

Our trainees and our research rely on the essential funding support from NYSTEM. In 2020, I was recruited from the University of Southern California to start my lab at Columbia University based on a promise of support for my research in New York. During my postdoctoral training, I was funded by a fellowship from the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) program, and it was a critical stepping-stone to my successful mentored career grant from the NIH. So too, support from the NYSTEM program is a springboard for trainees and new research by early-stage investigators as we generate crucial data to compete for larger NIH funding. Especially with the new approval of expanded funding for the CIRM program in California, the termination of NYSTEM will lead to a drain of talent, research, and innovation away from New York State. Without NYSTEM, we in New York State will not be able to compete with other institutes, especially those in California, for the top talent in the stem cell field.

Please reconsider termination of the NYSTEM program. Especially in 2020, we have all seen first-hand the amazing progress that can be accomplished when you fund scientific research. By the same token, if you don't fund stem cell science, the chance that we develop treatments and cures for debilitating diseases like arthritis goes down. As we all look to rebuild our lives from this devastating pandemic, please re-invest in NYSTEM and stem cell research in New York State. Give us a brighter future.

I chose to build a life for my family and for my research program in New York State. Please choose to re-invest in stem cell science and keep New York Strong.

Sincerely,



Joanna Smeeton, PhD

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