

**FOR CONSIDERATION** By the Committee on Health Policy

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1                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to cancer; amending s. 381.915, F.S.;  
3           revising the definitions of the terms "cancer center"  
4           and "Florida-based"; defining the term "Cancer Connect  
5           Collaborative" or "collaborative"; making clarifying  
6           changes; deleting an obsolete date; revising the  
7           composition of the collaborative; deleting obsolete  
8           provisions; requiring the collaborative to review all  
9           submitted Cancer Innovation Fund grant applications  
10          using certain parameters; requiring the collaborative  
11          to give priority to certain applications; requiring  
12          licensed or certified health care providers,  
13          facilities, or entities to meet certain criteria to be  
14          eligible for specified grant funding; specifying such  
15          criteria; requiring the Department of Health to  
16          appoint peer review panels for a specified purpose;  
17          requiring that priority scores be forwarded to the  
18          collaborative and be considered in determining which  
19          proposals the collaborative recommends for certain  
20          grant funding; requiring the collaborative and peer  
21          review panels to establish and follow certain  
22          guidelines and adhere to a certain policy; prohibiting  
23          a member of the collaborative or a panel from  
24          participating in certain discussions or decisions  
25          under certain circumstances; requiring, beginning on a  
26          specified date and annually thereafter, the  
27          collaborative to prepare and submit a specified report  
28          to the Governor and the Legislature; requiring that  
29          the report include certain information; revising the

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30 requirements for a specified report by the department;  
31 requiring, beginning on a specified date, that certain  
32 allocation agreements include certain information;  
33 providing legislative findings; creating the Cancer  
34 Connect Collaborative Research Incubator within the  
35 department, and overseen by the collaborative, to  
36 provide funding for a specified purpose over a  
37 specified timeframe; specifying the incubator's  
38 targeted area of cancer research for the first  
39 specified timeframe; providing that grants issued  
40 through the incubator are contingent upon the  
41 appropriation of funds and must be awarded through a  
42 specified process; requiring that priority be given to  
43 certain applicants; authorizing the prioritization of  
44 certain grant proposals; providing that applications  
45 for incubator funding may be submitted by specified  
46 hospitals; requiring that all qualified applicants  
47 have equal access and opportunity to compete for  
48 research funding; requiring that incubator grants be  
49 recommended by the collaborative and awarded by the  
50 department in a certain manner; requiring the  
51 department to appoint peer review panels for a  
52 specified purpose; requiring that priority scores be  
53 forwarded to the collaborative and be considered in  
54 determining which proposals the collaborative  
55 recommends for funding; requiring the collaborative  
56 and peer review panels to establish and follow certain  
57 guidelines and adhere to a certain policy; prohibiting  
58 a member of the collaborative or a panel from

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59 participating in certain discussions or decisions;  
60 requiring recipients of incubator grant funds to enter  
61 into an allocation agreement with the department;  
62 specifying requirements for such allocation  
63 agreements; requiring, beginning on a specified date  
64 and annually until a specified date, the collaborative  
65 to prepare and submit a specified report to the  
66 Governor and the Legislature; requiring the  
67 collaborative to make a certain recommendation under  
68 certain circumstances; requiring that a specified  
69 report include certain information; amending s.  
70 381.922, F.S.; establishing the Bascom Palmer Eye  
71 Institute VisionGen Initiative within the William G.  
72 "Bill" Bankhead, Jr., and David Coley Cancer Research  
73 Program; providing the purpose of the initiative;  
74 providing that funding for the initiative is subject  
75 to annual appropriation; providing an effective date.

76  
77 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

78  
79 Section 1. Present paragraphs (c), (d), and (e) of  
80 subsection (3) and present subsections (12) and (13) of section  
81 381.915, Florida Statutes, are redesignated as paragraphs (d),  
82 (e), and (f) of subsection (3) and subsections (13) and (14),  
83 respectively, a new paragraph (c) is added to subsection (3),  
84 paragraph (d) is added to subsection (10), a new subsection (12)  
85 is added to that section, and paragraph (b) and present  
86 paragraph (c) of subsection (3), paragraphs (a), (b), (e), (f),  
87 and (h) of subsection (8), and subsections (9) and (11) of that

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88 section are amended, to read:

89 381.915 Casey DeSantis Cancer Research Program.—

90 (3) On or before September 15 of each year, the department  
91 shall calculate an allocation fraction to be used for  
92 distributing funds to participating cancer centers. On or before  
93 the final business day of each quarter of the state fiscal year,  
94 the department shall distribute to each participating cancer  
95 center one-fourth of that cancer center's annual allocation  
96 calculated under subsection (6). The allocation fraction for  
97 each participating cancer center is based on the cancer center's  
98 tier-designated weight under subsection (4) multiplied by each  
99 of the following allocation factors based on activities in this  
100 state: number of reportable cases, peer-review costs, and  
101 biomedical education and training. As used in this section, the  
102 term:

103 (b) "Cancer center" means a comprehensive center with at  
104 least one geographic site in the state, a freestanding center  
105 located in the state, a center situated within an academic  
106 institution, or a Florida-based formal research-based consortium  
107 under centralized leadership that has achieved NCI designation  
108 ~~or is prepared to achieve NCI designation by June 30, 2024.~~

109 (c) "Cancer Connect Collaborative" or "collaborative" means  
110 the council created under subsection (8).

