U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C. 20202-5335

APPLICATION FOR GRANTS UNDER THE

84-283B-1 FY24 Comprehensive Centers Program

CFDA # 84.283B

PR/Award # S283B240068

Gramts.gov Tracking#: GRANT14194063

OMB No. , Expiration Date:

Closing Date: Jun 24, 2024

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OMB Number: 4040-0004
Expiration Date: 11/30/2025

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424

* 1. Type of Submission:
- [ ] Preapplication
- [x] Application
- [ ] Changed/Corrected Application

* 2. Type of Application:
- [x] New
- [ ] Continuation
- [ ] Revision

* If Revision, select appropriate letter(s):

* Other (Specify):

* 3. Date Received: 06/24/2024

4. Applicant Identifier:

5a. Federal Entity Identifier: [redacted]

5b. Federal Award Identifier:

State Use Only:

6. Date Received by State:

7. State Application Identifier:

8. APPLICANT INFORMATION:

* a. Legal Name: The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

* b. Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN): [redacted]

* c. UEI: [redacted]

d. Address:

* Street1: 1111 Spring Garden St.
Street2: Ste 2601, Room 2702 MHRA Bldg
* City: Greensboro
County/Parish: Guilford
* State: NC: North Carolina
Province:
* Country: USA: UNITED STATES
* Zip / Postal Code: 27412-5013

e. Organizational Unit:

Department Name: Office of Sponsored Programs

Division Name: ORE

f. Name and contact information of person to be contacted on matters involving this application:

Prefix:
* First Name: Joy
Middle Name:
* Last Name: Dismukes
Suffix:

Title: Director, Office of Sponsored Programs

Organizational Affiliation: The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

* Telephone Number: [redacted]
Fax Number:

* Email: [redacted]

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424

*** 9. Type of Applicant 1: Select Applicant Type:**

Type of Applicant 2: Select Applicant Type:

Type of Applicant 3: Select Applicant Type:

* Other (specify):

*** 10. Name of Federal Agency:**

11. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:

84.283

CFDA Title:

Comprehensive Centers

*** 12. Funding Opportunity Number:**

* Title:

13. Competition Identification Number:

84-283B2024-1

Title:

84-283B-1 FY24 Comprehensive Centers Program

14. Areas Affected by Project (Cities, Counties, States, etc.):

*** 15. Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project:**

Attach supporting documents as specified in agency instructions.

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424

16. Congressional Districts Of:

* a. Applicant: NC-006 | * b. Program/Project: NC-006

Attach an additional list of Program/Project Congressional Districts if needed.

Add Attachment | Delete Attachment | View Attachment

17. Proposed Project:

* a. Start Date: 10/01/2024 | * b. End Date: 09/30/2029

18. Estimated Funding ($):

* a. Federal	2,262,945.00
* b. Applicant	0.00
* c. State	0.00
* d. Local	0.00
* e. Other	0.00
* f. Program Income	0.00
* g. TOTAL	2,262,945.00

*** 19. Is Application Subject to Review By State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?**

☐ a. This application was made available to the State under the Executive Order 12372 Process for review on .

☒ b. Program is subject to E.O. 12372 but has not been selected by the State for review.

☐ c. Program is not covered by E.O. 12372.

*** 20. Is the Applicant Delinquent On Any Federal Debt? (If "Yes," provide explanation in attachment.)**

☐ Yes ☒ No

If "Yes", provide explanation and attach

Add Attachment | Delete Attachment | View Attachment

21. *By signing this application, I certify (1) to the statements contained in the list of certifications and (2) that the statements herein are true, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I also provide the required assurances** and agree to comply with any resulting terms if I accept an award. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. (U.S. Code, Title 18, Section 1001)**

☒ ** I AGREE

** The list of certifications and assurances, or an internet site where you may obtain this list, is contained in the announcement or agency specific instructions.

Authorized Representative:

Prefix: | * First Name: Joy

Middle Name:

* Last Name: Dismukes

Suffix:

* Title: Director, Office of Sponsored Programs

* Telephone Number: [redacted] | Fax Number:

* Email: [redacted]

* Signature of Authorized Representative: Joy M Dismukes | * Date Signed: 06/24/2024

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, ''Disclosure of Lobbying Activities,'' in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

* APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION	The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
* PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	
Prefix:	
* First Name:	Joy
Middle Name:	
* Last Name:	Dismukes
Suffix:	
* Title:	Director, Office of Sponsored Programs
* SIGNATURE:	[redacted]
* DATE:	06/24/2024

Abstract

An abstract is to be submitted in accordance with the following:

1. Abstract Requirements

- Abstracts must not exceed one page and should use language that will be understood by a range of audiences.
- Abstracts must include the project title, goals, and expected outcomes and contributions related to research, policy, and practice.
- Abstracts must include the population(s) to be served.
- Abstracts must include primary activities to be performed by the recipient.
- Abstracts must include subrecipient activities that are known or specified at the time of application submission.

For research applications, abstracts also include the following:

- Theoretical and conceptual background of the study (i.e., prior research that the investigation builds upon and that provides a compelling rationale for this study).
- Research issues, hypotheses and questions being addressed.
- Study design including a brief description of the sample including sample size, methods, principals, and dependent, independent, and control variables, as well as the approach to data analysis.

[Note: For a non-electronic submission, include the name and address of your organization and the name, phone number and e-mail address of the contact person for this project.]

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* Attachment:

Tracking Number:GRANT14194063 Funding Opportunity Number:ED-GRANTS-051324-001 Received Date:Jun 24, 2024 11:04:58 AM EDT

ABSTRACT FOR REGIONAL CENTER 5 AT THE SERVE CENTER

Absolute Priority 2—Regional Centers. The SERVE Center at UNC Greensboro is pleased to offer our proposal to operate the Regional Center for Region 5 and provide intensive, capacity-building services to Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Our proposal presents a Five-Year Plan that builds on our successful tenure and trusted relationships developed with SEA leaders in operating the Regional Center for these three states from 2019-2024. We propose **five goals** representing customized strategies that address **nine educational challenges**. The first three goals describe support to the SEAs on their key improvement initiatives. **Goal 1**: Support the three SEAs in improving their effectiveness in carrying out Consolidated State Plans. **Goal 2**: Support the three SEAs in continuously improving their literacy, math, and MTSS initiatives. **Goal 3**: Build the capacity of SEAs to address emerging needs. Our **Goal 4**: Scale up promising practices/ evidence-based practices (EBPs) through engaging cohorts of LEA and school leaders. **Goal 5** focuses on support to the National Center, Content Centers, RELs and other federal assistance providers in disseminating their products and services. The **expected outcomes** are that we will build the human, organizational, policy, and resource capacities of the SEAs and LEAs we serve as they address nine educational challenges (e.g., improving low-performing schools, improving literacy and math outcomes, improving the implementation of MTSS, addressing emerging issues such as the educator shortage and non-academic barriers to learning). Our annual set of project plans will outline the activities to be accomplished each year based on our stakeholder engagement process. In terms of the primary activities to be accomplished, we describe **ten capacity-building strategies** (e.g., training/coaching in the application of Implementation Science, supporting the use of EBPs, facilitating peer-to-peer learning, supporting LEA cohorts through sustained professional development/Communities of Practice).

Project Narrative File(s)

*** Mandatory Project Narrative File Filename:**

To add more Project Narrative File attachments, please use the attachment buttons below.

REGIONAL CENTER 5 AT THE SERVE CENTER

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SECTION A: APPROACH TO CAPACITY-BUILDING

Introduction

The SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) is pleased to submit this application under Priority 2—Regional Centers, to operate the Region 5 Comprehensive Center (RC5) serving the three states of Georgia (GA), North Carolina (NC), and South Carolina (SC). The SERVE Center is located in North Carolina and is uniquely qualified to operate the RC5. Having operated the Regional Educational Laboratory for the Southeast (REL-Southeast) for 20 years (1991-2011), we have a history of working with southeastern states with a focus on the application of evidence-based practices (EBPs) to improve student outcomes. In 2019, the SERVE Center received the five-year (2019-2024) award to operate the Region 6 Comprehensive Center (RC6) serving Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina and, over these last five years has developed extensive knowledge of, and trusted relationships with key leaders from the three states (now to be served by the RC5). The SERVE Center also has extensive experience in research through our Early College Research Center, and in providing technical assistance relative to working with special populations, having operated the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) since 1997.

As the RC5 for 2024-2029, we will be building on our five years of progress (as the RC6) in providing intensive capacity-building services to the region. Our effectiveness in designing project plans that deliver high-quality, useful, and relevant capacity-building services closely aligned with the needs of our clients is reflected in our record of high levels of client satisfaction on ED-established performance measures (see Section C, Factor 2). With another five years, we can provide capacity-building services that help the SEAs make significant progress towards their long-term outcomes (such as improving literacy and math outcomes and closing

achievement gaps). In Section A, we describe our *Approach to Capacity-Building* organized by the two selection criterion factors.

Factor 1. Approach to Developing and Delivering High-Quality, Useful, and Relevant Capacity-Building Services that are Likely to Achieve Desired Recipient Outcomes

Our Logic Model (Figure A-1) provides a framework for our Five-Year Plan. The *Long-Term Outcomes* show that, as specified for Regional Centers, we aim to provide intensive capacity-building services to State and local clients that will help them improve educator practices, the quality of instruction, and student outcomes, particularly in literacy and math. The Logic Model is organized by **five** *Goals* that represent distinct types of capacity-building support and reflect our experience with designing and delivering project-specific support to the three states. The nine *Objectives* below address identified *Educational Challenges* that we propose to help SEAs address over the next five years based on our current knowledge of the three states and our initial needs sensing conversations with state leaders about their support needs.

- Objective 1: Improving Cross-Division SEA supports to rural schools
- Objective 2: Improving Cross-Division SEA supports to low-performing schools
- Objective 3: Improving literacy outcomes
- Objective 4: Improving math outcomes
- Objective 5: Improving Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) implementation
- Objective 6: Addressing non-academic barriers to learning (e.g., chronic absenteeism)
- Objective 7: Improving teacher evaluation to address the educator shortage
- Objective 8: Improving access to high-quality STEM instruction at the elementary level
- Objective 9: Improving rural stakeholders' access to evidence-based family engagement strategies

Figure A-1. RC5 Logic Model: Approach to Providing Capacity-Building Strategies—Five-Year Plan

ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 2: REGIONAL CENTERS Each Regional Center must provide capacity-building services that demonstrably assist clients and recipients in...	• Carrying out Consolidated State Plans approved under the ESEA **(See RC5 Goal 1)** • Implementing, scaling up, and sustaining EBPs, practices, or interventions that focus on key initiatives that lead to LEAs and schools improving student outcomes **(See RC5 Goals 2, 3, 4)** • Addressing the unique educational obstacles faced by underserved populations **(See RC5 Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)** • Improving implementation of ESEA programs **(See RC5 Goal 1)** • Regional Centers must effectively work with the National Center and Content Centers **(see RC5 Goal 5)**

Long-Term Outcomes (Y5+)
Improve educator practice, quality of instruction, and student outcomes, especially in literacy and math. Close achievement gaps for all students, particularly those with the greatest need (including students from low-income families and students attending CSI and TSI schools).

RC5 Five-Year Capacity Building Goals	**Educational Challenges** (Key Areas of Identified Need)	**Objectives**	**Short Term Outcomes (Y1-2)** (Improved Human, Organizational, Resource, Policy Capacities)	**Mid Term Outcomes (Y3-4)** (Improved Human, Organizational, Resource, Policy Capacities)
Goal 1: Support the three SEAs (GA, NC, SC) in improving their effectiveness in carrying out Consolidated State Plans	Rural Schools Low-Performing Schools	**Objective 1:** Facilitate Organizational Coherence in Addressing the Needs of Rural LEAs **Objective 2:** Facilitate Organizational Coherence in Cross-SEA Supports to Low-Performing Schools and Districts	Increased cross-division communication when addressing the educational challenges outlined in the Consolidated State Plans	Improved alignment of SEA policies, services for addressing unique obstacles related to specific needs of LPS and rural districts
Goal 2: Support the three SEAs (GA, NC, SC) in continuously improving their literacy, math, and MTSS initiatives	Literacy Math MTSS	**Objective 3:** Improve Literacy Outcomes **Objective 4:** Improve Math Outcomes **Objective 5:** Improve MTSS Implementation	Increased knowledge of implementation challenges in developing a continuous improvement approach to reading, math, and MTSS implementation	High-quality guidance and supports to LEAs and schools from the SEAs are based on feedback from the field
Goal 3: Build the capacity of SEAs to address emerging needs	Non-academic Barriers Educator Shortage	**Objective 6:** Address Non-academic Barriers to Learning **Objective 7:** Improve Teacher Evaluation to Address the Educator Shortage	Growth in SEA knowledge and internal capacity to manage new initiatives to address emerging challenges/root causes	SEAs effectively provide LEAs/schools with solutions to address emerging issues such as the educator shortage
Goal 4: Scale up promising practices/EBPs through engaging cohorts of LEA and school leaders	STEM Family Engagement	**Objective 8:** Improve Access to High-Quality STEM Instruction **Objective 9:** Improve Rural Stakeholders' Access to Evidence-Based Family Engagement Strategies	LEAs participate in PD cohorts and CoPs to scale up evidence-based practices	LEAs and schools implement changes reflecting EBPs and research in key areas (e.g., in STEM and Family Engagement)
Goal 5: Support to the National Comprehensive Center, four Content Centers, RELs, and other ED technical assistance centers in disseminating EBPs and other research/products				

In the *RC5 Capacity-Building Strategies* column, we provide examples of capacity-building strategies which will be described in Section A. In the columns for *Short-Term and Mid-Term Outcomes*, we describe examples of capacities (human, organizational, policy, and resource) that we expect will result from our capacity-building services. Below we use the *Goals* and *Objectives* from the Logic Model as the framework to describe our "*Approach to Developing and Delivering High-Quality, Useful, and Relevant Capacity-Building Services that are Likely to Achieve Desired Recipient Outcomes*." The capacity-building strategies described for each of the nine *Objectives* build on our past RC6 experiences with the three states. We envision a multi-year approach to addressing the nine *Educational Challenges* because key SEA improvement initiatives are typically complex and require a multi-year, continuous improvement focus to achieve desired student outcomes (Langley et al., 2009; Park et al., 2013).

Goal 1: Support the Three SEAs in Carrying Out Consolidated State Plans Approved Under ESEA (Including Assistance to Rural and Low-Performing Schools)

Large complex organizations such as State Education Agencies (SEAs) often struggle with cross-division coordination. Silos can form between different divisions who are working toward the same goals but have different areas of responsibility, or work with a specific population of students, or perform a specific function (e.g., curriculum, finance, policy). This "fragmentation" within SEAs can result in duplication of messaging efforts and other inefficiencies in how support is provided to LEAs and schools (What is Coherence?, 2024). [redacted] As the RC5, we propose to assist each of the SEAs by facilitating cross-division conversations and suggesting improvements to communication structures. We will build on the work of Education First (one of our partnering organizations) and the Council of Chief State School Officers, who developed resources for

improving organizational coherence at the SEA level and are implementing a two-year Carnegie grant to continue resource development in this area. The management of RC5 efforts to support increased organizational coherence at the SEA level will be a focus for our two Co-Directors, in concert with our three RC5 State Liaisons, who will serve as on-site RC5 representatives for their respective SEAs.

[redacted] The RC6 and the GaDOE brought together cross-division representatives to develop a new process under which rural and under-resourced LEAs could have more equitable opportunities to obtain funds for new improvement initiatives. This work will be continued as described in Objective 1 below. In Objective 2, we describe how the RC5 will help the SEAs in North Carolina and South Carolina continue to improve their support to low-performing LEAs and schools through better cross-division coordination.

Objective 1: Facilitate Organizational Coherence in Addressing the Needs of Rural LEAs (SEA Served—GA). Georgia is one of three states with the highest levels of rural children experiencing poverty (Showalter et al., 2023). Instructional spending for rural students is well below the state and U.S. averages. The GaDOE offers formula and discretionary grants through federal and state funding to help LEAs obtain resources to support higher student achievement. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic led to large amounts of relief funding

being distributed through grants. The need for better-coordinated grant processes became particularly relevant for rural LEAs, which often have limited central office capacity to compete for grant funding. Thus, an RC6 project (2022-2024) supported increased organizational coherence at the GaDOE in designing and managing discretionary grant processes, with a focus on rural equity. The work began with GaDOE leadership and the RC6 identifying a cross-division team representing the units that have a role in the discretionary grant process. This "design team" convened three times each year, and the RC6 and the GaDOE collaboratively designed and facilitated the sessions, which included discussions of problems of practice arising from implementing new grant application processes. The RC6 also provided assistance in developing a process map that helped stakeholders visualize the workflow from grant development to closeout. The GaDOE's focus on improving the organizational coherence of their grant application processes yielded promising results, [redacted]

This recent RC6 capacity-building work with the GaDOE provides an excellent foundation for the next five years of RC5 support as the GaDOE identifies additional areas related to resources for rural LEAs that would benefit from improved organizational coherence. In addition, building on resources from the Content Center on Fiscal Equity, the RC5 looks forward to supporting resource allocation reviews in support of the GaDOE's efforts to address equity in funding across sources.

Objective 2: Facilitate Organizational Coherence in Cross-SEA Supports to Low-Performing Schools and Districts (SEAs Served—NC, SC). Designing successful supports for low-performing schools is a goal for SEAs as reflected in their Consolidated State Plans. Table A-1 shows the numbers of low-performing schools by RC5 states.

Table A-1. Number of Low-Performing Schools by State

[redacted]		102	103	113	41	56
[redacted]		78	1,690	1,075	206	179

*Note. South Carolina did not post an updated CSI/TSI list for 2023-2024.
*Note. The disparity for NC's TSI and ATSI schools is attributed, in part, to the inclusion of school performance grades in the methodology for identifying these schools.

[redacted]

North Carolina. In 2023, the North Carolina Department of Instruction (NCDPI) developed a strategic plan that included a new statewide district and regional support system to coordinate departmental resources that support positive outcomes for all students, while prioritizing support to low-performing schools and LEAs. Recently, NCDPI leaders engaged in efforts to build organizational coherence in the Office of School Improvement, which is housed within the Division of District and School Support Services. [redacted] The RC5 will assist by co-developing cross-division planning processes within the SEA, supporting the creation of communication materials for use with LEAs, and increasing the organizational capacity of the regional support structure to lead these efforts. Thus, organizational coherence support from the

RC5 will help the NCDPI address the challenge of developing a more efficient and effective SEA support system for providing assistance to low-performing schools.

South Carolina. As the RC6, we have provided capacity-building services to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) through a multi-year project with the Office of School Transformation (OST). For LEAs that fail to meet certain academic or financial standards, a top priority for the SCDE has been to build greater cross-division integration in support of LEAs as they work to improve their low-performing schools. Recently, the focus of this SCDE effort has shifted to establishing the Helping Our Pupils Excel (HOPE) Network. The HOPE Network is intended to ensure collaboration between the various SCDE offices as they provide intensive coaching and support to the lowest-performing LEAs in the state. Looking forward, the RC5 will assist the SCDE in developing: 1) their implementation plan for facilitating the takeover of the low-performing LEAs and 2) their organizational capacity such that divisions within the SEA work collaboratively in service to the LEAs.

Goal 2: Support the Three SEAs in Continuously Improving Their Statewide Literacy, Math, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Initiatives

Goal 2 includes *Objectives* in support of three key state initiatives: 1) improving literacy outcomes, 2) improving math outcomes, and 3) improving MTSS implementation. The RC5 capacity-building services under Goal 2 include facilitating cross-state collaboratives with peer-to-peer learning opportunities for the three SEAs in the three areas (literacy, math, and MTSS). The logic behind including cross-state collaboratives for each of the three areas (in tandem with customized individualized support to each SEA) is that the SEA leaders of these three initiatives will benefit from learning from each other. For example, the MTSS leaders in each of the three states have participated in a cross-state RC6 project for two years (2022-2024) and have reported that the opportunity to regularly discuss their respective SEA's work with their peers from other

states has been very helpful. The facilitated discussions with other SEAs working towards similar outcomes (e.g., improving literacy) helps SEA leaders improve implementation support to LEAs and schools by learning from the experiences of their peers. Because making large-scale changes to instructional and school practices is complex and takes time, the three objectives described under Goal 2 (Objectives 3, 4, and 5 below) are expected to be multi-year in duration, reflecting the long-term nature of SEA efforts to improve the quality of instruction statewide.

Objective 3: Improve Literacy Outcomes (SEAs Served—GA, SC, NC). Objective 3 is a natural outgrowth of our five years of work as the RC6 in building the human, organizational, and policy capacities of the SEAs in service of their initiatives to improve literacy outcomes. Improving literacy is a particularly relevant educational challenge for all three states as they are in the middle of significant, multi-year efforts to provide statewide training in the science of reading. Because of this commonality across the three states in their focus on improving early literacy, as the RC6, we began facilitating cross-state meetings of the SEA early literacy leaders in 2023. To-date, we have hosted five virtual cross-state meetings, at which the SEA leaders shared their states' reading improvement efforts underway. The five virtual meetings were very well-received (serving as a space for SEA leaders to collaborate on shared challenges involving the science of reading/LETRS training). Topics covered to-date included sharing their efforts to provide literacy coaches statewide and their strategies for supporting multilingual learners, and hearing from the REL-Southeast about Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) for improving literacy in grades 4-12. Because these cross-state meetings have proved useful and relevant to the three SEAs, the RC5 will continue facilitating regular virtual meetings of this cross-state collaborative. We will also use the cross-state collaborative group meetings to raise the three SEAs' awareness of the opportunities for LEAs to use the REL-developed literacy toolkits designed to educate

practitioners about Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) in reading (e.g., REL-SE's *Toolkit for Differentiating Reading Instruction in Grades K-3).* Below we describe our proposed RC5 capacity-building services for each state in the context of their initiatives to improve reading and how we will build on our support provided over the last five years as the RC6.

Georgia. In 2019, the GaDOE requested support from the RC6 (in the form of conducting interviews with seven LEAs) so that the GaDOE could learn from the LEAs' implementation of a legislative mandate to pilot K-3 dyslexia screening and reading intervention. The resulting RC6 implementation analyses were used by the GaDOE to improve their support to the LEAs. The RC6 was able to make the reports publicly available so that other SEAs and LEAs could learn from the GaDOE Dyslexia Pilot. The RC6 support also included reviewing the alignment of state and federal policies related to the Dyslexia Pilot and the 2023 Georgia Early Literacy Act (which includes statewide requirements for universal reading screening, student intervention plans, and K-3 teacher training in teaching reading).

Going forward as the RC5, at the GaDOE's request, we will offer support in assessing the progress made in the statewide implementation of the K-3 dyslexia screening mandate (effective August 2024) and in the 2023 Georgia Early Literacy Act. We will also continue to assist the GaDOE in aligning dyslexia and literacy policies and in developing guidance for LEAs.

South Carolina. In 2023, the RC6 began supporting a literacy improvement initiative in a second state. The SCDE requested assistance with the use of implementation science to plan the rollout of a statewide initiative to train K-3 teachers using the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) science of reading training program. The RC6 staff met regularly with the SCDE staff during the 2023-2024 school year to provide training and coaching in implementation science and assistance with the development of an implementation plan for

the statewide training. The SCDE also requested that the RC6 conduct surveys and interviews with over 150 teachers, school reading coaches, principals, and LEA administrators who completed the LETRS training so that they could better understand implementation challenges that schools and teachers were experiencing in applying the LETRS training on the science of reading in classrooms. At the request of those leading the South Carolina LETRS training initiative, we propose, as the RC5, to continue facilitating implementation science training and support for planning for the SCDE team leading this initiative. We will also help the SCDE with collecting feedback from the field to inform how the SCDE might better support schools and LEAs in implementing the science of reading training.

North Carolina. The third state, NC, began a statewide rollout of LETRS training in 2021-2022 for all Pre-K to grade 5 teachers, teachers of English language learners, and one administrator and instructional coach per school. The state also appropriated $14 million to hire 115 early literacy specialists who are working with LEA literacy leaders and school coaches in low-performing schools to support the implementation of the science of reading. There are future plans in North Carolina to expand LETRS training to teachers through grade 8. RC5 capacity-building services for North Carolina may include conducting focus groups of the newly hired early literacy specialists to help the SEA summarize school challenges in implementing the science of reading practices. RC5 will also offer support in ensuring the alignment of the work of the literacy coaches with the statewide system of support to low-performing schools.

Objective 4: Improve Math Outcomes (SEAs Served—GA, NC, SC). Although legislative and other state initiatives have been common in literacy (37 states), state initiatives in improving math achievement have been less common (Schwartz, 2024). However, having

recognized that more attention is needed to improve math achievement, statewide initiatives focused on math are beginning to emerge in the RC5 states, as described below.

Georgia recently adopted new K-12 mathematics standards, which LEAs and schools began implementing in 2023-2024. Other efforts to support early math include the Georgia Numeracy Project, which provides a free, evidence-based resource consisting of a universal screener, tiered intervention activities, and professional development to help teachers build a foundation in numeracy for their students.

North Carolina began an initiative in 2024 to improve math scores that includes legislative, SEA, and external grant funding components. A recent grant, Patterns™ for Reaching & Impacting Students in Math (PRISM), is a 5-year, $7.86 million Education and Innovation Research Grant (EIR) which will engage up to 300 rural fourth-grade math teachers in a professional learning program designed to deepen their understanding of math concepts and increase math achievement.

South Carolina is creating a new position for an SEA mathematics leader who will be responsible for the development of new K-12 mathematics standards. The new standards and aligned curricula to support them will be implemented in 2025-2026. In addition, in August 2024, the state plans to initiate the Palmetto Math Project, which will enlist state math specialists in providing low-performing schools with professional learning and support for math in grades 4-8.

In our needs assessment conversations, key SEA stakeholders in each state expressed interest in participating in an RC5 cross-state math collaborative. Thus, we propose to develop a three-state collaborative of SEA math leaders to provide a setting in which they can share their efforts and collaborate to address challenges. In addition, we will work with each SEA to explore how

we might help them develop needs sensing processes and feedback loops from schools and LEAs to help inform how the SEA can improve support for their math improvement efforts.

An additional RC5 effort in supporting SEA math initiatives will be to introduce the three states to the REL Toolkits on evidence-based practices in math (e.g., *Teaching Math to Young Children* (REL Appalachian), *Developing Effective Fractions Instruction for Kindergarten through 8th Grade* (REL Midwest), and *Assisting Students Struggling with Math: Intervention in the Elementary Grades* (REL Northeast and Islands). With the RELs currently planning studies to evaluate the impact on schools of using these Toolkits that share EBPs in math, the timing is good for the RC5 to collaborate with our three SEAs in facilitating outreach to interested LEAs.

Objective 5: Improve MTSS Implementation (SEAs Served—GA, NC, SC). All three of the RC5 states have a strong interest and a long history of encouraging LEA and school implementation of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) as a form of school improvement. The MTSS framework outlines the need for identifying students experiencing academic or behavioral difficulties and providing appropriate evidence-based interventions to address these difficulties, followed by progress monitoring to track student progress. We learned through five years of assisting the SEAs with their statewide MTSS initiatives (as the RC6) that MTSS implementation can be challenging for schools, many of which require SEA support to begin implementation and achieve sustainability.

Our efforts (as the RC6) to help the three SEAs improve MTSS implementation began in South Carolina. At the request of the SCDE, we conducted focus groups across the state in 2021 to assess the status of the state's legislatively-mandated MTSS implementation and identify challenges. We found that implementation was particularly difficult at the secondary level and created an RC6 product in response (Durrance, 2023). Given a mutual interest in this topic

among all three states, in 2022-2023, as the RC6, we started the MTSS Three-State Collaborative to bring together MTSS leaders from all three states to share MTSS resources and discuss their states' efforts to improve MTSS support to LEAs and schools.

SEA leaders' initial interest focused on improving MTSS implementation in secondary schools. As the Three-State Collaborative continued, other topics of interest arose such as 1) how to help schools foster a mindset for success (that all students can be successful with the right support) and, 2) internally to the SEAs, how to support attention to MTSS across the SEA. The RC6-facilitated sessions provided a valuable opportunity for MTSS leaders in the three states to discuss challenges in MTSS implementation and receive support and ideas from their colleagues. In interviews conducted by the RC6 external evaluator, one client mentioned the value of peer-to-peer learning, noting that "The biggest opportunity was connecting with other state leaders in a safe space to talk about the work."

Through these experiences with the three SEAs, we recognized a need to examine what MTSS looks like in practice in schools, particularly at the high school level and in schools with high levels of student need. In response, the RC6 coordinated with SEA MTSS leaders to identify and interview school leaders and then write each school's "MTSS implementation story." These stories, posted on an RC6 webpage, are intended to serve as a resource for educators as they seek to understand what MTSS looks like in practice and how they might improve their own school's implementation. The stories also help SEA leaders identify ways in which they can better target their support to the field (Durrance & McColskey, 2024).

Under Objective 5, the RC5 will continue to provide capacity-building services in the form of facilitating peer-to-peer SEA learning opportunities for the MTSS Three-State Collaborative. Additionally, the RC5 capacity-building services will involve the continued creation and

dissemination of MTSS school implementation stories. We will also broaden the types of schools featured in the stories to include more high-poverty, rural, and successful turnaround schools.

Given the long-term nature of these SEA initiatives to improve literacy and math outcomes and to implement MTSS successfully, RC5 capacity-building services related to Objectives 3, 4, and 5 are expected to be multi-year in nature for maximum impact and sustainability.

Goal 3: Build the Capacity of SEAs to Address Emerging Needs

Needs assessment conversations with key SEA stakeholders in each state have identified emerging educational challenges in need of RC5 support starting in Year 1. The design of the intensive capacity-building services varies by the educational challenge and SEA context. [redacted]

To illustrate how we might apply the above capacity-building services to particular state contexts and needs, we provide two examples (in Objectives 6 and 7) of emerging challenges

that we have been asked to support with RC5 capacity-building services. Additionally, we will reserve 5% of our annual RC5 budget to address emerging challenges identified in consultation with SEA leadership.

Objective 6: Address Non-Academic Barriers to Learning (SEA Served—GA). As the RC6 for the last five years, we supported the GaDOE in their efforts to address the educational challenge of how to improve support for schools in reducing students' non-academic barriers to learning. Recent reorganization at the SEA led to the creation of an Office of Whole Child Supports, which includes areas such as MTSS, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), school climate, mental health, and health. Our RC6 support from 2019-2024, requested by the GaDOE, included obtaining feedback from the field on challenges in implementing wraparound services in low-performing schools as an approach to addressing students' non-academic barriers to learning. A second area of RC6 support involved developing data dashboards to help the SEA monitor key indicators. One RC6-developed Data Dashboard, now housed on Georgia Insights, enhances the SEA's understanding of state and local staffing levels for student support positions such as school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and nurses. [redacted] A third area of RC6 support included technical assistance to the GaDOE in making revisions to its School Climate survey with the goal of making it more useful to schools. The RC6 supported various elements of the Climate Survey development and piloting process, including reviewing the relevant literature, providing feedback on item wording and response scales, conducting exploratory factor analyses on the pilot data, and conducting focus groups with pilot schools to elicit their feedback.

As the RC5, we propose to continue to assist the GaDOE's Office of Whole Child Supports in addressing non-academic barriers to learning, such as chronic absenteeism. [redacted]

Objective 7: Improve Teacher Evaluation to Address the Educator Shortage (SEAs Served—GA, NC, SC). Although we provide the example below of how we propose to support Georgia as it begins to address the educator shortage through strategies to increase teacher retention, we also envision working with the other two states in the future, given that the educator shortage is a significant educational challenge nationwide (and that the Content Center on this topic will be providing EBPs). Georgia is currently implementing a pilot (called GaLEADS) that recasts the purpose of teacher evaluation as supporting growth and development, particularly for beginning teachers. The logic is that providing more feedback and support for early-career teachers will lower the likelihood that they will leave the profession. In 2023, the GaDOE GaLEADS initiative introduced changes to the existing teacher evaluation system, which is oriented towards accountability. The revisions were piloted with 12 LEAs during the 2023-2024 school year. The GaDOE recognized that revising teacher evaluation systems takes time, and the use of a pilot with a small number of districts can help to ensure that changes have the intended impact on improved opportunities for teacher growth and development. At the request of the GaDOE, beginning in 2023, we (as the RC6) began providing

capacity-building services in support of the SEA's efforts to improve and learn from this teacher evaluation pilot.

As the RC5, we propose to provide capacity-building services to the GaLEADS team by developing "Implementation Analysis" reports based on surveys and interviews with pilot district coordinators, principals, and teachers. This feedback from the pilot districts to the SEA will inform the ongoing improvement of the GaLEADS approach to teacher evaluation. We will also provide support to the GaDOE as it develops plans to evaluate the success and impact of GaLEADS, particularly its impact on teacher retention. Over time, the GaDOE will gain a better understanding of how the pilot districts are implementing GaLEADS and how the GaDOE's support to the field could be improved such that beginning teachers are retained at higher levels. As stated earlier, because the issue of educator shortages is important to all three states, in Year 1 needs sensing, we will explore how we might assist North Carolina and South Carolina in this area.

Goal 4: Scale Up Promising Practices/EBPs Through Engaging Cohorts of LEA and School Leaders

The primary stakeholders and clients for Goals 1-3 are SEAs. In some states, opportunities and needs arise such that the RC5 can provide capacity-building services directly to LEAs, schools or others at the regional or local level. Thus, Goal 4 involves supporting cohorts of LEAs and schools as they work to scale up or apply evidence-based practices, particularly with attention to underserved populations. Thus, although the SEAs are involved, the primary target audience for Goal 4 will be LEAs, schools, and others at the local level. The examples in Objectives 8 and 9 below represent extensions of successful projects from our past five years. Objective 8 describes a professional development effort in North Carolina and South Carolina to engage LEAs in scaling up the quality of elementary STEM education through project-based

instruction. Objective 9 describes a project to help the SCDE build the capacity of their rural LEAs and schools to use evidence-based practices in improving family engagement.

Objective 8: Improve Access to High-Quality STEM Instruction (States Served—NC, SC). The "Building Engineers in K-5 Classrooms" initiative was an RC6 project that has significantly increased student access to high-quality elementary STEM programs across the state of North Carolina. The work began as a district-level success story in the areas of STEM and robotics in a medium-sized district. This work led to several state-funded grants to help scale up the ideas to other districts with early marginal success. Through RC6 support, the project focused on developing better support statewide for the implementation of the STEM elementary instruction model. Through a professional development cohort model, LEAs volunteer to receive direct support in developing implementation plans around the use of high quality STEM instruction in grades K-5. The RC6 piloted professional development support to three cohorts of LEAs (Cohort 1 began in 2022-2023, Cohort 2 in 2023-2024, and Cohort 3 began in 2024). In total, 26 LEAs in North Carolina have participated in improving the quality of STEM instruction at the elementary level. To create interest among LEAs, the RC6 hosted an annual conference for elementary educators across the state. Attendance increased from 130 educators at the first conference, to 252 at the second, and 392 in this past year, indicating an increase in interest across the state. We propose expanding this work as the RC5 so that more rural and underserved students can gain access to STEM skills and pathways. That is, we anticipate continuing to add Cohorts of LEAs in North Carolina, to include rural LEAs and LEAs with concentrations of historically underserved/high poverty student populations. Additionally, we anticipate expanding our LEA support to eight rural LEAs in SC, who are interested in improving their students' workforce readiness.

Objective 9: Improving Rural Stakeholders' Access to Evidence-based Family Engagement Strategies (State Served—SC). [redacted] Since 2021, the RC6 has provided the SCDE with ongoing technical assistance to improve inter-agency communication and data-informed decision-making in this area. As part of our work with the SCDE's Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Liaison, the RC6 conducted an annual FACE landscape analysis to identify the needs of LEAs, schools, and community-level family engagement advocates across the state. [redacted]

To make the shift to ensuring the implementation of evidence-based practices in schools, LEAs, schools and local advocates need access to high-quality family and community engagement resources—especially resources that are designed to support historically underserved families (e.g., low-income families, families from communities of color, families whose primary language is not English) and families in rural LEAs where community partnerships are not as readily available due to geographic isolation.

To extend our reach from the SEA to the LEA level, as the RC5, we propose developing a Community of Practice (CoP) that will serve family engagement leaders from 56 rural LEAs across the state. The intent is to help them better understand evidence-based practices relevant to

their rural context. We propose to develop multiple hour-long webinars focused on each of the South Carolina Family Engagement K-12 Framework's five *Strategies for Success* (i.e., Building Relationships, Communication, Linking Families to Learning Outcomes, Collaborative Practices, and Community Partnerships) with a culminating, in-person session focused on how the LEAs can evaluate their implementation, monitor progress, and refine approaches. The RC5 will also provide individualized follow-up support to each participating LEA. The webinar sessions will share evidence-based approaches that align with the unique assets and needs of South Carolina's rural context. For example, rural communities have fewer parent engagement staff and fewer resources, changing student demographics (e.g., more multi-lingual parents) and fewer businesses or community organizations with whom to partner. The five webinars, in-person meeting, individualized planning support, and website resources will help participants develop and implement evidence-based strategies to improve family engagement.

Goal 5: Support to the National Center, Content Centers, RELs, and Other Centers in Disseminating EBPs and Other Research/Products

Regional Centers are expected to work effectively with the National Comprehensive Center and Content Centers to assist clients in selecting, implementing, and sustaining evidence-based programs, policies, practices, and interventions while also developing cost-effective strategies to make their services available to as many SEAs, REAs, LEAs, and schools as possible within their region. Also, under the proposed priorities, Regional Centers will serve as the entry points for the CCNetwork. Thus, as the RC5 we will help our states navigate available support from the CCNetwork and other federally-funded providers. We will support our SEAs and LEAs in participating in targeted capacity-building services offered by the National Comprehensive or Content Centers.

Our Co-Director, Dr. Priscilla Maynor, and our Communications/Dissemination Director, Beth Thrift, were our primary contacts over the last five years with the National Comprehensive Center and will continue in those roles for the RC5. To ensure regular communication with the four Content Centers, the RC5 will identify a staff member with expertise in each of the four Content Centers as our liaison to the Center. They will provide needs assessment information to the Content Centers and also be responsible for planning and delivering the universal and targeted services for their respective Content Center.

As an example of our established record in supporting other "federal investments" and initiatives, in 2024, the RC6 is participating in a cross-RC, cross-state effort by the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) at the U.S. Department of Education to promote awareness of Secretary Cardona's *Raise the Bar: Pathways to Multilingualism for ALL* and OELA's priority on *Dual Language Immersion* (DLI). With the support of three RCs, including the RC6, OELA is partnering with five SEAs (in California, New York, North Carolina, Texas, and Utah) to identify and visit DLI program "Bright Spots" within their states and to cohost a Round Table discussion of state DLI stakeholders. The five SEAs will participate in a series of meetings with OELA, identify DLI program "Bright Spots" within their states, facilitate site visits to the "Bright Spots," and convene a DLI Round Table discussion of DLI stakeholders. Dr. Priscilla Maynor, the current RC6 Co-Director, worked with NCDPI in March 2024 to host the third of the five state meetings. As the RC5 Co-Director, Dr. Maynor will continue to participate in this OELA project (and also serve as our lead contact for the Content Center on English Learners and Multilingualism). In conclusion, as a result of our past five years of experience as the RC6, we are very familiar with the work of the National Comprehensive Center, RELs, and

other Regional Centers. Thus, we will be well-positioned as the RC5 to continue this collaboration.

Factor 1 in Review: Based, in part, on our previous experience with the three RC5 states, we believe we have outlined an exceptional approach that includes five goals and nine objectives as a framework for a Five Year Plan. The Logic Model outlines the kinds of intensive capacity-building services we will provide to address nine educational challenges. The nine educational challenges reflect current state reform initiatives and emerging issues and priorities. As a result of our high-quality capacity-building services delivered over the past five years, we have strong and trusting relationships with Chief State School Officer designees and other key SEA clients.

Factor 2. Strategies that Address the Technical Assistance Needs of State and Local Education Systems in Key Areas of Identified Need as Evidenced by Knowledge and Understanding of Specific Educational Goals and Priorities of States to be Served

As we described under Factor 1, our Five Year Plan is organized by five *Goals* and nine *Objectives* that address educational challenges identified by the three SEAs. The *Objectives* reflect our current knowledge of the Technical Assistance needs of our three SEAs and the region. We will update the needs and Objectives as part of our project planning for the Annual Service Plan for Year 1. Also, under Factor 1, we introduced the kinds of capacity-building strategies we have used in our projects over the last five years (as RC6) and how we, as RC5, will use those strategies in the nine *Objectives* going forward. Below, by way of summary, we describe our menu of capacity-building, technical assistance services, which we will continue to augment and refine as the RC5. This list is not exhaustive; rather, it provides examples of the types of capacity-building strategies that have emerged as most frequently needed and impactful

over the past five years and which we envision using as RC5. The first two examples of strategies align with support for improving the coherence of SEA systems.

1. Facilitation of Cross-Division Efforts to Improve the Performance of Rural and Low-Performing Schools. Capacity-building strategies to address organizational coherence involve the facilitation of Cross-Division planning meetings for the SEA as they try to build a common vision or develop more coordinated processes in a particular area. Facilitating critical conversations across divisions leads to efficiencies in planning. In rural settings with fewer personnel, LEA leaders must often lead multiple programs, underscoring how critical it is that SEAs collaborate across divisions to develop common language and goals prior to disseminating resources and supports to LEAs.

2. Supporting Data Analysis and Visualization. We have expertise in the creation and use of data dashboards as a tool for assessing needs and monitoring progress. Dr. Eric Grebing, our Data Analysis & Visualization Lead, has helped the GaDOE create data dashboards to examine the staff-to-student ratios for Student Support positions such as social workers, school psychologists, and nurses and to explore the extent to which school-based Social Workers across the state report working on student attendance issues. [redacted]

Strategies 3-8 involve support for planning, piloting, implementing, and evaluating key SEA improvement initiatives.

3. Developing Logic Models Backed by Research to Articulate Outcomes of Key Initiatives. For new SEA improvement initiatives, serving as a thought partner and co-developing logic models with the key clients can help them more clearly articulate the "logic" behind the changes proposed in an area and how the components of the changes proposed are intended to address a particular challenge and result in specified outcomes. For example, we provided this service to the GaDOE as they planned out their approach to improving teacher evaluation processes, with the intent of increasing the retention of beginning teachers.

4. Training/Coaching/Facilitation in the Application of Implementation Science. We have an expert consultant [redacted] and a staff member who are experienced in supporting the SEAs in applying Implementation Science to the planning and management of their key improvement initiatives. For example, as the RC6, we have provided Implementation Science coaching to key clients in South Carolina as they implement a statewide LETRS teacher training effort. Implementation Science facilitation and coaching by the RC5 will be useful to all three states as they begin their math improvement initiatives in 2024.

5. Supporting the Use of EBPs. An underlying theme of *all* of our capacity-building strategies is a commitment to ensuring that key clients have access to and understand the research on the possible root causes of educational challenges and the research on interventions that might help in addressing challenges. This support can take the form of products (e.g., an annotated bibliography of key research on a topic such as the Educator Shortage). It can also take the form of bringing a well-known researcher to share their knowledge with the SEA clients (e.g., inviting the REL-Southeast to share EBPs for improving adolescent literacy with SEA early literacy leaders from all three states). A resource that our SEAs will likely have an interest

in is the REL Toolkits in reading and math, which will help LEAs understand and implement EBPs that are likely to improve instructional quality in reading or math.

6. Promoting the Use of Feedback Loops from the Field to the SEA to Understand the Implementers' Perspective. Several of our past projects in supporting SEAs' use of pilots (as a way to test out new requirements before they are mandated statewide) involved conducting surveys, interviews, or focus groups with LEA or school leaders participating in the pilot and then developing Implementation Analysis reports for the SEA clients. The perspective of the end user (those implementing the intervention or change) is critical to helping SEAs understand how to provide better support for successful implementation. We propose to continue to promote and support the use of feedback loops from the field as a way to help the SEAs understand the implementers' perspective.

7. Documenting School Implementation Experiences. Although an SEA may provide implementation fidelity rubrics as a guide for schools and LEAs to use in assessing their implementation of a particular intervention, in some cases, anecdotal information from schools implementing the intervention (such as lessons learned) is equally valuable. Such school implementation stories can contribute to a better understanding of how school context might affect implementation plans: for example, what it might look like to "start "small" and then continuously improve, particularly for a complex intervention such as MTSS. This strategy of collecting and disseminating school implementation stories is a way to encourage schools to learn from each other and SEAs to learn from schools about the range of possibilities for what the continuous improvement journey looks like. Given the complexities of implementing MTSS at the school level, we will continue to add school MTSS implementation stories to our RC website so that schools can learn from each other.

8. Facilitating SEA Peer-to-Peer Learning on Resources and Strategies. Our Goal 2 (with Objectives 3, 4, and 5 focused on creating Cross-State Collaboratives in Improving Literacy, Math, and MTSS) reflects the interest among our three states in learning from each other as they implement their statewide reading, math, and MTSS initiatives. They have reported that the Peer-to-Peer discussions that we (as the RC6) have facilitated, are extremely useful in broadening their thinking about implementation approaches, successes, and challenges. We will also regularly connect our SEA clients on an individual need-to-know basis with other SEAs across the country to discuss their experience with a particular initiative.

The two last examples from our "menu" of strategies are focused on designing professional development initiatives to maximize our reach at the LEA, school, and local community levels.

9. Supporting LEA Cohorts through Sustained Professional Development Initiatives. As the RC6, we have been successful in developing a statewide effort in support of LEAs interested in implementing high-quality instruction in STEM at the elementary level. The "Cohort" model provides training and coaching to LEA teams (eight LEAs per year) as they plan for and implement high-quality STEM instruction (Objective 8). Currently, 24 LEAS in North Carolina have been supported and we propose adding additional Cohorts over the next five years in both North Carolina and South Carolina, with a particular focus on rural and high poverty LEAs.

