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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SENATORIAL DISTRICT NO. 1

January 13, 2026

Mr. Brian Lamkin
Inspector General of South Carolina
111 Executive Center Drive, Suite 204
Columbia, South Carolina 29210

Dear Inspector General Lamkin:

I am writing this letter to request your office examine the well-publicized Newry Development matter in Oconee County involving Oconee County, private businesses related to United Homes Group, and Clemson University. As a starting point for your review, I will provide materials I have received from Clemson University and Oconee County. I request that your office determine if the actions taken by Clemson University related to this matter were in compliance with South Carolina law or Clemson University policies, and whether there are lessons from this matter that may warrant consideration by the Clemson University Board of Trustees or the General Assembly.

At the outset, I want to be clear that this referral should not be read as expressing any concern that Clemson University, its board members, or its employees acted improperly or unethically. I have examined the materials myself, and my request is not predicated on any belief that a legal or ethical violation occurred. To the contrary, I believe it is important that Clemson University maintain its well-earned reputation as a well-run and respected institution within South Carolina's higher education system.

Public confidence in any state institution depends not only on whether its actions comply with the law, but also on whether those actions are viewed as beyond reproach. For that reason, I believe an independent review is warranted. Such a review will either confirm Clemson University's representations regarding its actions related to the Newry project or identify areas where practices fell short of institutional goals and should be addressed. In either case, the result will provide clarity. As any patient might say to a physician, the value lies in being told either that everything is well or how to get better.

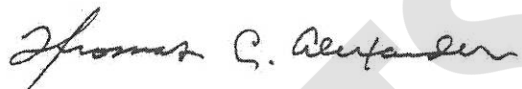
I believe the Office of the Inspector General is uniquely suited to conduct this review. Your office has a long and well-established record of thorough professional investigations. You also have staff with the specialized expertise and resources to conduct reviews of this nature. Most importantly, your office operates independently, which is essential if the results are to be credible and accepted by all involved, regardless of the outcome.

While we have considered how best to address this matter, none of the avenues available to the Senate is well suited for the task. The Senate Oversight Committee, which I chair, does not have jurisdiction over institutions of higher education. The Senate Education Committee, while knowledgeable on policy matters, does not have the specialized staff or bandwidth necessary to conduct a detailed review involving both legal compliance and institutional best practices. For those reasons, a Senate led review would not offer the benefits an investigation by the Inspector General would.

Furthermore, I also recognize that, unlike Congress, neither the Senate nor your office has authority to investigate private entities or local governments. Accordingly, I understand that your review would be limited to Clemson University and matters within your jurisdiction.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Your independent review is in the best interest of the public and of Clemson University, so that necessary work can proceed with the confidence of the public or, if warranted, appropriate changes can be made moving forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas C. Alexander".

Thomas C. Alexander