

evonatura

March 27, 2026

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

RE: Support for Innovation Program Funding, FY27 Budget Economic Development Article

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

I am writing to urge you to maintain funding for Rhode Island's **Innovative Matching Grants/Internship** program in the FY27 Budget. In the current budget proposal, this program is being cut in order to fund the Innovation Initiatives program. Both programs are critical to driving high growth businesses, attracting federal and private investment and creating high paying jobs in the State.

Since 2013, the Innovative Matching Grants/Internship program has helped companies access and leverage **\$152 million** in federal funds through the SBIR/STTR program. This program keeps innovative companies in Rhode Island. It helps companies build breakthrough technologies that attract private investment and growth. Many spin out from our research institutions. These dollars align Rhode Island companies to federal and private innovation funds - further positioning Rhode Island as a place for innovation.

At EvoNatura, we are proud to be a Rhode Island-based climate tech company pioneering the world's first drop-in microbial additive that programs plastics to safely biodegrade at the end of their lifecycle. Backed by local ecosystem leaders like the Social Enterprise Greenhouse, we are currently at a critical transition phase, moving from lab-scale validation to commercial pilot testing in 2026.

For deep-tech and materials science startups like ours, the Innovative Matching Grants and Internship programs are a lifeline. Developing hardware and biological solutions requires significant capital and access to specialized talent. These state programs provide the vital resources necessary to bridge the gap between R&D and commercial manufacturing, allowing us to hire local university talent and aggressively pursue federal SBIR/STTR funding. Maintaining this funding ensures that breakthrough climate technologies—and the high-paying green

manufacturing jobs they create—take root and scale right here in Rhode Island, rather than relocating to competing tech hubs.

In conclusion, I urge you to keep \$1 million funds in the Innovative Matching Grants/Internship (Innovate RI) program.

Respectfully,

Priyanka K. Naithani

Co-Founder and CEO

EvoNatura