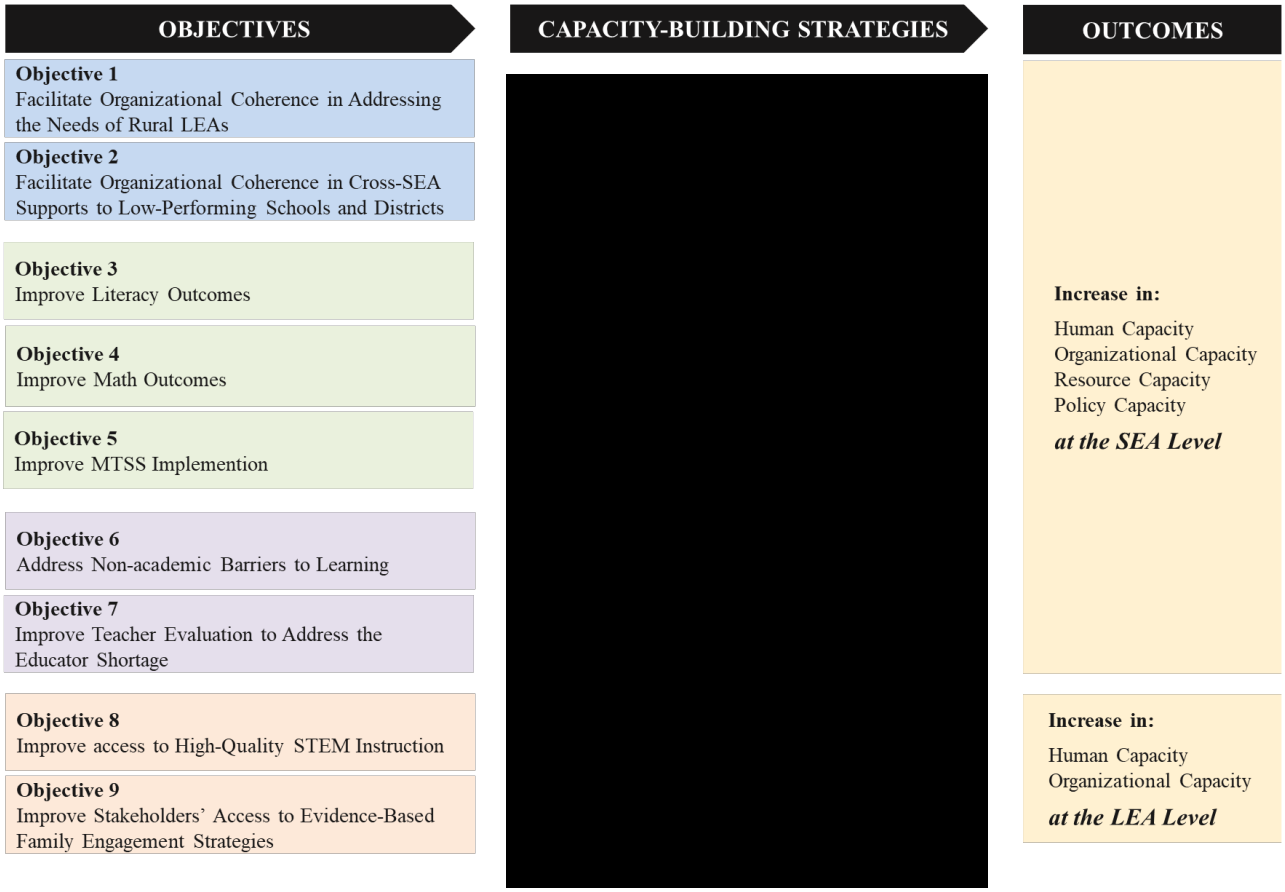
10. Facilitating Communities of Practice (CoP) to Solve Problems of Practice in Key Areas. In areas where sustained training or professional development is not needed but conversations among practitioners implementing similar interventions can be helpful, we will offer to develop and facilitate a Community of Practice. Leveraging adult learning principles, our approach to CoPs includes providing thoughtful framing, skilled facilitation, a safe and inclusive information-rich environment designed to foster group learning, knowledge sharing, honest

reflection and problem-solving. Collective participation over time in knowledge sharing and problem-solving to improve the implementation of a strategy or practice is consistent with the social aspects of adult learning (Yoon et al., 2007). The CoP strategy can involve the same group over time so they can progress through the stages of implementation and evaluation together. That is, educators' practical concerns about fidelity of implementation with a new EBP or intervention often center on "what works, for whom, and under what conditions" (Cohen-Vogel et al., 2015). Understanding variations in implementation across school and LEA contexts is important because the variations in implementation provide important information about how interventions can be purposefully adapted to fit different school contexts while still maintaining adequate levels of fidelity.

As the RC6 over the last five years, we have experience in facilitating CoPs. For example, with ESSER funding being used in part to support summer Career Accelerator Programs in one state, given the short timeline for implementation and use of funds, we were asked to facilitate a CoP of LEAs after their first year of implementing these summer Career Accelerator Programs, so they could help each other think more strategically about sustainability and next steps. We plan to continue to develop CoPs tailored to emerging challenges and the needs of the region as the RC5. For example, we propose in Objective 9 to establish a CoP of rural LEAs in South Carolina interested in learning more about and sharing their experiences with evidence-base practices aimed at improving their family engagement strategies. We are skilled in the use of various web-based platforms that enable us to set up CoPs virtually with shared documents and virtual meetings rather than in-person meetings, thereby increasing the potential reach of the CoPs, especially for rural participants.

In summary (see Figure A-2), we believe the menu of capacity-building strategies we have outlined represents a comprehensive approach to supporting SEA improvement initiatives. Undergirding all our capacity-building strategies is our commitment to serve as 'thought partners' to key clients and recipients as they plan, implement and evaluate their key improvement initiatives. We take thought partnering seriously as we have realized in our work as the RC for the region for the last five years how valuable our access to research, experts and informational resources is to those at the SEAs or LEAs who have limited time or staff to explore the research or learn from others.

Figure A-2. Ten Capacity-Building Strategies by RC5 Objectives



SEA Priorities and State-Level Reform Efforts in the Three RC5 States

Below we describe the key initiatives identified by each state for RC5 support based on initial needs sensing conversations with the Chief State School Officer Designee. These initial needs sensing conversations included a review of requirements for the Comprehensive Centers program, an overview of each state's Consolidated State Plan, and attention to the priorities identified by the Southeast Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) convened by ED in the Fall of 2023. Letters of Support from the three RC5 SEAs highlighting these needs are provided in the Appendix.

Georgia State-Level Reform Efforts and Priorities. A top priority for the GaDOE is improving literacy outcomes. Over the next five years, the GaDOE is expected to continue its support for the implementation of legislative mandates such as its dyslexia screening requirements (Senate Bill 48) and the Georgia Early Literacy Act (House Bill 538), as well as for Georgia's new K-12 English Language Arts Standards (implementation SY 2025-2026). Georgia also has a state-level effort underway to improve math outcomes starting with the adoption of new K-12 Mathematics standards beginning in 2023-2024. Other SEA support includes $3 million in K-5 Numeracy Development Grants being awarded to 43 LEAs to facilitate innovative strategies for building students' early numeracy skills.

To foster a continuous improvement mindset towards improving instructional practice, as well as to address teacher burnout and improve the retention rates of beginning teachers, Georgia is currently piloting changes to their teacher evaluation system. The RC5 will continue to support this key GaDOE initiative. Another area which the RC5 will support is improving the Georgia School Climate survey so that schools have better data for making improvements to both the school instructional environment and student engagement.

North Carolina State-Level Reform Efforts and Priorities. The 2023 North Carolina Consolidated State Plan explicitly promotes the implementation of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) as a problem-solving school improvement framework of evidence-based practices in instruction, assessment and curricula alignment that addresses the needs of all students. The plan describes MTSS as a system that allows for a rapid response system to address group and individual student needs to ensure students are provided evidence-based, appropriately targeted instruction for academic, behavior, and/or social-emotional needs.

The NCDPI's MTSS approach to improving student outcomes (supported by a staff of 16 in the Integrated Academic & Behavior Systems unit) provides a solid foundation on which to build their key initiatives in reading and math. The NCDPI initiative to train K-3 teachers and others in the science of reading is well underway. The NCDPI rolled out the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training as a two-year professional development program, completed by over 44,000 educators across the state as of June 2024. The NCDPI is also beginning to work with educator preparation programs to build their knowledge of the science of reading. A similar statewide initiative to that described above for reading is now underway in math. The RC5 will support the NCDPI's initiatives in Literacy, Math, MTSS, and improving assistance to low-performing schools. The NCDPI is also interested in RC5 continuing to provide professional development to LEAs in improving STEM instruction at the elementary school level.

South Carolina State-Level Reform Efforts and Priorities. A key priority for the SCDE is to improve the capacity of districts to support the school improvement efforts of their lowest-performing schools. The priority is reflected in the HOPE Network initiative, which is a cross-division team working towards a revised school improvement framework, a consolidated

comprehensive school needs assessment process, and a tiered system of supports to schools to begin in the Fall of 2024. Improving literacy outcomes is a second key priority of the SCDE. They began their literacy improvement initiatives in 2022 with the adoption of new English Language Arts (ELA) standards (that include foundational skills and new curricula aligned to the science of reading). Like North Carolina, the SCDE is supporting K-3 teachers through intensive training in the Science of Reading through the Language Essentials for Teaching Reading and Spelling (LETRS) professional development program.

In 2024-2025, the SCDE plans to begin a statewide focus on improving math instruction in grades 4-8. The Palmetto Math Project initiative will include a focus on high-quality instructional materials and professional development for teachers, a state team of math coaches, and funding for intensive student tutoring.

Summary of Three State Reform Efforts and Priorities. In addition to the extensive knowledge we have gained about the three states over the last five years in working as a "thought partner" on their key reform efforts and priorities, we also have client satisfaction data (from our 2023 key client survey satisfaction measures and key client interviews about our impact—see Section C, Factor 2) as evidence that our capacity services delivered as the RC6 have been of high quality, useful, and relevant.

In addition to the state reform efforts and key initiatives described above as underway or starting soon, based on our track record of support, we have had some initial requests for support with new SEA initiatives that are still in the planning stages. For example, two states have initiatives just beginning around building workforce readiness. Georgia is beginning the Expanding Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) Pathways initiative, which lays out priorities from the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan (Career Forward Georgia) for building a

skilled workforce. This new GaDOE CTAE initiative aims to prepare all students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to succeed in a rapidly changing economy. South Carolina may also begin a new initiative to address the need to build workforce readiness in rural areas. Specifically, in 2024, South Carolina proposed an initiative (the CTE Rural Renaissance Program) to provide support to rural regions of the state in implementing high-quality career programming to include investments in mobile CTE equipment labs and crafting career pathways.

We believe our successful track record of providing high-quality services and being responsive to the needs of the three SEAs explains why they continue to turn to us for support with new initiatives.

Applicable State and Regional Demographics and Other Factors Relevant to Improving Educational Opportunities and Outcomes, Closing Achievement Gaps, and Improving Instruction

We close Section A with data that confirm and illustrate the need for RC5 services in support of the state-level reforms and initiatives we described. The data on needs is organized by the four RC5 goals from our Logic Model.

Goal 1: Support the Three SEAs in Carrying out Consolidated State Plans Approved Under ESEA (Including assistance to Rural and Low-Performing Schools). The extent of rurality, poverty, and differential subgroup achievement are important to understand in supporting the SEAs in their Consolidated State Plans. Our three states (Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina) serve a high number of low-income areas as reflected in the fact that 59% of schools in the three-state region receive Title I funding. The percent of schools designated as Title I across all three states is slightly higher in rural and town areas (63%) than in urban and suburban areas (56%).

The differences in the percentage of students scoring proficient on statewide assessments in 2021-2022 (the last year that subgroup performance data was publicly available for all states) also illuminate needs. As displayed in Table A-2, there is a substantial gap in percent proficient in math and in ELA between students who are and are not economically disadvantaged across RC5 states. The percent proficient for those students Not Economically Disadvantaged is about twice that of those students who are Economically Disadvantaged. Gaps also are shown between students from different race/ethnicity groups and among special populations.

Table A-2. Percent Proficient on Statewide Academic Assessments 2021-2022 by Subgroup

		GA		NC		SC	
		Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA
	ALL STUDENTS	37%	40%	51%	50%	41%	52%
Economic Disadvantage	Economically Disadvantaged	25%	27%	33%	34%	30%	40%
	Not Economically Disadvantaged	54%	55%	62%	60%	60%	71%
Race/Ethnicity	American Indian/Alaska Native/Native American	37%	40%	34%	34%	34%	45%
	Black (not Hispanic) African American	20%	26%	30%	33%	23%	35%
	Hispanic/Latino	30%	30%	41%	37%	35%	43%
	White or Caucasian (not Hispanic)	53%	53%	65%	63%	54%	65%
Special Populations	Students with disabilities	18%	17%	19%	17%	16%	18%
	English Learner	16%	10%	26%	16%	24%	23%
	Foster care students	20%	20%	29%	31%	22%	32%
	Students experiencing homelessness	16%	18%	20%	22%	22%	31%

Source: ED Data Express, 2021-2022 Performance on Statewide Mathematics and Reading/ELA Assessments.

Goal 2: Support the Three States in Continuously Improving their Literacy, Math, and MTSS Initiatives. As mentioned in the description of Objectives 3, 4, and 5, the three states have requested RC5 support for their literacy and math improvement initiatives and MTSS implementation. We show the NAEP reading and math results for the three states in Table A-3. Across the three states, in 2022, NAEP results showed that 39% of 4th graders performed "below basic" in reading. This finding is notable because research has found that children who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to not graduate from high school on time (Hernandez, 2011). In addition, NAEP reading results for 8th grade show that the

percent "below basic" has increased from 2019 in all three states. These results indicate a need for continued state focus on improving reading outcomes.

Table A-3. NAEP Results for Percent Scoring Below Basic in Reading and Math

	Reading 4th		Reading 8th		Math 4th		Math 8th	
	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022
National	35%	39%	28%	32%	20%	26%	32%	40%
GA	37%	39%	28%	31%	23%	25%	33%	41%
NC	33%	39%	28%	34%	18%	25%	29%	39%
SC	39%	39%	31%	37%	23%	26%	36%	44%

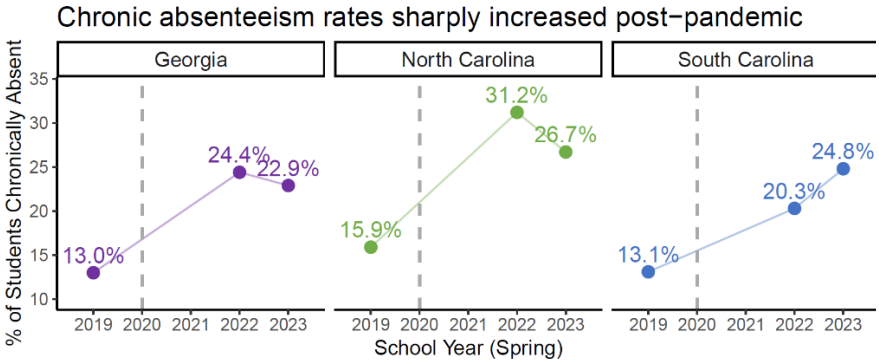
Source: NAEP 2019-2022 results, retrieved from API (https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/); data are for national public school students.

Nationally, the percentage of students scoring *below basic* in math on the NAEP exam increased by eight percentage points for 8th grade and six percentage points for 4th grade from 2019 to 2022, with similar trends across the three RC5 states. The percentage of students nationally scoring *below basic* in math is substantially higher in 2022 for 8th grade than for 4th grade (40% in 8th grade vs 26% in 4th grade). These results indicate that a specific focus on math instruction in grades 5-8 is critical nationally and will be an emphasis for RC5 support over the next five years.

Goal 3: Build the Capacity of SEAs to Address Emerging Needs. An emerging challenge of high interest to states is that of how to address non-academic barriers to learning. A particular area of high interest is how to address the issue of higher rates of chronic absenteeism. The chronic absenteeism rates in 2021-2022 increased dramatically in all three states since the last pre-pandemic year (Figure A-3). The percentage of chronically absent students nearly doubled from 2018-19 to 2021-2022. For the most recent year of data available (in 2022-2023), rates of chronic absenteeism rose further in South Carolina but came down slightly from prior-year highs in Georgia and North Carolina.

Figure A-3. Percentage of Students Chronically Absent

Source: FutureEd, via individual SEA websites; these data all use the national definition of chronic absenteeism as missing 10 percent or more of school days each year. Visuals created by the SERVE Center.



Rates of chronic absenteeism differ substantially by subgroup (see Table A-4). Across all three states, the rate of chronic absenteeism for Economically Disadvantaged students is nearly twice that for Not Economically Disadvantaged students. Chronic absenteeism rates for American Indian, Black/African-American, and Hispanic students exceeded the rates for White students. The rate for Students with Disabilities also exceeded the state rate for All Students in all three states. The data indicate a need to explore non-academic barriers to learning more fully (such as exploring the root causes for varying patterns of chronic absenteeism rates across subgroups). As the RC5, we will undertake this exploratory work with our three states.

Table A-4. Percentage of Students Chronically Absent by State and by Subgroup 2022-2023

	NC	SC	GA
ALL STUDENTS	27%	25%	23%
Economically Disadvantaged	36%	31%	27%
Not Economically Disadvantaged	18%	14%	15%
American Indian	43%	31%	27%
Black / African-American	33%	29%	27%
Hispanic	30%	26%	24%
White	22%	22%	20%
Students with Disabilities	34%	31%	27%
English Learners	30%	24%	20%

Sources: Individual SEA websites, chronic absenteeism data by subgroup.

Goal 4: Scale Up Promising Practices/EBPs through Engaging LEAs and School Leaders. In closing, we look at data related to high school completion, another important metric by which we can understand differences in student outcomes. As shown in Table A-5, large gaps

in high school completion rates exist between subgroups, with the starkest differences seen with special populations.

Table A-5. Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates by Subgroup 2021-2022		GA	NC	SC
	ALL STUDENTS	84%	86%	84%
Economic Disadvantage	Economically Disadvantaged	79%	80%	76%
	Not Economically Disadvantaged	89%	89%	93%
Race/Ethnicity	American Indian/Alaska Native/Native American	77%	85%	77%
	Black (not Hispanic) African American	82%	83%	80%
	White or Caucasian (not Hispanic)	87%	90%	87%
	Hispanic/Latino	78%	80%	80%
Special Populations	Students with disabilities	73%	71%	58%
	English Learners	66%	67%	78%
	Foster care students	48%	53%	42%
	Students experiencing homelessness	63%	68%	63%

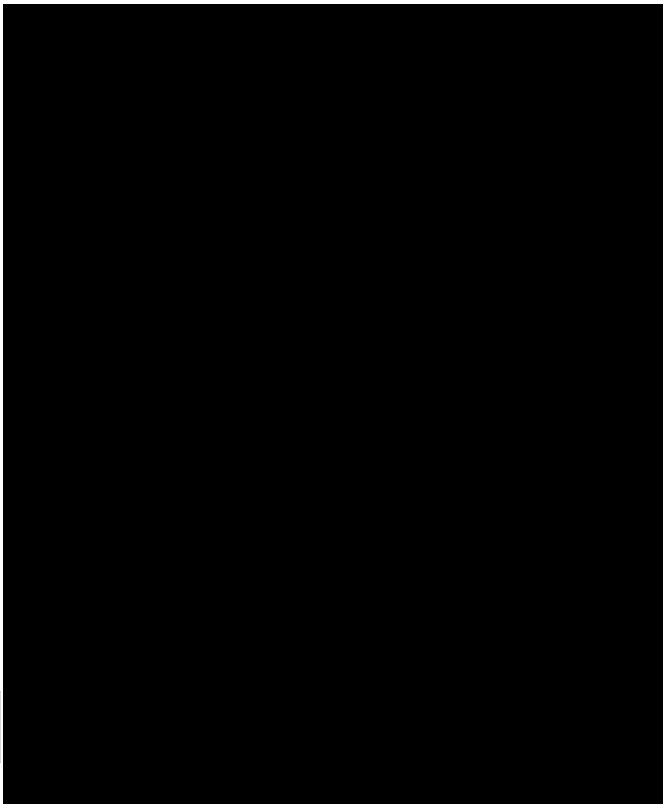
Source: ED Data Express, 2021-2022 Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates.

In addition, we note that many students across the three states are not prepared to pursue post-secondary STEM pathways, with fewer than 20% of ACT test takers across the three states meeting the college readiness benchmark in STEM subjects (STEM Opportunity Index, 2024). As outlined in Objective 8, we will engage rural LEAs in improving student access to high-quality STEM instruction at the elementary level as a way of beginning to create better career pathways for underserved populations. Growing the number of workforce prepared students across subgroups is a clear imperative for RC5 efforts.

Factor 2 in Review: In this section we highlighted our portfolio of capacity-building strategies, which we have developed and honed over the last five years of work with Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Capacity-building strategies are aligned with our nine Objectives and are expected to lead to increases in human, organizational, policy, and resource capacities at the SEA and LEA level. We also outline key state level reform initiatives and present relevant data on key educational challenges, which further confirms the identified needs of the three RC5 states.

SECTION B: QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN

Section B describes our Management Plan, which is comprised of the four required factors (Figure B-1). These four systems, outlined below, describe how we will plan, manage, and evaluate projects; engage with stakeholders and organize our communications and dissemination processes; and manage personnel and partners such that we have the subject-matter and technical expertise to deliver high-quality, useful, and relevant services.



Factor 1. Performance Management and Evaluation System

Our proposed performance management and evaluation system outlines our process for creating, implementing, evaluating, and continuously improving our set of annual projects and associated capacity-building services in a way that integrates required federal reporting and the collection of other data for continuous improvement. The components are shown in Figure B-2.

Figure B-2. Performance Management and Evaluation System

The first three components listed above represent our understanding of the current ED requirements for Regional Centers to 1) submit an Annual Service Plan describing each project

planned for the year, 2) submit Quarterly Project Reports on the progress of those projects, and 3) submit Mid-Year and End-of-Year Reports including data on performance measures reflecting overall project effectiveness. The fourth component reflects the formative or internal evaluation efforts we propose to undertake to support our continuous improvement towards excellence in building the human, organizational, policy, and resource capacities of the states. Each of the four components is described below.

1. Annual Service Plan/Project Planning

Attention to a clear and well-developed annual set of project plans reflecting the needs identified by the three SEAs is critical to the success of the RC5 projects. The Annual Service Plan (ASP) format specified by ED provides a useful structure for scoping out our annual set of projects. The ASP requires the following information for each project proposed for a given year: 1) states served/key clients, 2) project team leaders, 3) high-leverage problem description/summary of project need, 4) approach to capacity-building services, 5) proposed quarterly milestones, 6) proposed outputs, 7) proposed outcomes, and 8) cost estimate.

Our annual project plan development process will begin with a clear articulation of the identified needs for capacity-building services through needs sensing and collaboration with key clients. Once the identified need is clear, we will identify an appropriate Project Lead and team with the necessary expertise for each project (more details about our team and pool of subject experts are provided in Section C). The Project Lead will work with key clients to outline the approach to capacity-building services, quarterly milestones, and expected project outcomes (e.g., SEA or LEA capacities to be built) using a common project logic model format. These draft project logic models are then refined by RC5 leadership before finalizing the plans with the project clients. Developing project-specific logic models that identify capacity-building services

and recipient outcomes ensures that there is agreement on both sides as to what services and support the particular RC5 project will provide and to what end. The final RC5 set of projects proposed for a given year will be submitted to ED as the RC5 Annual Service Plan (e.g., for Year 1). The ASP outlining our project plans for each year will provide the road map for the capacity-building services we deliver. The ASP also provides a starting point for quarterly cycles of continuous improvement.

Per ED guidelines, within 90 days of receiving funding, we will demonstrate that we have secured client and partner commitments for implementing the Year 1 ASP. In our Logic Model in Section A, we outlined nine Objectives as our initial thinking about the focus/needs addressed by RC5 project plans for Year 1. That is, for Year 1, we expect to submit at least nine projects aligned with these Objectives, each of which will address a unique educational challenge (unless the priorities of the three SEAs change as we conduct our initial needs sensing).

2. Tracking Project Performance through Quarterly Cycles

Once the project plans for the year are submitted to ED in the ASP, a key to successful project implementation will be the regular monitoring of these projects. As such, the RC5 will operate on annual project planning cycles with quarterly milestones outlined. This structure lends itself to 90-day Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles that will allow us to refine our capacity-building services (Park et al., 2013). The ED-required quarterly project reporting process provides a structure for examining the delivery of capacity-building services, completion of milestones, and whether progress is being made toward recipient outcomes for each project submitted in the ASP. ED defines Quarterly Project Milestones as “unique, verifiable steps or activities taken to produce an output,” with the understanding that milestones should “serve as stepping stones to achieve the identified outcomes.” Establishing clear quarterly project

milestones (that specify what services will be provided each quarter) is fundamental for successful project implementation. That is, these milestones will guide the work of each project team. Our experience with the ED quarterly project reporting process over the last five years has been that it provides an early warning system for identifying needed changes to our approach to service delivery when milestones are in danger of not being met.

The quarterly report template provided by ED requires that each project report on highlights, implementation status, evidence of implementation, leading indicators (evidence of progress toward stated project outcomes), and unexpected challenges/delays. Each Project Lead will be responsible for managing project implementation and being ready for the quarterly reporting process. In terms of developing the quarterly project reports for submittal to ED, our Project Leads complete the first draft for their project, which is then reviewed by the RC5 Assistant Director and Performance Management Lead (PML) to probe for clarifications needed. The Co-Directors and others on the RC Leadership Team (which includes the Assistant Director, PML, Data Analysis and Visualization Lead, Stakeholder Engagement Lead, and Communications & Dissemination Lead) provide a second review so that they are up-to-date on the progress of projects. Once quarterly project reports are finalized, the PML loads the information from the individual quarterly project reports into the ED Excel quarterly reporting spreadsheet. These reports also provide essential source material for regular meetings with the ED Program Officer. Dr. Priscilla Maynor, Co-Director, will schedule these meetings and share any feedback from the ED Program Officer with the RC staff. We intend to continue using the quarterly reporting process, which has worked well over the past five years, to help us monitor project progress toward milestones, outputs, and outcomes and identify opportunities for dissemination of lessons learned internally and with the field.

In addition to reporting to ED on the quarterly progress of projects submitted in the ASP as described above, the RC5 will also regularly monitor progress on performance indicators at an organizational level. For example—especially given the three states comprising the RC5 region rank in the top 10 in terms of rurality—over the next five years, we hope to significantly expand our reach to include more capacity-building services to rural and high-poverty LEAs and schools. Our Data Analysis and Visualization Lead will coordinate gathering and analyzing data (e.g., administrative sources and project-specific data) to monitor RC-wide progress. We will also track dissemination indicators, such as patterns of digital downloads from the RC website.

The regular review of project progress also contributes greatly to the "study" and "act" components of PDSA cycles. Quarterly reviews allow for diverse perspectives to surface on any adjustments that need to be made, how to respond to any changes at the SEA level, and how to understand incremental progress towards the intended outcomes.

3. Mid-Year and End-Of-Year Reporting to ED

ED requires mid-year and end-of-year reporting on specified performance measures as part of the mid-year Annual Progress Report (APR) and the end-of-year Annual Evaluation Report (AER). These reporting cycles will provide additional opportunities to understand the extent to which the RC5's work is building human, organizational, policy, or resource capacities. These cycles also allow us the opportunity to better understand recipients' perspectives of the quality, usefulness, and relevance of the Center's services.

In order to report on our effectiveness in working with key SEA clients and others in our three states, we will collect both mid-year and end-of-year data based on the following four performance measures established by ED for use by the Regional Centers.

Measure 1: The extent to which Comprehensive Center clients are satisfied with the quality, usefulness, and relevance of services provided.

Measure 2: The extent to which Comprehensive Centers provide services and products to a wide range of recipients.

Measure 3: The extent to which Comprehensive Centers demonstrate that capacity-building services were implemented as intended.

Measure 4: The extent to which Comprehensive Centers demonstrate recipient outcomes were met.

The data sources we will use for APR and AER reporting on the four Measures above include: 1) a client satisfaction survey (at mid- and end-of-year) and 2) an internally-developed tracking process for counts of recipients served, number of project milestones met, and number of project short-term outcomes met (at mid- and end-of-year). These two data sources are described below, followed by a description of a third data source (key client interviews, conducted only at end-of-year), with results used to inform the required AER and Project Impact Stories, as well as for internal evaluation purposes.

Data Source #1: Required Client Satisfaction Survey (Mid- and End-of-Year). Key clients identified in the ASP will receive a Client Satisfaction Survey via email from the RC5 at mid-year and end-of-year. The survey includes 21 survey items associated with the performance measures that ED developed for the RCs to use in their reporting. For example, there are three survey items used to assess the RC's effectiveness on Measure 1 (quality, usefulness, and relevance of services), nine items used to assess the RC's effectiveness on Measure 3 (the extent to which RC5 services were implemented as intended), and nine items used to assess the RC's effectiveness on Measure 4 (the extent to which Comprehensive Centers demonstrate recipient

outcomes were met). Responses to each item are on a five-point scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). As an example from our RC6 work, a survey item for Measure 3 asked clients to rate the extent to which they agreed that the RC capacity-building services were based on high-priority needs. We then calculated the percentage of key clients who responded "agree" or "strongly agree." For this particular survey item, ED established a target percentage of 80%. In Year 4 of RC6 operation, 100% of our clients (n=14 across all three states) surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that our projects were based on their high-priority needs. Exceeding the target indicated that our process for alignment of projects with needs was working.

Data Source #2: Tracking Indicators (Mid-Year and End-of-Year). A second data source for reporting on the performance measures at mid- and end-of-year will come from the RC5 indicator tracking process. For all projects in the year's ASP, each project lead will complete a mid-year and end-of-year "indicator tracking matrix" that asks for the number of recipients served and the number of milestones, outputs, and milestones met. These data are reported for relevant performance measures. For example, the number of recipients served is asked for in Measure 2 (the extent to which the RC served a wide range of recipients). At mid-year and end-of-year, each project lead will complete the tracking matrix by entering the actual number of recipients served and the number of milestones, outputs, and outcomes met. The PML then calculates the overall percentage of met versus not met, and this percentage is compared to a target percentage established by ED. For example, as the RC6, in response to Measure 3, the PML calculated the number of milestones completed divided by the number of milestones proposed to be completed. For this particular performance measure, ED established a target percentage of 80%. In Year 4 of RC6 operation, 90% of our milestones were completed. Thus, we reported to ED that we **exceeded the target** for this particular performance measure. The

tracking also led to internal discussions about the lessons learned from milestones not met due to changes within SEAs.

Based on the data collected from the two sources (the client satisfaction survey and the indicator tracking matrices), we will populate the ED Grant Performance Report (ED 524B) Project Status Chart with our proposed and actual percentages, which will be submitted as a component of both the APR and the AER. In addition to our annual reporting requirements, we will participate in the national evaluation of the Comprehensive Centers Program.

Data Source #3: End-of-Year Client Interviews. In addition to reporting on performance measures, our required end-of-year reporting to ED will also include an Annual Evaluation Report with a descriptive assessment of our projects' impacts. Thus, in addition to the required reporting on performance measures, we will conduct client interviews for each project at the end of each year to ask them about our impacts and to obtain feedback on what did and did not work in terms of our capacity-building services and what we could do better. These data will provide the RC5 with important insights to guide future-year ASPs and to help the RC5 team continue to improve its services to the states.

In our five years as the RC6, we contracted with an external evaluator, Bellwether Education Partners, to conduct these end-of-year interviews. As the RC5, we propose to continue this partnership with Bellwether, who will conduct the end-of-year client interviews across all the projects each year (roughly 12 interviews per year). These client interviews are intended to explore how RC5 services support clients' knowledge and skill development, improvement in the various capacity dimensions, and their progress toward outcomes. Bellwether will develop a project-by-project summary of the results from the client interviews, along with an overall summary of impacts and successes across the portfolio of projects for a given year. These

interview results can also help inform the development of project Impact Stories, which benefit the field with lessons learned from projects across the CC Network.

4. Formative Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

We propose to use an internal, formative evaluation process to interview and gather input at mid-year from our Project Leads about what they are learning from their projects. The internal data collection will focus on two primary domains of project management: people and process (Project Management Institute, 2020). A similar internal interview process used during the 2019-2024 operation of RC6 identified several findings that informed continuous improvement, including the need to 1) develop methods to support SEA turnover, 2) improve internal capacity to gather evidence toward meeting recipient outcomes, and 3) create an onboarding process for new team members and external collaborators on projects. As the RC5, the results of this internal interview process will be used to facilitate internal conversations around the continuous improvement of our capacity-building services. For example, we propose to interview RC5 staff about the four Goals outlined in the Section A Logic Model to enhance our "collective intelligence" about the kinds of evidence we are seeing as making a difference in our work with clients. Overarching questions will include: *To what extent is there evidence...*

- ...that our projects are resulting in increased organizational coherence at the SEA level, particularly around carrying out Consolidated State Plans under ESEA? (Goal 1)
- ...that our projects are helping to improve the SEA support provided to LEAs and schools in improving reading and math outcomes and MTSS implementation? (Goal 2)
- ...that our projects are building SEA capacities to address emerging challenges and needs (e.g., dealing with non-academic barriers to learning and the educator shortage)? (Goal 3)

- ...of the scaling up of evidence-based practices in STEM and family engagement in rural and high-poverty LEAs due to RC5 projects? (Goal 4)
- ...of widespread RC5 dissemination of EBPs and other products from the National Comprehensive Center and Content Centers? (Goal 5)

The interview protocol will also include questions related to level of engagement of SEA/LEA staff in the RC5 project activities and/or the lessons learned about our capacity-building strategies. We will summarize and use the results of these internal interviews to discuss what we as the RC5 are learning about how to strengthen our capacity-building services and how changes in state contexts may be impacting our success.

In addition to the commitment to internal formative evaluation as described above, we have three kinds of processes, described below, to maintain consistent internal and external communication and organizational monitoring that supports the continuous improvement of our services.

1. **Weekly Meetings of the RC5 Leadership Team.** The RC5 Leadership Team will meet weekly to review and discuss project performance. We recognize the importance of these leadership meetings as an opportunity to monitor progress across all projects and assess the extent to which the projects are implemented as intended.
2. **Monthly Meetings of Internal Project Staff by State and Goal.** Monthly internal meetings of project team leaders and teams, by state and by the goals outlined in the RC5 logic model, play an important role in keeping all staff up to date on project status, milestones, outputs, and critical project risks or issues. These meetings allow for frequent touchpoints, ensuring projects are making progress toward their stated outcomes. The

opportunity to discuss strengths and challenges also encourages cross-project and cross-state learning among RC5 staff.

3. **Monthly Meetings between Project Leads and Key Clients.** Project Leads will have regularly scheduled meetings with their key clients to ensure we are meeting their needs. These meetings will occur *at least* monthly. Ideas for expanding the project scope or for co-developing joint products often come from these meetings. These frequent check-ins also allow us to develop relationships as "thought partners" and make it possible to address issues as they arise so we can troubleshoot solutions to project implementation problems.

Factor 1 in Review: We believe the four components of the Performance Management and Evaluation System described above (see Figure B-2) will result in the continuous improvement of our capacity-building services and increased likelihood that recipient outcomes will be achieved. This system has operated very smoothly over our last five years as the RC6, and we expect to continue to build on this strong performance management and evaluation system foundation as the RC5.

Factor 2. Stakeholder Engagement System

In this section, we describe our Stakeholder Engagement System and Communication & Dissemination Plan, characterized by two directions of information flow ("Field to RC" and "RC to Field"). Taken together, our approach will provide a useful framework for how we will reflect on and continuously improve our methods.

1. **Field to RC (Stakeholder Engagement):** information flowing from stakeholders to the RC5 about the needs of our region. Three strategies are described below.

2. **RC to Field (Communication and Dissemination):** our Communication and Dissemination Plan is designed to increase the reach of the RC5 products and services in addition to those products of the National Comprehensive Center, four Content Centers, RELs, and others. Five examples of dissemination methods are described below.

1. Field to RC Information Flow (Stakeholder Engagement)

Stakeholder engagement will be an important first step in developing our Annual Service Plans as described in the Performance Management System. That is, we have developed methods to annually solicit stakeholder input in order to ensure that the RC5 is meeting the region's needs. Three strategies for obtaining this information from the field are described below.

Strategy #1: Three RC5 State Liaisons to Regularly Connect with SEA and LEA Stakeholders. We have in place a position we call a "State Liaison" for each of the three states. Each State Liaison is located near the state department of education office they serve and thus, has in-person access to regular meetings with SEA leaders. All three of these Liaisons, Ann Duffy for Georgia, Donna Brown for North Carolina, and Don Doggett for South Carolina have served in this role during our tenure as the RC6 (2019-2024) and thus have developed both trusting relationships with key SEA leadership and a deep knowledge of their state's current educational challenges and needs. The State Liaisons worked for many years in their respective states (at the SEA and/or LEA level) before coming to work at the RC, and thus have deep internal knowledge of their particular SEA's history and context. To ensure that our three liaisons regularly provide updates to the Chief State School Officer Designee on the portfolio of RC5 projects underway in their respective state, they will schedule monthly meetings. Our Co-Directors and Stakeholder Engagement Lead (described in Section C) will also attend these

meetings to assist in maintaining clear feedback channels from the stakeholders to the RC5 and to facilitate an immediate response to any emerging issues or challenges.

Strategy #2: Annual Needs Sensing in Each State Across a Variety of Organizational Levels and Potential Beneficiaries. A second component of our Stakeholder Engagement System will be an annual needs sensing process for each of the three states, with information gathered from a mix of SEA leaders, LEA leaders, school principals, educators, parents, and others. After receiving the award we plan to create a diverse mix of these stakeholders on the Advisory Board who can assist with needs sensing. The needs sensing may be in the form of surveys, interviews, or focus groups. The list of stakeholders for each state will be developed by the Co-Directors and the three state liaisons, with input from the Chief State School Officer Designee. The data collection will be designed by our RC5 Leadership and Crosscutting Systems Leads. The purpose is to understand the extent of progress made and challenges emerging from across the spectrum from classroom to SEA in each of the three states. In addition, our three State Liaisons will collaborate with Project Leads to select multiple LEAs each year from their state that have been involved in or recipients of RC5 services to explore how progress in addressing a particular challenge (e.g., reading improvement, MTSS implementation, educator shortage, non-academic barriers to learning) is occurring vertically (LEA, school, classroom). The information from the annual needs sensing activities in each state will result in a summary of themes that will be used in the Annual Service Plan development.

Strategy #3: Annual Evaluation of Project Progress that Involves Interviews with Key Clients in Each State (Summarized by Project and By State). In the Performance Management and Evaluation System section, we describe our intent to conduct interviews each year with key clients across all projects about the capacity-building services they received and

how we might improve them. This interview feedback will be a key aspect of our Stakeholder Engagement System as it helps us determine across projects within a state, whether the projects are on track to meet the key clients' needs.

2. RC to Field Information Flow (Communication and Dissemination)

Our goal as the RC5 will be to continually increase the reach of both our products and services and those of the National Center, Content Centers, RELs, and other federally funded centers over the five years. We describe our Communication and Dissemination (C&D) Lead's expertise in Section C. She has been doing this work over the past five years and is skilled in strategic communication and dissemination planning, well-versed in varied systems of delivery, and is committed to ensuring products and materials are accessible for all stakeholders. Having served on the current CCNetwork Communication and Dissemination workgroup, as well as a previous REL Dissemination workgroup, she appreciates how harnessing the diverse perspectives, experiences, and collective strengths of workgroups can address challenges, build collective knowledge and skills, and increase the outreach to and the positive outcomes for recipients.

To maximize the reach of our RC5 services, as well as the reach of the National Comprehensive Center and Content Centers, and others such as the RELs, our Communication and Dissemination Plan will address the flow of products and information to our region from two sources: the CCNetwork and the RC5.

We recognize our responsibility as a RC in supporting the National Comprehensive Center and the four Content Centers (the CCNetwork) by disseminating the products emerging from their universal and targeted services. The RC5 support for the National Centers is captured under Goal 5 described in Section A. In the areas in which we have intensive capacity-building services

underway in our three states, we will disseminate national products to our project clients as a starting point, and then engage them in planning a wider dissemination based on the needs in their state. In areas in which we don't currently have intensive capacity-building services underway, our C&D Lead, Beth Thrift, will develop a communication and dissemination plan specific to the goal of the product in collaboration with the National Center producing the product. She will collect feedback from the National Comprehensive Center and the four Content Centers at least once annually on how we might improve the dissemination of their products. The RC5 will also support the National Center, the Content Centers, other Regional Centers, as well as Regional Educational Laboratories in promoting resources and events of relevance to the region. Likewise, the RC5 will share access to resources and events developed through the RC5 with the National Center for dissemination. The C&D Lead will continue to serve on Communication and Dissemination workgroups that cross the CCNetwork, as well as collaborate with the National Center, Content Centers, RELs, and others to ensure resources are delivered in a manner that is relevant, timely, accessible, and useful, and reaches the largest number of recipients possible.

A second type of dissemination is from the RC5 to the field and involves implementing a system that will steadily expand and maximize our reach in the three states around the products and knowledge emerging from our intensive capacity-building service projects. We outline six dissemination methods below that we will use. For each RC5 project, the C&D Lead will work with the Project Lead, with input from the RC5 Leadership Team, to design a dissemination plan (to include methods such as website posts, products, newsletters, events, social media announcements). The dissemination methods will be designed to ensure broad visibility across potential beneficiaries, allowing us to effectively reach targeted audiences with the products

from the universal and targeted capacity-building services. Further, we recognize that diverse audiences engage with resources in different ways, and we will take that into account when developing our materials. We will obtain stakeholder feedback on materials and carefully consider language and context when designing materials. Examples of RC5 dissemination methods are described below.

RC5 Website Availability. A website is the first (but not the only) level of access to information, products, and other resources that may be of wide interest to the field. As the RC6, we have experience in creating a RC website and we will build on that experience to create a new RC5 website where stakeholders can access information, resources and products, as well as implementation and impact stories, and news and announcements within and across the CC Network. The RC5 website will serve as a central hub for information, updates, and stakeholder engagement. We will explore dynamic content development strategies such as webinars, podcasts, video clips, and animated presentations to convey concepts, findings, and evidence-based practices relative to specific project content areas in ways that are engaging and accessible. Regular updates to content and ensuring easy navigation will be critical. The RC5 will comply with federal and ED requirements and guidelines for IT, privacy protection, and Section 508 accessibility in designing and maintaining our website.

RC5 Products. As a result of our project work outlined in Section A, we will be creating user-friendly products for our key clients that distill research findings and evidence-based practices into accessible formats. These products, developed at the request of our key clients or project stakeholders, might include whitepapers, briefs, toolkits, guides, infographics, fact sheets, or interactive tools. We will develop a dissemination plan in collaboration with the project lead responsible for the particular product to ensure that the product has maximum reach.

Newsletters. Newsletters are an effective tool for reaching diverse audiences. We will disseminate a monthly RC5 newsletter that highlights key findings, evidence-based practices, implementation and impact stories, and upcoming events from the RC5 as well as the broader CCNetwork. By tailoring content to different stakeholder groups (e.g., SEAs, LEAs, schools), we can ensure relevance and thus, engagement.

Events. RC5 staff will engage with broader audiences by presenting at conferences and convenings. The RC5 will also plan and conduct webinars and podcasts related to our work in addressing educational challenges, using panels of educators and others to highlight evidence-based practices and share implementation and impact stories. Webinars and podcasts will be offered live and recorded for on-demand access through the website. Additionally, we will collaborate with the National Center, Content Centers, Regional Centers, and the RELs to offer relevant webinars to clients within and across the CC Network.

Social Media. Our primary platform for social media engagement has been LinkedIn, which we have found to be an effective channel for sharing information, announcing publications and events, and initiating real-time interactions. Additionally, we will share relevant work from the National Center and other Comprehensive Centers on LinkedIn, expanding access for the RC5 clients and the reach of the CCNetwork.

Each major communication and dissemination effort will have an accompanying evaluation plan to assess the audience engagement and client satisfaction based on the intended purpose(s). Data will be collected and shared with RC5 Leadership and Project Leads to inform the need for additional products, as well as potential adjustments to dissemination methods.

Factor 2 in Review: We describe our Stakeholder Engagement System and Communication & Dissemination Plan, characterized by two directions of information flow ("Field to RC" [Stakeholder Engagement] and "RC to Field" [Communication and Dissemination]). Our Stakeholder Engagement system outlines three strategies for collecting needs sensing information from the field. The Communication and Dissemination Plan describes how we will disseminate information from the CCNetwork and the RC5 through a variety of methods (e.g., website posts, products, newsletters, events, social media announcements). Each major communication and dissemination effort will have an accompanying evaluation plan.

Factor 3. Personnel Management System

The SERVE Center at UNCG is the umbrella organization under which the award to operate the RC5 will fall. The SERVE Center was established as a stand-alone Center at UNCG in 1991 when it received the award to operate the REL-Southeast. It has continued to flourish over its years at UNCG and thus, has an established and effective personnel management system. The Personnel System is founded on clear processes and protocols resulting from our relationship and location within a major University, as well as the positioning of the SERVE Center under UNCG's Office of Research and Engagement (ORE). ORE has a clear understanding of the SERVE Center's work and is intent on providing the flexibility needed to support the recruitment and retention of a staff of experienced experts.

