



March 24, 2026

To: The Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chair, House Finance Committee

Re: Support for Continued Funding of the "Innovative Matching Grants/Internships" Program

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Committee on Finance, Committee

I am writing on behalf of Jaia Robotics to express our strong support for the continued funding of the Innovative Matching Grants and Internships program (the Innovate RI Fund). We urge the Committee to maintain the \$1 million allocation for this vital program in the FY27 Budget.

As a science and technology company based in Rhode Island, we have seen firsthand how these matching grants serve as a force multiplier for our state's economy. To date, Jaia Robotics has been awarded two Phase II SBIRs from NOAA, with one of these major projects continuing through October 2026.

The state's matching support is a critical component of our ability to execute these high-level federal contracts. Programs like this have helped Rhode Island companies leverage over \$152 million in federal SBIR/STTR funds since 2013 – money that goes directly toward high-wage jobs and cutting-edge R&D right here in our state.

The proposed cut to this program would be a significant blow to the local innovation ecosystem. Without these funds:

- Rhode Island startups will lose the critical "match" that makes our federal grant applications more competitive.
- The talent pipeline will be weakened by the loss of the SBIR internship support.
- Small businesses will lose the technical application support necessary to navigate complex federal funding processes.

While we recognize the importance of the Innovation Initiatives (Vouchers and Patent Incentives), it should not come at the expense of the SBIR Matching program. Both are essential pillars of the state's economic development strategy. For Jaia Robotics, this program is a proven catalyst for growth, and we respectfully ask that you restore the \$1 million for the Innovative Matching Grants/Internships program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ian Estaphan Owen", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ian Estaphan Owen
CEO & Co-Founder
Jaia Robotics, Inc.