111 (d)-(e) "Florida-based" means that a cancer center's actual  
112 or sought designated status is or would be recognized by the NCI  
113 as primarily located in Florida and not in another state, or  
114 that a health care provider or facility is physically located in  
115 Florida and provides services in Florida.

116 (8) The Cancer Connect Collaborative, a council as defined

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117 in s. 20.03, is created within the department to advise the  
118 department and the Legislature on developing a holistic approach  
119 to the state's efforts to fund cancer research, cancer  
120 facilities, and treatments for cancer patients. The  
121 collaborative may make recommendations on proposed legislation,  
122 proposed rules, best practices, data collection and reporting,  
123 issuance of grant funds, and other proposals for state policy  
124 relating to cancer research or treatment.

125 (a) The Surgeon General shall serve as an ex officio,  
126 nonvoting member of the collaborative and shall serve as the  
127 chair.

128 (b) The collaborative shall be composed of the following  
129 voting members, ~~to be appointed by September 1, 2024:~~

130 1. Two members appointed by the Governor, three members ~~one~~  
131 ~~member~~ appointed by the President of the Senate, and three  
132 members ~~one member~~ appointed by the Speaker of the House of  
133 Representatives, based on the criteria of this subparagraph. The  
134 appointing officers shall make their appointments prioritizing  
135 members who have the following experience or expertise:

136 a. The practice of a health care profession specializing in  
137 oncology clinical care or research;

138 b. The development of preventive and therapeutic treatments  
139 to control cancer;

140 c. The development of innovative research into the causes  
141 of cancer, the development of effective treatments for persons  
142 with cancer, or cures for cancer; or

143 d. Management-level experience with a cancer center  
144 licensed under chapter 395.

145 2. One member who is a resident of this state who can

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146 represent the interests of cancer patients in this state,  
147 appointed by the Governor.

148 (e) Members of the collaborative whose terms have expired  
149 may continue to serve until replaced or reappointed, but for no  
150 more than 6 months after the expiration of their terms.

151 (f) Members of the collaborative shall serve without  
152 compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for per diem and  
153 travel expenses pursuant to s. 112.061.

154 ~~(h) The collaborative shall develop a long-range~~  
155 ~~comprehensive plan for the Casey DeSantis Cancer Research~~  
156 ~~Program. In the development of the plan, the collaborative must~~  
157 ~~solicit input from cancer centers, research institutions,~~  
158 ~~biomedical education institutions, hospitals, and medical~~  
159 ~~providers. The collaborative shall submit the plan to the~~  
160 ~~Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the~~  
161 ~~House of Representatives no later than December 1, 2024. The~~  
162 ~~plan must include, but need not be limited to, all of the~~  
163 ~~following components:~~

164 ~~1. Expansion of grant fund opportunities to include a~~  
165 ~~broader pool of Florida-based cancer centers, research~~  
166 ~~institutions, biomedical education institutions, hospitals, and~~  
167 ~~medical providers to receive funding through the Cancer~~  
168 ~~Innovation Fund.~~

169 ~~2. An evaluation to determine metrics that focus on patient~~  
170 ~~outcomes, quality of care, and efficacy of treatment.~~

171 ~~3. A compilation of best practices relating to cancer~~  
172 ~~research or treatment.~~

173 (9) (a) The collaborative shall advise the department on the  
174 awarding of grants issued through the Cancer Innovation Fund.

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175 During any fiscal year for which funds are appropriated to the  
176 fund, the collaborative shall review all submitted grant  
177 applications using the parameters provided in paragraph (c) and  
178 make recommendations to the department for awarding grants to  
179 support innovative cancer research and treatment models,  
180 including emerging research and treatment trends and promising  
181 treatments that may serve as catalysts for further research and  
182 treatments. The department shall make the final grant allocation  
183 awards. The collaborative shall give priority to applications  
184 seeking to expand the reach of cancer screening efforts and  
185 innovative cancer treatment models into underserved areas of  
186 this state.

187 (b) To be eligible for grant funding under this section, a  
188 licensed or certified health care provider, facility, or entity  
189 must meet at least one of the following criteria:

190 1. Operates as a licensed hospital that has a minimum of 30  
191 percent of its current cancer patients residing in rural or  
192 underserved areas.

193 2. Operates as a licensed health care clinic or facility  
194 that employs or contracts with at least one physician licensed  
195 under chapter 458 or chapter 459 who is board certified in  
196 oncology and that administers chemotherapy treatments for  
197 cancer.

198 3. Operates as a licensed facility that employs or  
199 contracts with at least one physician licensed under chapter 458  
200 or chapter 459 who is board certified in oncology and that  
201 administers radiation therapy treatments for cancer.

202 4. Operates as a licensed health care clinic or facility  
203 that provides cancer screening services at no cost or a minimal

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204 cost to patients.

205 5. Operates as a rural hospital as defined in s.  
206 395.602(2)(b).