Located Within a Public University in North Carolina

As required, the SERVE Center is located in the region that it will serve (in Greensboro, North Carolina). The SERVE Center came into existence with funding to operate the REL-Southeast for four consecutive five- year contracts from 1991-2011. Now in its 33rd year as a

successful self-governing research and technical assistance center at UNCG, the SERVE Center also operated the RC6 from 2019-2024. We are a trusted resource both within the state of North Carolina (see letter of support from the North Carolina Office of the Governor) and throughout the region. The SERVE Center office includes multiple offices for our staff and also has four meeting spaces complete with the latest technology for both in person and virtual collaboration. The facility and property is maintained by UNCG with ongoing technology support and the location is easily accessed by our clients and other stakeholders. Both the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in Raleigh, North Carolina and the South Carolina Department of Education in Columbia, South Carolina are within easy driving distance of Greensboro with the Georgia Department of Education easily accessible (one-hour direct flight or a five-hour drive by car). Thus, the physical location of the SERVE Center's proposed leaders and staff is well-situated for regular interaction with the three SEAs.

Policies for Effective Staff Recruiting, Hiring, and Supervising

The SERVE Center's Executive Director, Dr. Maria Pitre-Martin, works closely with UNCG and ORE to ensure all operational processes (human resources, finance, contracts, and grants) are functioning effectively for the operation of awards that flow to the SERVE Center. Dr. Pitre-Martin will work with our proposed Co-Director, Mr. George Hancock, to ensure effective personnel management in operating the RC5 based on guidance and procedures from the UNCG Human Resources (HR) office. Given the SERVE Center's long tenure at the university, these UNCG personnel processes are widely understood and followed by the SERVE Center staff. The SERVE Center operated the Regional Center for Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina for the last five years (as the RC6) and thus, RC5 leadership is very familiar with the personnel processes required by UNCG, including those referenced below:

- Position Design and Organizational Analysis
- Position Creation, Modification, and Classification
- Recruitment, Selection, and Retention
- Compensation Analysis and Strategy
- Salary Administration for Current Employees (Payroll related matters)
- Employee Performance and Evaluation

In the hiring of new staff, the timeline for establishing and posting new positions is critical to our success. As the SERVE Center has been involved in operating Centers on behalf of the ED previously, we have developed consistent language in our position descriptions that clearly align with the expertise involved in our work (data analysis, conducting needs assessment, disseminating educational research and evidence-based practices, delivering technical assistance, etc.). This consistency allows for the use of existing position descriptions which creates efficiencies in the hiring process should the need arise. Employment is offered based upon the job-related qualifications of applicants using fair and valid selection criteria and upon satisfactory completion of all relevant reference checks, pre-employment background checks, credentials verification, and verification of eligibility to work in the United States.

The SERVE Center (and UNCG) are committed to policies and practices that encourage employment applications from members of traditionally underrepresented groups. Since its inception in 1991, the SERVE Center has followed explicit policies and procedures set forth by the University of North Carolina System to ensure strict compliance with its Equal Employment Opportunity commitment and support for Affirmative Action. The SERVE Center and UNCG are committed to equality of employment opportunities and do not discriminate against applicants or employees based on race, creed, color, national origin, religion, gender, age,

disability, veteran status, political affiliation, or sexual orientation. UNCG Human Resources (HR) automatically posts to the UNCG HR website as well as multiple outside sources (e.g., InsideHigherEd, NCWorks). The UNCG Office of Research and Engagement also can add recruitment sources as needed to solicit applications.

With support from the UNCG Offices in ensuring effective hiring as referenced above, the SERVE Center will continue to build and retain a diverse and highly experienced group of leaders and staff that enhance the quality of our work by this diversity of experiences and backgrounds.

Developing, Supervising, and Retaining High-Quality Staff

The SERVE Center has assembled a team of highly qualified and experienced staff during our last five years of operating the RC for Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Perhaps most important to hiring and retaining quality staff is the provision of a positive, inclusive working environment that reduces turnover. Of note, 9 out of 10 members of our proposed RC5 key personnel have been in place for the five years (2019-present) that we operated the RC6. In terms of support for professional development, all of our staff can request individualized professional development and also participate in opportunities provided by UNCG. For example, 11 SERVE Center staff members recently completed 36 hours of project management training with a certified Project Management Institute trainer, expanding their capacity to support our clients.

Retention of our expert staff who have established trusted relationships with key stakeholders in our RC5 region is a high priority because it creates efficiencies for future project planning and implementation. Thus, for the work outlined in Section A for the RC5, all key personnel are in place and available immediately upon receiving the RC5 award. All staff will participate in a

kickoff orientation and will engage in regularly scheduled team meetings for coordination, information sharing, and capacity-building planning. We will include consultants/partners in all-staff and team meetings as appropriate to ensure their integration with the team's efforts.

At UNCG, personnel management is an ongoing partnership between employees and supervisors to provide our employees with timely performance feedback to enable success in their roles and in their professional development and career growth. Our evaluation process gives employees an annual comprehensive review of their performance.

While the RC5 Co-Directors have authority to finalize project plans and have clearly delineated responsibilities (discussed further in Section C of this proposal), our overarching organizational goal is to create a climate of intentional collaboration and efficient communication across the RC5 team. Team members and subject matter experts are supported in communicating across projects under the direction of the Project Leads.

Employees follow the personnel management structure articulated in UNCG policy. Each staff member is assigned a supervisor responsible for monitoring their performance based upon annual goals that include their specific project role(s) in the RC5 Annual Service Plan. Should a staff member perform below expectations, or our clients' express concerns about a staff member's performance, the RC5 Co-Directors will work with the assigned supervisor to follow UNCG/SERVE Center Human Resources policies and procedures to document performance and to create a plan to remediate underperformance. If we must replace a staff member, we will assess needs and refill from within, or hire quickly. The SERVE Center works closely with the HR personnel at UNCG using documented processes for staff postings, interviewing, and hiring that will aid in filling the role quickly.

If we must terminate a key staff member for changes in workload needs or other reasons, we will follow the ED contract requirements, including making requests in writing and providing a complete résumé for proposed key personnel substitutes demonstrating their qualifications for the role. Additionally, our team will ensure essential tasks are accomplished and project activities will continue uninterrupted. The SERVE Center and its partners have a cadre of highly experienced staff and subject-matter experts who can step in to ensure that existing project deliverables are met in a timely manner. Immediately upon notification of staff departure, we will inform ED and provide a written explanation of why the change is occurring and any impacts to the contract. Any changes in key staff will proceed with written approval by the Contracting Officer.

Contracting with External Subject Matter and Technical Assistance Experts

The SERVE Center has a successful track record of managing contracts for Subject Matter and Technical Assistance Experts (SMEs) across multiple complex efforts. We formalize these external relationships before the work begins and maximize coordination and communication by: 1) defining a specific scope of work that details the organization's or individual's involvement by project or content area, 2) mapping assignments to the role and budget outlined in our proposal and project work plan, 3) involving the SME in regular project planning and client update meetings to ensure alignment on project direction and goals, and 4) outlining internal communication and reporting processes to ensure that SME work remains on schedule and within budget. The SERVE Center will work with SME contractors to set clear expectations and timelines for the development and submission of deliverables. The Project Lead will communicate regularly with the SME to provide feedback on deliverables and identify potential

challenges and solutions. Any issues that cannot be resolved will then be addressed by the Co-Directors.

The SERVE Center follows established UNCG processes for contract development, processing, and oversight. The UNCG Division of Finance and Administration is responsible for helping the SERVE Center to procure needed services (e.g., via contracting). Their mission is to provide efficient and effective procurement processes in accordance with applicable State and University policies and procedures. They strive to accomplish these goals as economically as possible, within acceptable standards of quality and service, while utilizing professional ethics and best business practices throughout the entire procurement cycle. In terms of contract management. UNCG's Accounts Payable Office handles billing for all of the SERVE Center's contracts (according to the terms of the contract) and is responsible for tracking and reporting finances by funding source. This Office establishes contracting standards, tools, and oversight, allowing the SERVE Center/the RC5 to execute projects efficiently, effectively, and to high standards.

Factor 3 in Review: While we are fully staffed with a highly experienced team who can effectively achieve the goals we have laid out in our Logic Model, we also have personnel management processes in place that will allow us to continue to supervise and retain this highly qualified staff, and to easily add new talent as needed via hiring or contracting processes in the future.

Factor 4. Approach to Partnerships

Intentional Approach

As described in Goal 5 in Section A, we intend to regularly collaborate with the National Comprehensive Center, the four Content Centers, the RELs, and other federally funded technical assistance centers and leverage their knowledge, skills, and expertise as we deliver capacity-building services to our three states. We have been intentional in enlisting the support of partners described below who are very knowledgeable and experienced in providing technical assistance to SEA, LEA, and school clients. Each of the partners will have specific roles and scopes of work within our Center. Each also has a history of working with states in the Southeast and within the Comprehensive Center network, thereby creating efficiencies for planning and implementation of Center activities upon award.

Education First (EdFirst). EdFirst works nationally to deliver research and analysis that helps education leaders probe the root causes of problems, understand the perspectives of stakeholders and experts, benchmark against other organizations and identify solutions for their unique contexts. They help SEAs, LEAs, policymakers, and others get to the heart of the problem they want to address with quality research and feedback from stakeholders. Ann Duffy, a Principal Advisor for state and district leaders at Education First, will serve as our SEA State Liaison for Georgia as she lives in Atlanta and knows the state context and leadership well from her years working in that state. In addition, she has unique recent experience in working with the Georgia SEA on improving the organizational coherence of resource allocation (described in Objective 1 in Section A) and issues around equitable funding for rural LEAs. Thus, she will continue to coordinate the RC5 activities in Georgia.

RTI International (RTI). RTI is located within an hour of the SERVE Center. It combines deep knowledge of key improvement initiatives in North Carolina with content expertise in a number of areas and broad capabilities in education research and evaluation. RTI can add to the SERVE Center subject matter expertise in a number of areas related to the Educator Shortage. For example, [redacted], who will be our point of contact with RTI, currently serves as the program director for Aspire Teacher Prep, an alternative teacher residency preparation program approved in North Carolina, and previously provided capacity-building services for two Grow Your Own (GYO) programs. Other expertise relates to promoting opportunities for STEM instruction such as through the Girls of Color in STEM programming.

Manhattan Strategy Group LLC (MSG). MSG has a diverse portfolio of work underway with educators and policymakers nationwide that includes expertise in many forms of technical assistance (e.g., communities of practice, resource development and curation, development of training modules) and communications services such as the design of virtual meetings. MSG has led and/or currently leads important national initiatives such as the National Charter School Resource Center (NCSRC), the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA), the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) Technical Assistance Center, and the TA network for Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFEC-TA). [redacted] Her experience includes delivery of technical assistance for multiple stakeholders (SEAs, LEAs, institutions of higher education) across a variety of topics, such as early literacy development, EL education, and teacher preparation.

Bellwether Education Partners (Bellwether). Bellwether is a national nonprofit that works with education leaders and organizations to accelerate their impact, inform, and influence policy

and program design. Bellwether has partnered with the RC6 for the last five years, from 2019-2024, serving as external evaluator. They have worked closely with our Performance Management Lead in collecting mid- and end-of-year client satisfaction survey data and conducting end-of-year interviews with key clients to inform our evaluation of our projects' impacts. They have agreed to continue serving in this data collection role for the RC5. [redacted] Her expertise includes program evaluation, capacity-building for evaluation and continuous improvement, and applied research with a particular focus on issues related to whole child development and holistic student supports, family engagement, and teacher and leader preparation and training.

In the sections below, we describe our approach to partnering for impact, demonstrating: 1) our focus on building collaborative partnerships that reduce client burden, and 2) our intentional process to ensure efficient and effective use of federal resources.

1. Building Collaborative Partnerships that Reduce Client Burden

At both the SEA and LEA levels, education leaders must deal with many challenges and we will not add to their burden by introducing partners who are unfamiliar with the context and work of each of our states. Our ability to create trusted key client relationships with SEAs that result in successfully addressing their high priority needs without adding to their stresses and burdens is absolutely critical. Our proposed RC5 Co-Directors have experienced the Comprehensive Center-SEA relationship from both sides (as the SEA client and as the CC provider) and they both possess a clear understanding of how to be effective in leading our work and developing partnerships to provide efficient and effective capacity-building services. In addition, our key personnel and partners have extensive experience in leading or contributing to

Comprehensive Center and federal technical assistance work. We also have processes in place to ensure a seamless entry of partners into our projects. That is, in developing our annual project plans with the key clients, we name a Project Lead who will coordinate all meetings and communication with our partners, consistently assessing progress, and revising our efforts as needed to address the needs of our key clients for the particular project.

2. Ensuring an Efficient and Effective Use of Federal Resources

Given the SERVE Center's (and its partners') history of operating federal technical assistance centers and collaborating with them often in providing supports to our clients, we have the knowledge to consider all available federal resources during the development of our annual service plans. This includes the National Center, the designated Content Centers, and the entire Comprehensive Center Network.

Consistently, over our tenure as the RC6, we have mined the field for expertise that we can offer our key clients, beginning with our key partners, but also expanding the search across the CC network, other OESE TA centers, and RELs. For example, when the GaDOE key client receiving our literacy improvement support wanted to use a document developed by the Region 16 Comprehensive Center (R16CC) for the Alaska Department of Education, we facilitated a discussion with the R16CC to find out more about the document's development and the best way for the GaDOE to recreate it (with attribution to the original authors). Additionally, by reaching out to the R16CC, we, as the RC6, had the opportunity to share our respective efforts in the area of early literacy and explore other ways our products/services might be coordinated.

While knowledge of federal expertise available to the Regional Centers is critical, it is also important to understand the different types of federal partners in terms of their ability to provide support. For example, Centers within the Network referenced above operate under a *cooperative*

agreement with the USED, where there is greater flexibility in designing capacity-building services. Other federal technical assistance centers operate under a *contract* with the Department, with very specific annual tasks, requiring that RCs work with leadership in these Centers to fit within their scope to address the needs of our clients.

Our Center will designate our Co-Director, Dr. Priscilla Maynor, as the main point of contact for the Network and the National Center. She will also serve as the lead in our partnership with the REL-Southeast and will continue to serve on the Advisory Board for the REL-Southeast (with a reciprocal role also designated for the REL-Southeast on our Advisory Board). Additionally she will facilitate the annual joint needs sensing designed to inform service delivery and reduce burden on State agencies. This model has worked well in creating efficiencies in accessing REL expertise for our RC work.

Finally, in terms of how we think about our work with partners using a continuum of impact, we note that USED distributed a graphic to the Regional Centers in March, 2024 that illustrates likely increases in benefits when partners consider five developmental levers—Connecting (which builds awareness), Consulting (which increases understanding), Cooperating (to support each other's goals), Coordinating (thereby increasing efficiency of the endeavor), and Collaborating (which contributes to higher quality and perhaps innovation in their work together). Our approach to partnering is aligned with this Continuum. Thus, we consider these levers over two dimensions: intensity and capacity, hypothesizing that as members in a partnership are intentional and strategic in pursuing these levers, their engagement becomes more intense and their capacity as a partnership grows, resulting in positive client impact.

Factor 4 in Review: We have engaged three partners (EdFirst, RTI, MSG) in order to supplement our internal subject matter and technical assistance expertise, and one partner (Bellwether) to conduct our annual client interviews in support of the Annual Evaluation Report. EdFirst is providing our Georgia State Liaison and brings unique expertise in facilitating organizational coherence. We also describe how our collaboration with partners will be handled in such a way as to reduce client burden and how we will ensure that federal resources are used efficiently and effectively across federally funded providers.

SECTION C: SUBJECT MATTER AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EXPERTISE

Encouraging Applications from Members of Underrepresented Groups

The SERVE Center at UNCG is committed to policies and practices that encourage employment applications from members of traditionally underrepresented groups. Since its inception in 1991, the SERVE Center has followed explicit policies and procedures set forth by the University of North Carolina System to ensure strict compliance with its Equal Employment Opportunity commitment and support for Affirmative Action. The SERVE Center and UNCG are committed to equality of employment opportunities and do not discriminate against applicants or employees based on race, creed, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, veteran status, political affiliation, or sexual orientation. The SERVE Center recruits staff through varied national and regional venues. In addition, the UNCG Chancellor's Office, the Provost's Office and the Office of Sponsored Programs provide additional support and venues for attracting quality candidates, especially for those positions requiring specific professional experience and/or advanced or terminal degrees. The SERVE Center has assembled and will continue to build a diverse and highly experienced group of leaders and staff that

enhance the quality of our work through this diversity of experiences and backgrounds. Our operation of the RC6 for the last five years reflects our commitment to this effort as does our proposed team of personnel and partners for operating the RC5. We will continue to demonstrate this commitment to encouraging employment applications from members of traditionally underrepresented groups moving forward as the RC5.

Factor 1. Key Project Personnel Demonstrate the Required Subject Matter Expertise and Relevant Knowledge, Understanding, and Experience in Operating and Administering State and Local Educational Systems to Effectively Support Recipients

The SERVE Center at UNCG was established in 1991 when it was funded to operate one of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES). From 1991-2011, the SERVE Center received four consecutive, five-year awards from IES to operate the REL-Southeast. In addition to its operation of the REL-Southeast over those 20 years, the SERVE Center competed for and won other federal contracts, such as for the Eisenhower Math and Science Consortium, the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE), the Regional Technology in Education Consortium and the Coordinating Teaching and Learning in Migrant Communities Technology grant. The SERVE Center has also had a longstanding partnership with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to operate the North Carolina Homeless Education Program over the last 15 years, and the North Carolina Foster Care Education Program, over the last six years. Both programs provide training, technical assistance, and guidance for LEAs across the state. Most recently, SERVE established the Early College Research Center (ECRC), which conducts, synthesizes, and disseminates research on early college models and related topics such as dual enrollment and postsecondary transitions. The ECRC's cutting-edge research was cited in the *2023 Economic Report of the President* and informed the creation of a federal proposal for career-connected

pathways. As this list of awards demonstrates, the SERVE Center is extremely knowledgeable and experienced in the operation of State and Local educational systems across a variety of topics.

Our proposed RC5 leaders include three highly experienced individuals who bring diverse and complementary experience and expertise. All three of the leaders, two Co-Directors and an Assistant Director served in these roles for the last five years as the RC6. Thus, we work well together as a team and have also individually established trusted relationships with stakeholders in each SEA. Figure C-1 shows the key project personnel proposed for the RC5.

[redacted]

In addition to the Co-Directors and Assistant Director, we identified a Stakeholder Engagement Lead who oversees the needs sensing and other work of the three SEA Liaisons. We propose three Crosscutting Systems Leads who will oversee Communication and Dissemination, Performance Management and Evaluation, and Data Analysis and Visualization. These four leaders along with the two Co-Directors and Assistant Director for Evidence-Based Practices will meet weekly to manage the work outlined in the Annual Service Plans and to discuss the impact of our work across the region. The Stakeholder Engagement Lead and the three State Liaisons will meet monthly to discuss SEA initiatives and needs and to review project implementation in each state. Our Key Partners were described in Section B and our approach to facilitating new and ongoing partnerships will be further articulated under Factor 3.

Rather than a single Director, we are proposing a management structure with two Co-Directors, each at .5 FTE, with clear and distinct responsibilities but both with significant experience in planning and leading large projects within and outside of SEAs. Our Co-Directors have extensive experience in working at the SEA level to address statutory requirements, each having participated in the development and implementation of State Plans under multiple reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Each have led multiple Federal Programs monitoring visits in LEAs and participated in SEA monitoring visits by ED. One of our Co-Directors previously led the NCHE, and both have consistently worked with the National Center, the Comprehensive Center Network, and various federally funded technical assistance centers in leading the RC6 over the last five years. Our Co-Director, Dr. Priscilla Maynor will serve on the REL-Southeast Advisory Board.

We also propose an Assistant Director of Evidence-Based Practices, who will oversee efforts of projects across the Annual Service Plan to incorporate evidence-based decision-making

supports. With extensive senior leadership experience in applying research to practice from 1991 to 2011 in SERVE's operation of the REL-Southeast, her background distinctly matches the title of her position in supporting our RC5 clients. As the brief biographies below demonstrate, the proposed RC5 leaders and key staff have the subject matter expertise and knowledge and understanding of state and local educational systems required for the RC5 to be successful.

RC5 Leadership

George Hancock, M.Ed./M.S.A., will serve as the RC5 **Co-Director**, which will build on his experience over the last five years in serving in this role for the RC6. In this role, he will provide leadership for all operational aspects of the RC5, including budget and personnel management, adherence to UNCG policies, and project oversight with ED. As Co-Director, he will also be responsible for managing partner and consultant subcontracts to ensure project teams have the right expertise for the work proposed. He will be the point-of-contact for each of our partnering organizations.

Mr. Hancock began his career as a middle school teacher and had his first experience with school improvement as the chair of the School Improvement Team, which was searching for strategies to address the needs of disadvantaged students at the school. He obtained his Master of Education and Master of School Administration degrees with the goal of moving into school leadership. He has worked in three North Carolina districts (both rural and urban settings), serving as a principal in Title I schools. It was in these schools that he developed the skills required to motivate students and staff, garner the support of the school community, and lead school improvement efforts. Building on his leadership experience at the school level, he transitioned to the role of Federal Programs Director at the district level, with an interest in leveraging program resources and funds to support economically disadvantaged students across

schools in the district. His experiences with Federal Programs at the district level prepared him for his move to the SEA level in North Carolina, where he served for 10 years as a State Federal Programs Administrator and as the School Improvement Grants (SIG) State Coordinator. In his role as the SIG State Coordinator, he managed grants and supports for four cohorts of SIG schools (90 total schools, with more than $143M in federal funds). He was responsible for overseeing the grants awarded to the schools in terms of both compliance and support. Collaboration across levels of the education system (SEA, REA, LEA, school) was an important aspect of the work of trying to turn around low-performing schools in the state. Of note, two of the schools not only improved academic outcomes, but also became the first SIG schools to concurrently be named as Title I Distinguished Schools as a result of student proficiency growth achieved. In working closely with these two schools, Mr. Hancock focused on developing strong leadership and improving teacher effectiveness as the major foci in turning around the low-performing schools. He came to the SERVE Center in 2016 to lead the NCHE, which allowed him to engage with national efforts underway to improve the education outcomes of historically underrepresented student populations.

Priscilla Maynor, Ed.D., served from 2019 to 2024 as the **Co-Director** for the RC6 and will continue in that role for the RC5. She will also serve as the liaison for the Content Center on English Learners and Multilingualism. For the last five years, she served as the point-of-contact for each of the three states and will continue providing leadership for the RC5 State Liaisons. She will lead the RC5 in conducting needs sensing and holding regular meetings with the Chief State School Officer designee in the three states. Dr. Maynor is a systems-focused education strategist recognized for her broad knowledge of public education systems and her forward-thinking leadership. Since starting her professional career as a special education teacher, she has

served in leadership capacities at the school, LEA, REA, SEA, and national levels. Her perspectives on culture, teaching and learning, equity, and the power of the community fuels her passion to encourage innovation in schools serving under-represented populations. Dr. Maynor has thirteen years of experience in leading SEA relations. She was the Executive Vice President of Shared Learning Systems & Leadership Development at the Center for Educational Leadership and Technology and oversaw the company's portfolio of technology supported learning management and leadership development projects. Further, she has engaged with multiple Tribal Education Agencies (TEAs), supporting capacity-building work in system design, implementation of personalized learning models and school improvement.

Dr. Maynor served in executive leadership roles at the NCDPI for 16 years, where she led statewide initiatives in exceptional children, early childhood education, and district and school transformation. She led agency-wide initiatives to improve communications, data quality and governance, and departmental processes. During her tenure at the state-level, she participated in a number of policy initiatives to advance American Indian and Hispanic and Latino education. Of particular relevance to the RC5 is that she was responsible for implementing a statewide regional support model to provide assistance to the lowest-performing districts and schools. Dr. Maynor's work experiences have focused significantly on systems change—designing systems and building organizational and leadership capacities in public and tribal schools, LEAs, and SEAs. These projects have focused on building organizational capacities to establish collaboratives that bring school and community leaders together to solve local problems and guide change management activities. Dr. Maynor obtained an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Wendy McColskey, Ph.D., will serve as the **Assistant Director for Evidence-Based Practices**. The U.S. Department of Education has made it clear that it prioritizes opportunities for SEAs, LEAs, and low-performing schools to engage in the review and selection, implementation, and evaluation of evidence-based practices (EBPs) as a means towards school improvement and the improvement of outcomes for Economically Disadvantaged students. Dr. McColskey is extremely qualified and well-suited to provide our RC leadership in this area of selecting, implementing, and evaluating EBPs. She received her Ph.D. in Educational Research and Evaluation from Ohio State University in 1983. After several years of working in a district evaluation office, she came to work at the SERVE Center in 1991 when it was awarded a contract from ED to operate the REL-Southeast. Much of her first 15 years in leading REL projects at the SERVE Center was spent in developing Research and Development partnerships with districts to support teachers in improving classroom assessment practices and to support districts in improving teacher evaluation practices. The products and publications she produced cover a wide range of educational topics (e.g., teacher evaluation, classroom assessment, low-performing schools, instructional reform, student motivation and engagement, and integrated student support programs for at-risk students).

Dr. McColskey was a Program Director for the REL-Southeast during the period of time (2005-2011) in which ED directed RELs to introduce and support evidence-based decision-making (EBDM) in the region. She led efforts to provide training to LEA leaders in EBDM and to operate an Evidence-Based Education Request Desk, which responded to over 900 requests over five years, the majority from SEAs and LEAs. She was responsible for two REL-Southeast publications on evidence-based interventions, one focused on reading across the curriculum interventions (Lewis et al., 2007) and one on social-psychological interventions to reduce

stereotype threat in the classroom (Aronson et al., 2009). She also led the development of a third REL-Southeast publication, *Measuring Student Engagement in Upper Elementary through High School: A Description of 21 Instruments* (Fredricks et al., 2011).

Dr. McColskey is an experienced program evaluator who has been the Principal Investigator on many evaluation contracts over her years at the SERVE Center. For example, she led the state-level evaluations of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) programs in South Carolina and Alabama and the Extended Learning and Integrated Student Supports grant programs for North Carolina. Her program evaluation experiences also contributed to her understanding of implementation challenges experienced by schools across a variety of interventions. She has continued this attention to implementation in her work with the RC6 on MTSS implementation. Most directly relevant to demonstrating her experience and skills in designing projects that support clients in the use of EBPs is that she has served in this role for the last five years in our tenure as the RC6.

Other Key Personnel

Karla Lewis Strong, Ph.D., will serve as the **SEA Engagement Lead** and in that role will be responsible for coordinating the RC5 work across the three State Liaisons (Ann Duffy in Georgia, Donna Brown in North Carolina, and Don Doggett in South Carolina) through regular meetings and discussions on the status of projects in each state. She will also be responsible for working with the State Liaisons to conduct the annual needs sensing process and ensuring maximum coordination and systemic impact across the three states in applying strategies to improve organizational coherence. Dr. Strong has been with the SERVE Center for over twenty years and served as a Project Director with the SERVE Center's REL-Southeast (2006-2011). In this role with the REL-Southeast, she supervised and coordinated the work of the SERVE

Center's State Policy Analysts (senior staff assigned to each of the six southeastern states and located physically in the SEA offices). She will bring her experience working on SEA-guided projects to her RC5 role in supporting the State Liaisons as they navigate the organizational culture of the SEAs.

Dr. Strong has extensive content expertise in school, family, and community partnerships. For the past five years, she has led the RC6's Family Engagement project in South Carolina. Before coming to SERVE in 2003, she held a 2-year Spencer Foundation Post-Doctoral Fellowship at Johns Hopkins University, Center for Social Organization of Schools (CSOS) to extend her dissertation research on parent and family involvement. While at CSOS, her research focused on community involvement with high schools who were members of the National Network of Partnership Schools. Dr. Strong began her career as a social worker in LA County, before obtaining her M.A. and Ph.D. in Educational Policy from The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Ann Duffy, Ph.D., will be the **State Liaison for Georgia**. She is currently serving in this role for the RC6 under a contract with Education First and has established working relationships with the key clients at the GaDOE. She lives in Atlanta and thus, is regularly available for meetings and other events with the GaDOE. Dr. Duffy has extensive expertise in working with SEAs on developing organizational coherence as they implement their key initiatives. She has worked with state education leaders through the Walton Innovative Assessment Project and with district leaders through the Wallace Foundation's Partnership for Social Emotional Learning.

After earning her teaching certificate at Harvard, she joined the staff of Teach for America, working in the Mississippi Delta and Louisiana, where many students did not have the support and resources they needed to be successful. That experience inspired her to commit to improving

public education, first as a community organizer with Parents for Public Schools in Mississippi, and later as an executive in SEAs in Massachusetts and Georgia. She holds a Doctorate in Education Policy from the University of Georgia.

***Donna Brown, M.A.*,** will be the **State Liaison for North Carolina,** a position she has held since 2019. Ms. Brown is uniquely qualified for this role as she has over 37 years of experience in North Carolina at the local and state level in curriculum and instruction, school improvement, education policy, and federal programs. She served as the NCDPI's Director of Federal Program Monitoring and Support Division for six years, directing the work of the division and providing oversight for approximately $575,000,000 in federal funds provided to LEAs and schools each year. She provided leadership to the Division in program monitoring, data collection and reporting, and technical assistance to ensure not only compliance, but quality programs for all students. Additionally, during her tenure at the NCDPI, Ms. Brown served on the SEA's leadership team charged with drafting State Plans for multiple reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Ms. Brown has an M.A. in Early Childhood Education from Appalachian State University. She began her career as a third grade teacher in rural North Carolina.

***Don Doggett, M.Ed.*,** will be the **State Liaison for South Carolina**, a position he has held since 2019 for the RC6. He has worked at various levels in the South Carolina educational system for more than 25 years, as a classroom teacher, assistant principal in two districts, principal in three elementary schools, and superintendent in one South Carolina district. Mr. Doggett has expertise in providing professional development to SEAs, LEAs, and schools in areas such as how to use classroom instructional walkthroughs to assess alignment to South Carolina Standards and how to use math and writing benchmark data to develop plans for student

remediation and acceleration. Mr. Doggett is particularly experienced in the area of school turnaround processes for low performing schools. He facilitated a partnership with the University of Virginia School Turnaround Program to build the capacity of the SCDE to support school improvement through a district level approach. Mr. Doggett has an M.Ed. from Howard University and is currently working on an Ed.D. at South Carolina State University.

Beth Thrift, M.S., will serve as the **Communication & Dissemination Lead**, managing communication and dissemination activities, including virtual applications, such as webinars and online communities. She served in this role for the RC6 from 2019-2024. She will be responsible for the design and maintenance of our RC5 website, dissemination activities in collaboration with the National Centers, and providing support for our online Communities of Practice. She has experience in providing technical assistance to SEAs and LEAs in technology through her work on the Southeast Regional Technology in Education Consortium that the SERVE Center operated with funding from Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) from 1995-2005. From 2005-2011, she provided leadership for our REL-Southeast research to practice efforts, expanding our use of webinars and online communities. She has extensive experience in the use of communications technologies, such as web-based conferencing, social media, and virtual environments. Ms. Thrift has a B.S. in English from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Master's in Instructional Technology from East Carolina University.

Melissa Williams, M.A., will lead our **Performance Management and Evaluation** efforts, as she had done for the last five years for the RC6, facilitating all internal processes for planning, implementing, evaluating, reporting on, and continuously improving the projects and services. For the RC5, she will oversee all required federal reporting included reporting on specified performance measures (e.g., Quarterly Reports, APR, AER). Because of the importance of this

role, she serves on the Leadership Team. She guides all Project Leads through the process of quarterly and annual reporting and is the point of contact for the external evaluation contract with Bellwether. Ms. Williams has been a program evaluator and research specialist at the SERVE Center for 20 years. She has experience in project management and evaluation across a number of federal contracts at the SERVE Center, such as ECRC. During her time as the Associate Coordinator of Research Studies for the REL-Southeast (2006-2011), her primary responsibility was in managing partnerships with SEAs to conduct randomized control trials on curricular programs they were implementing. She earned her M.A. from the College of William and Mary in Experimental Psychology.

Eric Grebing, Ph.D., will lead the RC5 work in **Data Analysis and Visualization** and serve as our liaison for the Content Center on Fiscal Equity. He will work with SEA partners and RC5 project leaders to identify appropriate datasets and design efficient, user-centered dashboards that will help education leaders gain insights about key challenges or initiatives. Dr. Grebing has supported several RC6 projects over the past five years through technical assistance in data analysis and visualization, including dashboards and accompanying presentations or discussion guides. For example, he examined patterns of chronic absenteeism and discipline in CSI/TSI schools in all three states. Dr. Grebing has been a researcher and evaluator at the SERVE Center for the last eight years, working on high school reform initiatives, including as PI for the evaluation of a mid-phase Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grant, and conducting research on high-quality implementation through exploring the relationship between stakeholder buy-in and implementation fidelity. Early in his career, when he was a high school math teacher in NC, Dr. Grebing led the transition to Common Core Standards in his LEA through unpacking standards and collaborative development of pacing guides. Dr. Grebing will bring a unique

combination of experience as an educator/teacher and as a researcher/evaluator to his role with the RC5. He received a Ph.D. in Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis from North Carolina State University. He also holds a Project Management Professional (PMP) Certification.

Capacity-Building Services (Subject Matter and TA Expertise)

Project Leads. In addition to the bios provided above, we highlight additional subject matter and TA experts who have multiple years of experience working in their specialty area (see Figure C-1).

Bridget Johnson, Ed.D., has over 20 years in education including years as a classroom teacher, school principal, and district administrator. She has been leading our "improving literacy" support in South Carolina for the RC6, and she will serve as a Project Lead in this area for the RC5. Prior to joining the RC6 at the SERVE Center in April of 2020, she served as the K-12 Director for Curriculum and Instruction at the LEA level in North Carolina. Dr. Johnson's strengths include planning and delivering high-quality professional development to a wide range of educational audiences, from classroom teachers to superintendents, and SEA leaders. Specifically, Dr. Johnson has demonstrated success in supporting SEAs in applying Implementation Science to their statewide literacy improvement initiatives (e.g., Science of Reading in North Carolina and LETRS in South Carolina). She also has experience in coaching educational leaders through school improvement planning and in facilitating Communities of Practice. She holds a Master's in School Administration from UNC-Pembroke, and a Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership from East Carolina University.

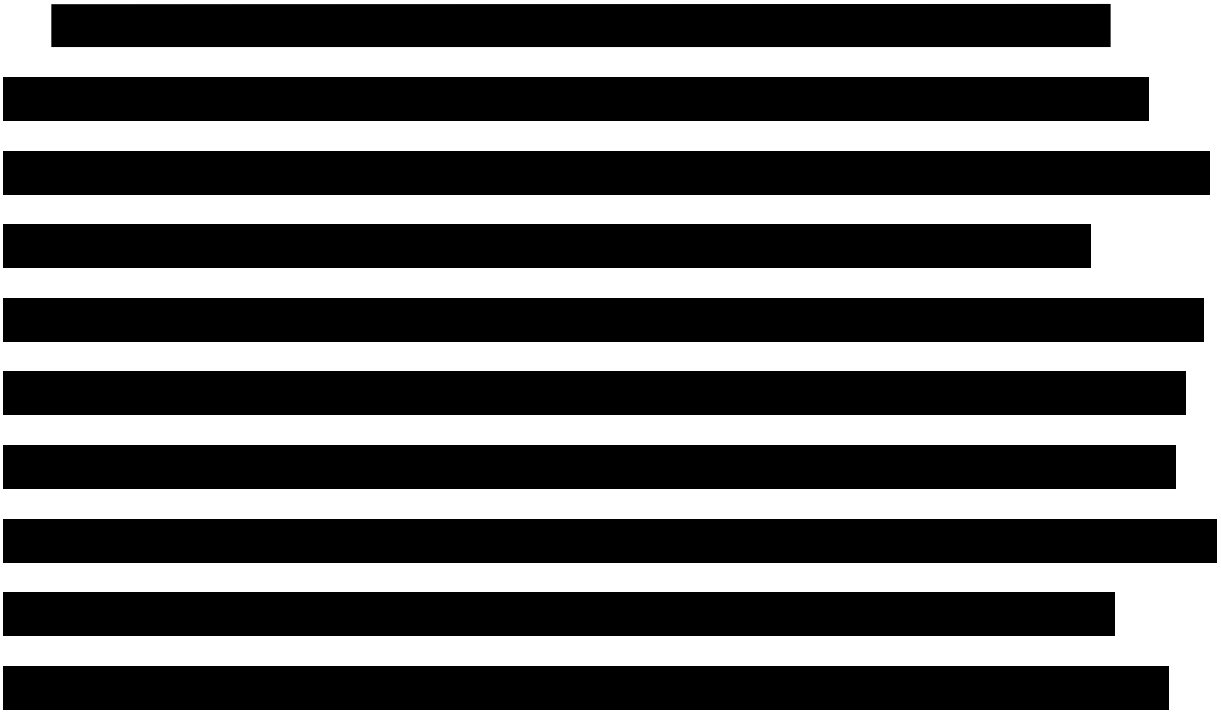
Samantha Durrance, M.A., M.P.P., has served as a Project Lead for the RC6 for the last five years for work in Georgia in support of their implementation of a statewide K-3 Dyslexia

Screening mandate and for work in South Carolina on the implementation of MTSS. For the RC5, she will serve as our MTSS Project Lead. Her background in education includes teaching middle school mathematics and serving as the MTSS leader at an elementary school in Georgia. Then, as an Analyst with the Southern Regional Education Board, she developed expertise in the areas of dyslexia and early literacy and authored a pioneering brief on state dyslexia policies that was used by state legislators in Georgia, Kentucky, and elsewhere as they looked for ways to improve student outcomes in reading. In her five years at the RC6 (2019-2024), she has supported the three states in addressing the emerging challenge of improving early literacy. She holds an M.A. in Teaching from Emory University and a Master of Public Policy from Georgia State University.

Steve Johnson, M.Ed., will serve as a Project Lead for the STEM work proposed for the RC5. Over the past four years in this work for the RC6, he worked collaboratively with LEAs, SEA leaders, and teachers to implement high-quality STEM instruction at the elementary level as a way of introducing STEM career pathways in the early grades (and thus, ensuring that ALL students can envision themselves in these vital careers). This work has resulted in 26 LEAs in North Carolina having participated in professional development to improve the quality of STEM instruction at the elementary level. In addition, he facilitated an annual K-5 Building Engineers Conference that brought together over 300 participants, including teachers, school administrators, district staff, and higher education faculty. He began his career as an elementary and computer lab teacher. His time in the classroom led to serving as a digital learning coach and district leader in digital learning and STEM at the LEA level in NC. He has been a leader in the state in the use of robotics and STEM instruction in the early grades to effectively build career pipelines for a broader range of students, resulting in his Project Leadership for the RC5

proposed Building Engineers in K-5 Classrooms project. He holds an M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction–Teacher Leadership from Pennsylvania State University.

Maria Pitre-Martin, Ph.D., will serve as our liaison to Content Center for Strengthening and Supporting the Educator Workforce. She was formerly the executive director of board operations and policy for the North Carolina State Board of Education (NCSBE) and state director of K-12 curriculum and instruction for the NCDPI. During her time at the NCDPI, she supervised the Office of Educator Preparation and Teacher Licensure. This office was responsible for staffing the Professional Educator Preparation and Standards Commission, making rule recommendations regarding all aspects of preparation, licensure, continuing education, and standards of conduct for public school educators. Dr. Pitre-Martin also worked to provide the NCSBE with the North Carolina Pathways to Excellence for Teaching Professionals proposal to address the state's long standing teacher pipeline challenges. She is the current Executive Director of the SERVE Center and holds a Doctorate in Educational Administration from Texas A&M University.



[redacted]

Subject Matter Experts to Address Emerging Challenges. In addition to the examples of Year 1 RC5 project leads described above, we have collaborated with our partners from MSG, RTI, and Education First to outline other potential Subject Matter experts across our organizations who are prepared to step into leadership and/or support roles as emerging challenges are identified. Additionally, we are well connected with UNCG's School of Education and its Institute for Partnerships in Education, who are committed to supporting our work as the RC5. A sampling of available SME experts is shown below.

Factor 1 in Review: We have proposed key project personnel with bios that demonstrate deep subject matter expertise and extensive experience in administering state and local education systems. Specifically, our Co-Directors have experience in leadership positions at the SEA level and in leading a Regional Comprehensive Center (the RC6) for the last five years. The Assistant Director is experienced in providing support for the use of EBPs and in program evaluation. We introduced Crosscutting Systems Leads, who have five years of experience with the RC6 in leading the critical project design and implementation systems (e.g., Performance Management, Communications & Dissemination). We also have three State Liaisons in place, who have deep prior knowledge of their respective states combined with five years of recent experience in this role. They will collaborate with our Stakeholder Engagement Lead in annually assessing the needs of our region. Finally, we introduced internal subject matter experts who will serve as Project Leads (and who have demonstrated their effectiveness in this role over the last five years). We also provide examples of external subject matter experts with whom we can engage, as needed.

Factor 2. Demonstrated Exceptional Technical Assistance Expertise in Providing High-Quality, Timely, Relevant, and Useful Technical Assistance and Capacity-Building Services to State and Local Educational Systems

As part of our ED-required mid-year and end-of-year reporting as the RC6 from 2019-2024, we collected four years of client satisfaction data reflecting the extent to which our clients were satisfied with the quality, usefulness, relevance, and timeliness of our capacity-building services they received. The methodology we used to collect this information evolved from collecting interview data in Years 1 and 2 to collecting survey data in Years 3-5. As a demonstration of the RC6's exceptional technical assistance expertise in providing high-quality, useful, relevant, and

timely technical assistance and capacity-building services, client satisfaction results for four years are presented in Tables C-2 (Years 1 and 2) and C-3 (Years 3 and 4). The data show that every year clients reported high levels of satisfaction with regard to the quality, usefulness, relevance, and timeliness of the RC6 project services provided. Further, based on ED-established targets beginning in Year 3, we met or exceeded our target ratings each year.

In Years 1 and 2, to assess the quality, usefulness, and relevance of services provided by the RC6, our external evaluator (Bellwether), interviewed the key SEA clients in each state who were the primary recipients of the eight RC6 projects. One to three SEA clients were interviewed for each project. If more than one client was interviewed for a project, their ratings were averaged. On a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, and a 5 =Strongly Agree), the interviewees were asked to rate their experience with the RC6 services in terms of whether the services were of high-quality, relevant, and useful. Interviewees were asked to consider the three categories (quality, relevance, usefulness) independently of each other.

Table C-2. Client Perception of the Quality, Usefulness, and Relevance of RC6 Services (Year 1 and Year 2)

Client perception of the...	Average Client Ratings of Service Quality, Relevance, and Usefulness (out of 5.0; target of 3.5)	
	RC6 Y1	RC6 Y2
quality of the services provided.	4.4	4.8
usefulness of the services provided.	4.2	4.8
relevance of the services provided.	4.4	4.8

In Year 1, overall, the services provided by the RC6 were perceived as *high quality* (m = 4.4), *relevant* (m=4.4) and *useful* (m=4.2) by SEA clients. We surpassed the ED target rating of 3.5 in all three areas. Interviewees cited the accuracy and clarity of products and the high caliber of trainings. Specifically, interviewees cited the RC6's ability to effectively engage stakeholders as exemplary. As one interviewee stated, *"I've worked with a number of TA providers and some*

haven't been engaged or committed to the work we're trying to do…with [RC6], that's not the case. They're undertaking tasks for us, and the quality is there." SEA leaders also noted that the RC6 products were well designed: *"Their framework for how they would approach the work was very carefully crafted."*

In Year 2, Table C-2 shows that, overall, the services provided by the RC6 were perceived as *high quality* (m = 4.8), *relevant* (m=4.8) and *useful* (m=4.8) by SEA clients. All categories surpassed the ED target rating of 3.5 and Year 1 ratings. Interviewees described examples of the timeliness and usefulness of RC6 services and products. Specifically, interviewees cited that the RC6's ability to "effectively build rapport" with stakeholders across the state through "thoughtful and responsive feedback" was especially valuable. The SEA clients interviewed were strongly appreciative of the thought partnership that the RC6 brought to the table with one client noting: *"They brought a lot to the table and it broadened my own horizon and ideas. Especially the picture of what equity plans should look like. They really increased our understanding of what to do and what not to do. They are trying to help us create a valuable tool. They brought resources that we didn't have."*

Beginning in Year 3, while we still conducted end-of-year interviews, ratings of client satisfaction on quality, usefulness, relevance, and timeliness, were collected via a brief end-of-year survey to key SEA clients from all projects (10 in Year 3, 12 in Year 4). Clients were asked to consider all the technical assistance services they received from the RC6 between October 1 and September 30 of each year. Responses to each question were collected on a five-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Whereas client satisfaction ratings in Years 1 and 2 were based on average ratings of

RC6 project services they received, beginning in Year 3, frequencies were calculated to determine the percentage of clients who Agreed or Strongly Agreed on each survey item.

Table C-3. Client Perception of the Quality, Usefulness, and Relevance of RC6 Services (Year 3 and Year 4)

Performance Measure	Percent of Clients Reporting Satisfaction with Quality, Relevance, Usefulness, and Timeliness	
	RC6 Y3	RC6 Y4
Percent of key clients reporting satisfaction with the **quality** of the services provided.	90% (Target=85%)	100% (Target=85%)
Percent of key clients reporting satisfaction with the **usefulness** of the services provided.	90% (Target=85%)	100% (Target=85%)
Percent of key clients reporting satisfaction with the **relevance** of the services provided.	90% (Target=85%)	100% (Target=85%)
Percent of key clients reporting that CC capacity-building services are consistently delivered in a **timely** manner.	90% (Target=80%)	100% (Target=85%)

In Year 3, the RC6 exceeded ED's 85% target for all three performance measures of quality, usefulness, and relevance. Specifically, 90% of clients surveyed reported satisfaction with the quality of services, 90% reported satisfaction with the usefulness of services, and 90% reported satisfaction with the relevance of the services provided. A mean for each survey item was 4.5 out of 5, indicating positive perceptions of these indicators. Further, regarding timeliness, 90% also Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the capacity-building services were delivered in a timely manner.

