



April \_\_, 2026

The Honorable G. Murrell Smith, Jr.  
Speaker of the House  
South Carolina House of Representatives  
Columbia, South Carolina

The Honorable William “Bill”  
Herbkersman  
Chairman  
House Labor, Commerce, and Industry  
Committee  
Columbia, South Carolina

The Honorable Bruce W. Bannister  
Chairman  
House Ways and Means Committee  
Columbia, South Carolina

The Honorable Jeff Bradley  
Chairman  
House Regulations, Admin. Procedures,  
Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity  
Committee

**Subject: Immediate Action Required: ASCEND Appropriation**

Dear Speaker Smith, Chairman Bannister, Chairman Herbkersma, Chairman Bradley,  
and Members of House Leadership:

We write to strongly urge your support for the ASCEND appropriation and to underscore the urgency of this decision as it relates to the State’s upcoming budget deliberations.

**This is a time-sensitive opportunity. The outcome of this budget cycle will determine the State’s position in this emerging infrastructure landscape.**

ASCEND is expected to be considered as part of House budget deliberations in the coming days. The decisions made in this window will determine whether South Carolina actively shapes its role in next-generation infrastructure or adapts to frameworks defined elsewhere.

ASCEND is not simply an economic development initiative. It is foundational infrastructure.

Just as prior generations invested in ports, power, and transportation, this investment establishes the compute, energy alignment, and governance systems that will define how artificial intelligence, digital identity, and financial platforms operate within our state.

At its core, ASCEND creates a statewide, sovereign computing capability coordinated through the South Carolina Research Authority (SCRA). This ensures that South



Carolina defines how these systems are deployed, accessed, and governed at a time when control over infrastructure is increasingly tied to economic and policy outcomes.

**The window to act is narrowing.**

We are entering a three to four-year period in which these systems, standards, and market positions will be established. States that move now will define the terms. States that wait will inherit them.

Other states are already advancing infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and capital alignment to capture leadership in this space. Delay does not preserve flexibility. It results in lost positioning that is difficult, if not impossible, to recover.

The implications are both immediate and long-term.

In the near term, ASCEND supports growth across critical sectors including healthcare, advanced manufacturing, agriculture, and energy. It strengthens South Carolina's ability to attract investment, research partnerships, and high-value jobs.

Over the long term, it determines whether the State maintains influence over the infrastructure layers that increasingly govern economic participation, data systems, and digital interaction.

Aligned efforts in research, workforce development, and pilot programs are already underway, preparing the foundation necessary for successful implementation. These efforts ensure that infrastructure deployment is matched by talent, policy readiness, and institutional coordination.

This is not a single initiative. It is a coordinated strategy.

The requested appropriation is modest relative to the scale of impact. More importantly, it allows South Carolina to act now, while this decision is still ours to make.

**Inaction is not neutral.**

It is a decision to defer leadership and accept external direction in systems that will shape the State's economic future.

South Carolina is well-positioned to lead. ASCEND provides the mechanism to do so.

**We respectfully urge your support.**



Respectfully,

Dennis Fassuliotis

President

South Carolina Emerging Technology Association (SCETA)

and undersigned stakeholders