THE CLAIRE FRIEDLANDER
FAMILY FOUNDATION

September 2026

Annual Letter from the President of the Foundation

It is unfortunate that there is not—at least not yet—a large language model focused on ridding the world of hate in all its deplorable forms: an AI agent that teaches and promotes tolerance and helps people live together peacefully, respectfully, and without violence of any kind. Now that would be a "killer app" (if you'll excuse the poorly devised pun).

Wouldn't it be remarkable if AI could meaningfully move the needle on the climate crisis—particularly in regions whose communities are least equipped to withstand its consequences? What if AI could accelerate breakthroughs in cancer research or deepen our understanding of autism? What if it could help secure a low-carbon energy source that is abundant, affordable, and available worldwide? Encouragingly, AI has recently shown substantive promise on several of these fronts.

Progress has been made, and the future is tremendously exciting. But let's face it: we do not yet know whether today's rapid technological buildout will produce breakthroughs equal to these challenges. We hope it will—of course we do—but hope is not a guarantee. Indeed, hope is an emotion and, like all human emotions, is subject to bias.

Historically, major technological breakthroughs have had profound effects on society, but those effects often emerge years after the underlying innovations are first introduced. Time matters. And in many of these areas, time is precisely what we do not have. We need transformative advances now.

This is where philanthropy has an important role to play—not as a conventional venture capitalist, but as a provider of patient, risk-tolerant capital capable of extending and accelerating the impact of early-stage innovation. Like venture capital firms, private foundation boards must understand emerging technologies and consider how they can be applied to advance breakthroughs in the fields they support. Philanthropists must do their homework, just as traditional capital providers do.

Private foundations are uniquely positioned to serve as early providers of capital, as well as conveners and connectors among subject-matter experts, innovative organizations, and forward-thinking companies. A private foundation answers to its board—not to investors seeking a particular, and often outsized, financial return. Its objective is impact.

Foundation boards pursue that impact with permanent capital: their endowments. Unlike many charitable organizations, private foundations generally do not need to fundraise. This allows them to avoid much of the cost, publicity, and loss of agency that can accompany the fundraising process—and to remain focused on their mission.

We can—and should—hope that breakthroughs of all kinds will continue to amaze us. But foundations need not remain passive observers. Their boards and leaders can place a measured "finger on the scale," providing the support that promising early-stage ventures and innovations need to succeed.

Sound investment-management principles counsel that only a prudent portion of a foundation's assets should be allocated to venture-like investments, and we fully agree. Yet even a measured commitment—particularly when combined with the efforts of other like-minded foundations—can make an enormous difference.

So, here's to the future: hopeful, engaged, and always pushing forward.

Respectfully,

Peter J. Klein

President
The Claire Friedlander Family Foundation