In Year 4, the RC6 exceeded ED's 85% target for all three performance measures of quality, usefulness, and relevance. Specifically, 100% of clients reported satisfaction with the quality of services, 100% reported satisfaction with the usefulness of services, and 100% reported satisfaction with the relevance of the services provided. A mean for each question was 4.8 out of 5, indicating positive perceptions of these indicators. Further, regarding timeliness, 100% also Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the capacity-building services were delivered in a timely manner.

The data presented above reflect that the clients of our RC6 services routinely reported high levels of satisfaction, over the past four years, with the quality, usefulness, relevance, and timeliness of our services.

Factor 2 in Review: As directed by ED, the RC6 reported on performance measures such as the extent to which our clients were satisfied with the quality, usefulness, and relevance of services provided as well as the extent to which services were delivered in a timely manner. This section presents data showing that during our tenure as the RC6 (2019-2024), our SEA clients reported high levels of satisfaction with regard to the quality, usefulness, relevance, and timeliness of services provided.

Factor 3. Demonstrated the Ability to Develop New and Ongoing Partnerships with Leading Experts and Organizations Nationwide or Regionally, as Appropriate, That Enhance Its Ability to Provide High-Quality Technical Assistance and Subject-Matter Expertise

As previously referenced, the SERVE Center has been awarded over $200 million in contracts and grants and has successfully managed 18 major awards, including four consecutive contracts to operate the REL-Southeast from 1991-2011, the award to operate the RC6 serving Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina from 2019-2024, and five consecutive awards to operate the NCHE from 1999-2024. As a result of the many partnerships created throughout this history, we have established a wide and deep network of technical assistance and subject matter experts that we can easily access. Below, we offer three types of partner engagement, providing past examples of each type.

Type 1: Engaging with Experts within the Comprehensive Center Network, Including Federally Funded Technical Assistance Centers and Regional Educational Laboratories

The expansive knowledge and expertise across the CC Network and the platform for collaboration to be provided by the National Comprehensive Center allows each Regional Center to easily access experts as needed to support their capacity-building services. Additionally, as the RC6, we developed a relationship with REL-Southeast by attending their Advisory Board meetings, coordinating our annual needs assessments, and sharing work and progress across the three states we both serve (Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina). Examples of how we have engaged partners (as the RC6) are described below.

1. The RC6 supported the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) by collecting and analyzing information from seven districts in a pilot program focused on identifying and providing interventions to students with dyslexia. [redacted] In terms of accessing national experts, we asked experts at the National Center on Improving Literacy (NCIL) to provide information to the GaDOE on how other states were conducting pilots aimed at intervening with students identified as having dyslexia. This national perspective on how other states were conducting these pilots proved very useful to the GaDOE and pilot districts as they identified and addressed implementation challenges. We have maintained contact with NCIL throughout the project and sought their expertise as needed (Gearin et al., 2023).

2. Since 2021, the RC6 provided capacity-building services to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) as they worked to integrate and focus family engagement support to LEAs and schools, particularly to rural LEAs and low-performing schools (who may not have strong family-engagement initiatives). The federally funded Carolina Family

Engagement Center (CFEC) was a key initial partner with the RC6 in providing this support for the SCDE, serving as a reviewer of our products, while also participating as a key collaborator with the RC6 in the planning for the SCDE's annual Family and Community Engagement Summits. [redacted], helped introduce the RC6 team to the SCDE family engagement team. A second partner for the RC6 family engagement work was the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) Equity Assistance Center (EAC) South. [redacted], participated with the RC6 on the annual Summit Planning Committee and led a workshop ("Harnessing the Power of Parents to Improve Education: Lessons Learned About Shared Leadership").

3. After early literacy leaders in the three states (Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina) expressed an interest in learning more about successful LEA and school efforts to intervene with struggling readers (in grades 4 and higher), the RC6 reached out to the REL-Southeast for information on their efforts to support a group of LEAs in Mississippi as they used evidence-based practices with struggling adolescent readers. The RC6 hosted a webinar in 2024 in which the REL-Southeast presented on their work with the Mississippi LEAs to the early literacy leaders in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. As the RC5, we intend to maintain this partnership with the REL-Southeast around evidence-based practices for struggling adolescent readers.

4. We have also delivered services and supports to other regions within the Comprehensive Center Network. As a result of the SERVE Center's operation of the National Center for Homeless Education, we were able to provide supports to the Region 19 Comprehensive Center in their efforts to work with Hawai'i, American Samoa, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands in support of children and youth experiencing homelessness (letter of support provided in

Appendix). Partnerships of this nature exemplify the potential efficiency and effectiveness of the Comprehensive Center Network and we look forward to continuing to play a role in this critical effort to address our nation's greatest educational challenges.

Type 2: Engaging with Organizations that Have Evidence-Based Products or Training that Aligns with the Needs Articulated by Our Clients

In some cases, our planning for how to provide capacity-building services ends up focusing on organizations that have in place a particular training program, such as one that is well-aligned with the needs and context for a particular SEA. These pre-existing training programs or products may provide an efficient means for addressing a SEA's emerging needs or challenges. That is, the training may be designed around a particular state or region's needs and thus, the organization can act quickly in providing direct, immediate supports to our clients. Our Project Leads, along with our Assistant Director for Evidence-Based Practices, and Co-Directors have built a network of resources that we may tap into as needed. Two examples are provided below.

1. Through our Georgia-based partners at The Institute for Performance Improvement (TIFPI), and at the request of the GaDOE, the RC6 supported cohorts of school improvement specialists through the *LAUNCH!*™ training, which prepares SEA-identified school improvement coaches and regional support persons to work more effectively with their assigned low-performing schools. In our tenure as the RC6, the GaDOE expressed a specific interest in this *LAUNCH!*™ training during our initial needs sensing sessions, resulting in our support for multiple cohorts of educators (selected by the GaDOE) having access to this training over two years. Through the *LAUNCH!*™ Training, participants learned systemic analysis processes to use in their roles as school improvement coaches (such as processes for identifying problems and solutions as a school).

2. As another example of partnering in our tenure as the RC6, we engaged with [redacted]

Type 3: Engaging with Individual Subject Matter and Technical Assistance Experts that Have Unique Experience and Skills to Support Client Needs

At times, that one "perfect fit" is required – an expert that has specific topical expertise, understands the context of the SEA or LEA, and is capable of meeting the needs of the client immediately and efficiently. As a result of SERVE's more than 30 years of experience in providing research, evaluation, and technical assistance, we have partnered with many organizations, universities, and consultants who had the subject matter and technical assistance expertise we needed at a particular time or for a particular project. These individuals can efficiently step into a project in progress, provide the needed expertise in leading projects, or assist in providing other expertise.

For example, since 2020, the RC6 has engaged [redacted] to provide Implementation Science training for SEA teams internal to the SCDE charged with working to improve low-performing schools. Previously, she has directed and supported the statewide implementation of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) in multiple states, including North Carolina, and is considered to be an expert in this area.

Factor 3 in Review: We have demonstrated our ability to develop new and ongoing partnerships in three different ways. We look forward to establishing new partnerships in the future as the RC5 (specific proposed partnerships are described in Section B, Factor 3). Partnerships truly exemplify the potential efficiency of the Comprehensive Center Network and we look forward to continuing to play a role in this critical effort to address the educational challenges identified by the SEAs in our region.

Responsive to Program and Application Requirements

In developing this proposal, we addressed all the Program and Application requirements. While many of the requirements are evident throughout the proposal, the tables below highlight the primary locations within the proposal where we address each of the Program and Application Requirements. (For space purposes, the wording of the Requirements has been excerpted from their full wording available in the RFP).

Program Requirements

Program Requirements for All Centers (9)	Proposal Location
1. Develop service plans annually.	Section B, Factor 1
2. Develop and implement capacity-building services in partnership with State and local clients.	Section A
3. Develop and implement an effective performance management and evaluation system.	Section B, Factor 1
4. Develop and implement a stakeholder engagement system.	Section B, Factor 2

5. Develop and implement a high-quality personnel management system.	Section B, Factor 3
6. Develop and implement a comprehensive communication and dissemination plan.	Section B, Factor 2 (see RC to Field Information Flow [Communication and Dissemination])
7. Identify and enter into partnership agreements with federally funded providers, State and others to support states in scaling up evidence-based programs, practices, interventions.	Section B, Factor 4
8. Within 90 days of receiving funding for an award, demonstrate commitments have been secured to carry out proposed annual service plans.	Section B, Factor 1 (see Annual Service Plan/Project Planning)
9. Participate in a national evaluation of the Comprehensive Centers Program	Section B, Factor 1 (see Mid-Year and End-Of-Year Reporting to ED)
Program Requirements for Regional Centers (8)	**Proposal Location**
1. Actively coordinate and collaborate with the REL serving their region, including annual joint needs sensing designed to inform service delivery and reduce burden on State agencies...	Section A, Factor 1 (see REL Toolkits, also see Objectives 3 and 4) Section B, Factor 2 Stakeholder Engagement
2. Consult with a broad range of stakeholders and integrate their feedback in developing the annual service plan to reflect the needs of all states (and	Section B, Factor 1 (see Annual Service Plan) Section B, Factor 2 Stakeholder Engagement

to the extent practicable, of LEAs) within the region to be served.	
3. In developing the Annual Service Plan, ensure services are provided to support students and communities with the highest needs including recipients...	Section A, Factor 1 (see Logic Model) Section B, Factor 1 (see Annual Service Plan/Project Planning)
4. Explore and provide opportunities to connect peers within and across regions.	Section A, Factor 1 (Logic Model, also see Objectives 3, 4, and 5), Section A, Factor 2 (Figure A-2)
5. Collaborate with the National Center and Content Centers to support client and recipient participation in targeted capacity building services and obtain and retain the services of nationally recognized content experts.	Section A, Factor 1 (see Goal 5) Section B, Factor 2 Stakeholder Engagement
6. Support the participation of the Regional Center staff in CCNetwork peer learning opportunities.	Section A, Factor 1 (see Goal 5) Section B, Factor 2 Stakeholder Engagement
7. Within 90 days of receiving funding for an award, provide to the Department copies of partnership agreements with the REL(s) in the region that the Center serves, and as appropriate other Department funded technical assistance providers.	Section B, Factor 4 Approach to Partnerships

8. a) Be located in the region the Center serves. b) The Project Director must be capable of managing all aspects of the Center and be either a minimum of .75FTE or there must be two Project Co-Directors each at a minimum of .5 FTE. Must be able to provide on-site services...	Section A, Introduction Section C Factor 1 Key Project Personnel (see RC5 Leadership)

Application Requirements

Application Requirements for All Centers (8)	Proposal Location
1. Present an approach to the proposed project for operating the Comprehensive Center that clearly establishes the critical educational challenges proposed to be addressed by the Center.	Section A, Factor 1 (see Logic Model)
2. Present applicable regional, State, and local educational needs, including relevant data and the perspectives of under-represented groups, that could be addressed.	Section A, Factor 2
3. Demonstrate how key personnel possess subject matter expert knowledge of statutory requirements...supporting the implementation and scaling up of evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions.	Section C, Factor 1

4. Demonstrate expertise in providing highly relevant and highly effective technical assistance...demonstrates adult learning principles...	Section C, Factor 2 Section A, Factor 2
5. Present a logic model informed by research or evaluation findings that demonstrates a rationale explaining how the project is likely to improve or achieve relevant and expected outcomes.	Section A, Introduction, Logic Model
6. Present a Management Plan that describes the applicant's proposed approach to managing the project to meet all program requirements related to needs assessment, stakeholder engagement, communications and dissemination, personnel management, and partnerships.	Section B
7. Present a Performance Management and Evaluation plan that describes the applicant's proposed approach to meeting the program requirements related to performance management...	Section B, Factor 1
8. Include in the budget an annual set-aside of five percent of the grant amount to support emerging needs that are consistent with the proposed project's intended outcomes.	Section A, Factor 1 Budget Narrative

Application Requirements for Regional Centers (2)	Proposal Location
1. Describe the proposed approach to intensive capacity building services...	Section A, Factor 1 Section B, Factor 1
2. Demonstrate that proposed Key Personnel have the appropriate subject matter and technical assistance expertise to deliver high- quality intensive services that meet client and recipient needs.	Section C Factor 1, Factor 2

Other Attachment File(s)

*** Mandatory Other Attachment Filename:**

To add more "Other Attachment" attachments, please use the attachment buttons below.

RESUMES

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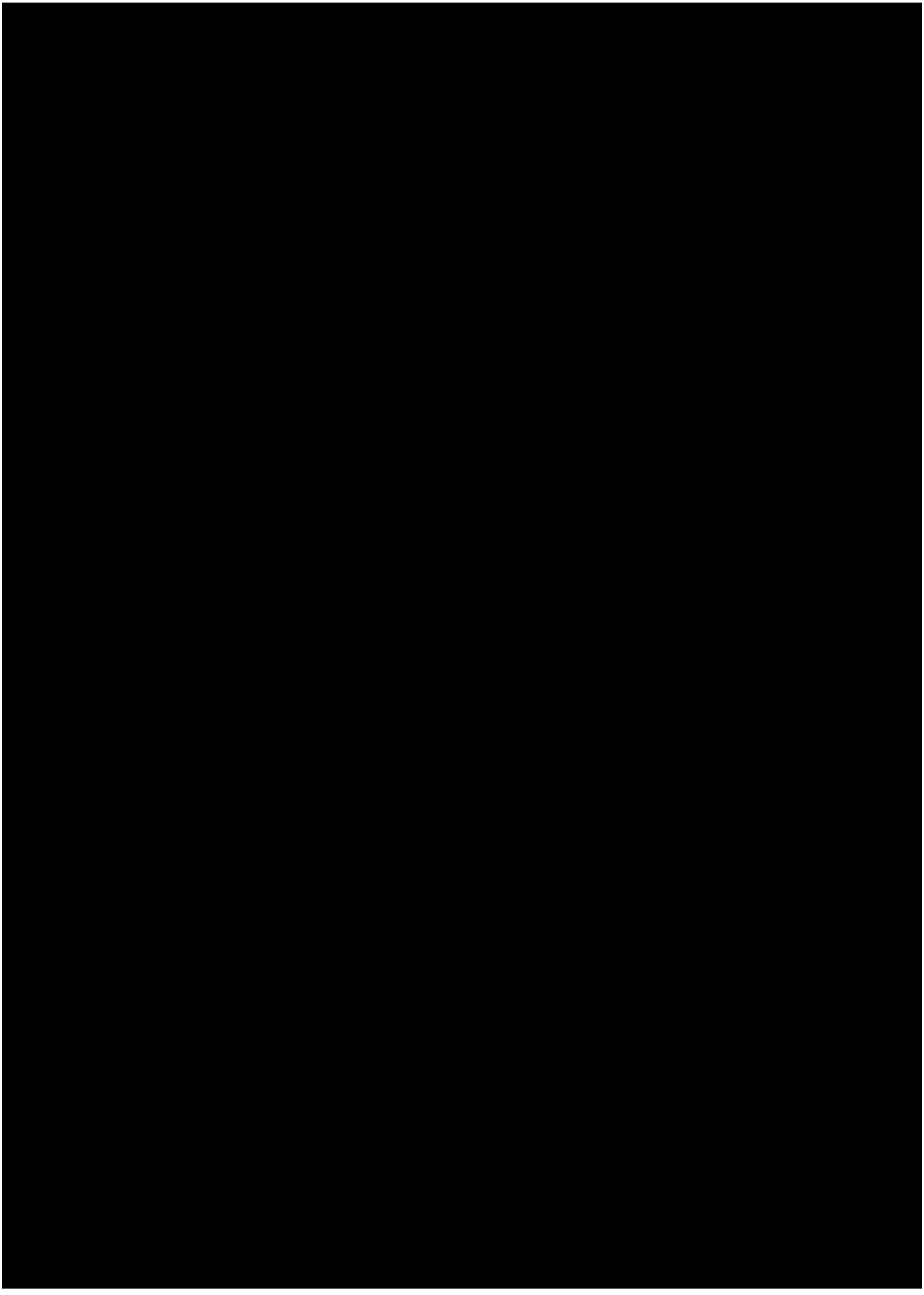
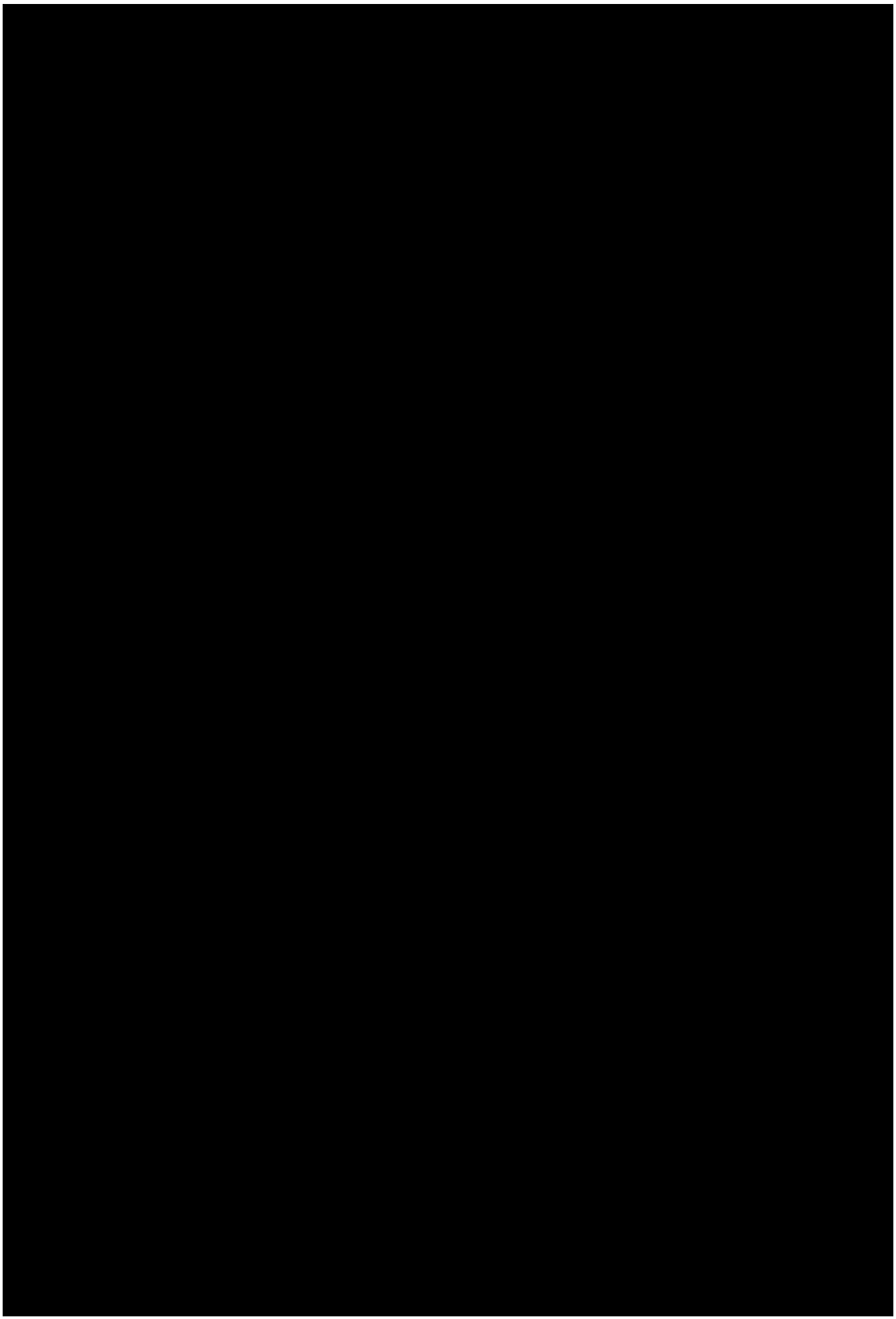
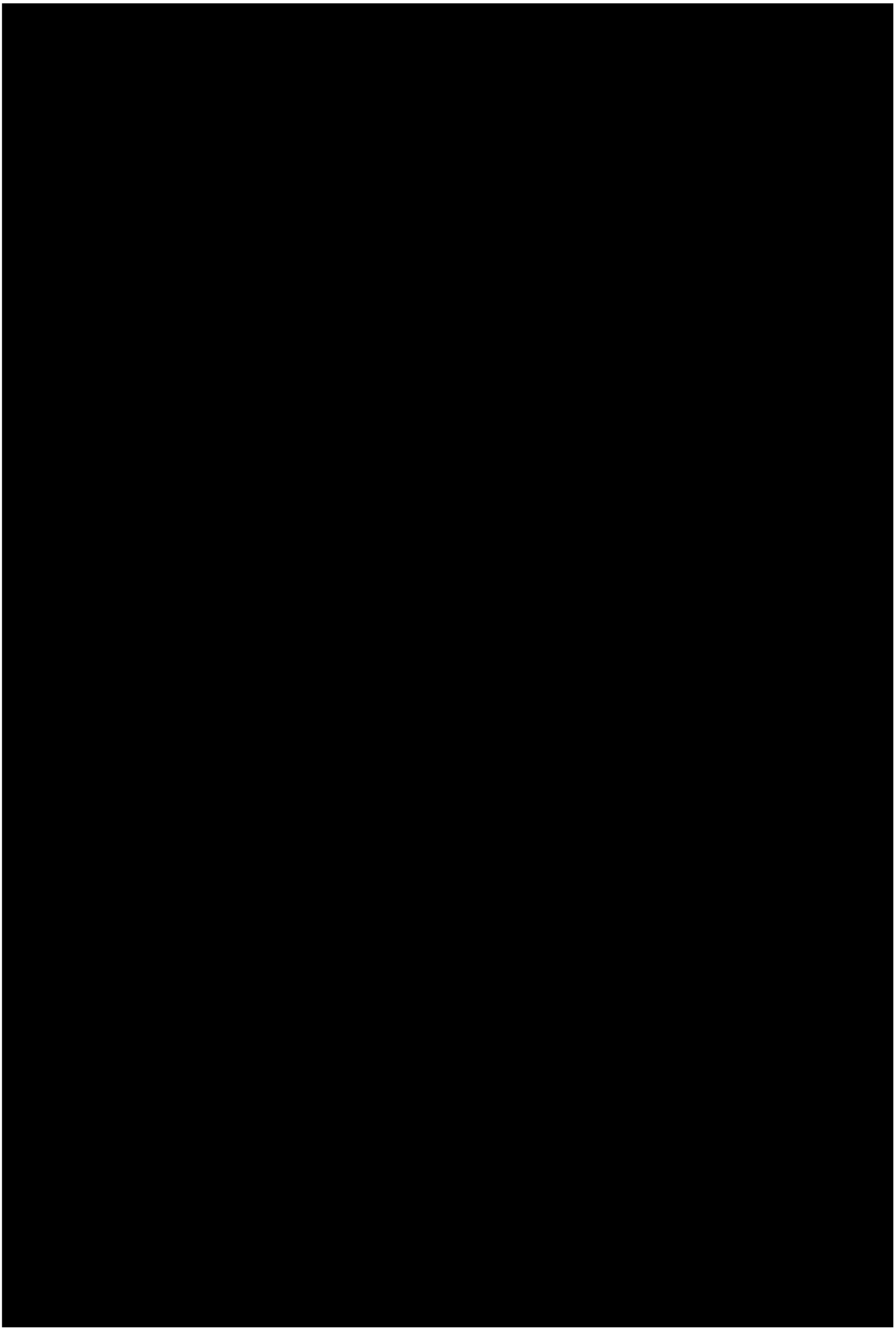
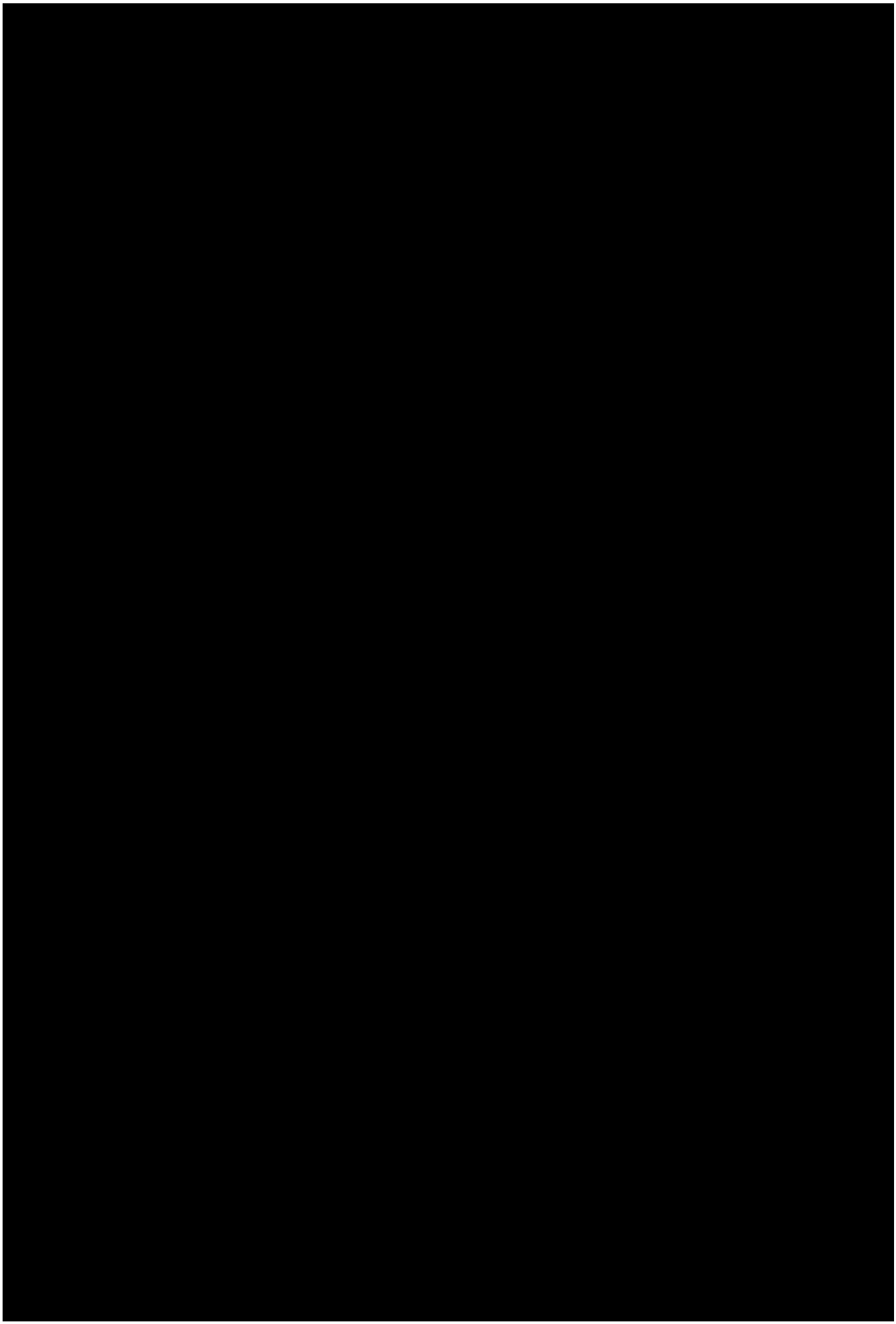
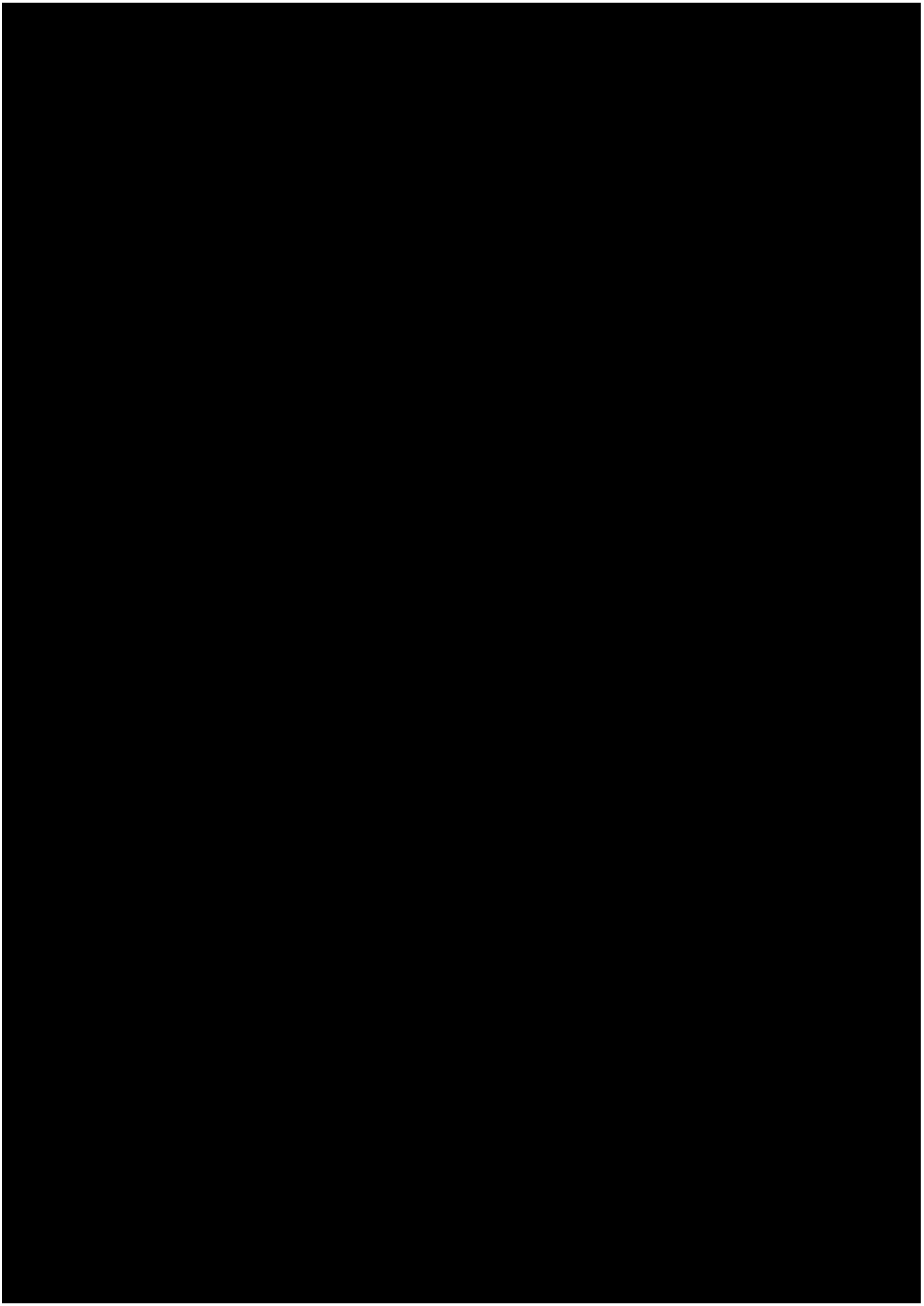
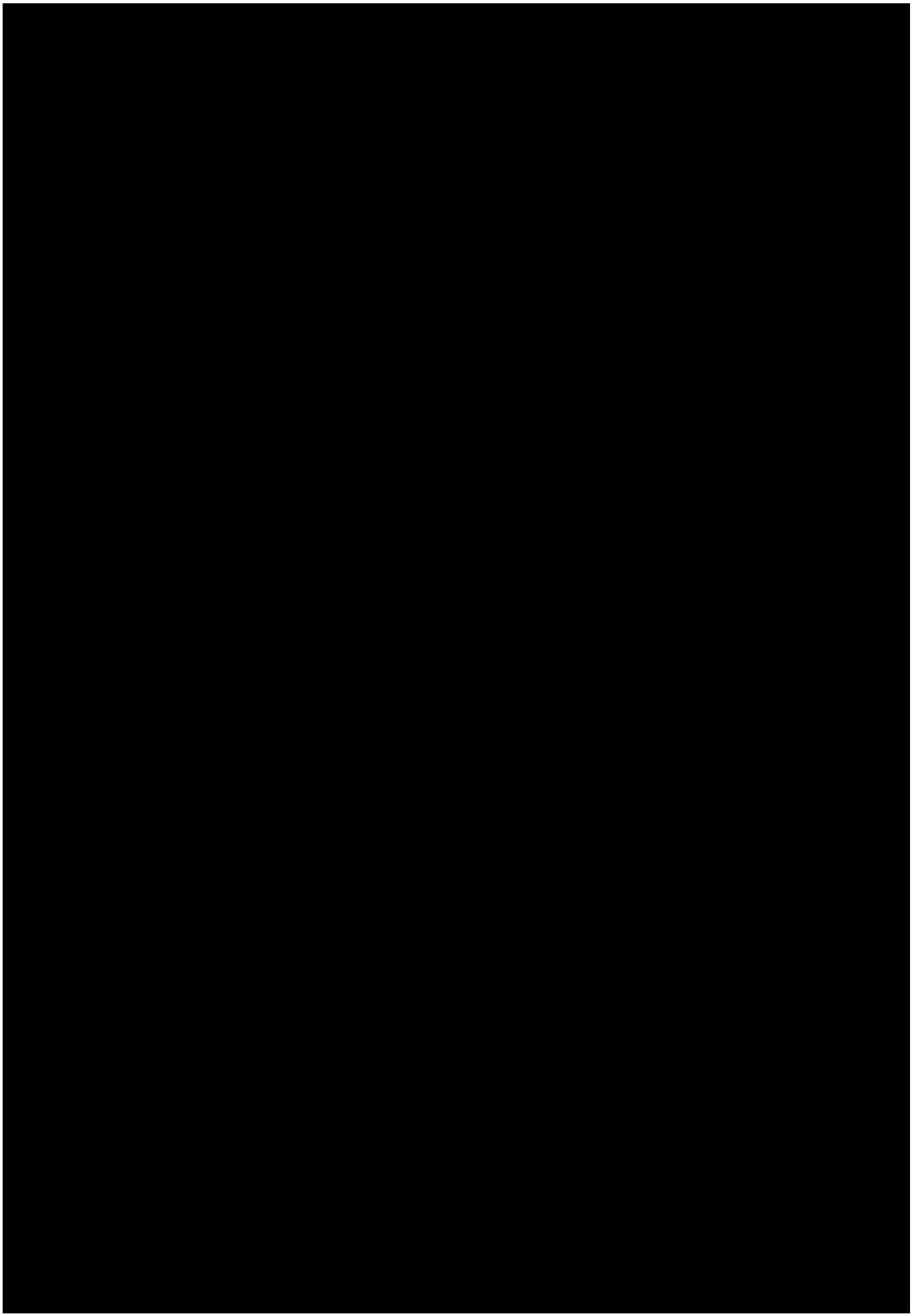


