



March 3, 2015

California Energy Commission

To whom it may concern:

We are writing in support of funding for University of California research centers such as the Center for the Built Environment (CBE) at the University of California, Berkeley. We strongly agree with the sentiments noted in the EPIC 2015-2017 Triennial Investment Plan, that “research centers have been very effective at turning innovative technologies into products that become part of California’s markets or advancing science to support decisions by policy makers.”

HOK is one of the largest architectural, planning and engineering firms in the world with a deep commitment to integrating sustainability and energy efficient strategies into all of our global work. HOK employs 1800 building industry professionals in 24 worldwide locations with 290 employees in two California offices: San Francisco and Los Angeles. HOK gross revenue was \$416 million in 2014. Our company has been a member of CBE’s industry consortium since 2002 and we are actively involved on the advisory board and as a research collaborator. We have worked closely with CBE staff on several research projects, for example, on a study of commercial building operations and behavior at the CalSTRS Headquarters in Sacramento, designed by HOK, in a study sponsored by the California Air Resources Board. We also have collaborated with CBE on improving the design and operation of underfloor air distribution HVAC systems, and we have relied on design tools and approaches developed by CBE for our engineering design of these systems. We also worked with CBE to develop new survey resources for evaluating the performance of hospitals from the perspective of doctors, nurses and hospital administrators. The wide range of research ongoing at CBE provide much value to our company, and to that of other CBE members and to the building industry at large.

The funding of research centers such as CBE is a cost effective way to provide long term continuity of research topics, and to supporting post-research activities that are needed to support adoption of energy efficient building technologies through licensing and by impacting codes and standards, from the entire research lifecycle from fundamental research, to application prototyping, to pilot testing and field evaluation. Private companies benefit greatly from the third party objectivity and scientific rigor that these research centers provide.

These centers have strong relationships with industry, and this industry/university collaboration makes their research relevant to current practice and focused on important challenges. These centers are highly cost effective, and enable the support of advanced tools and resources that are not easily financed through the standard research solicitation process. The centers also provide flexibility, and are able to change the course of a research project when technologies or practice demands such change. Finally, these centers utilize multiple funding sources, such as from industry and federal sources, to leverage the investment from the California Energy Commission.

We strongly recommend that University of California research centers be provided with ongoing financial support so that they may continue to serve their important missions that include unbiased evaluation of new technologies, supporting the adoption of appropriate technologies, and educating the future workforce.

Sincerely,
HOK

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