



CITY OF PALM DESERT

73-510 FRED WARING DRIVE
PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA 92260-2578
TEL: 760-346-0611
INFO@PALMDESERT.GOV

March 25, 2025

The Honorable Alex Padilla
United States Senator
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Subject: Support for Community Project Funding for California State University, San Bernardino

Dear Senator Padilla,

As Mayor of Palm Desert, I am writing to express the City's strong support for California State University, San Bernardino's (CSUSB) Community Project Funding (CPF) requests: \$1,250,000 for the establishment of an Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Virtual Reality (VR) Research and Retraining Center, and \$2,490,000 for the Regional Entrepreneurial Resource Centers program.

Recent studies indicate that over 80% of workforce tasks may be augmented or replaced by AI. This underscores the urgent need to equip our workforce with specialized skills in these emerging fields. The proposed AI and VR Center will build upon CSUSB's nationally recognized Cybersecurity Workforce Development Program by incorporating AI-driven security solutions and immersive VR-based training. These innovations will help develop a robust talent pipeline capable of addressing the complexities of modern cybersecurity and supply chain operations.

Additionally, the Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship (IECE) at CSUSB is the largest entrepreneurial support organization in the region. Since 2000, the IECE has delivered entrepreneurial training and small business counseling to more than 183,000 businesses, resulting in an economic impact of over \$700 million, supporting more than 46,268 jobs and creating more than 2,400 distinct startups. These services are crucial for economic development in the Inland Empire.

We respectfully urge your favorable consideration of CSUSB's requests for \$1.25 million to support the AI and VR Research and Retraining Center and \$2.49 million to fund the Regional Entrepreneurial Resource Centers located in Palm Desert, Temecula, and San Bernardino.

Sincerely,

Jan C. Harnik
Mayor, City of Palm Desert