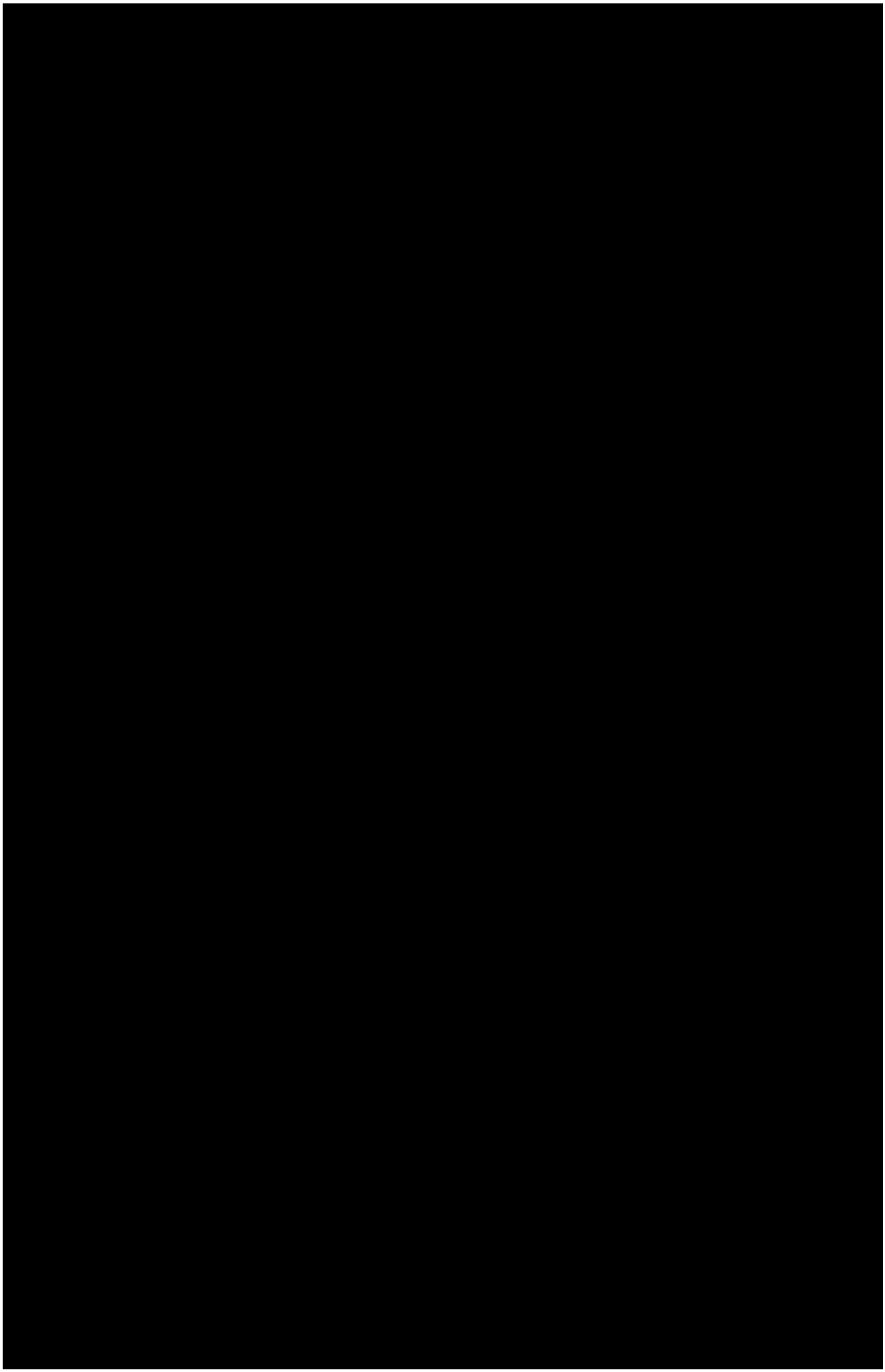


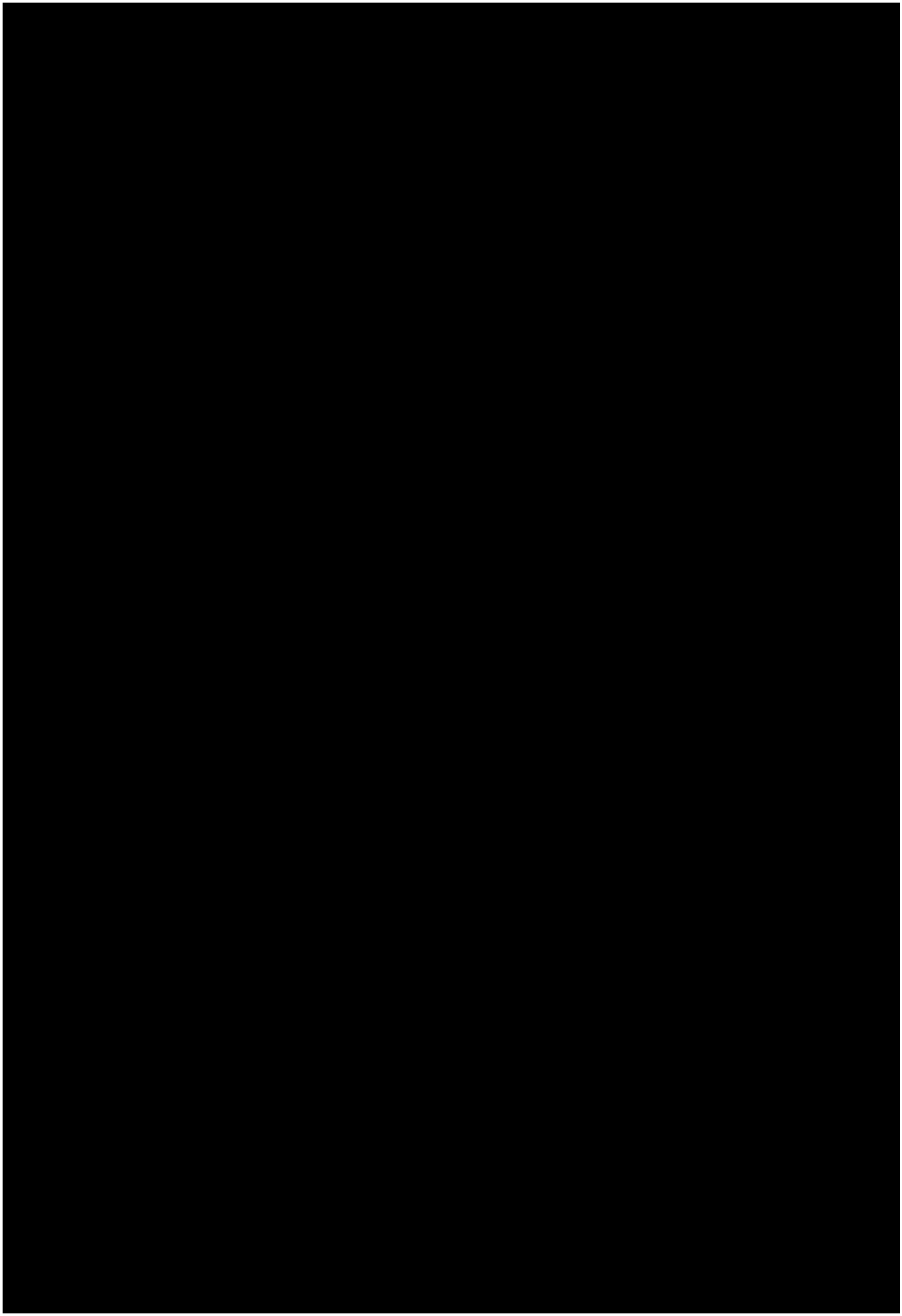


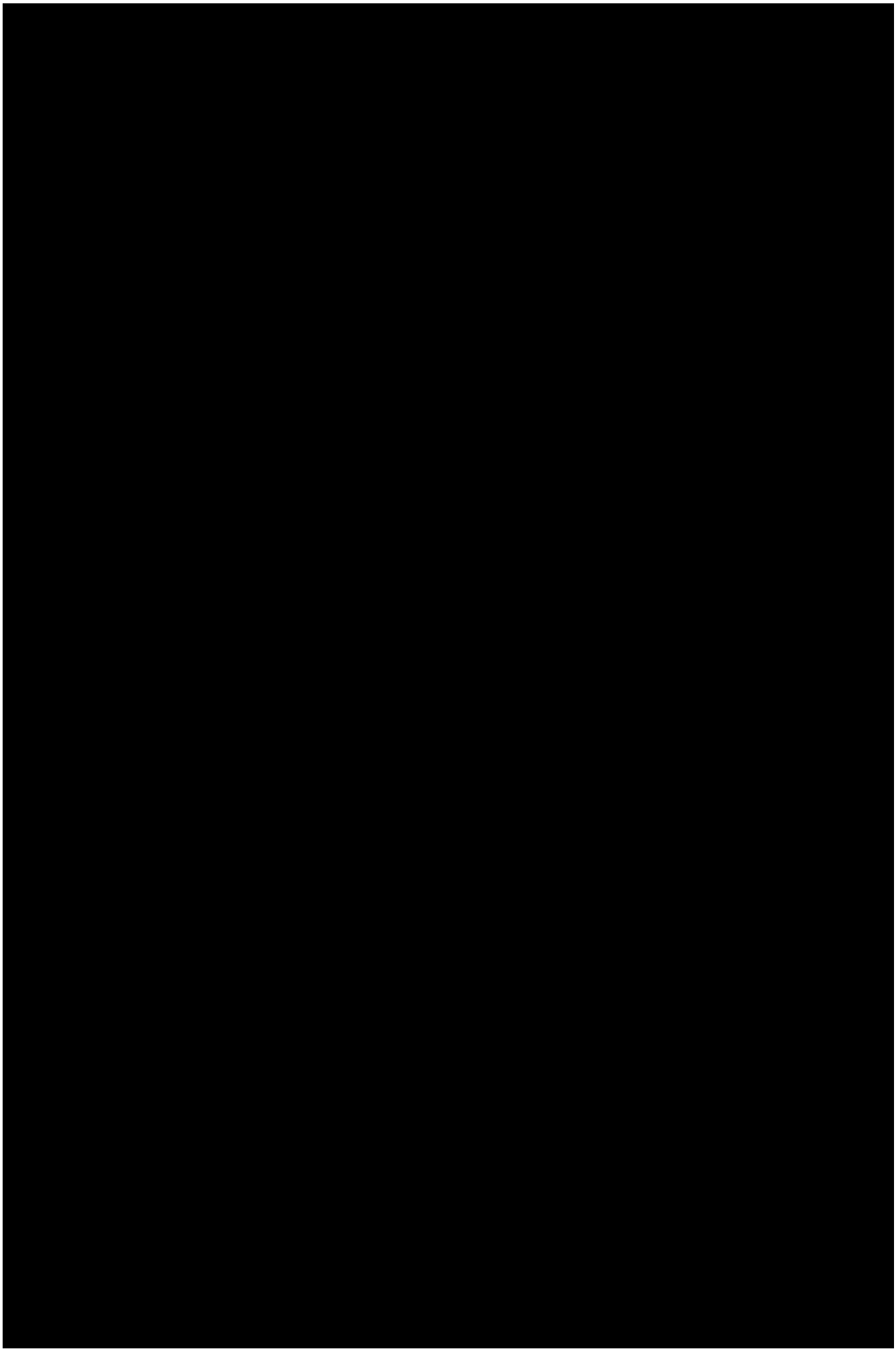


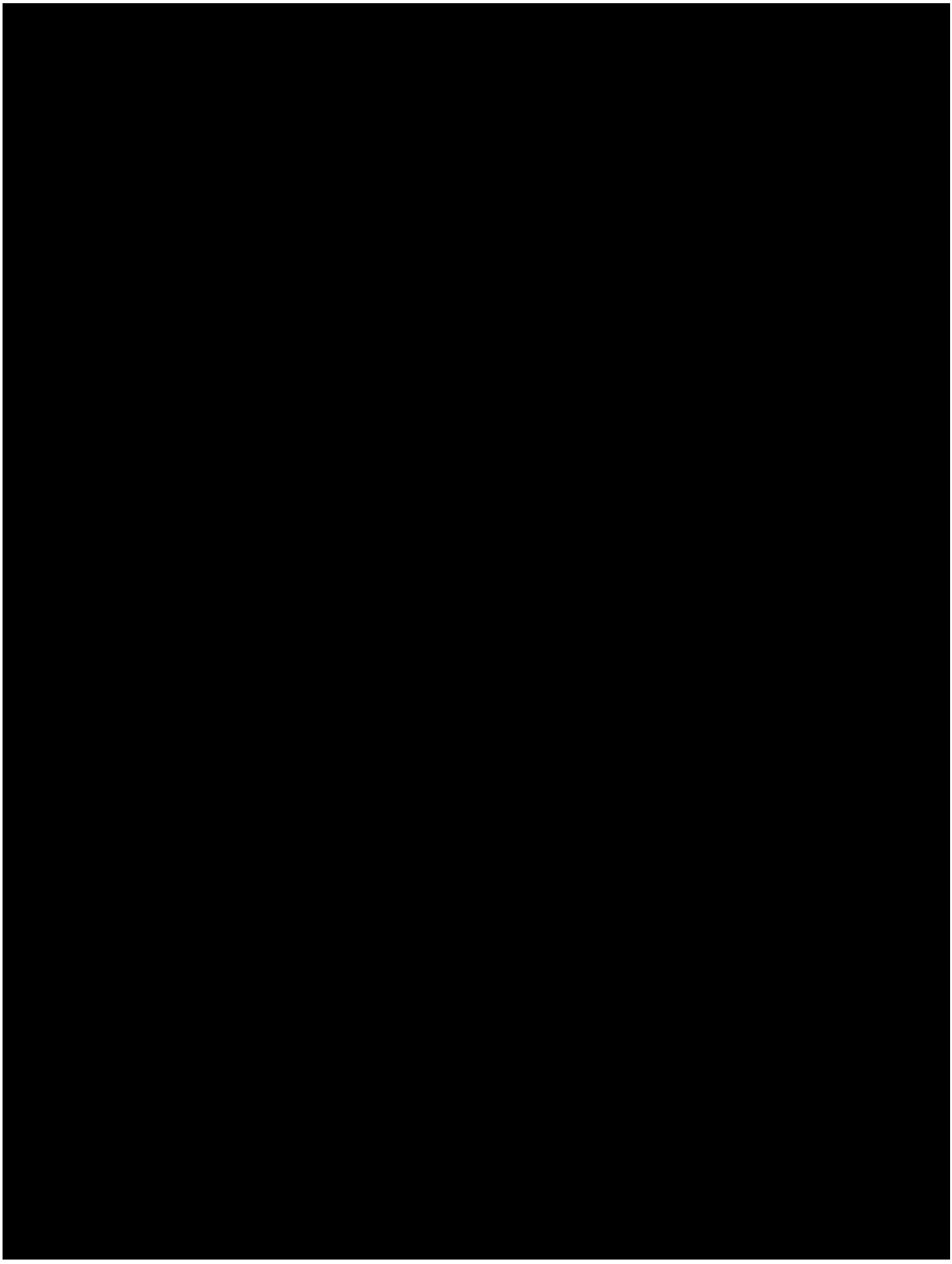


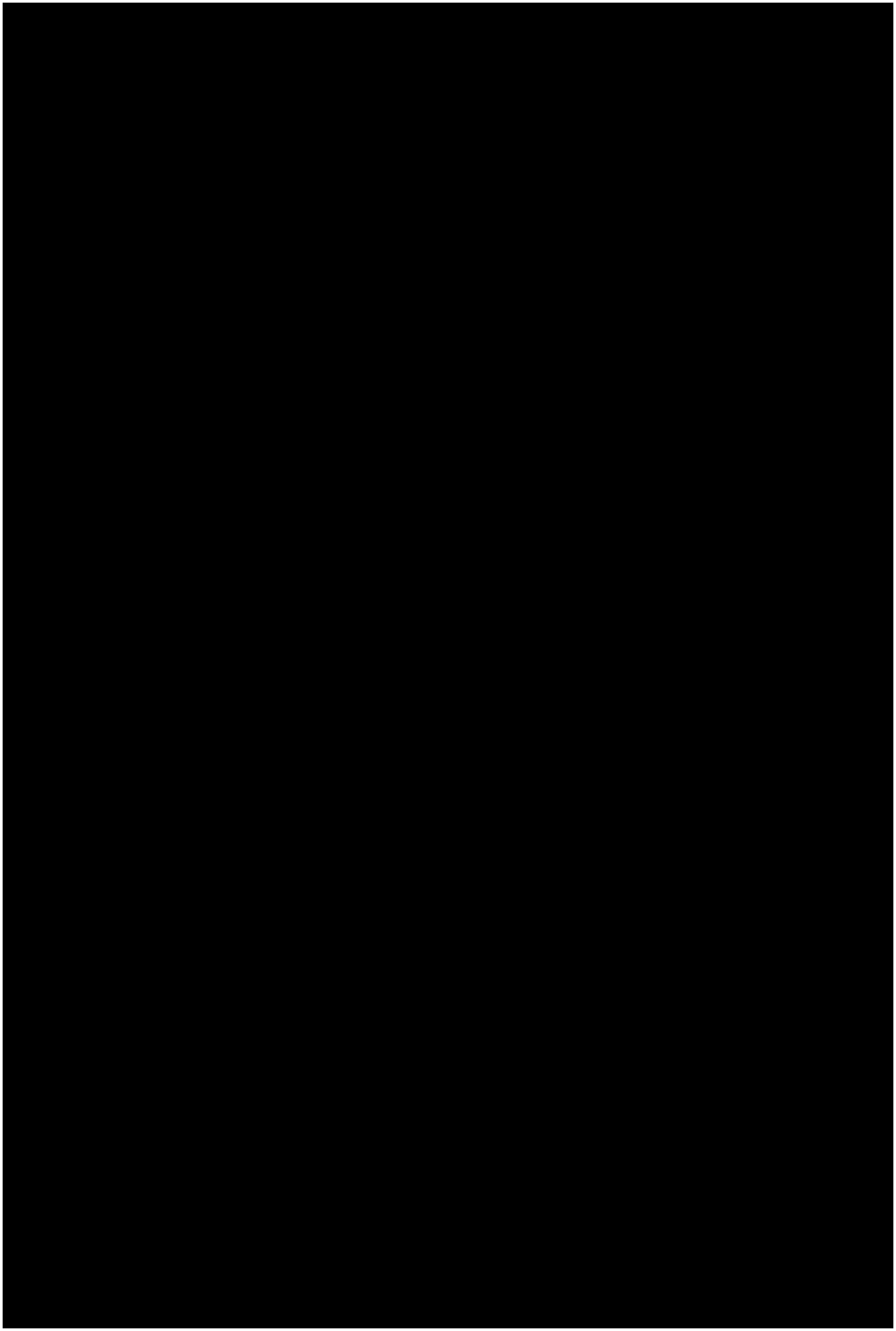


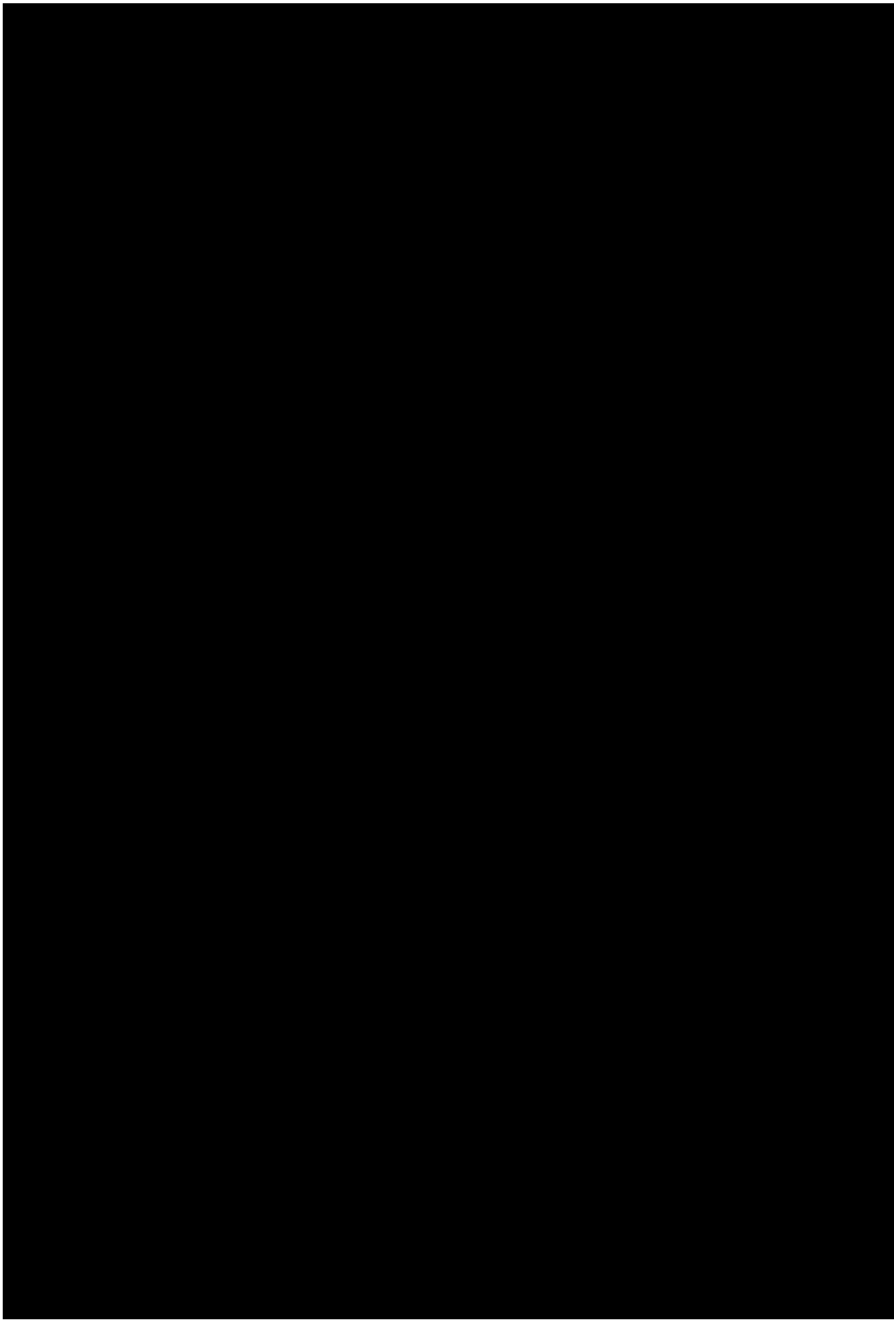


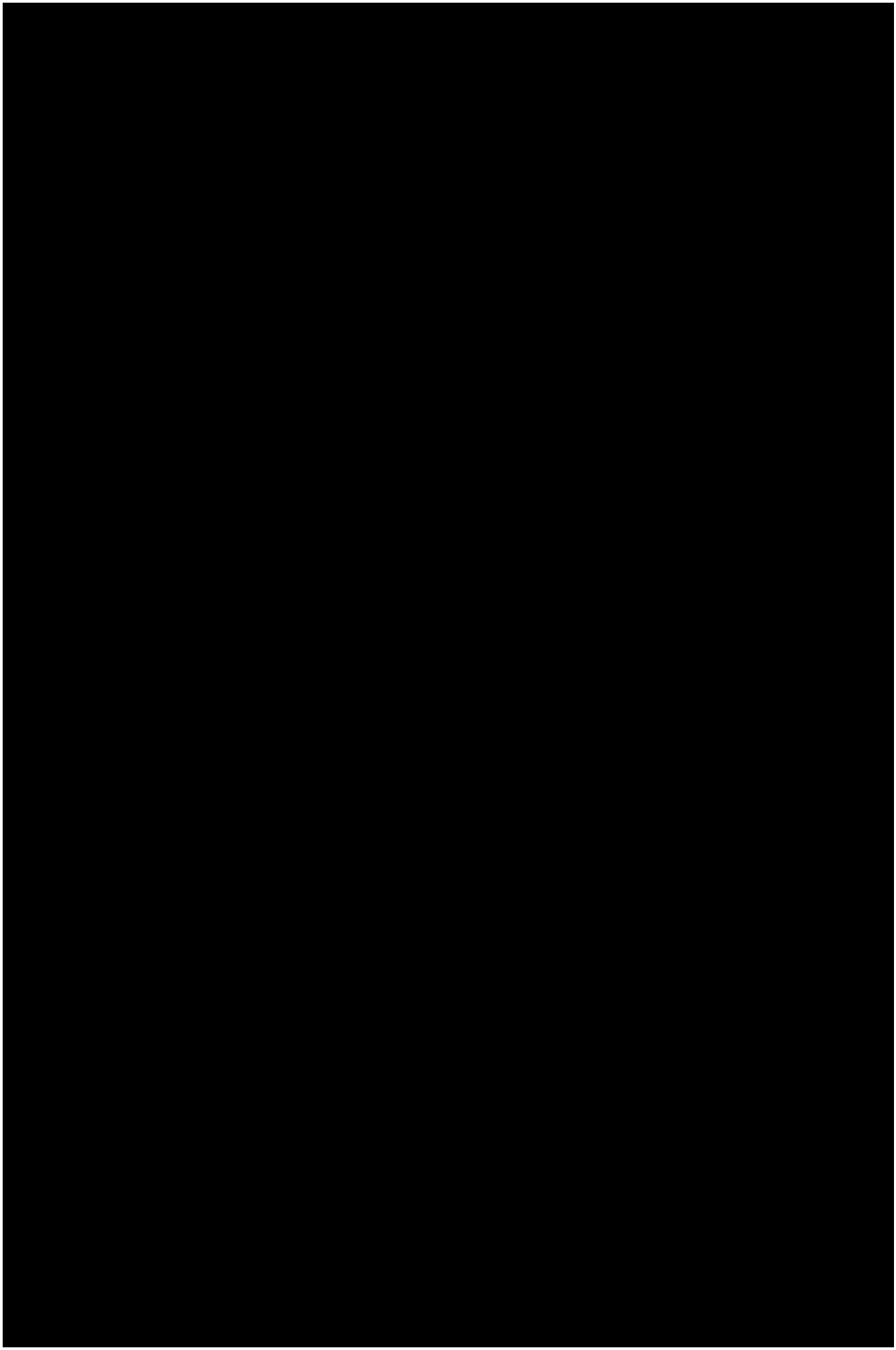


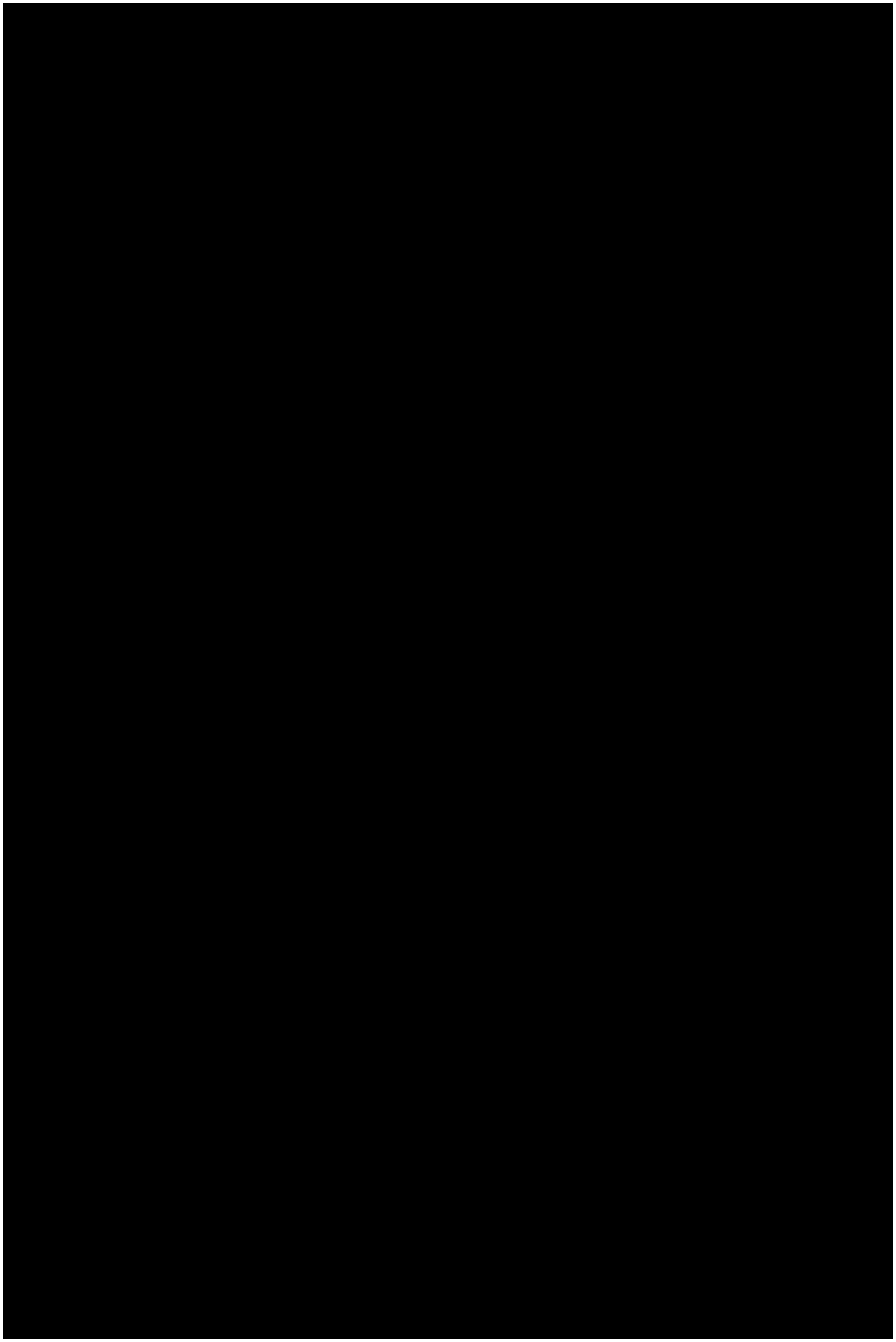


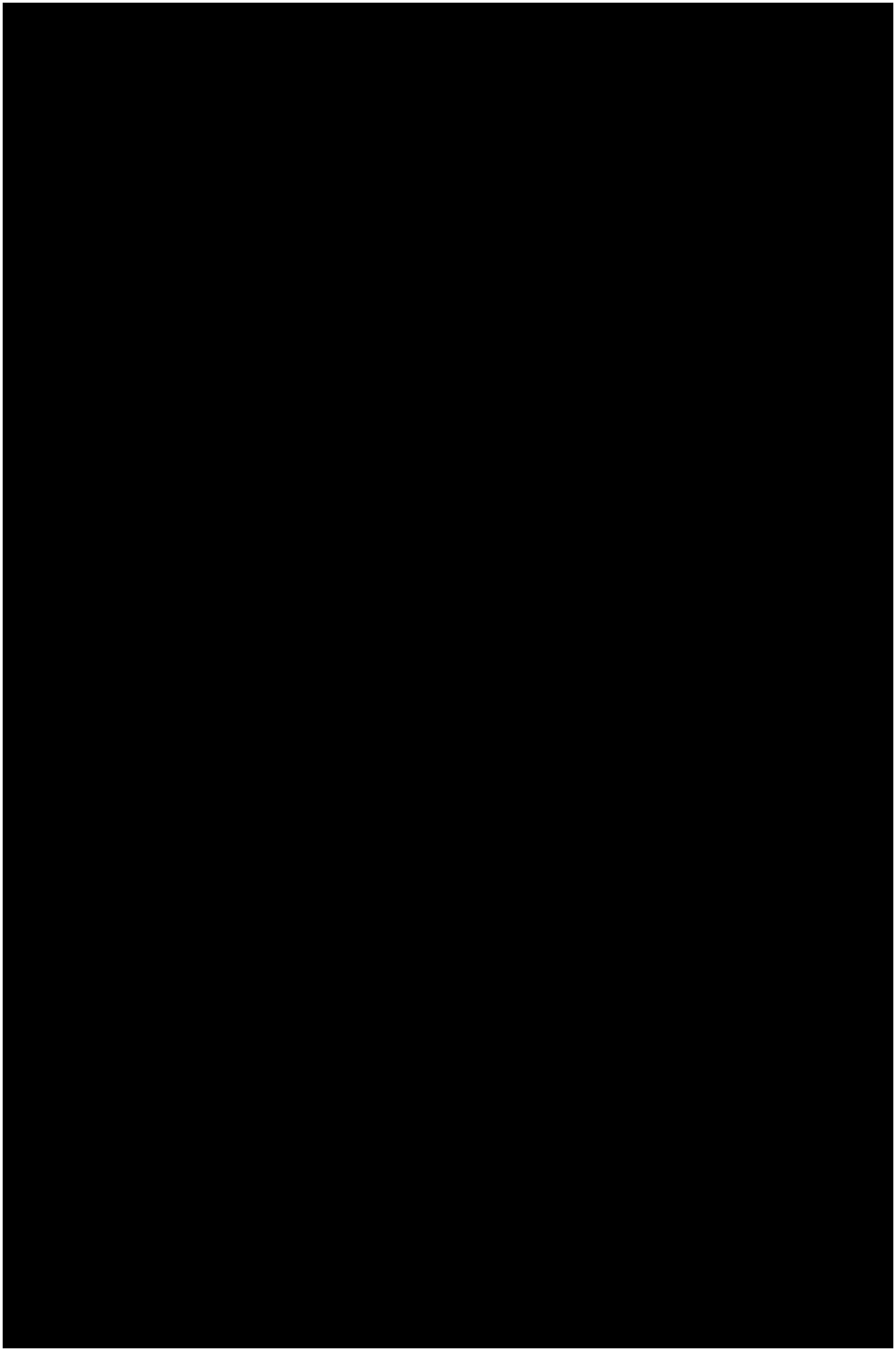


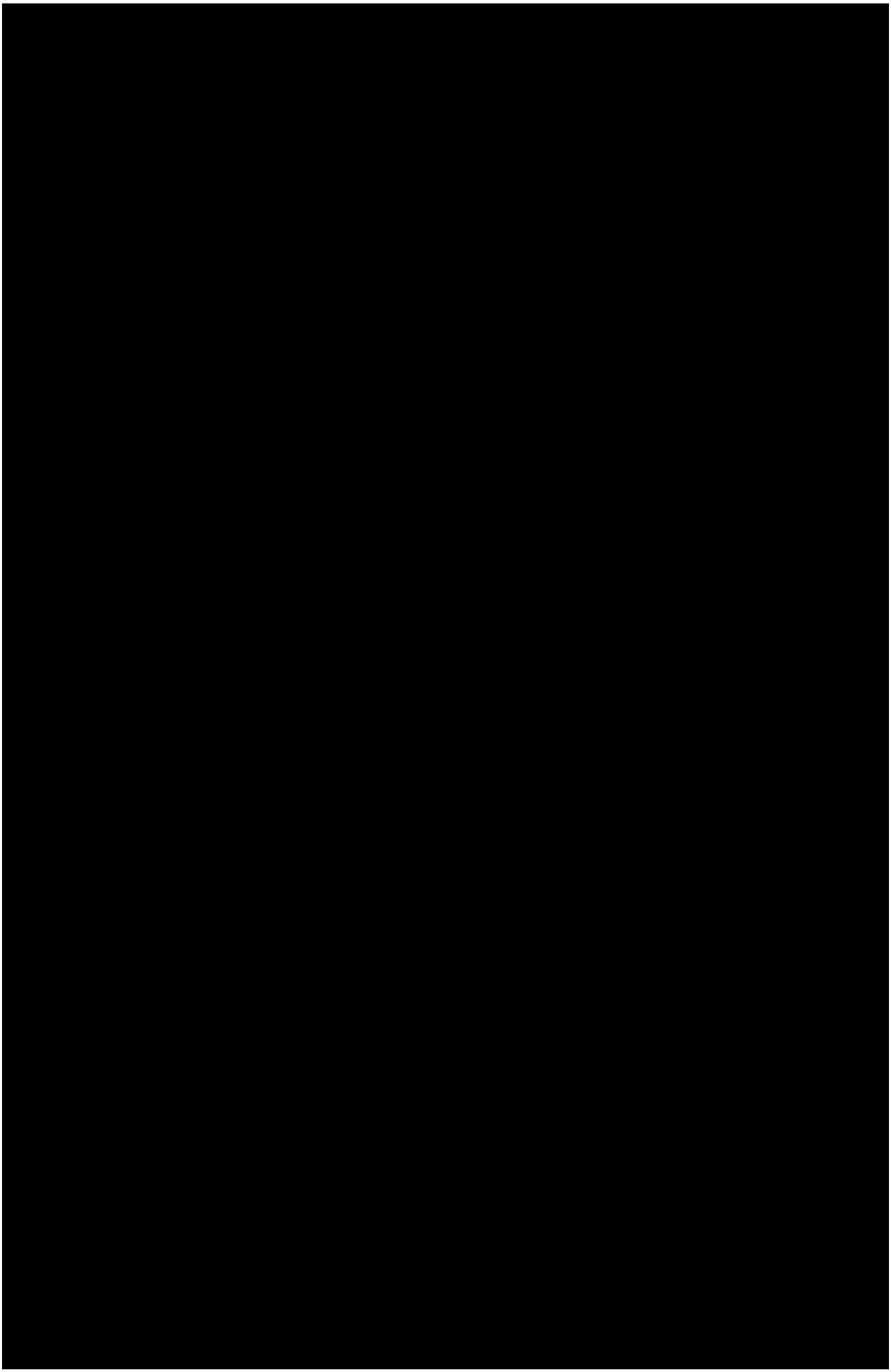


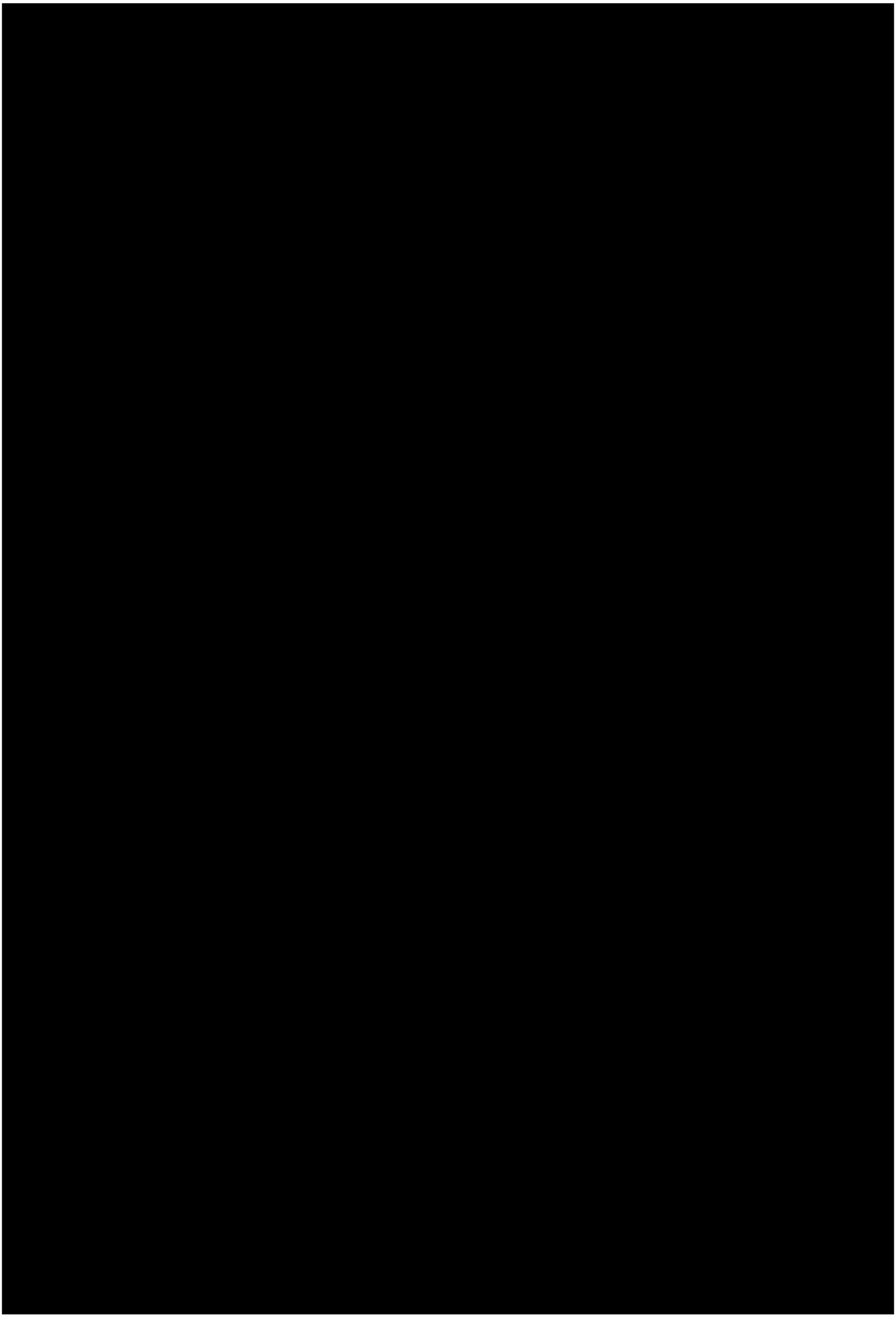


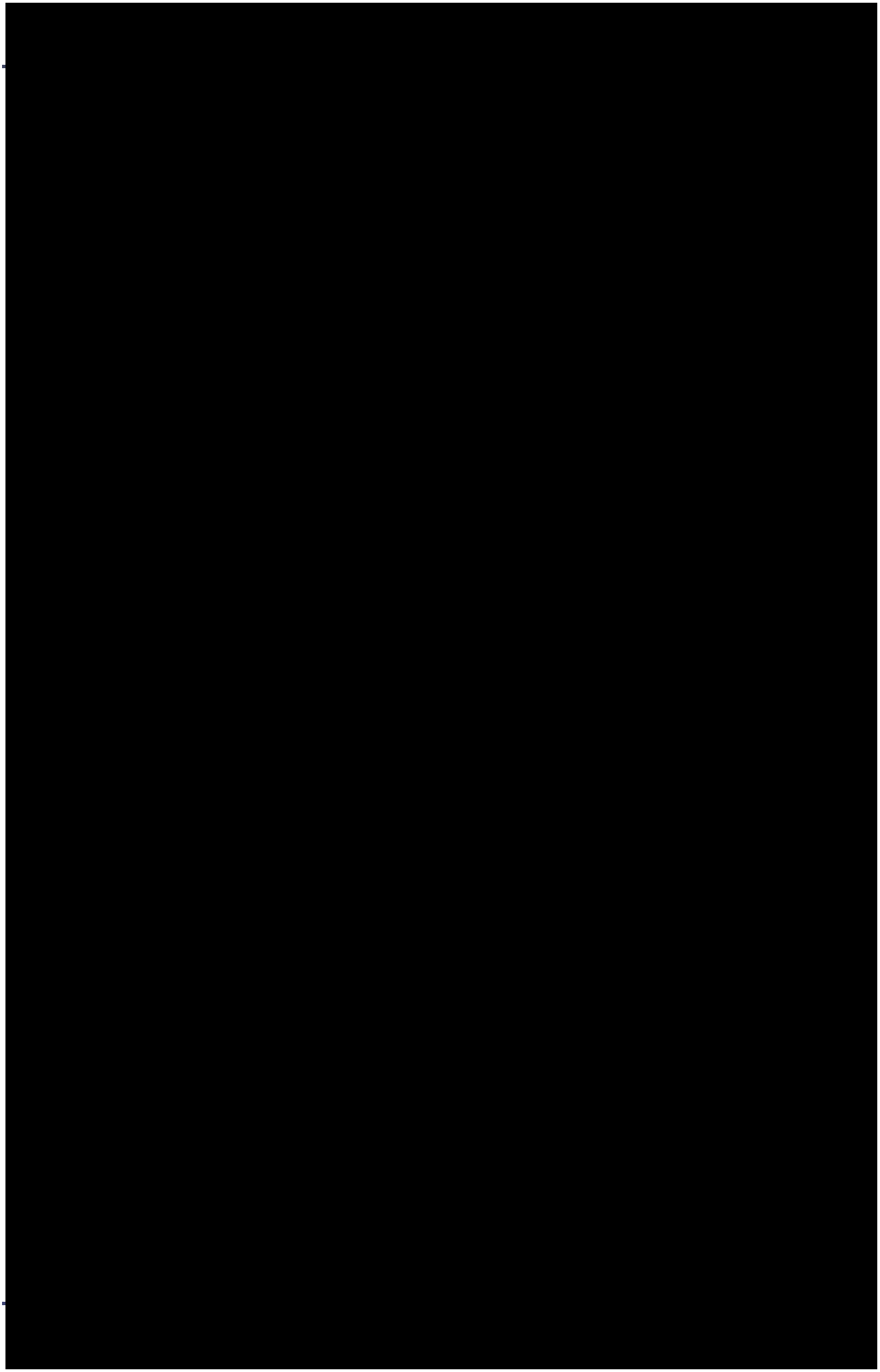


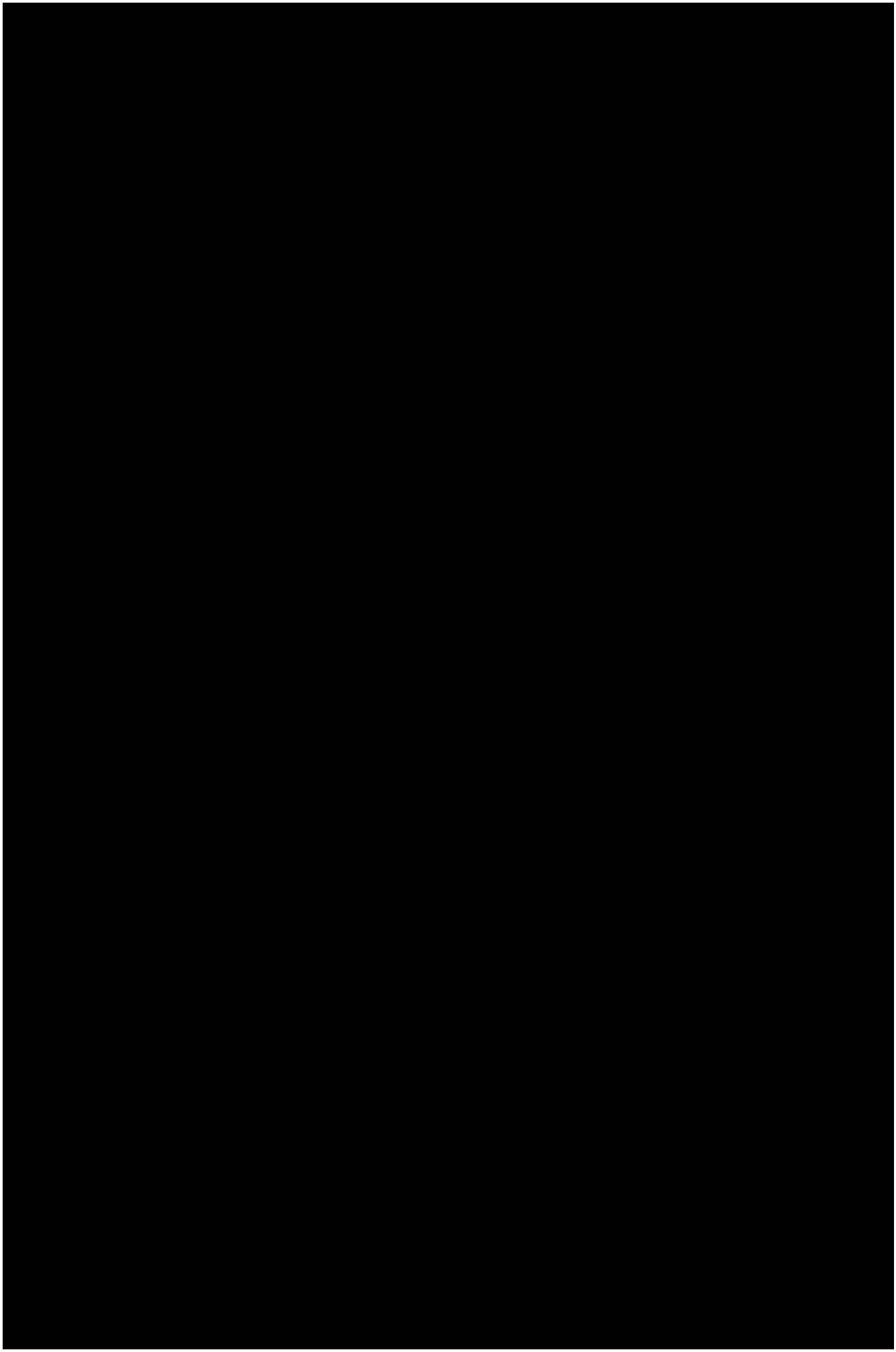


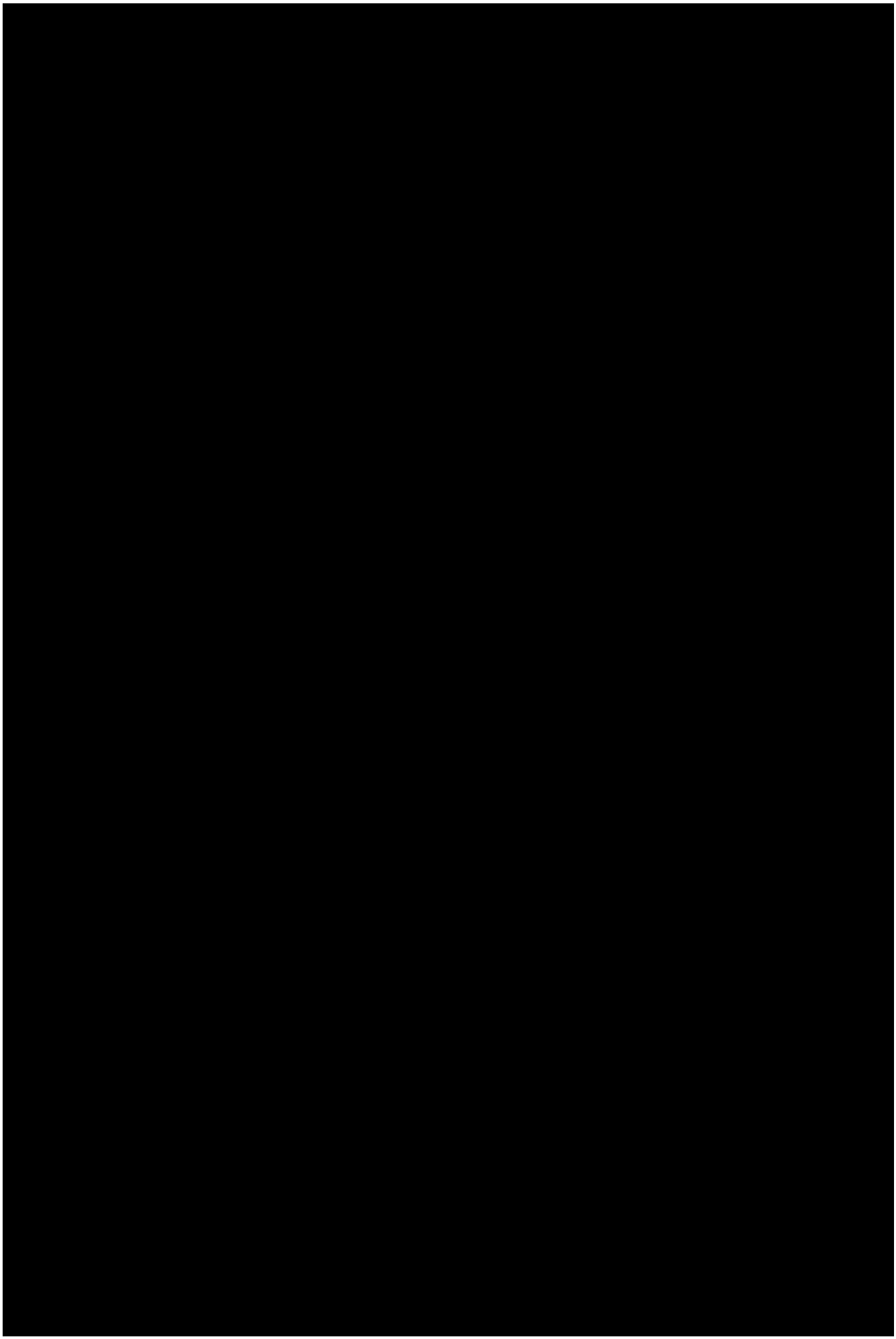


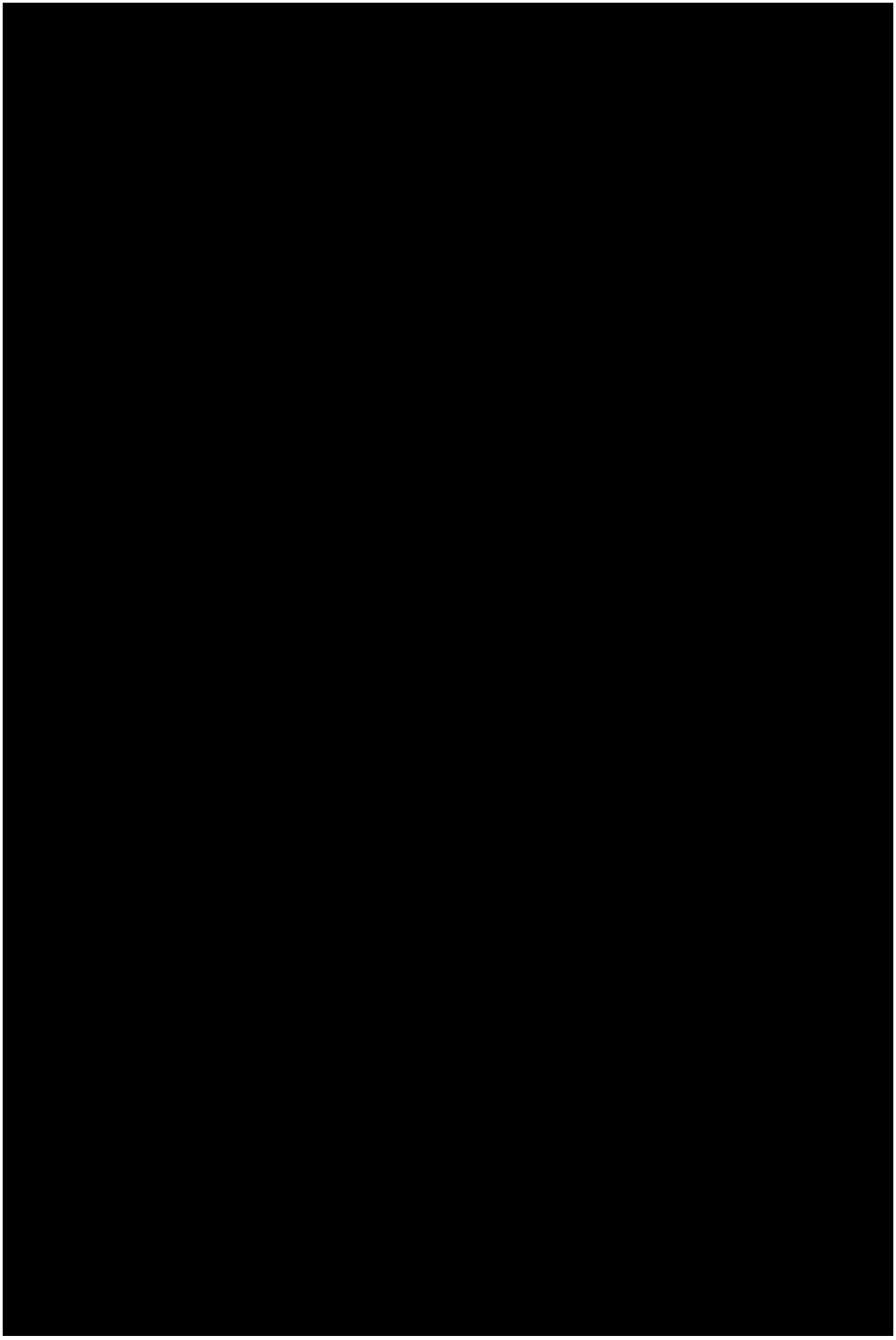


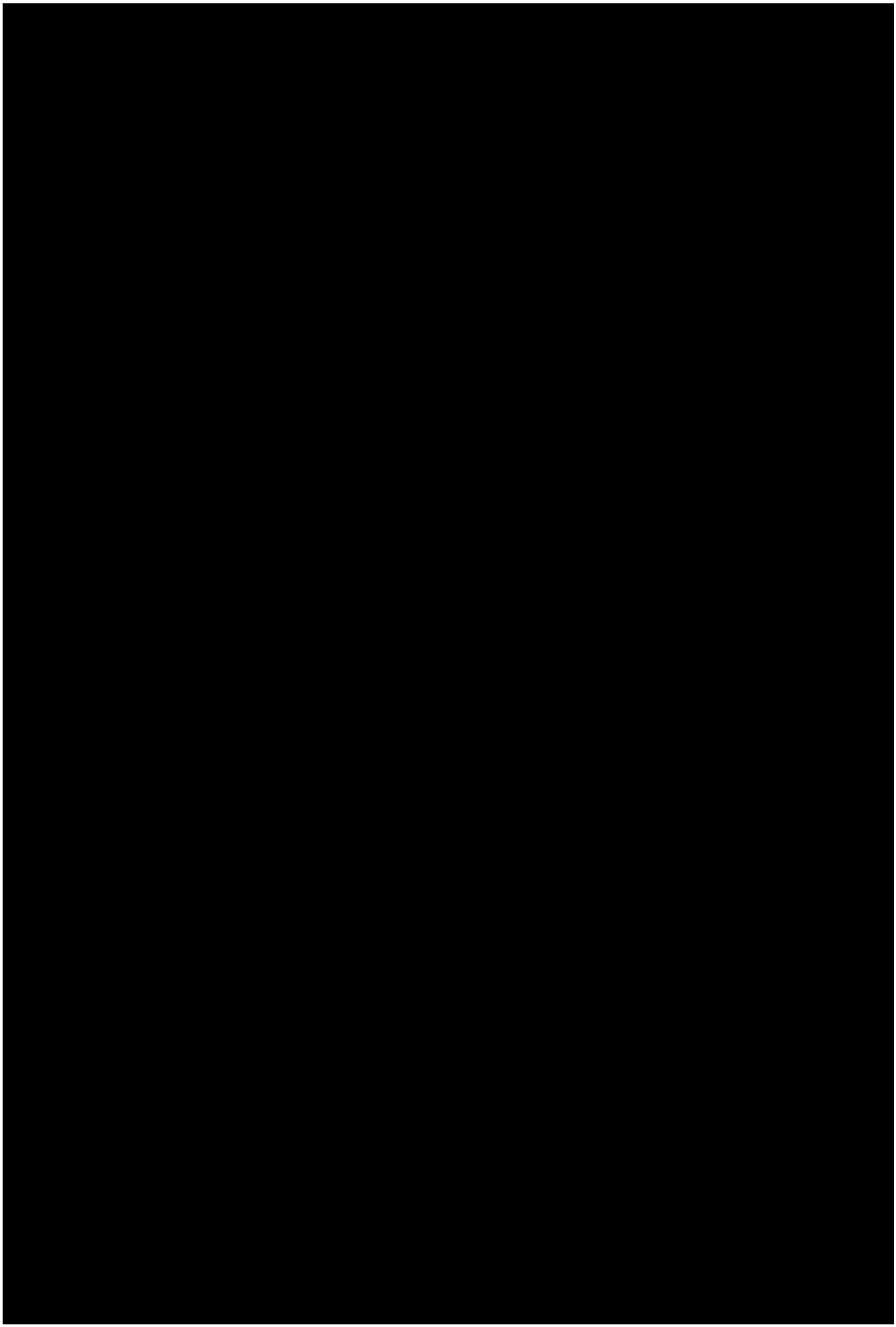


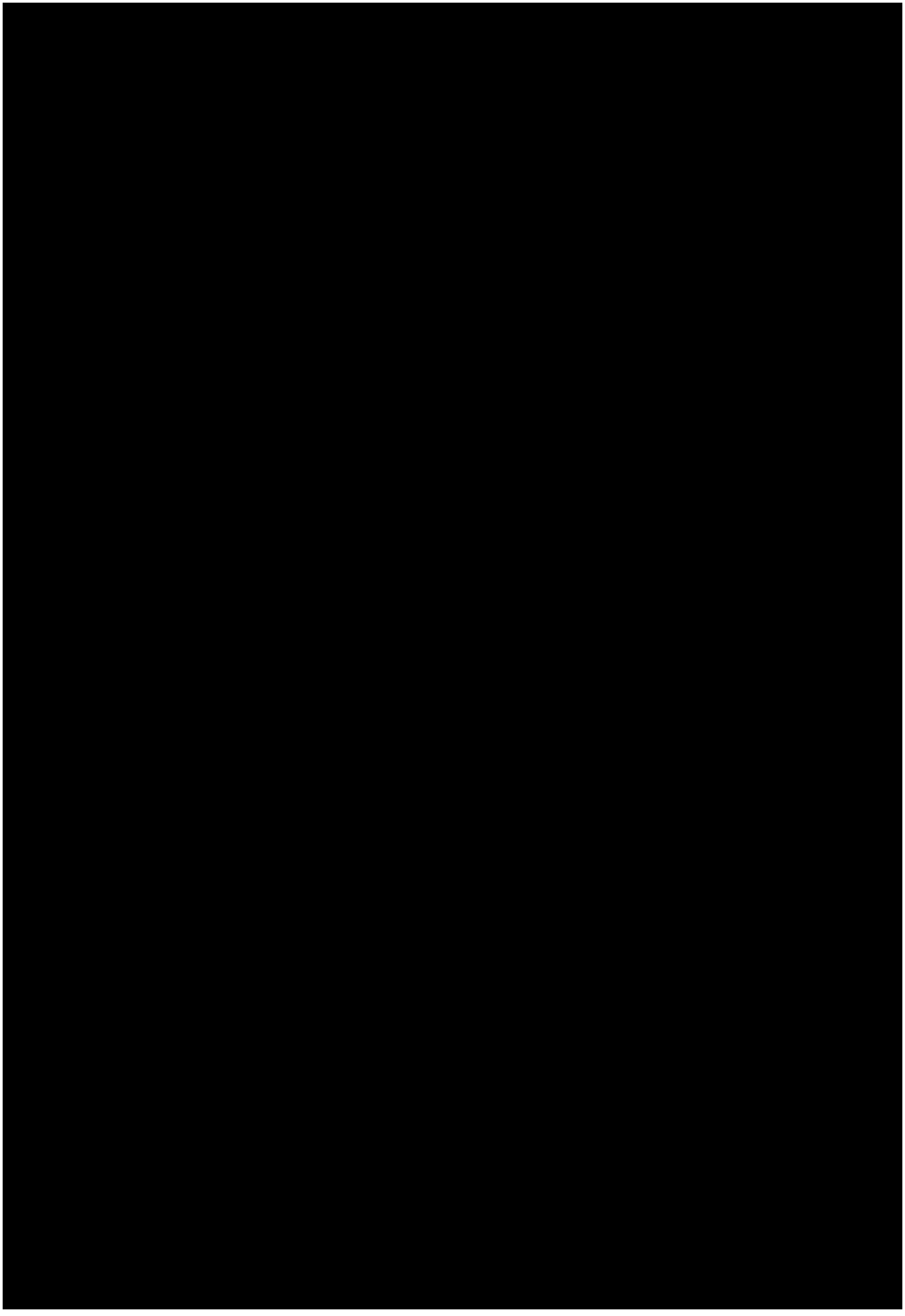


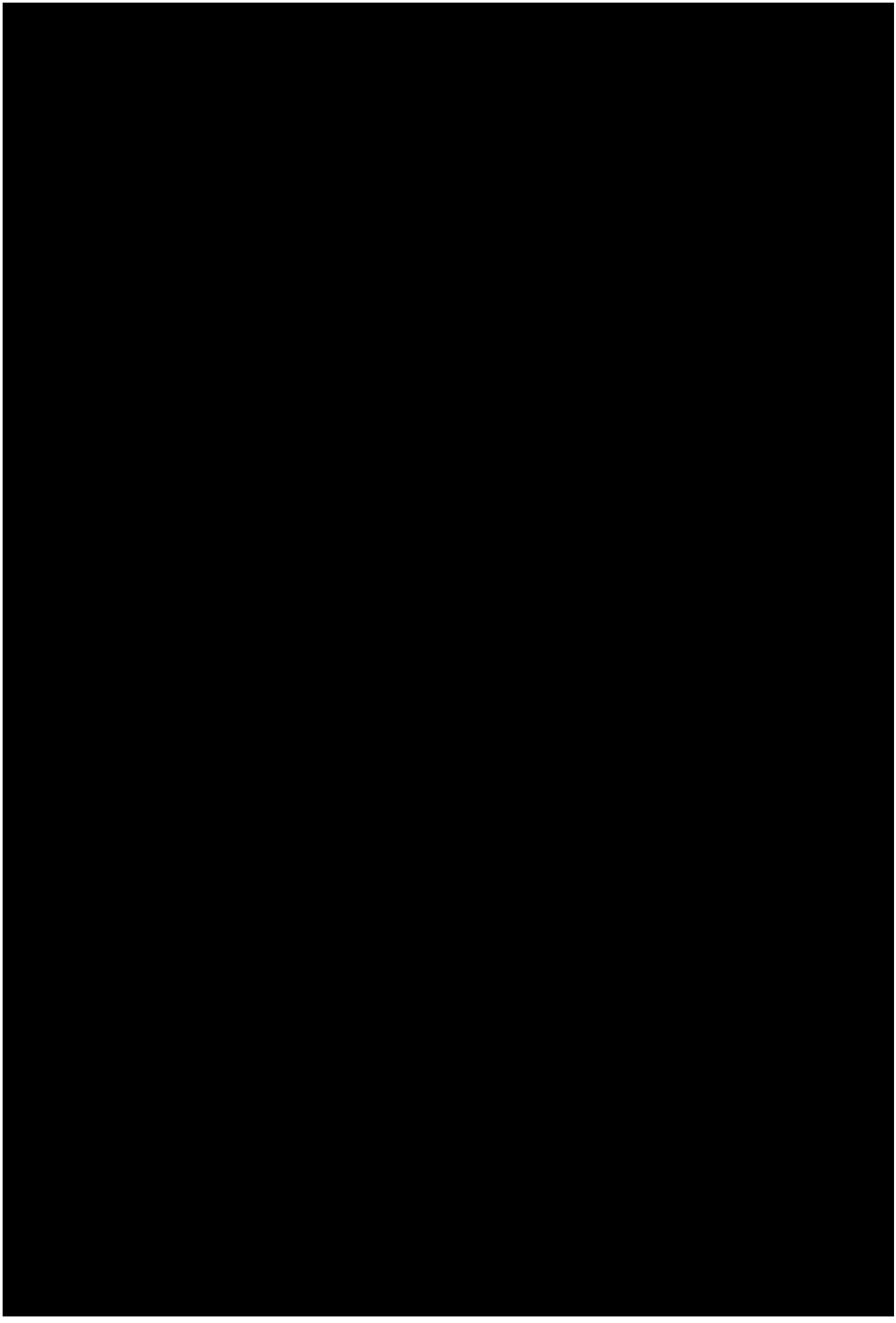


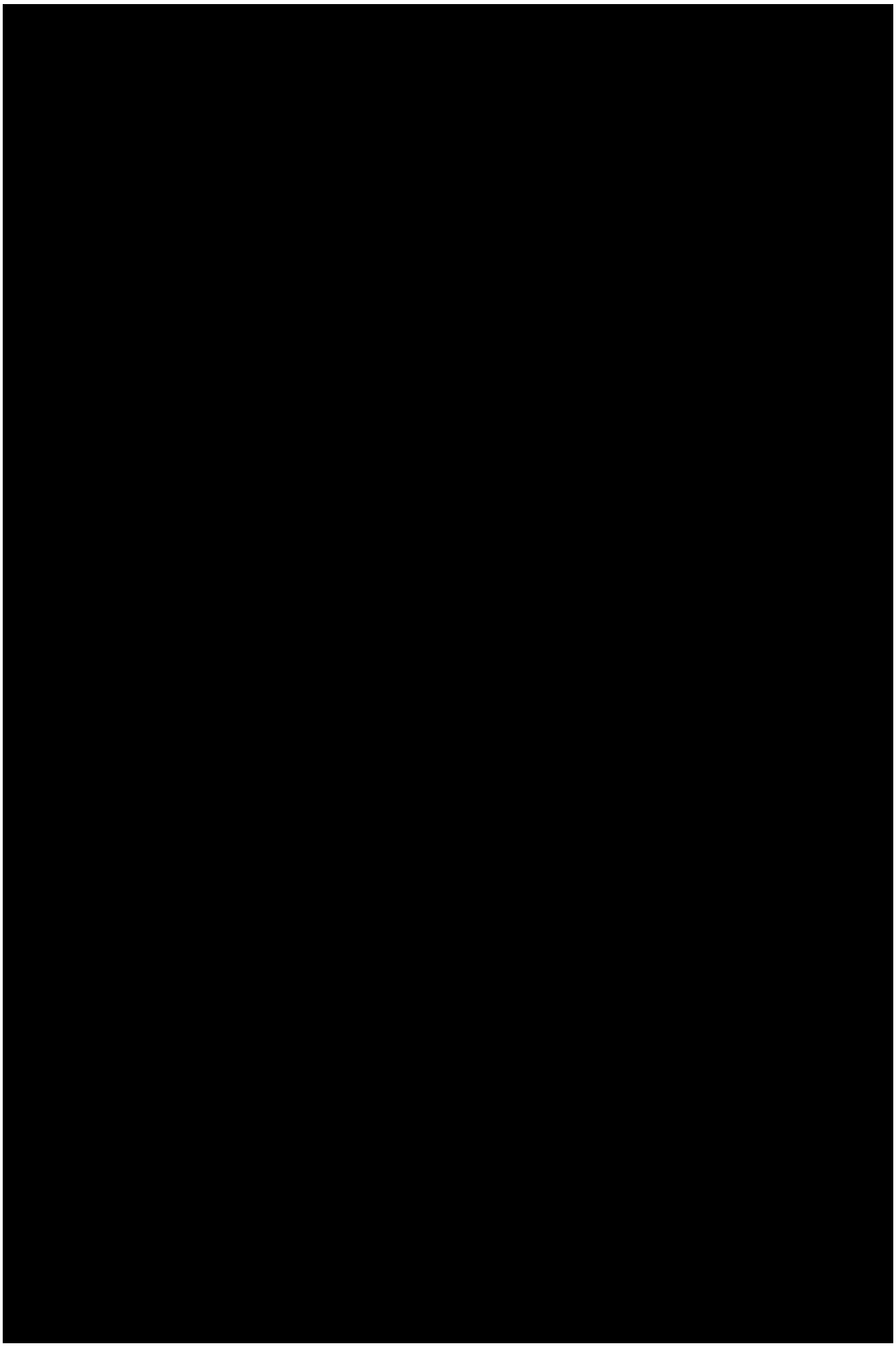


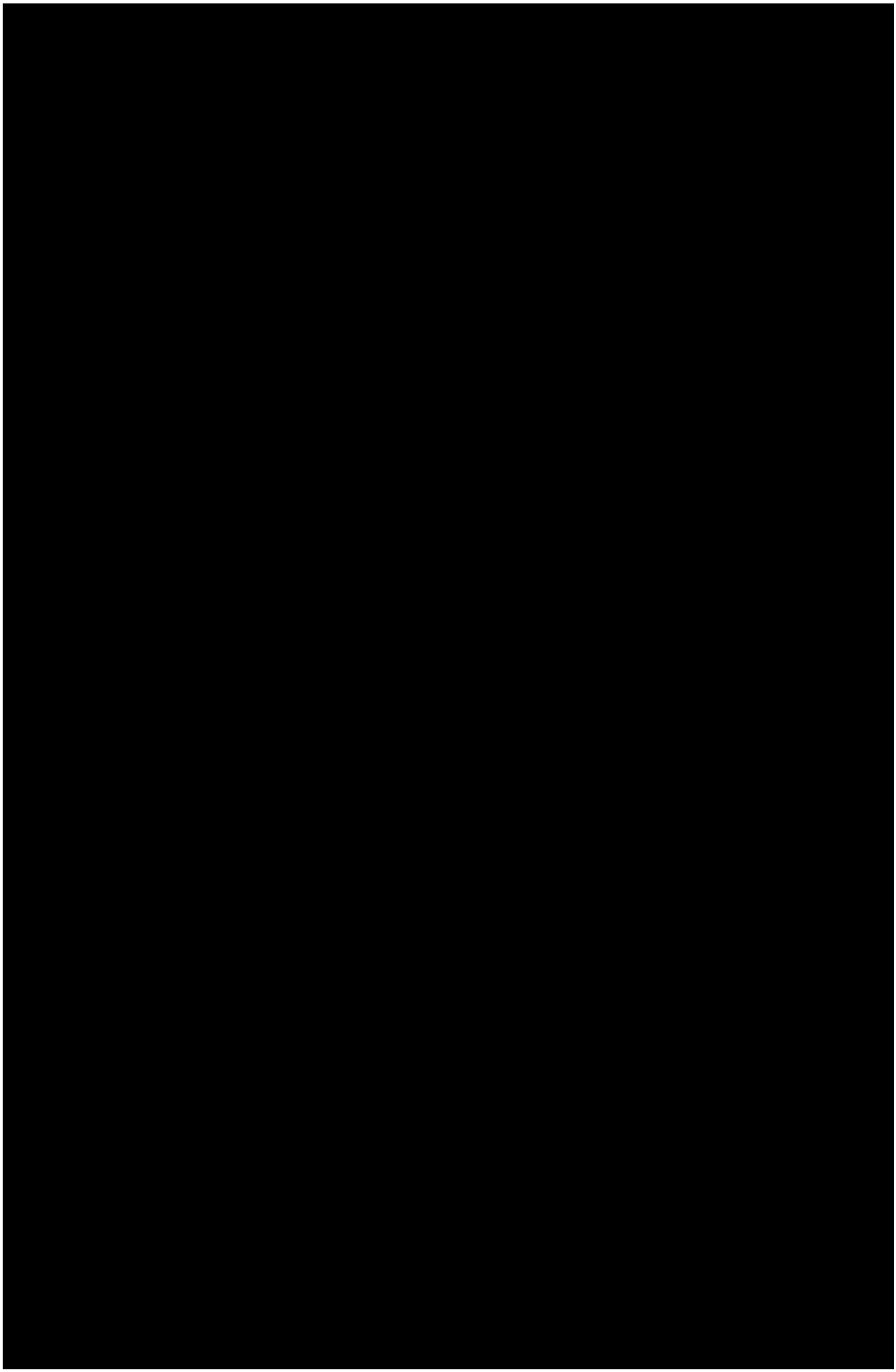


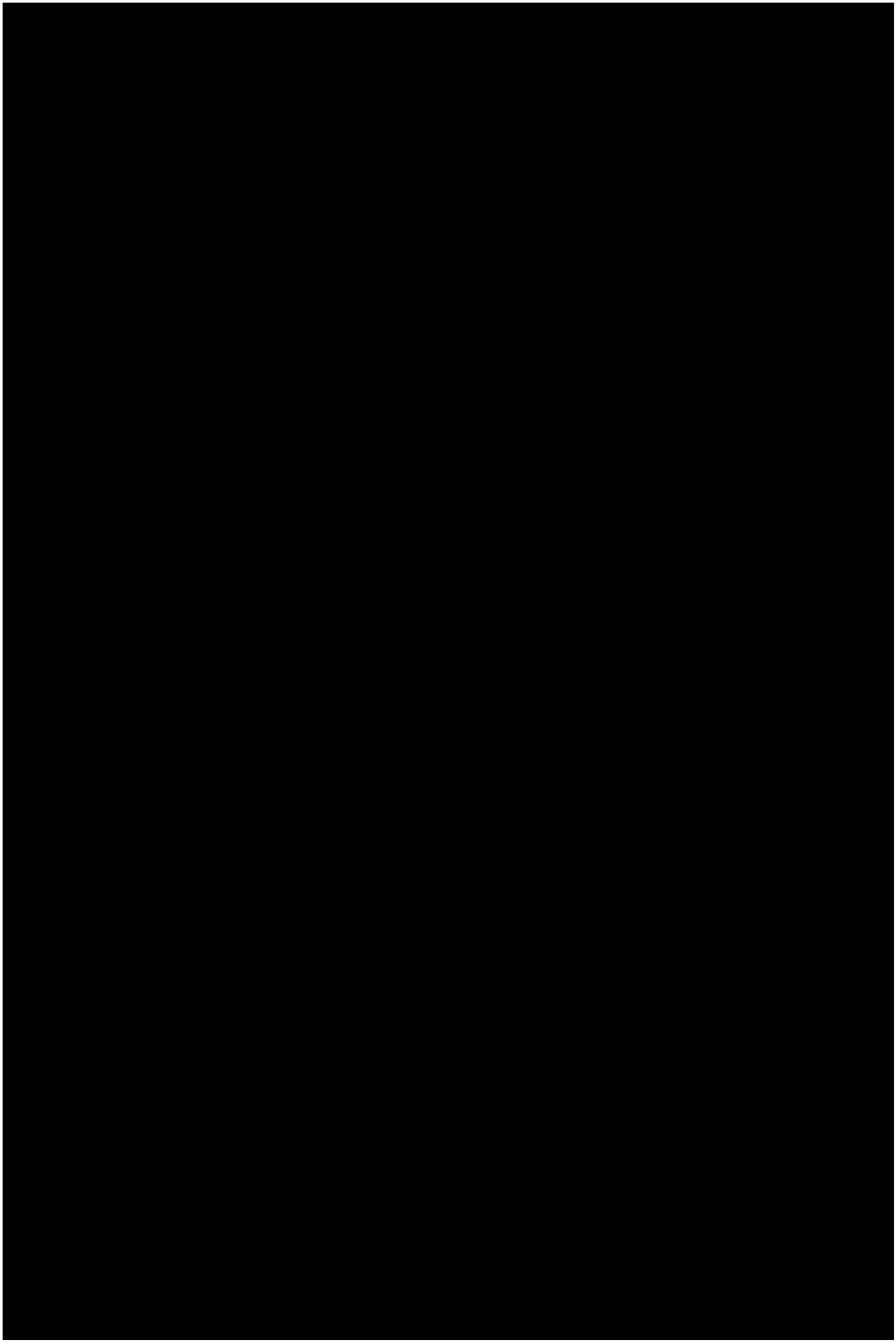


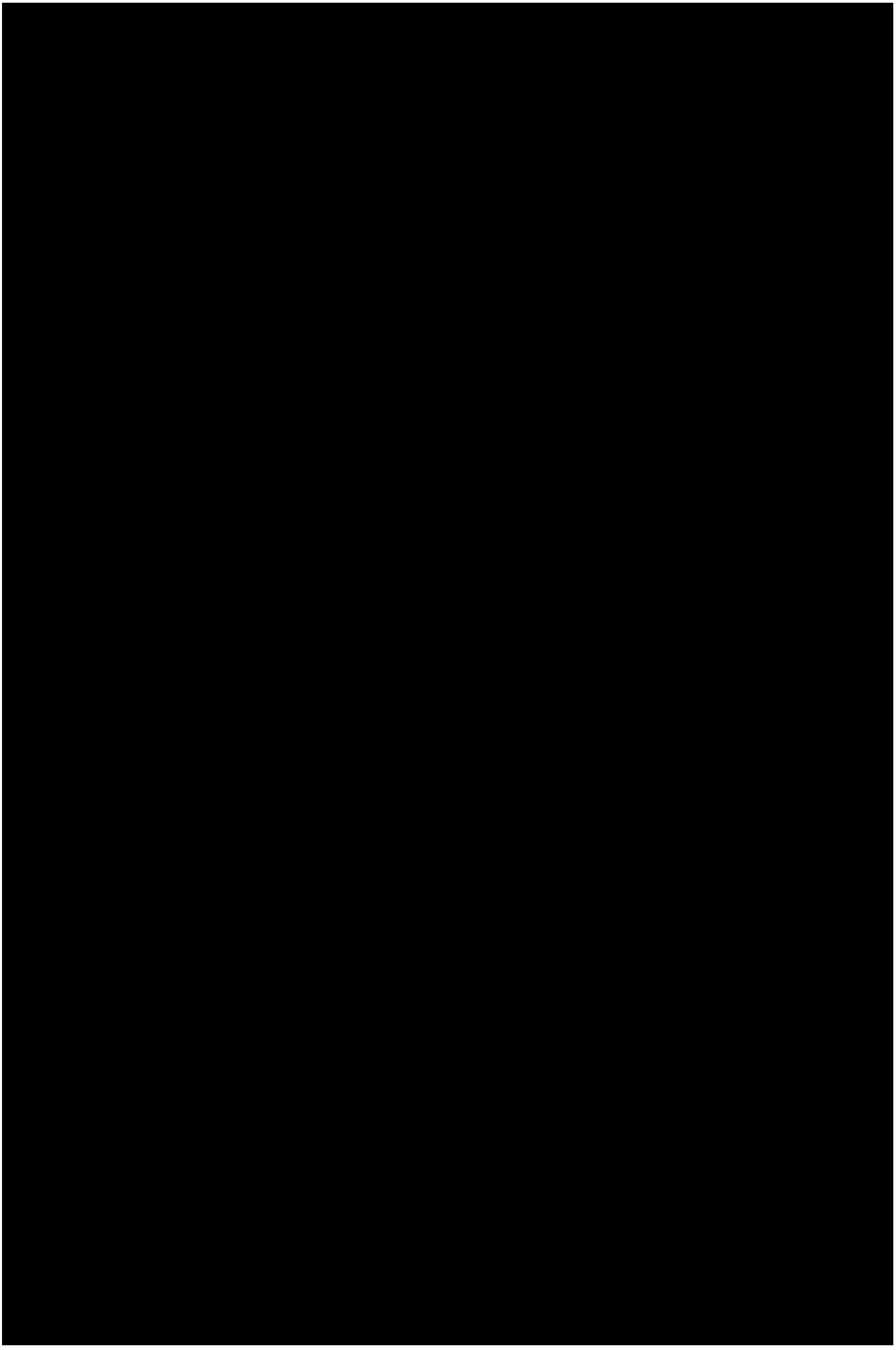


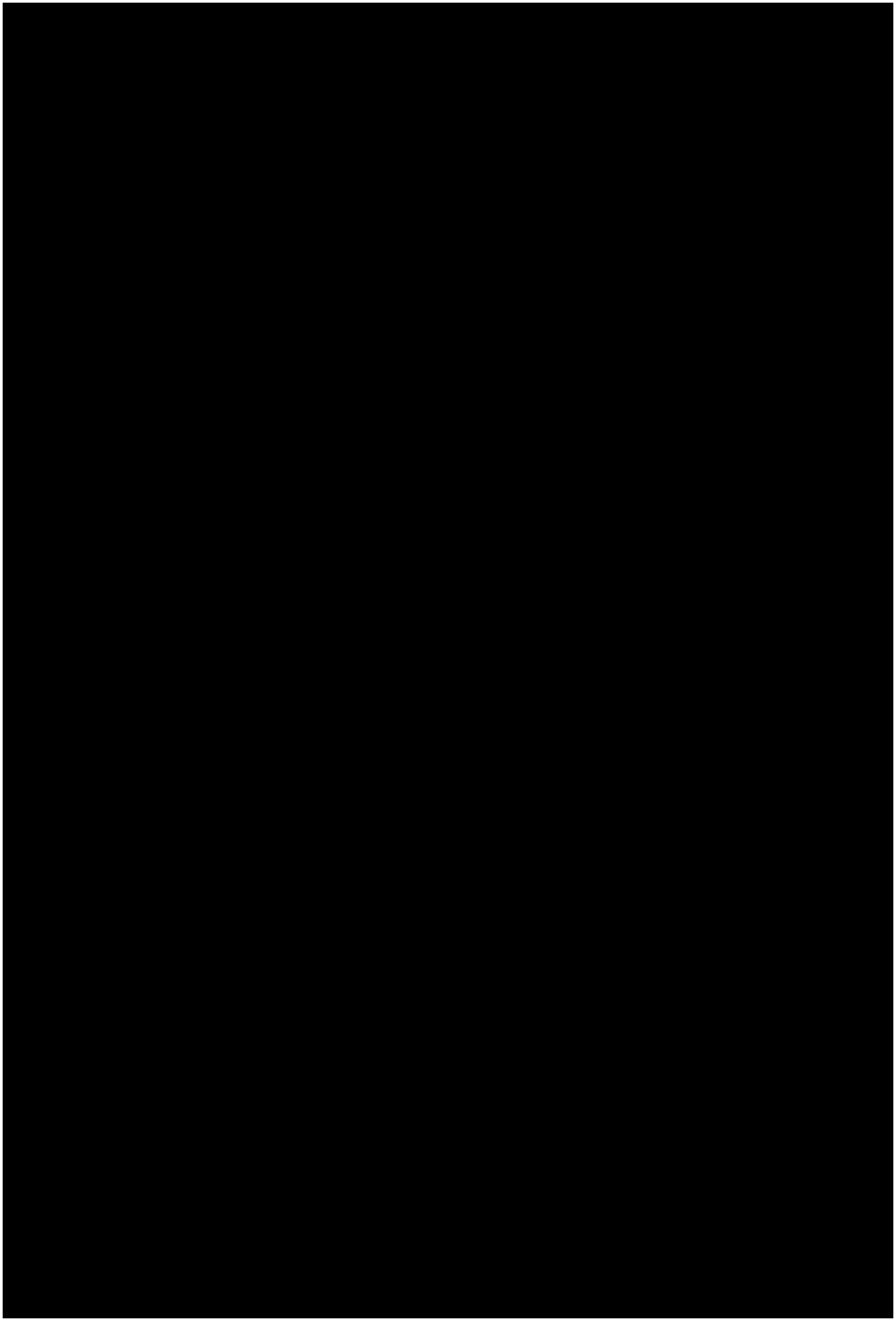


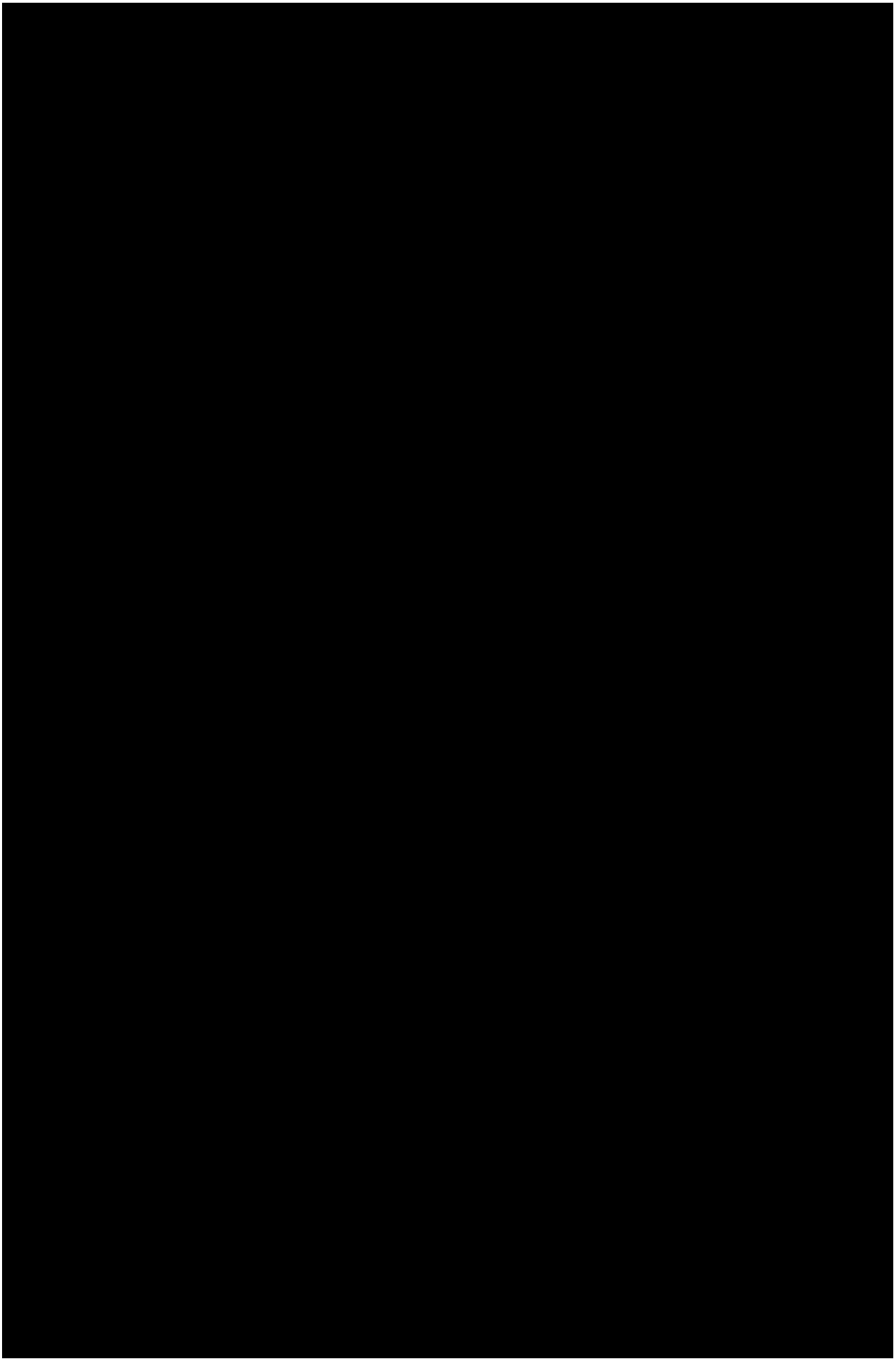


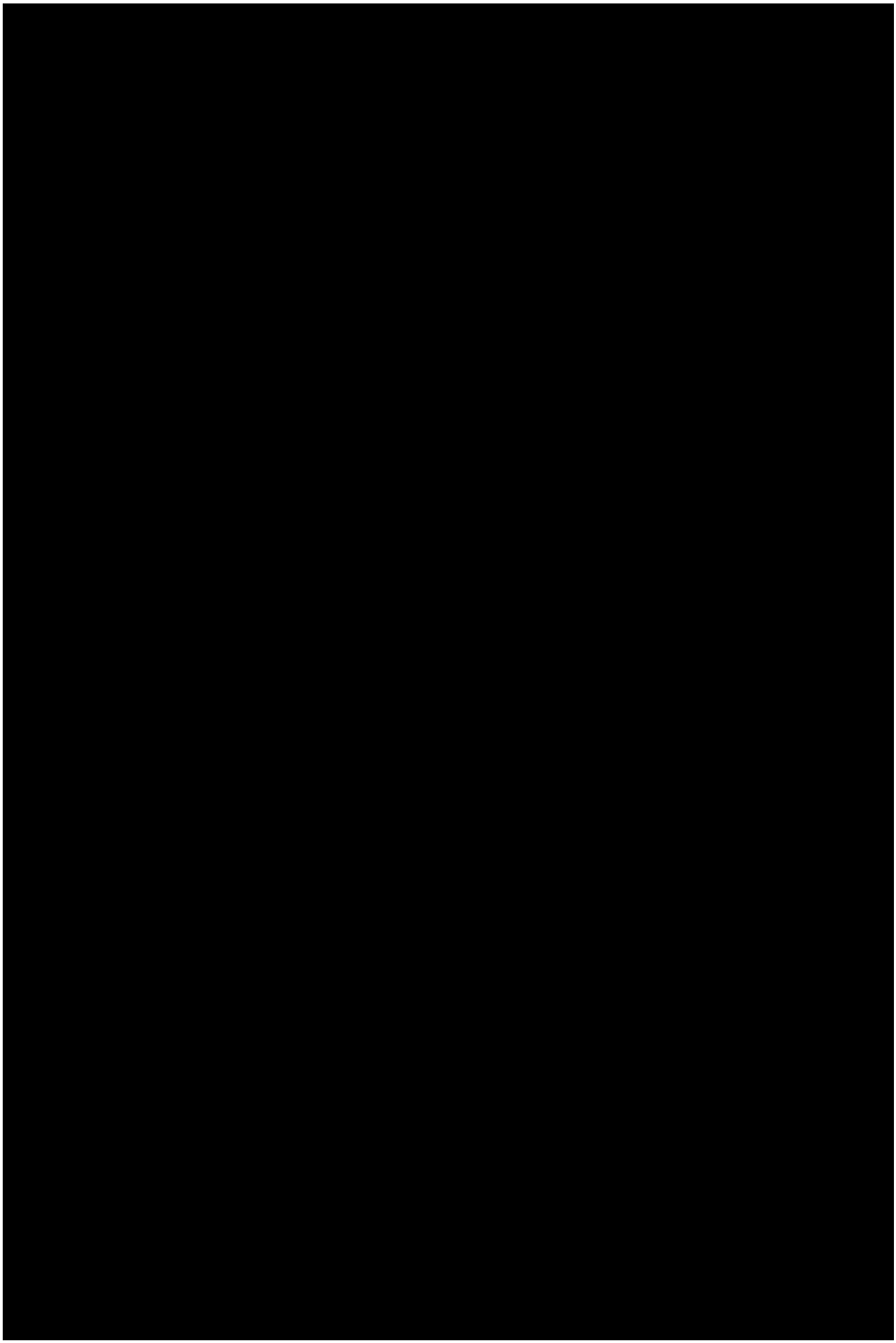


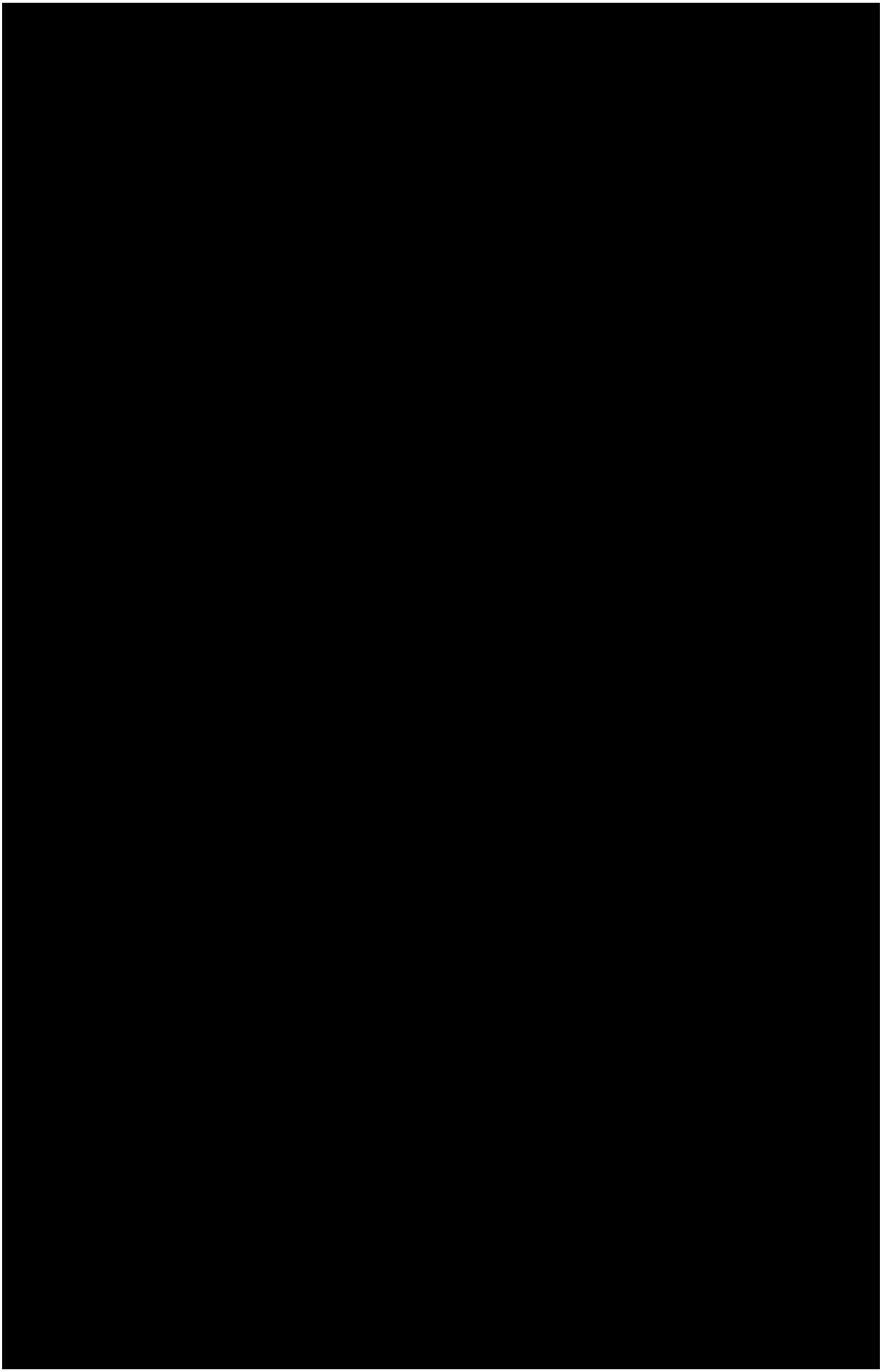


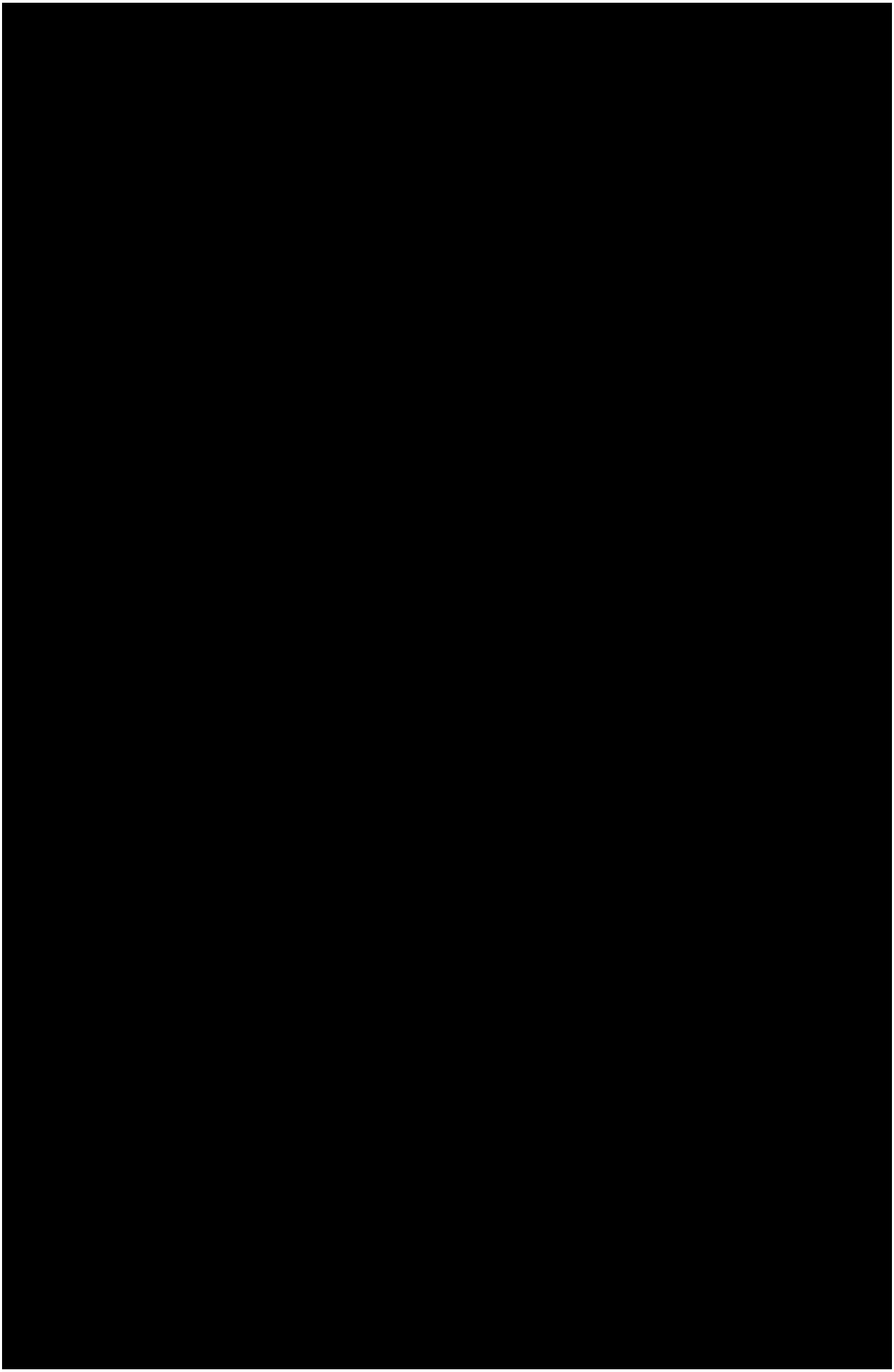


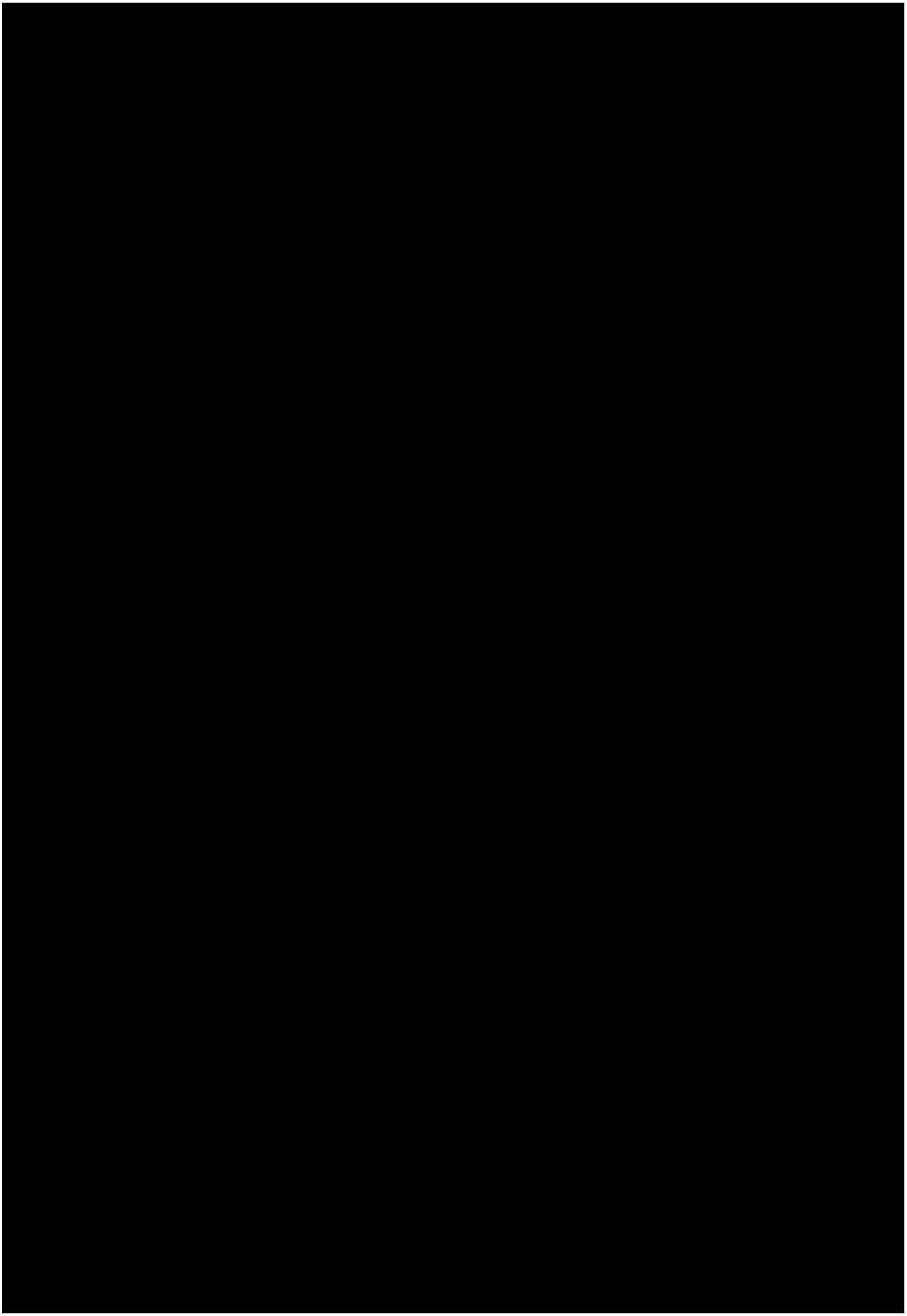


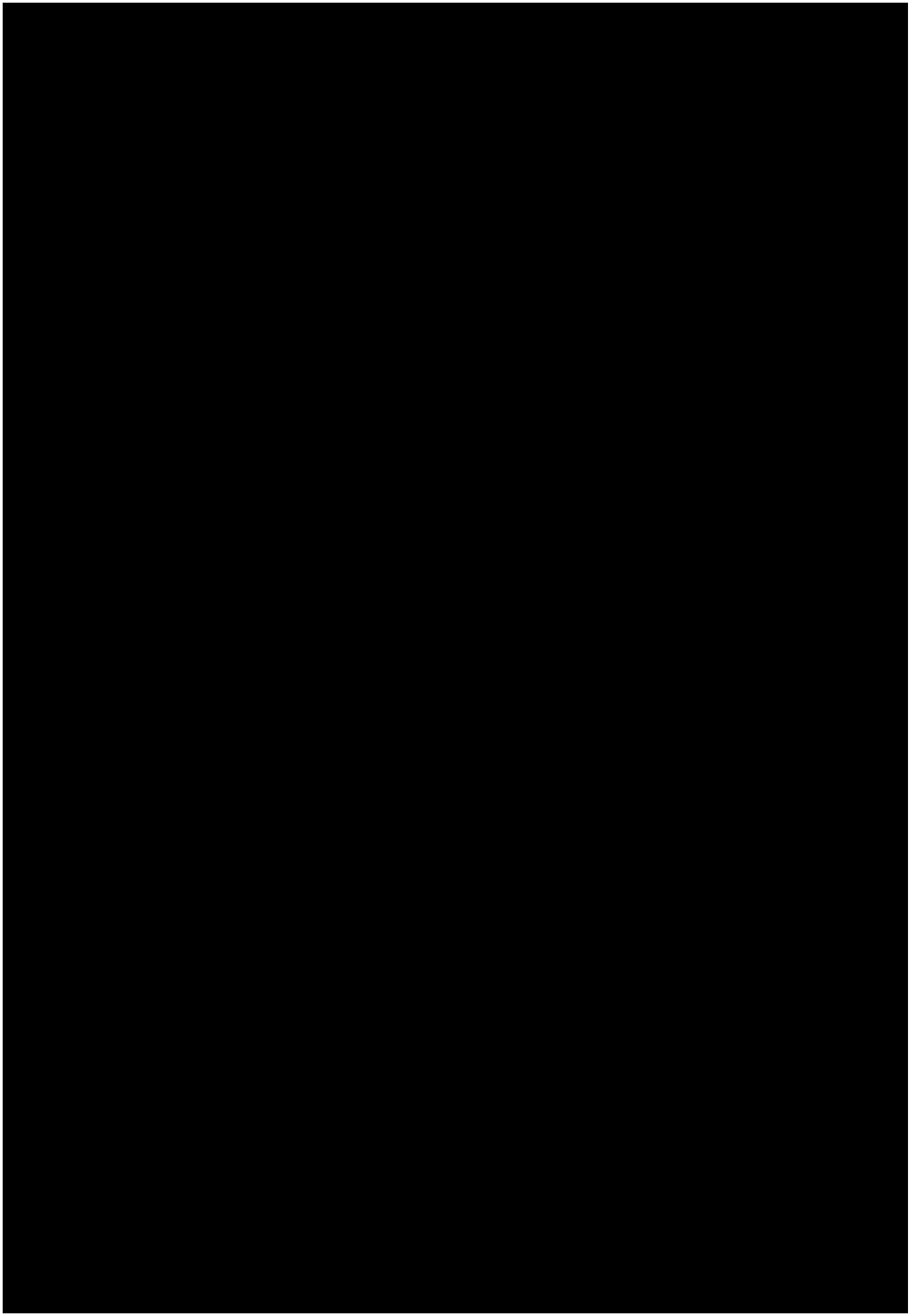


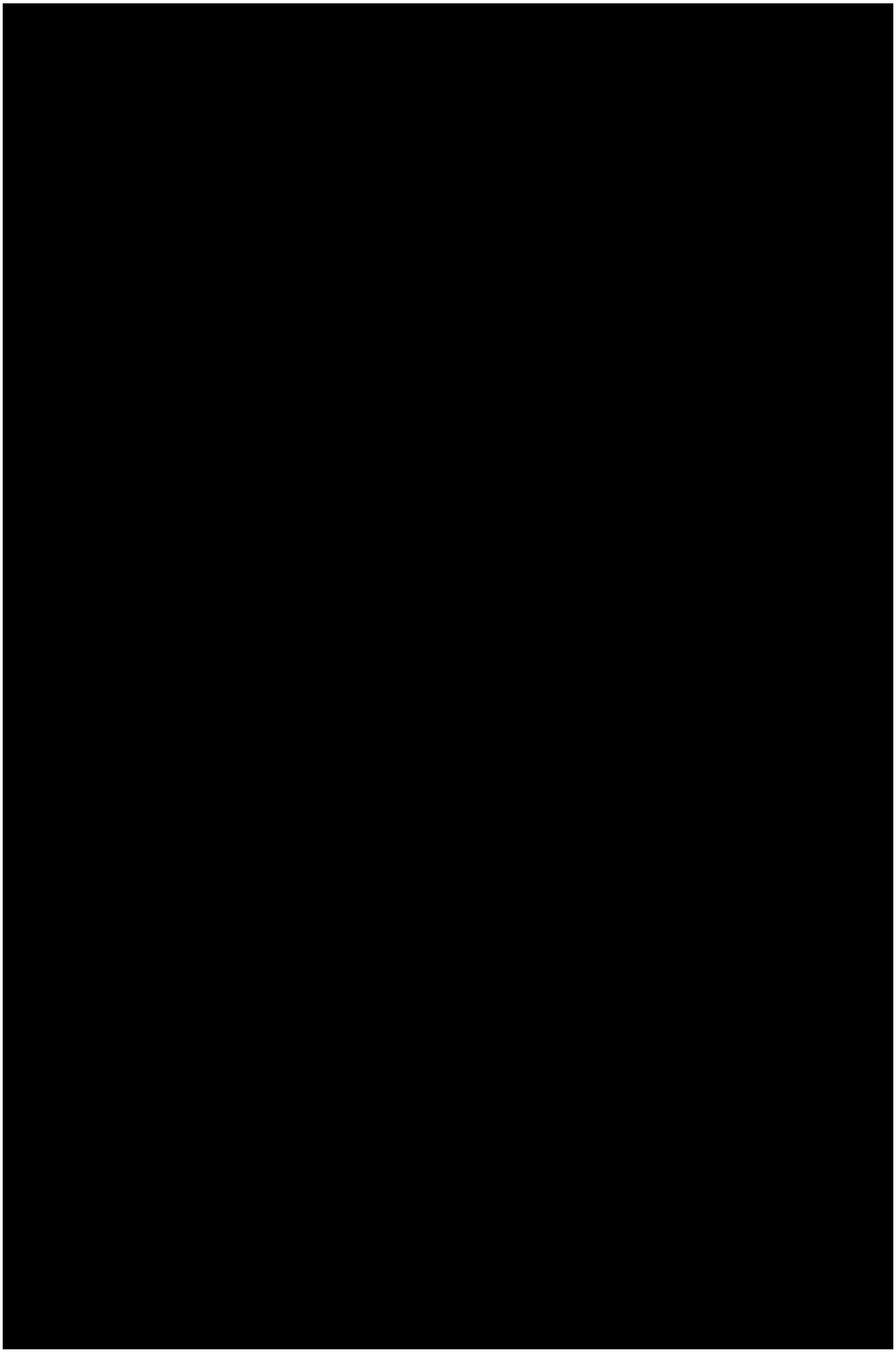


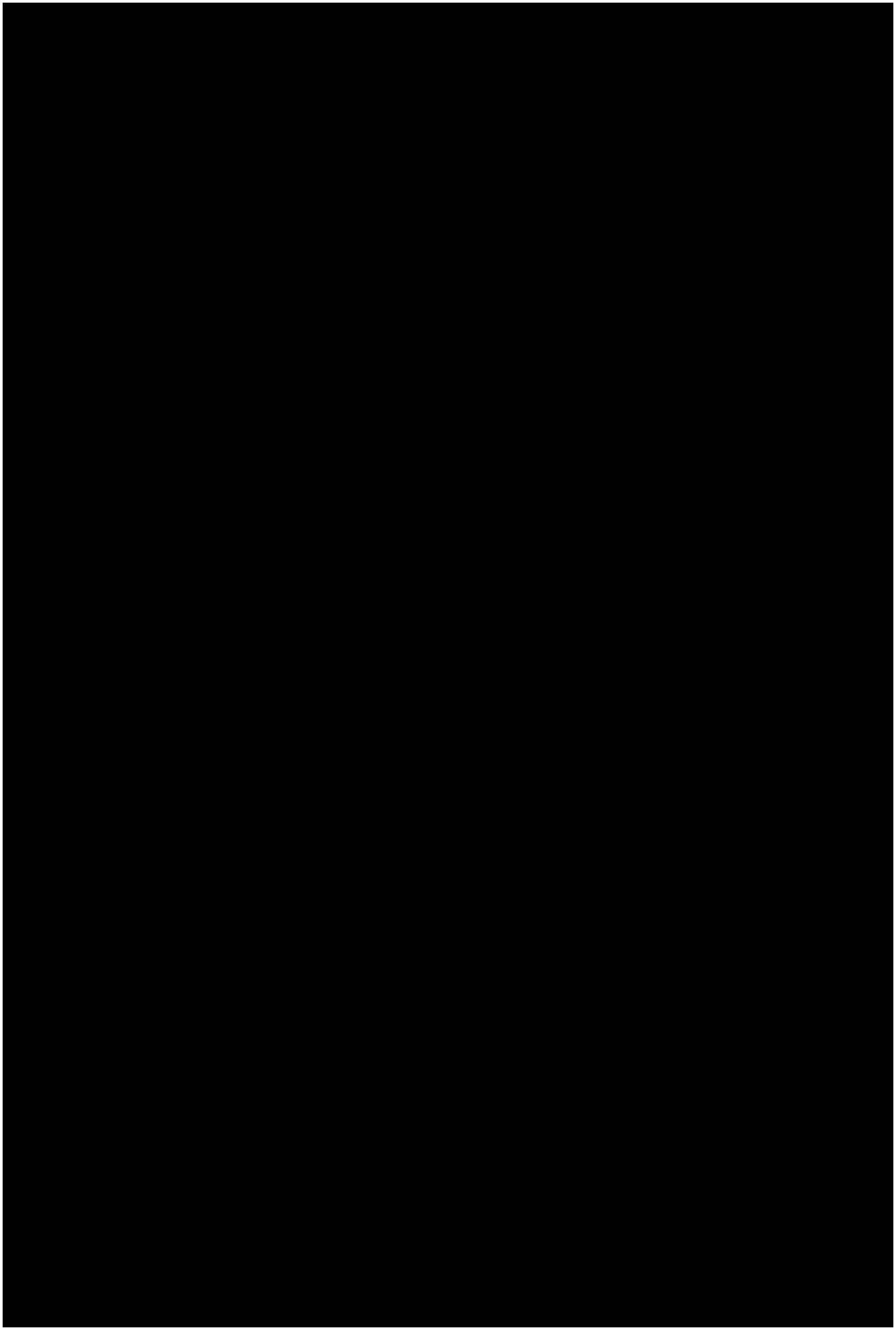


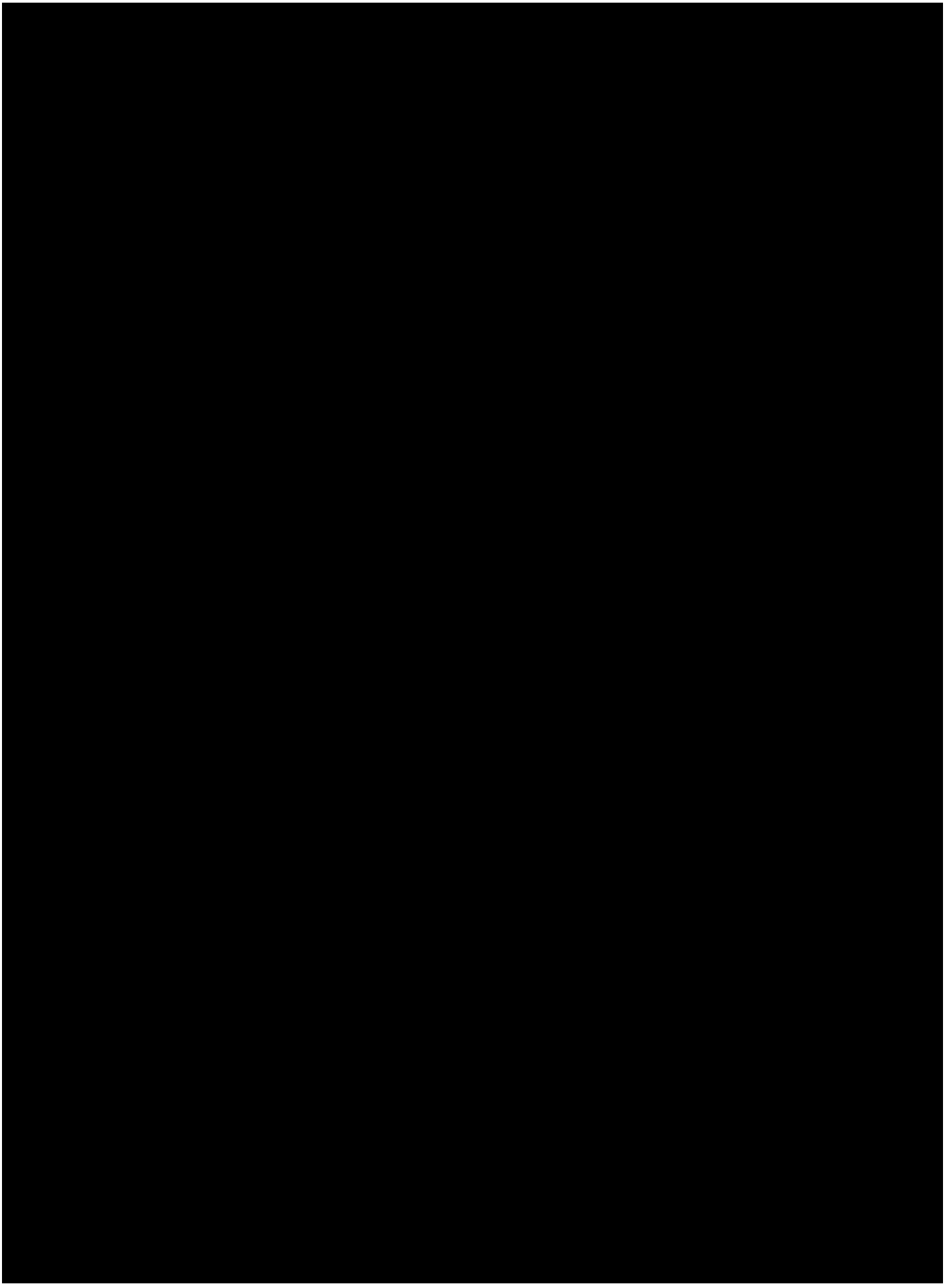


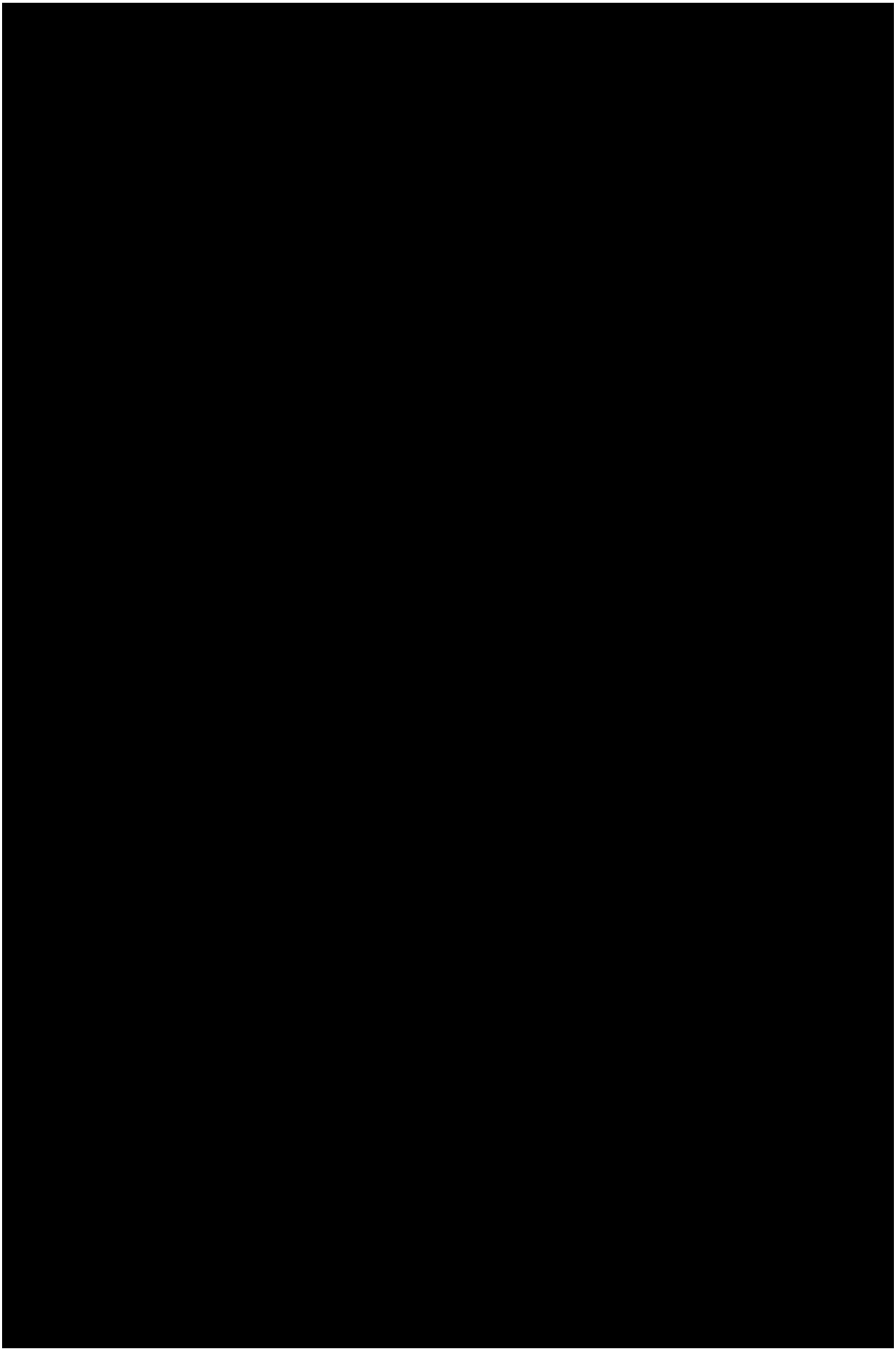


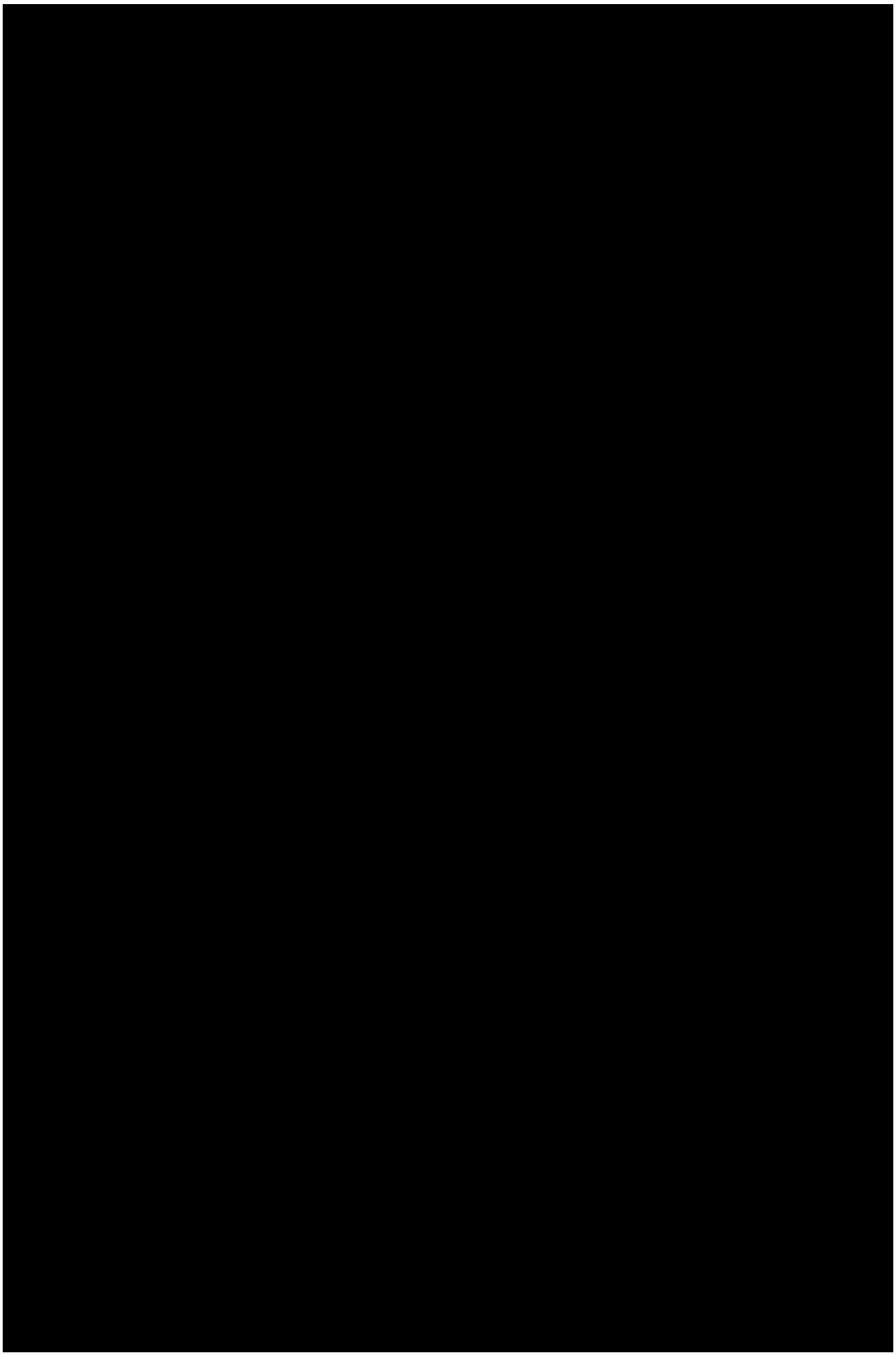












COPY OF INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES RATE AGREEMENT

EIN: 1566001468A1
ORGANIZATION:
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
254 Mossman Building
Greensboro, NC 27412-5001

Date: 03/26/2024
FILING REF.: The preceding agreement was dated 03/08/2023

The rates approved in this agreement are for use on grants, contracts and other agreements with the Federal Government, subject to the conditions in Section III.

SECTION I: INDIRECT COST RATES

RATE TYPES: FIXED FINAL PROV. (PROVISIONAL) PRED. (PREDETERMINED)

	EFFECTIVE PERIOD				
TYPE	FROM	TO	RATE(%)	LOCATION	APPLICABLE TO
PRED.	07/01/2023	06/30/2024	45.50	On-Campus	Organized Research
PRED.	07/01/2023	06/30/2024	55.50	On-Campus	Instruction
PRED.	07/01/2023	06/30/2024	45.50	On-Campus	Other Sponsored Activities
PRED.	07/01/2023	06/30/2024	26.00	Off-Campus	All Programs
PRED.	07/01/2024	06/30/2027	47.00	On-Campus	Organized Research
PRED.	07/01/2027	06/30/2028	48.00	On-Campus	Organized Research
PRED.	07/01/2024	06/30/2028	30.00	On-Campus	Other Sponsored Activities
PRED.	07/01/2024	06/30/2028	50.00	On-Campus	Instruction
PRED.	07/01/2024	06/30/2028	26.00	Off-Campus	All Programs
PROV.	07/01/2028	Until Amended			Use same rates and conditions as those cited for fiscal year ending Jun 30, 2028

*BASE

Modified total direct costs, consisting of all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). Modified total direct costs shall exclude equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs and the portion of each subaward in excess of $25,000. Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

SECTION I: FRINGE BENEFIT RATES**

TYPE	FROM	TO	RATE(%)	LOCATION	APPLICABLE TO
FIXED	7/1/2023	6/30/2024	4.70	All	Permanent Faculty & Staff
FIXED	7/1/2023	6/30/2024	0.30	All	Non-Permanent Temporary & Student Employees
FIXED	7/1/2024	6/30/2025	4.30	All	Permanent Faculty & Staff
FIXED	7/1/2024	6/30/2025	0.00	All	Non-Permanent Temporary & Student Employees
PROV.	7/1/2025	Until Amended			Use same rates and conditions as those cited for fiscal year ending June 30, 2025

** DESCRIPTION OF FRINGE BENEFITS RATE BASE:

Salaries and wages.

SECTION II: SPECIAL REMARKS

TREATMENT OF FRINGE BENEFITS:
The fringe benefits are charged using the rate(s) listed in the Fringe Benefits Section of this Agreement. The fringe benefits included in the rate(s) are listed below.

TREATMENT OF PAID ABSENCES:
Vacation, holiday, sick leave pay and other paid absences are included in salaries and wages and are claimed on grants, contracts and other agreements as part of the normal cost for salaries and wages. Separate claims are not made for the cost of these paid absences.

OFF-CAMPUS DEFINITION: The off-campus rate will apply for all activities: a) Performed in facilities not owned by the institution and where these facility costs are not included in the F&A pools; or b) Where rent is directly allocated/charged to the project(s). Actual costs will be apportioned between on-campus and off-campus components. Each portion will bear the appropriate rate.

This organization uses fringe benefits for estimating direct fringe benefit costs on grant applications and contract proposals. The following fringe benefits are covered by the fringe benefits listed in Section I: Worker's Compensation, Unemployment, Accrued Leave payouts at Termination and Severance, Short-Term Disability, and Employee Assistance Program.

For cash claims and final reporting purposes, the following fringe benefits are specifically identified to each employee and charged individually as direct costs: FICA/Medicare, Health Insurance and Retirement.

This rate agreement updates indirect cost rates only.

The next Fringe Benefit rates proposal for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, will be due in our office by December 31, 2024.

The next F&A rates proposal based on actual costs for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027 is due in our office by December 31, 2027.

Equipment means tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds $5000.

SECTION III: GENERAL

A. LIMITATIONS:

The rates in this Agreement are subject to any statutory or administrative limitations and apply to a given grant, contract or other agreement only to the extent that funds are available. Acceptance of the rates is subject to the following conditions: (1) Only costs incurred by the organization were included in its facilities and administrative cost pools as finally accepted: such costs are legal obligations of the organization and are allowable under the governing cost principles; (2) The same costs that have been treated as facilities and administrative costs are not claimed as direct costs; (3) Similar types of costs have been accorded consistent accounting treatment; and (4) The information provided by the organization which was used to establish the rates is not later found to be materially incomplete or inaccurate by the Federal Government. In such situations the rate(s) would be subject to renegotiation at the discretion of the Federal Government.

B. ACCOUNTING CHANGES:

This Agreement is based on the accounting system purported by the organization to be in effect during the Agreement period. Changes to the method of accounting for costs which affect the amount of reimbursement resulting from the use of this Agreement require prior approval of the authorized representative of the cognizant agency. Such changes include, but are not limited to, changes in the charging of a particular type of cost from facilities and administrative to direct. Failure to obtain approval may result in cost disallowances.

C. FIXED RATES:

If a fixed rate is in this Agreement, it is based on an estimate of the costs for the period covered by the rate. When the actual costs for this period are determined, an adjustment will be made to a rate of a future year(s) to compensate for the difference between the costs used to establish the fixed rate and actual costs.

D. USE BY OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES:

The rates in this Agreement were approved in accordance with the authority in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 200 (2 CFR 200), and should be applied to grants, contracts and other agreements covered by 2 CFR 200, subject to any limitations in A above. The organization may provide copies of the Agreement to other Federal Agencies to give them early notification of the Agreement.

E. OTHER:

If any Federal contract, grant or other agreement is reimbursing facilities and administrative costs by a means other than the approved rate(s) in this Agreement, the organization should (1) credit such costs to the affected programs, and (2) apply the approved rate(s) to the appropriate base to identify the proper amount of facilities and administrative costs allocable to these programs.

BY THE INSTITUTION:

University of North Carolina at Greensboro

[redacted]

ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT:

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
(AGENCY)

[redacted]
Digitally signed by Darryl W. Mayes -S
Date: 2024.03.29 15:05:05 -04'00'

(SIGNATURE)

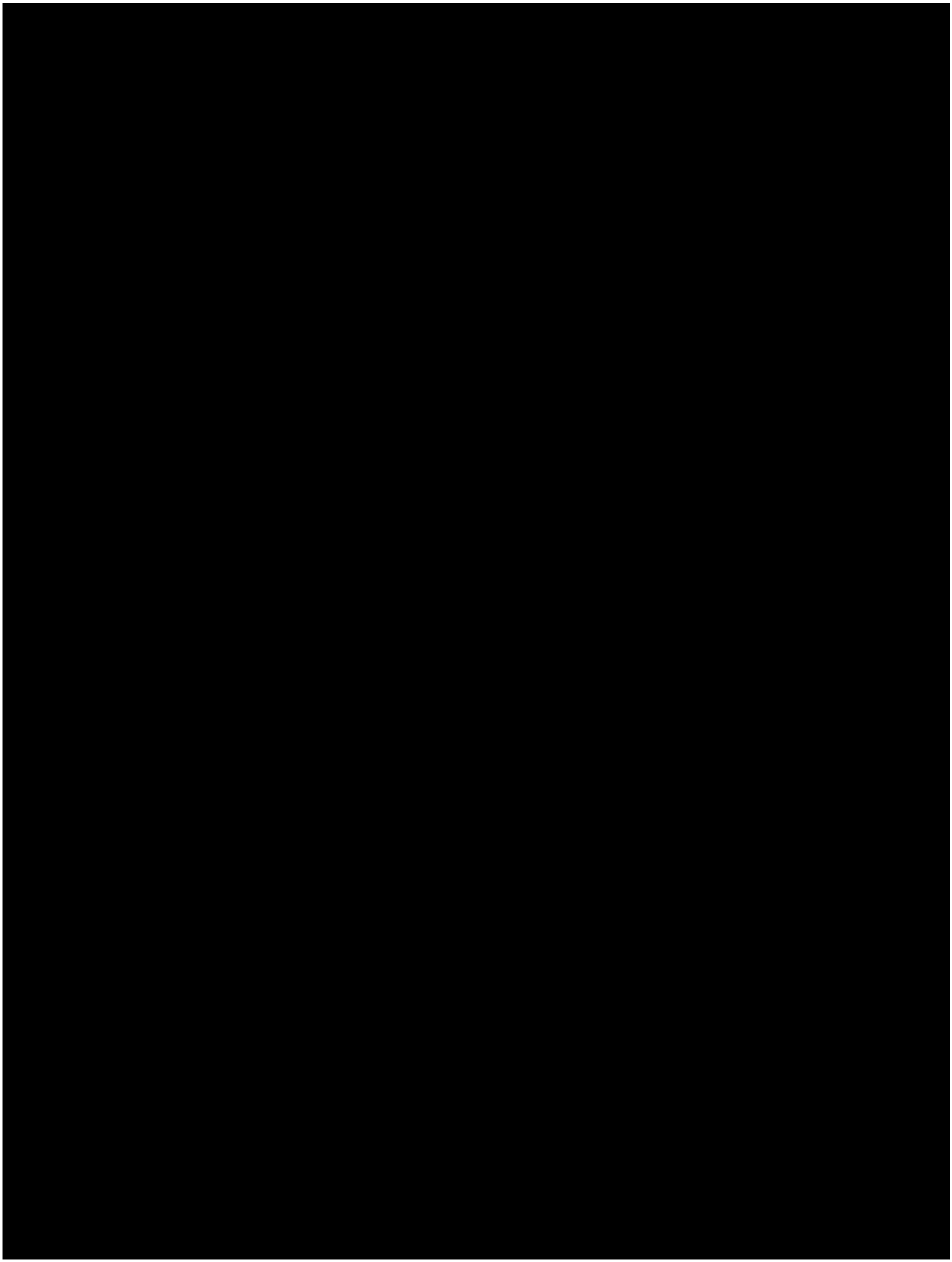
Darryl W. Mayes
(NAME)

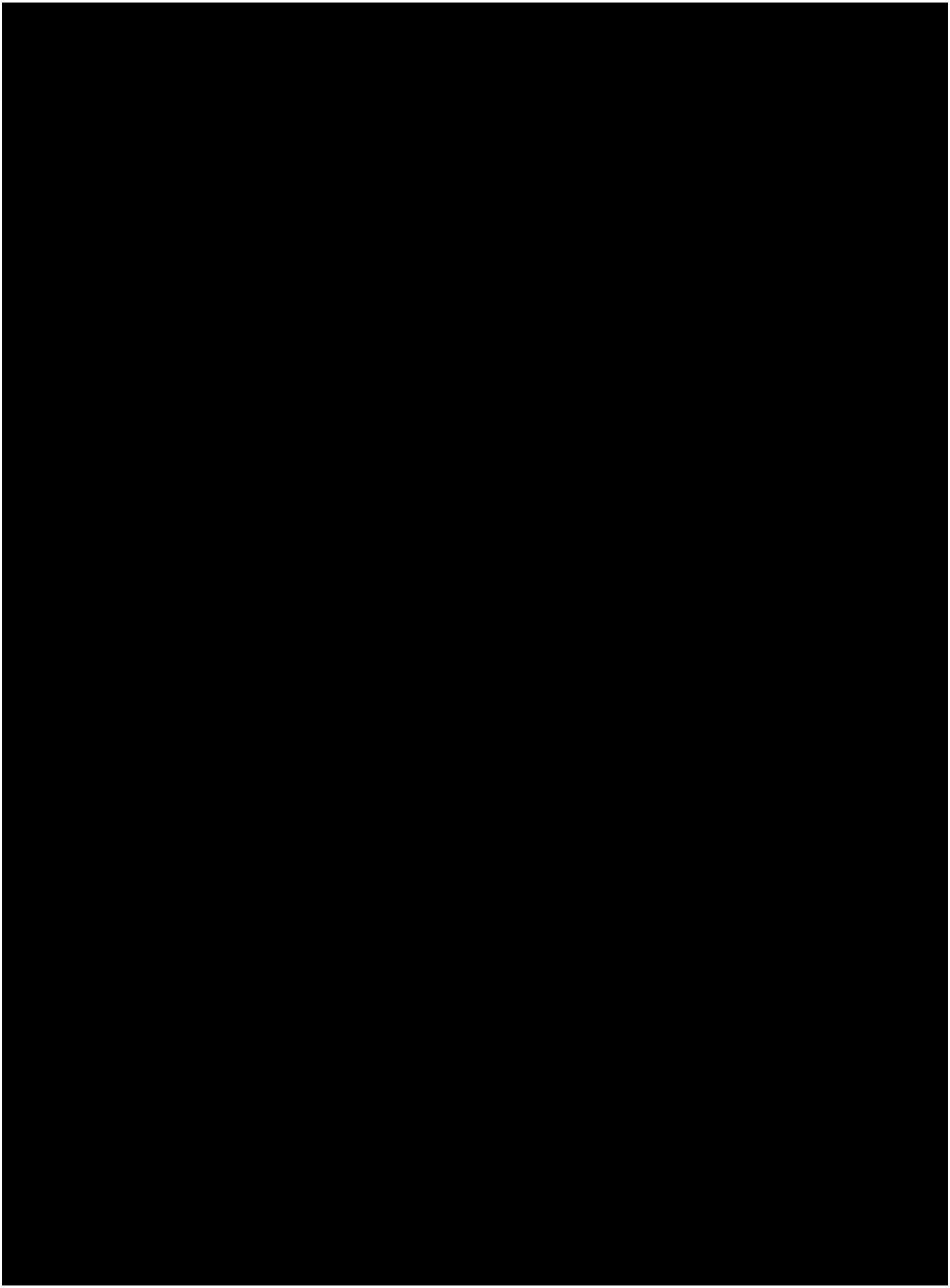
Deputy Director, Cost Allocation Services
(TITLE)

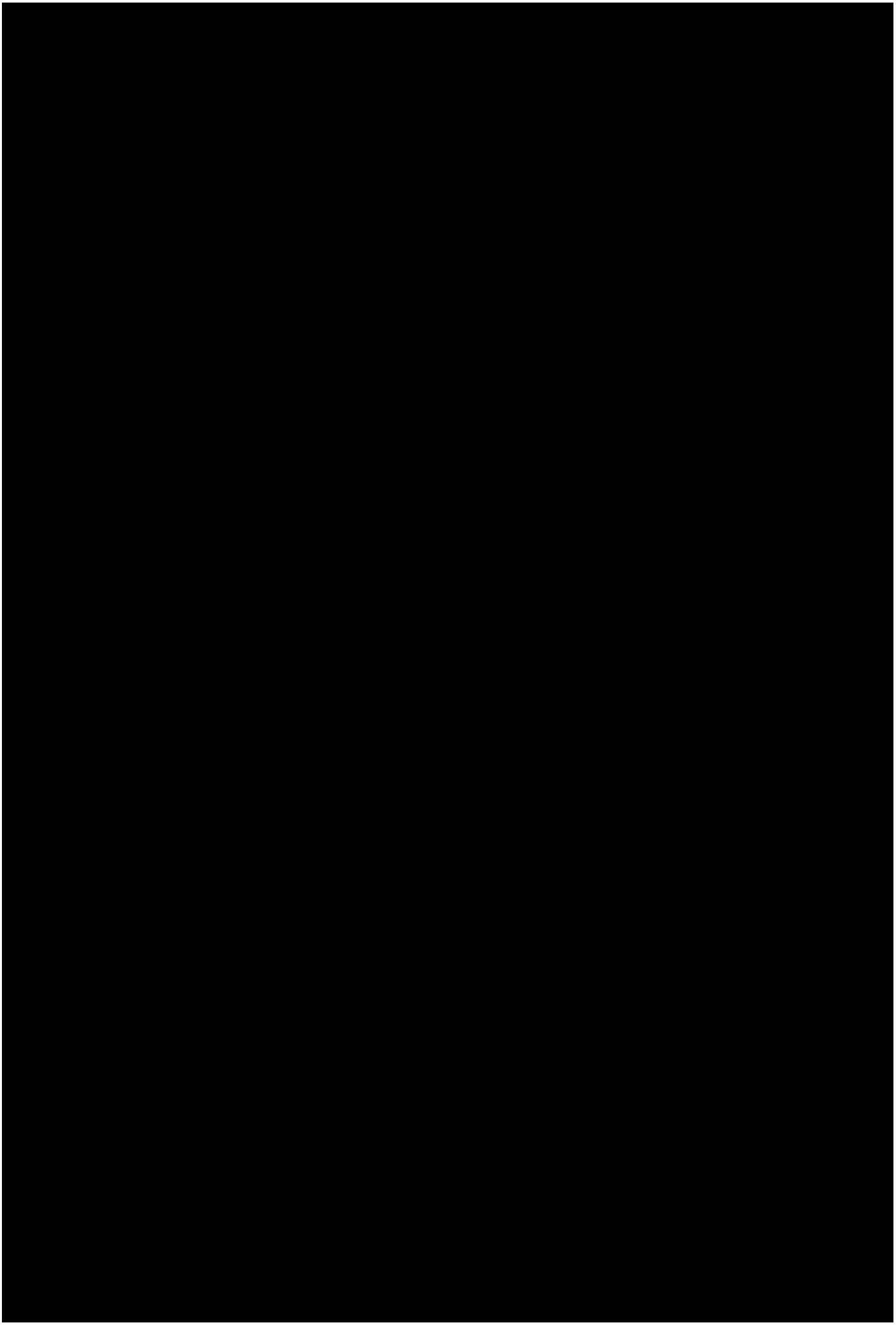
03/26/2024
(DATE)

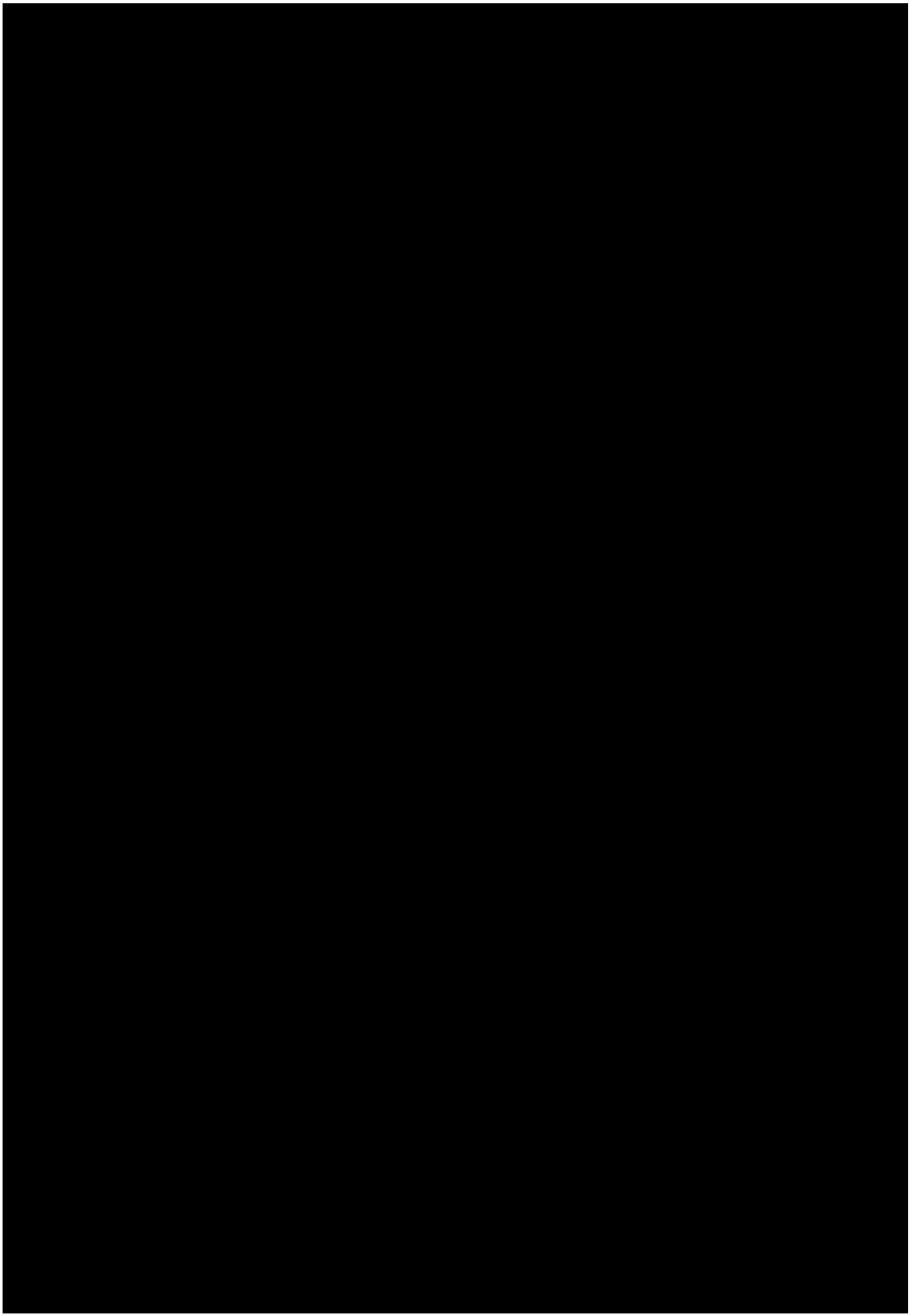
HHS REPRESENTATIVE: Ernest Kinneer

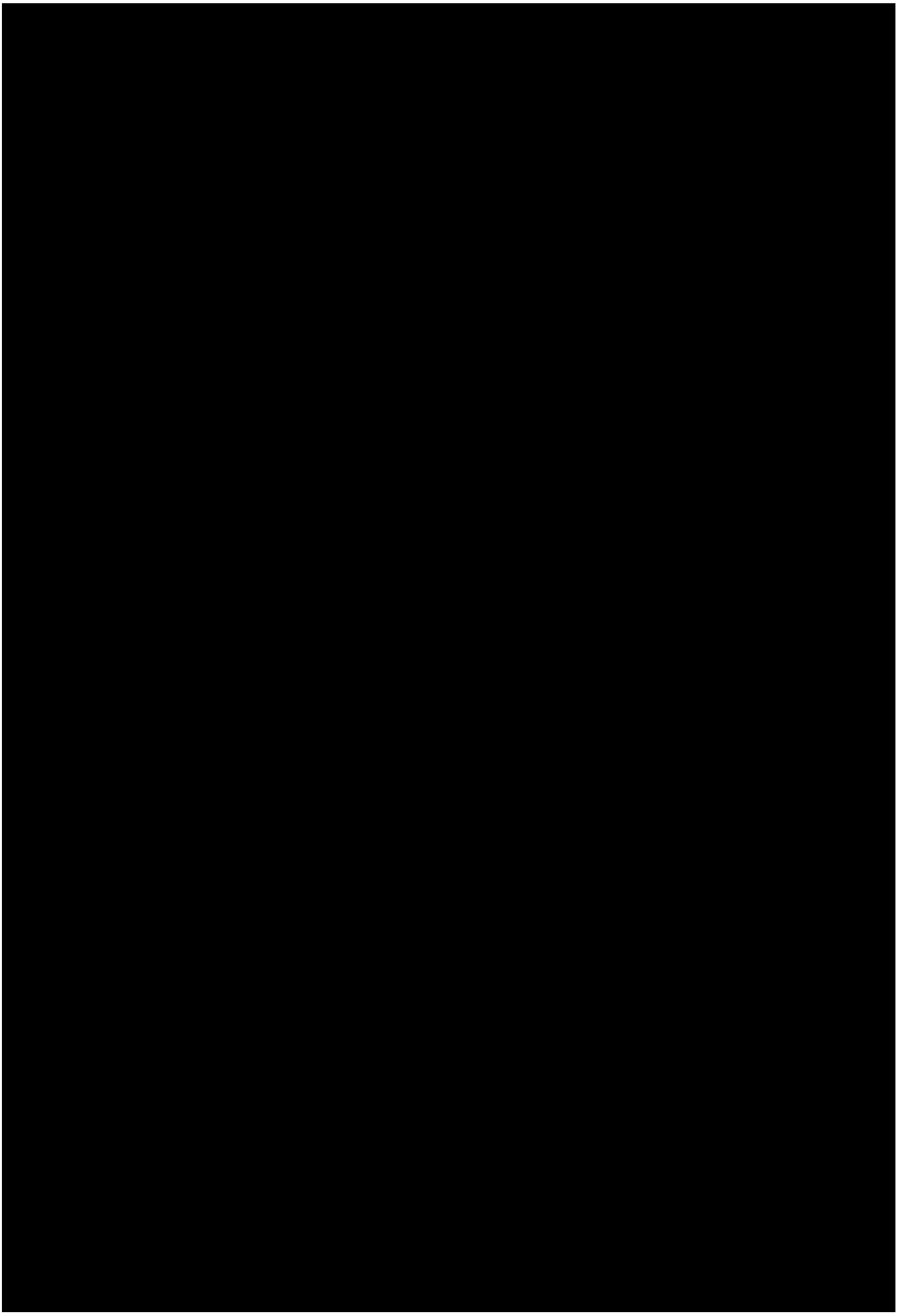
TELEPHONE: [redacted]

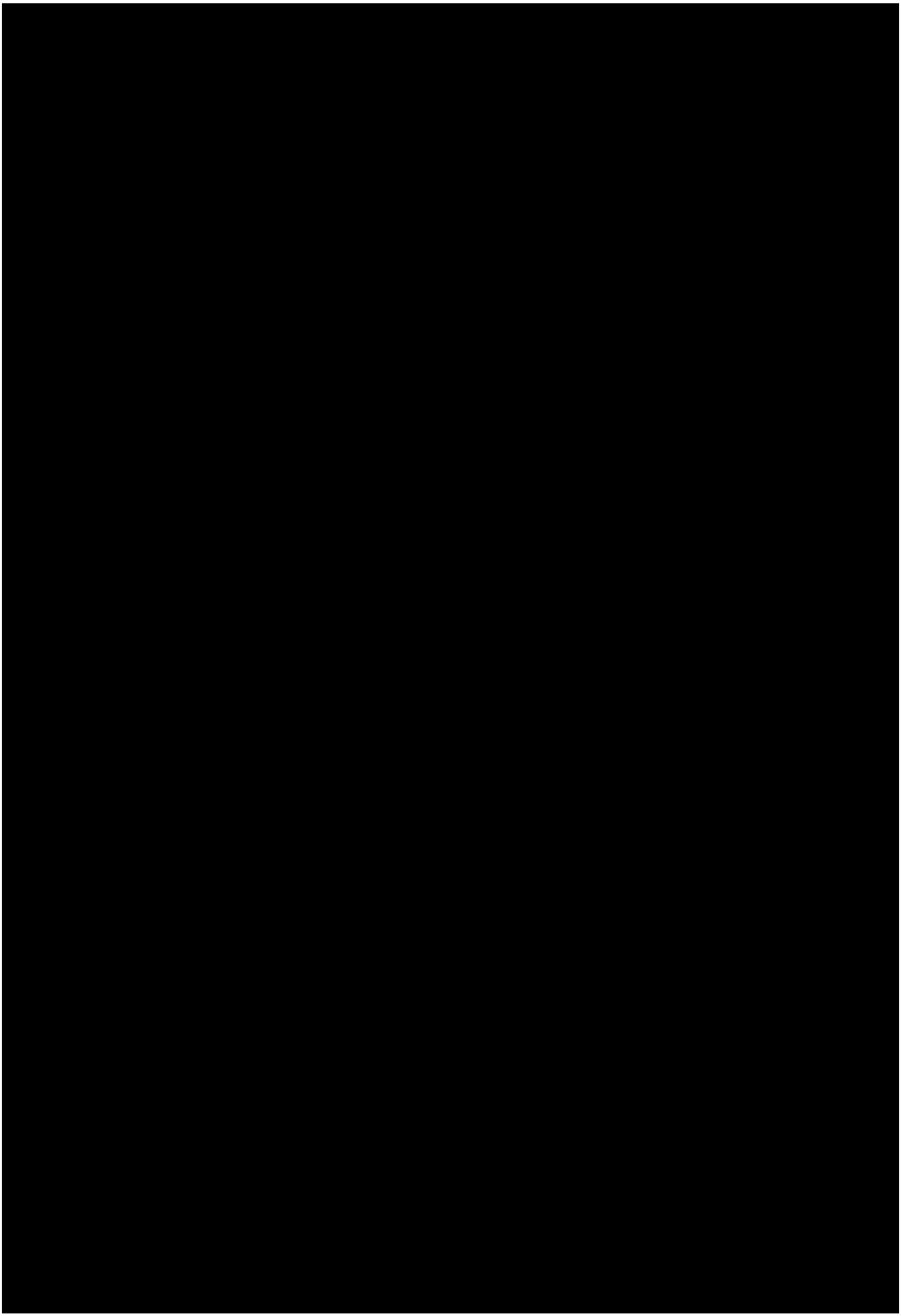












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REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

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EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 TRANSMITTAL LETTER (IF APPLICABLE)

Not applicable.

Budget Narrative File(s)

*** Mandatory Budget Narrative Filename:** 1237-SERVE_RC5_Budget_Narrative2.pdf

Add Mandatory Budget Narrative | Delete Mandatory Budget Narrative | View Mandatory Budget Narrative

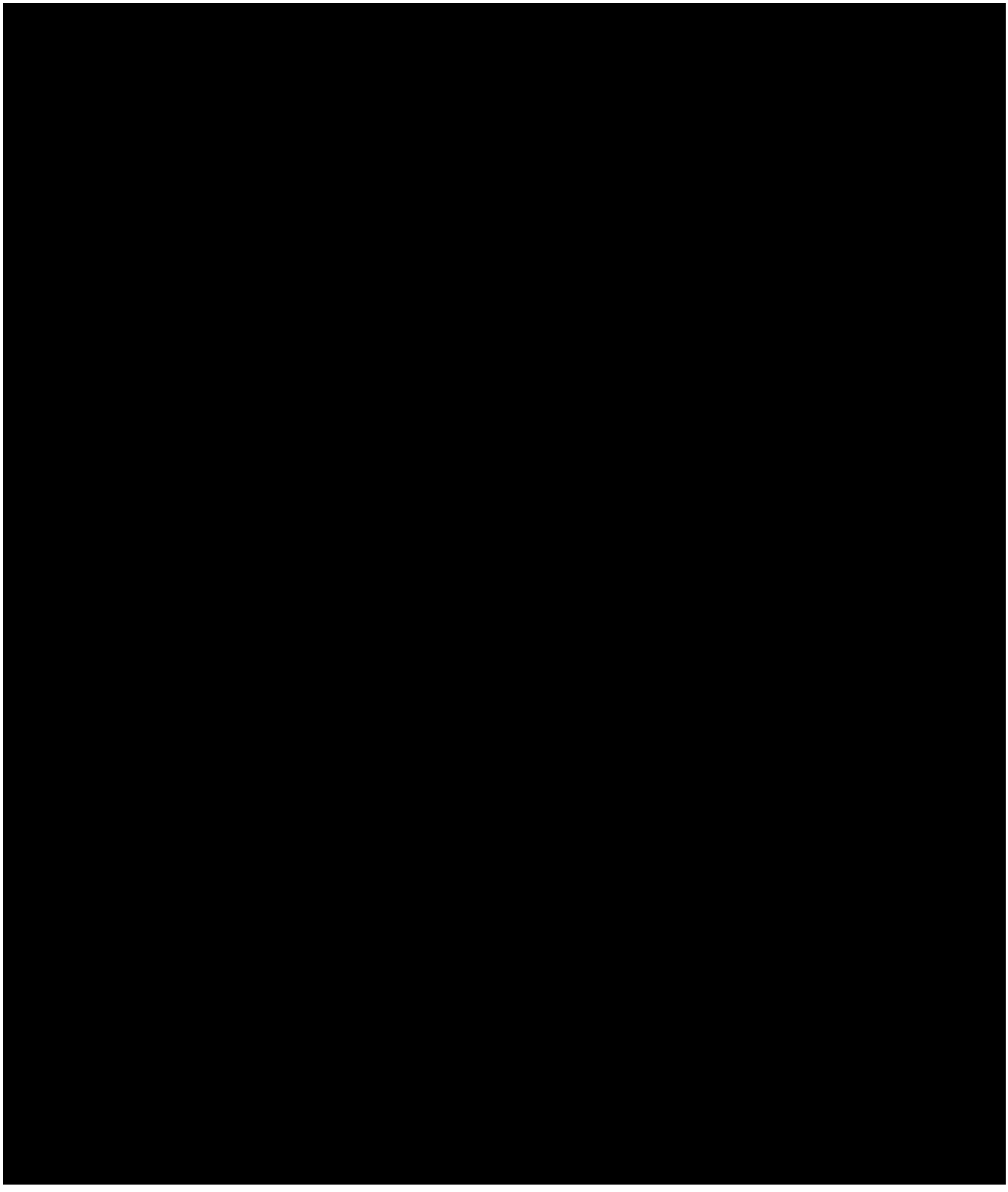
To add more Budget Narrative attachments, please use the attachment buttons below.

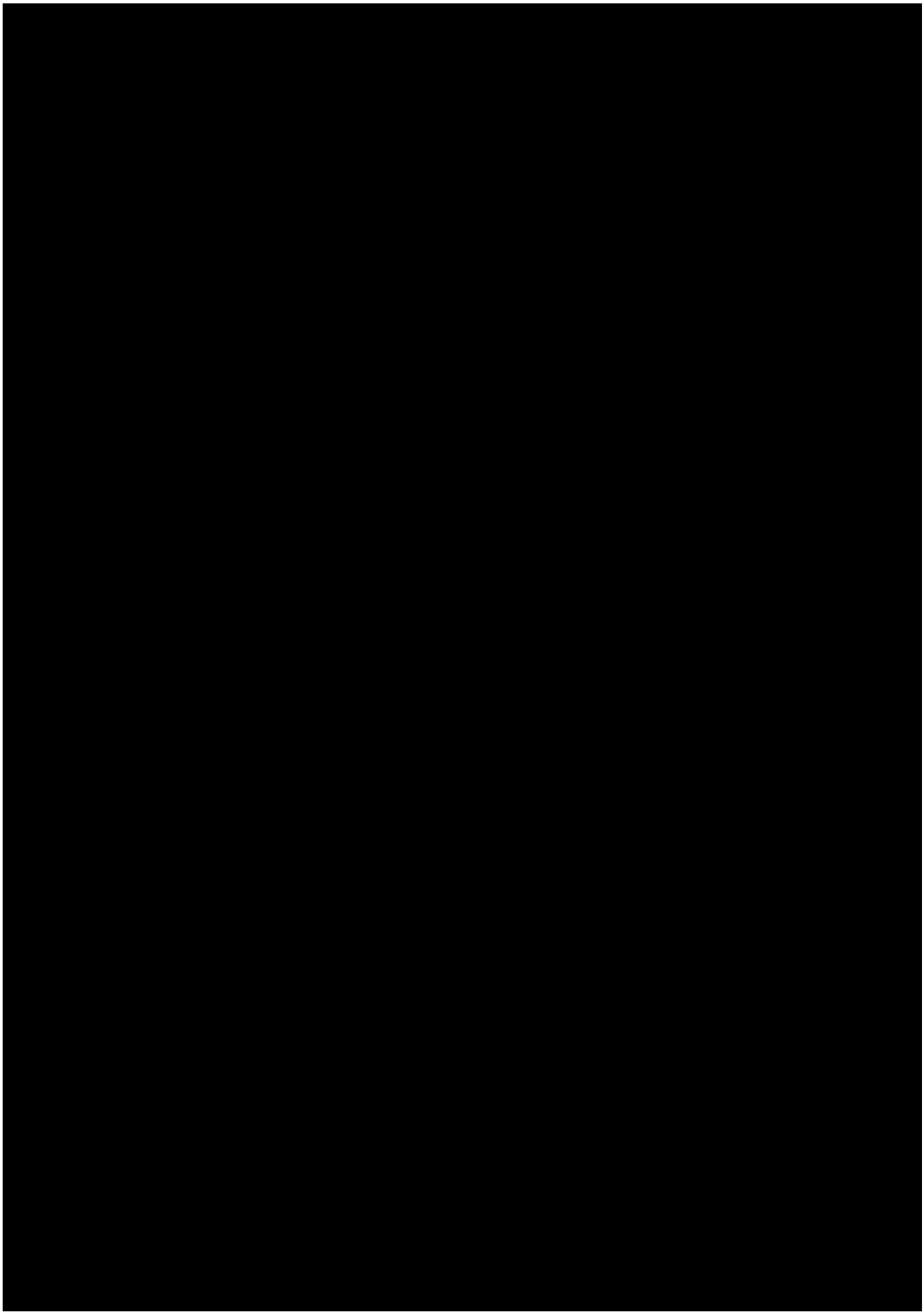
Add Optional Budget Narrative | Delete Optional Budget Narrative | View Optional Budget Narrative

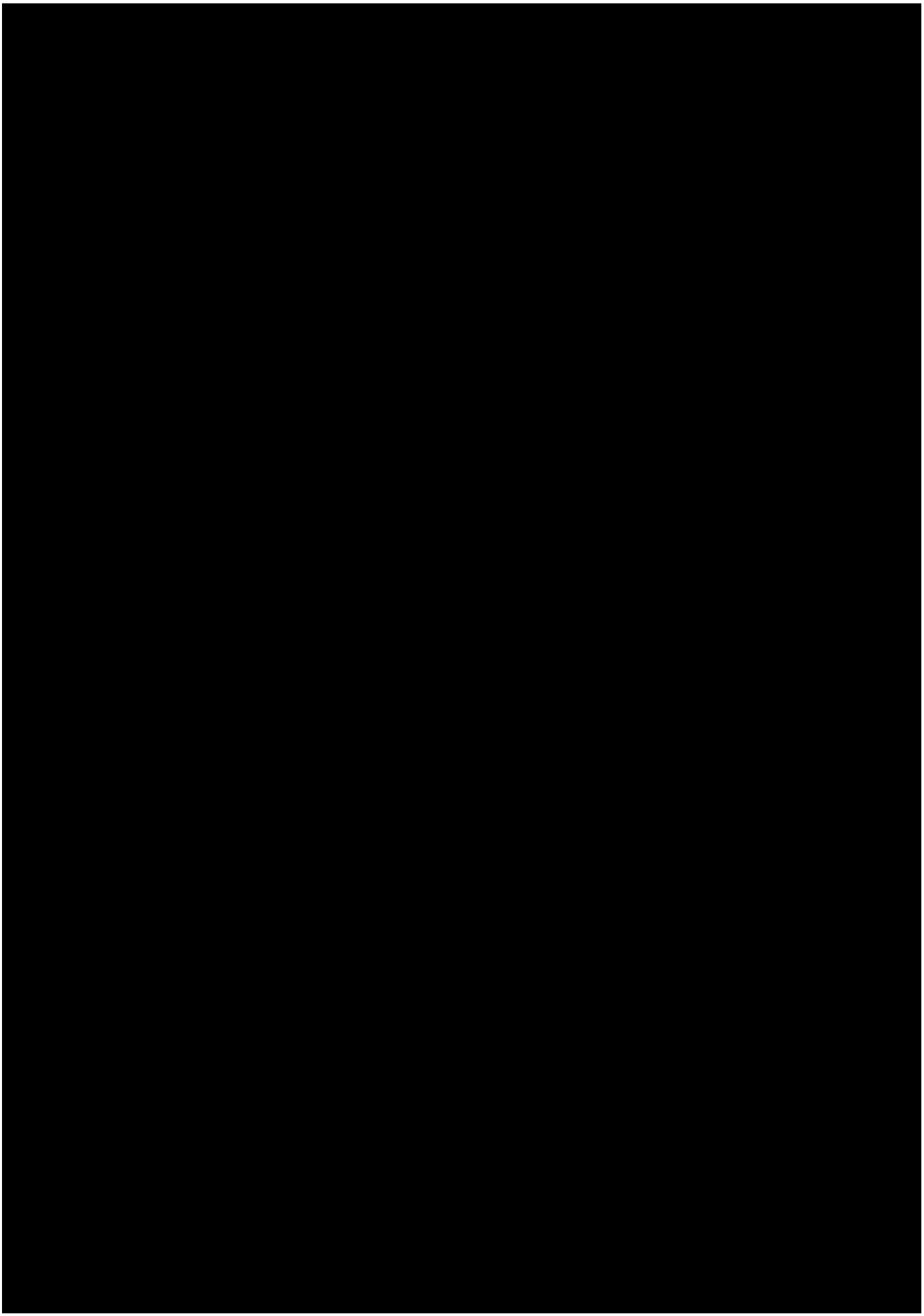
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Region 5 Comprehensive Center

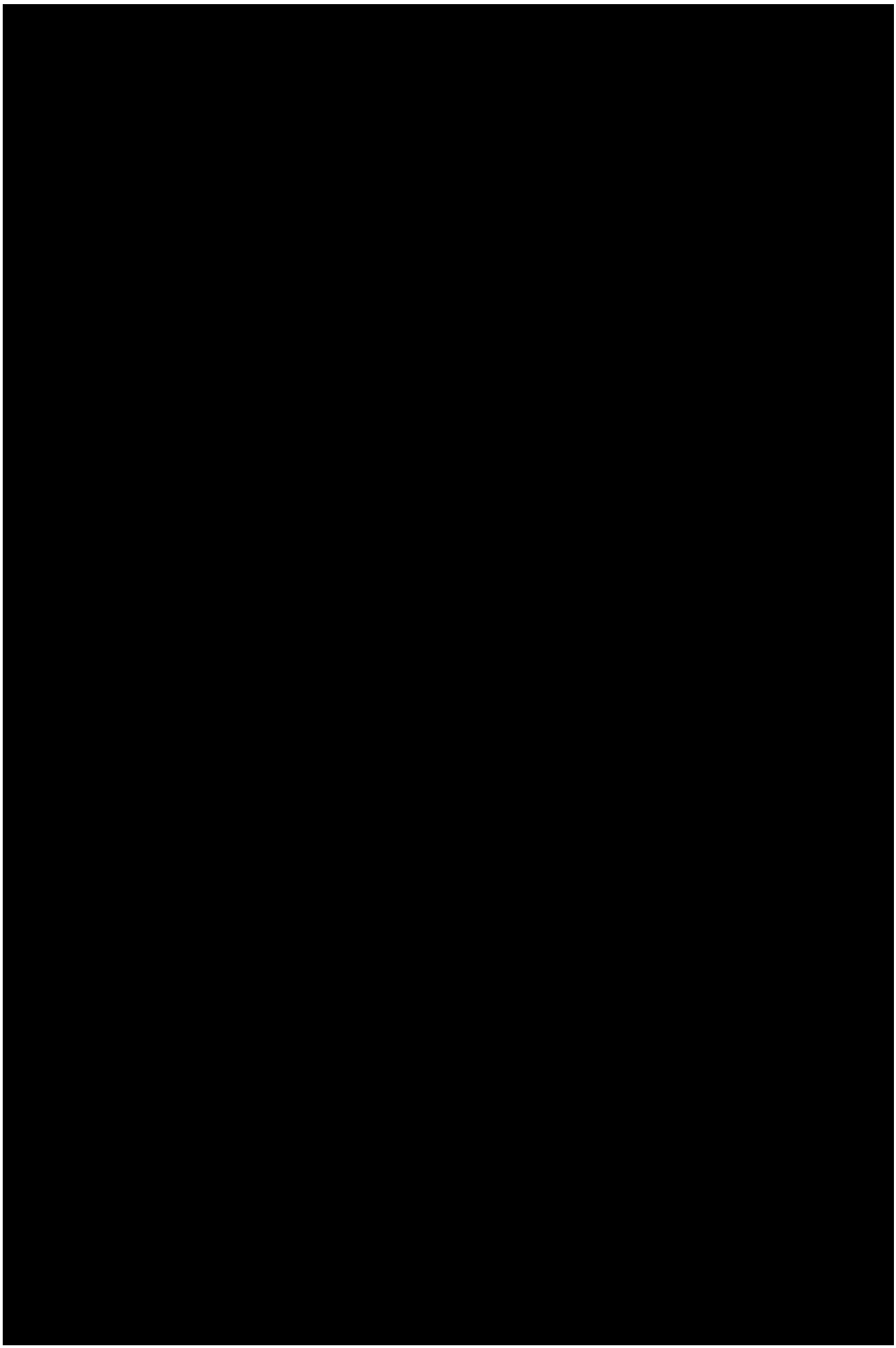
Budget Narrative

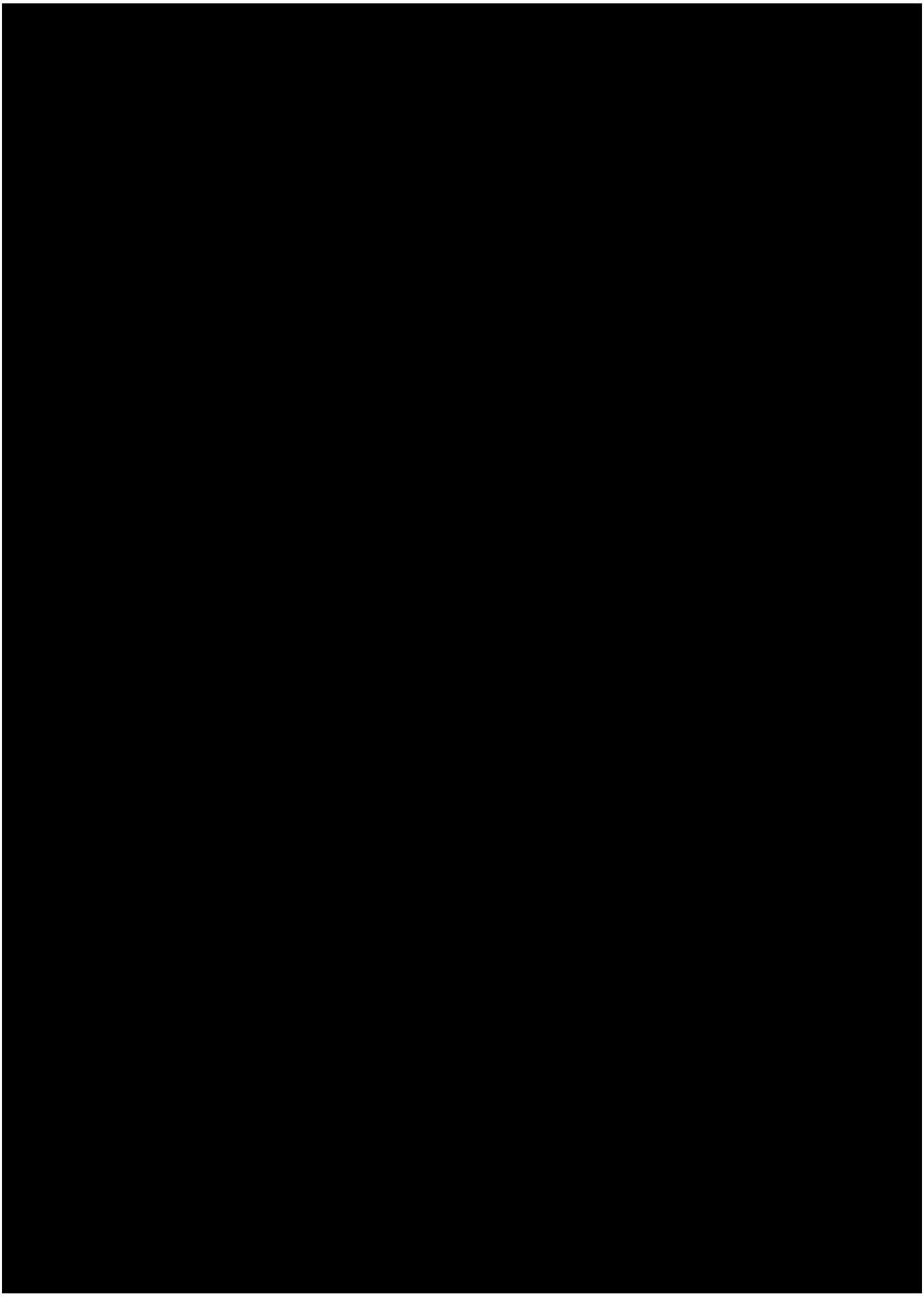
Note: The budget narrative is for five years. Resource allocations described are on a 12-month basis.

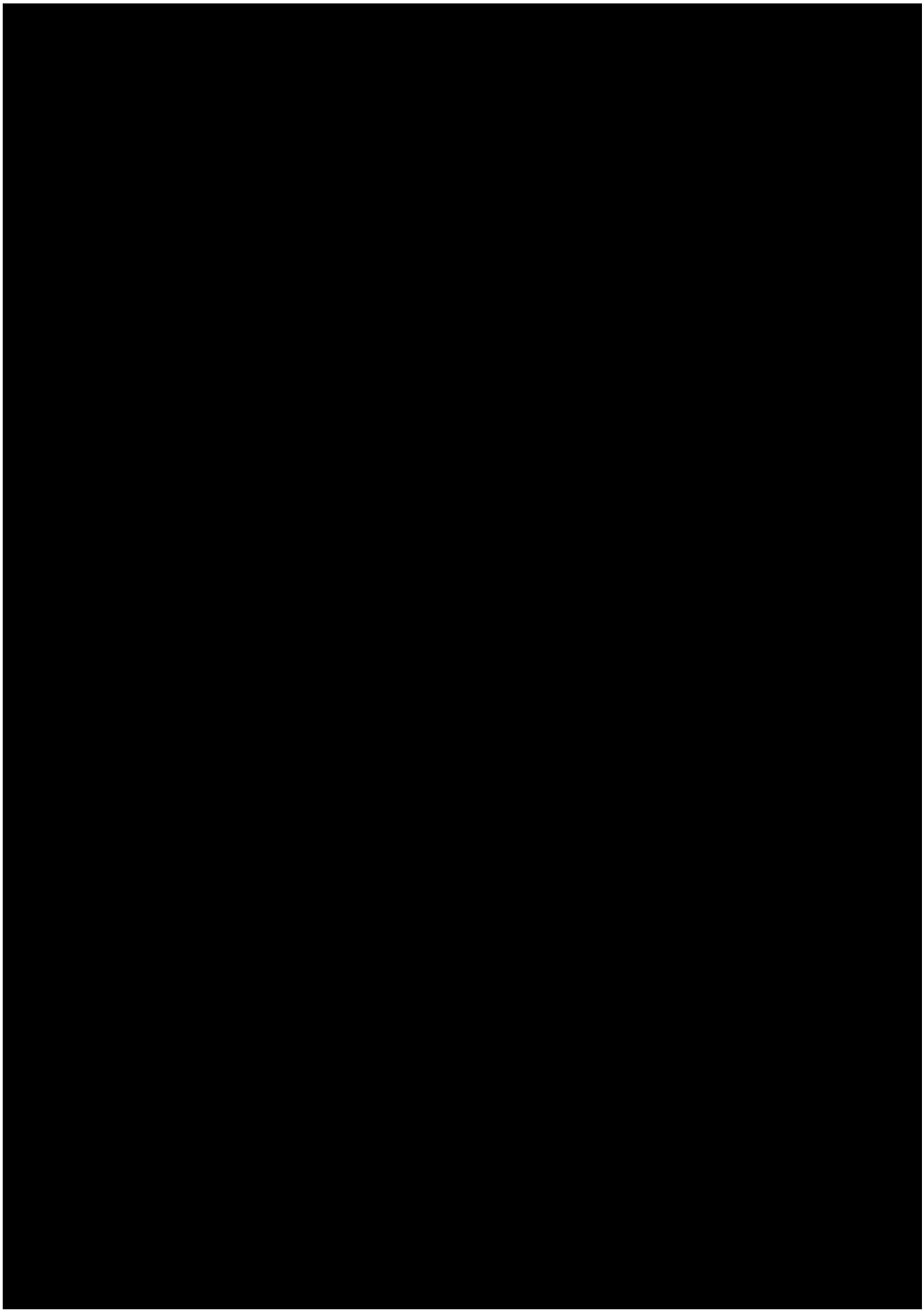


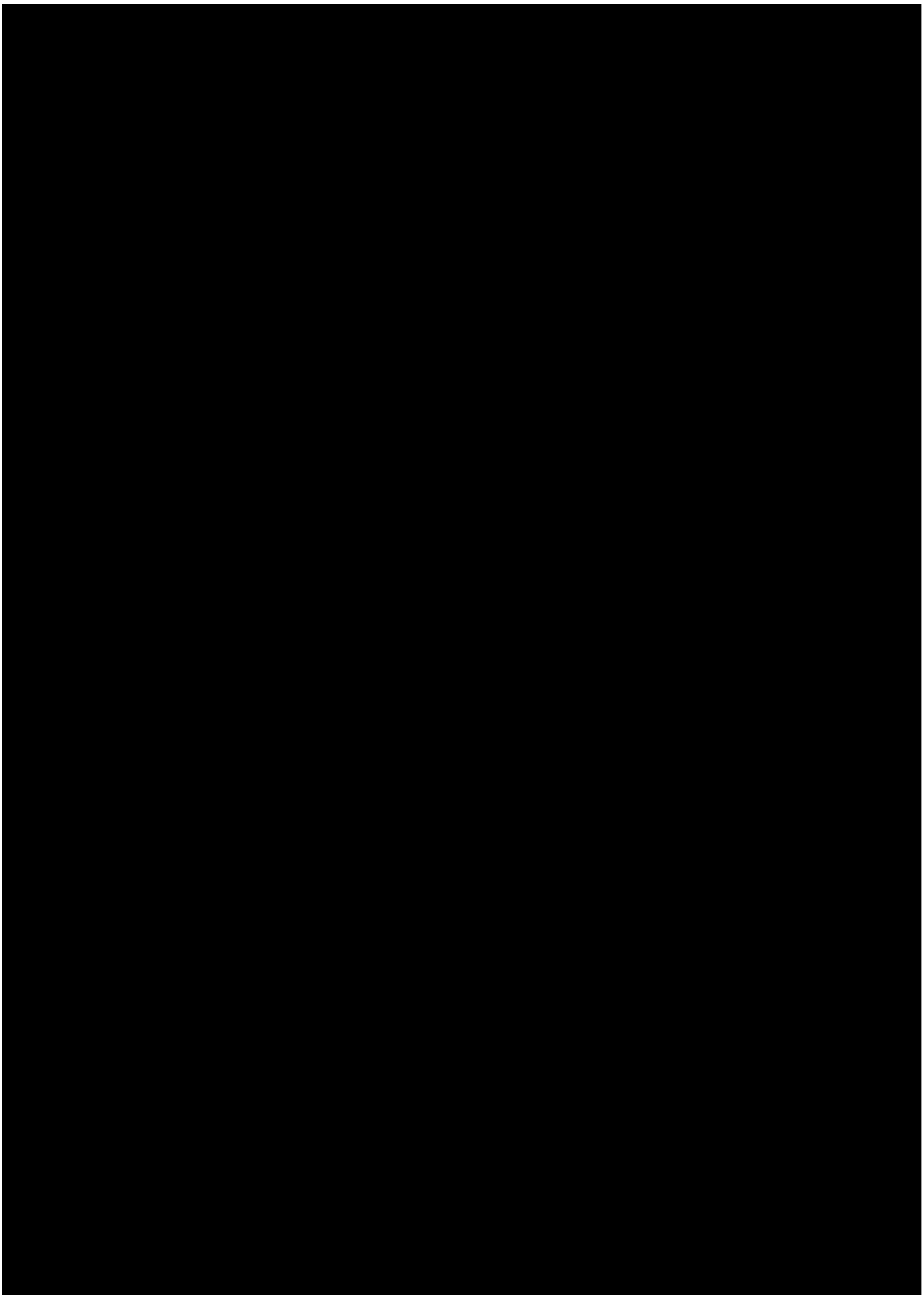












U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BUDGET INFORMATION
NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

OMB Number: 1894-0008
Expiration Date: 08/31/2026

Name of Institution/Organization

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Applicants requesting funding for only one year should complete the column under "Project Year 1." Applicants requesting funding for multi-year grants should complete all applicable columns. Please read all instructions before completing form.

SECTION A - BUDGET SUMMARY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FUNDS

Budget Categories	Project Year 1 (a)	Project Year 2 (b)	Project Year 3 (c)	Project Year 4 (d)	Project Year 5 (e)	Project Year 6 (f)	Project Year 7 (g)	Total (h)
1. Personnel	[redacted]							
2. Fringe Benefits								
3. Travel								
4. Equipment								
5. Supplies								
6. Contractual								
7. Construction								
8. Other								
9. Total Direct Costs (lines 1-8)								
10. Indirect Costs*								
11. Training Stipends								
12. Total Costs (lines 9-11)								

Indirect Cost Information** ***(To Be Completed by Your Business Office): If you are requesting reimbursement for indirect costs on line 10, please answer the following questions:

(1) Do you have an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement approved by the Federal government? ☒ ☐

(2) If yes, please provide the following information:

Period Covered by the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement: From: ☐ To: ☐ (mm/dd/yyyy)

Approving Federal agency: ☐ ☒

The Indirect Cost Rate is [redacted]%.

(3) If this is your first Federal grant, and you do not have an approved indirect cost rate agreement, are not a State, Local government or Indian Tribe, and are not funded under a training rate program or a restricted rate program, do you want to use the de minimis rate of 10% of MTDC? ☐ ☐ If yes, you must comply with the requirements of 2 CFR § 200.414(f).

(4) If you do not have an approved indirect cost rate agreement, do you want to use the temporary rate of 10% of budgeted salaries and wages?

☐ ☐ If yes, you must submit a proposed indirect cost rate agreement within 90 days after the date your grant is awarded, as required by 34 CFR § 75.560.

(5) For Restricted Rate Programs (check one) -- Are you using a restricted indirect cost rate that:

☐ ☐ The Restricted Indirect Cost Rate is ☐ %.

(6) For Training Rate Programs (check one) -- Are you using a rate that:

☐ Is based on the training rate of 8 percent of MTDC (See EDGAR § 75.562(c)(4))? Or, ☐ is included in your approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, because it is lower than the training rate of 8 percent of MTDC (See EDGAR § 75.562(c)(4))?

ED 524

Name of Institution/Organization	Applicants requesting funding for only one year should complete the column under "Project Year 1." Applicants requesting funding for multi-year grants should complete all applicable columns. Please read all instructions before completing form.	
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro		

SECTION B - BUDGET SUMMARY
NON-FEDERAL FUNDS

Budget Categories	Project Year 1 (a)	Project Year 2 (b)	Project Year 3 (c)	Project Year 4 (d)	Project Year 5 (e)	Project Year 6 (f)	Project Year 7 (g)	Total (h)
1. Personnel								
2. Fringe Benefits								
3. Travel								
4. Equipment								
5. Supplies								
6. Contractual								
7. Construction								
8. Other								
9. Total Direct Costs (lines 1-8)								
10. Indirect Costs								
11. Training Stipends								
12. Total Costs (lines 9-11)								

SECTION C - BUDGET NARRATIVE (see instructions)

ED 524

Name of Institution/Organization	Applicants requesting funding for only one year should complete the column under "Project Year 1." Applicants requesting funding for multi-year grants should complete all applicable columns. Please read all instructions before completing form.	
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro		

IF APPLICABLE: SECTION D - LIMITATION ON ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES

(1) List administrative cost cap (x%): ☐

(2) What does your administrative cost cap apply to? ☐ (a) indirect and direct costs or, ☐ (b) only direct costs

Budget Categories	Project Year 1 (a)	Project Year 2 (b)	Project Year 3 (c)	Project Year 4 (d)	Project Year 5 (e)	Project Year 6 (f)	Project Year 7 (g)	Total (h)
1. Personnel Administrative								
2. Fringe Benefits Administrative								
3. Travel Administrative								
4. Contractual Administrative								
5. Construction Administrative								
6. Other Administrative								
7. Total Direct Administrative Costs (lines 1-6)								
8. Indirect Costs								
9. Total Administrative Costs								
10. Total Percentage of Administrative Costs								

ED 524

DISCLOSURE OF LOBBYING ACTIVITIES

Complete this form to disclose lobbying activities pursuant to 31 U.S.C.1352

OMB Number: 4040-0013
Expiration Date: 02/28/2025

1. * Type of Federal Action:

- ☐ a. contract
- ☒ b. grant
- ☐ c. cooperative agreement
- ☐ d. loan
- ☐ e. loan guarantee
- ☐ f. loan insurance

2. * Status of Federal Action:

- ☐ a. bid/offer/application
- ☒ b. initial award
- ☐ c. post-award

3. * Report Type:

- ☒ a. initial filing
- ☐ b. material change

4. Name and Address of Reporting Entity:

☒ Prime ☐ SubAwardee

** Name*

** Street 1* *Street 2*

** City* *State* NC: North Carolina *Zip* 27412-5068

Congressional District, if known: NC-006

5. If Reporting Entity in No.4 is Subawardee, Enter Name and Address of Prime:

6. * Federal Department/Agency:

7. * Federal Program Name/Description:

Comprehensive Centers

CFDA Number, *if applicable:* 84.283

8. Federal Action Number, *if known:*

9. Award Amount, *if known:*

$

10. a. Name and Address of Lobbying Registrant:

Prefix ** First Name* *Middle Name*

** Last Name* *Suffix*

** Street 1* *Street 2*

** City* *State* *Zip*

b. Individual Performing Services (including address if different from No. 10a)

Prefix ** First Name* *Middle Name*

** Last Name* *Suffix*

** Street 1* *Street 2*

** City* *State* *Zip*

11. Information requested through this form is authorized by title 31 U.S.C. section 1352. This disclosure of lobbying activities is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed by the tier above when the transaction was made or entered into. This disclosure is required pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1352. This information will be reported to the Congress semi-annually and will be available for public inspection. Any person who fails to file the required disclosure shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

*** Signature:** [redacted]

***Name:** *Prefix* Ms. ** First Name* *Middle Name*

** Last Name* *Suffix*

Title: Director, Office of Sponsored Programs **Telephone No.:** **Date:** 06/24/2024

Authorized for Local Reproduction
Standard Form - LLL (Rev. 7-97)

U.S. Department of Education Supplemental Information for the SF-424
Application for Federal Assistance

1. Project Director and Applicable Entity Identification Numbers:

Prefix:	* First Name:	Middle Name:	* Last Name:	Suffix:
Dr.	Priscilla		Maynor	

* Project Director Level of Effort (percentage of time devoted to grant):

Address:

* Street1: 5900 Summit Ave
Street2: #201
* City: Browns Summit
County:
* State: NC: North Carolina
* Zip Code: 27214-9860
* Country: USA: UNITED STATES

* Phone Number (give area code) [redacted]
Fax Number (give area code)

* Email Address: [redacted]

Alternate Email Address: [redacted]

OPE ID(s) (if applicable)

NCES School ID(s) (if applicable)

NCES LEA/School District ID(s) (if applicable)

2. New Potential Grantee or Novice Applicant:

☐ N/A. This item is not applicable because the program competition's notice inviting applications (NIA) does not include a definition of either "New Potential Grantee" or "Novice Applicant." This item is not applicable when the program competition's NIA does not include either definition.

For NIA's that include a definition of "New Potential Grantee" or "Novice Applicant," complete the following:

a. Are you either a new potential grantee or novice applicant as defined in the program competition's NIA?

☐ ☒

3. Human Subjects Research:

a. Are any research activities involving human subjects planned at any time during the proposed Project Period?

☐ Yes ☒ No

b. Are ALL the research activities proposed designated to be exempt from the regulations?

☐ Yes Provide Exemption(s) #(s): ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8

☐ No Provide Federal Wide Assurance #(s), if available:

c. If applicable, please attach your "Exempt Research" or "Nonexempt Research" narrative to this form as indicated in the definitions page in the attached instructions.

4. Infrastructure Programs and Build America, Buy America Act Applicability:

If the competition Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) in section III. 4. "Other" states that the program under which this application is submitted is subject to the Build America, Buy America Act (Pub. L. 117-58) (BABAA) domestic sourcing requirements, complete the following:

☒ This application does not include any infrastructure projects or activities and therefore **IS NOT** subject the BABAA domestic sourcing requirements.

☐ This application **IS** subject to the BABAA domestic sourcing requirements, because the proposed grant project described in this application includes the following infrastructure projects or activities:

☐ Construction

☐ Remodeling

☐ Broadband Infrastructure

If this application **IS** subject to the BABAA domestic sourcing requirements, please list the page numbers from within the application narrative where the proposed infrastructure project or activities are described:

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS: EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program.

ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW GRANT AWARDS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.

Please respond to the following requests for information. Responses are limited to 4,000 characters.

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

offenders, first generation college students, individuals who have not completed high school or a GED, single mothers, immigrants, low income residents and other underrepresented populations
3. Providing interpreters when appropriate and possible, in partnership with the Center for New North Carolinians
4. Providing an environment that welcomes individuals from all backgrounds
5. Seeking ongoing direction from the UNCG's Policy Administrators on non-discriminatory conduct and with regard to the implementation of any future changes in these policies
6. Providing ongoing gender bias and cultural awareness training
7. Ensuring full facility compliance with ADA requirements
8. Offering web materials in languages other than English, notably Spanish
9. Ensuring the web site is compliant for those who are vision impaired
10. Attempting to hire at least one staff member who is fluent in a language other than English, notably Spanish

2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

Notes:

1. Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity in order to submit an application.

2. Applicants may identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.

3. Applicants may have already included some or all of this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) and page number(s) in their applications or State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

Paperwork Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1894-0005. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 3 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is required to obtain or retain a benefit. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving this individual collection, send your comments to ICDocketMgr@ed.gov and reference OMB Control Number 1894-0005. All other comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual form may be addressed to either (a) the person listed in the FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT section in the competition Notice Inviting Applications, or (b) your assigned program officer.