207 6. Operates as a critical access hospital as defined in s.  
208 408.07(14).

209 7. Operates as a specialty hospital as defined in s.  
210 395.002(28)(a) which provides cancer treatment for patients from  
211 birth to 18 years of age.

212 8. Engages in biomedical research intended to develop  
213 therapies, medical pharmaceuticals, treatment protocols, or  
214 medical procedures intended to cure cancer or improve the  
215 quality of life of cancer patients.

216 9. Educates or trains students, postdoctoral fellows, or  
217 licensed or certified health care practitioners in the  
218 screening, diagnosis, or treatment of cancer.

219 (c) To ensure that all proposals for grant funding issued  
220 through the Cancer Innovation Fund are appropriate and are  
221 evaluated fairly on the basis of scientific merit, the  
222 department shall appoint peer review panels of independent,  
223 scientifically qualified individuals to review the scientific  
224 merit of each proposal and establish its priority score. The  
225 priority scores must be forwarded to the collaborative and must  
226 be considered in determining which proposals the collaborative  
227 recommends for grant funding through the Cancer Innovation Fund.

228 (d) The collaborative and the peer review panels shall  
229 establish and follow rigorous guidelines for ethical conduct and  
230 adhere to a strict policy with regard to conflicts of interest  
231 regarding the assessment of Cancer Innovation Fund grant  
232 applications. A member of the collaborative or a panel may not



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233 participate in any discussion or decision of the collaborative  
234 or a panel with respect to a research proposal by any firm,  
235 entity, or agency with which the member is associated as a  
236 member of the governing body or as an employee or with which the  
237 member has entered into a contractual arrangement.

238 (e) Beginning December 1, 2025, and annually thereafter,  
239 the collaborative shall prepare and submit a report to the  
240 Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the  
241 House of Representatives which identifies and evaluates the  
242 performance and the impact of grants issued through the Cancer  
243 Innovation Fund on cancer treatment, research, screening,  
244 diagnosis, prevention, practitioner training, workforce  
245 education, and cancer patient survivorship. The report must  
246 include all of the following:

- 247 1. Amounts of grant funds awarded to each recipient.  
248 2. Descriptions of each recipient's research or project  
249 which include, but need not be limited to, the following:  
250 a. Goals or projected outcomes.  
251 b. Population to be served.  
252 c. Research methods or project implementation plan.  
253 3. An assessment of grant recipients which evaluates their  
254 progress toward achieving objectives specified in each  
255 recipient's grant application.  
256 4. Recommendations for best practices that may be  
257 implemented by health care providers in this state who diagnose,  
258 treat, and screen for cancer, based on the outcomes of projects  
259 funded through the Cancer Innovation Fund.

260 (10) Beginning July 1, 2025, and each year thereafter, the  
261 department, in conjunction with participating cancer centers,

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262 shall submit a report to the Cancer Control and Research  
263 Advisory Council and the collaborative on specific metrics  
264 relating to cancer mortality and external funding for cancer-  
265 related research in this state. If a cancer center does not  
266 endorse this report or produce an equivalent independent report,  
267 the cancer center is ineligible to receive program funding for 1  
268 year. The department must submit this annual report, and any  
269 equivalent independent reports, to the Governor, the President  
270 of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives  
271 no later than September 15 of each year the report or reports  
272 are submitted by the department. The report must include:

273 (d) A description of the numbers and types of cancer cases  
274 treated annually at each participating cancer center, including  
275 reportable and nonreportable cases.

276 (11) Beginning July 1, 2025 ~~2024~~, each allocation agreement  
277 issued by the department relating to cancer center payments  
278 under paragraph (2) (a) ~~subsection (2)~~ must include all of the  
279 following:

280 (a) A line-item budget narrative documenting the annual  
281 allocation of funds to a cancer center.

282 (b) A cap on the annual award of 15 percent for  
283 administrative expenses.

284 (c) A requirement for the cancer center to submit quarterly  
285 reports of all expenditures made by the cancer center with funds  
286 received through the Casey DeSantis Cancer Research Program.

287 (d) A provision to allow the department and other state  
288 auditing bodies to audit all financial records, supporting  
289 documents, statistical records, and any other documents  
290 pertinent to the allocation agreement.

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291 (e) A provision requiring the annual reporting of outcome  
292 data and protocols used in achieving those outcomes.

293 (12) (a) The Legislature finds that targeted areas of cancer  
294 research require increased resources and that Florida should  
295 become a leader in promoting research opportunities for these  
296 targeted areas. Floridians should not have to leave the state to  
297 receive the most advanced cancer care and treatment. To meet  
298 this need, the Cancer Connect Collaborative Research Incubator,  
299 or "incubator" as used in this subsection, is created within the  
300 department, to be overseen by the collaborative, to provide  
301 funding for a targeted area of cancer research over a 5-year  
302 period. For the 5-year period beginning July 1, 2025, the  
303 incubator's targeted area of cancer research is pediatric  
304 cancer.

305 (b) Contingent upon the appropriation of funds by the  
306 Legislature, grants issued through the incubator must be awarded  
307 through a peer-reviewed, competitive process. Priority must be  
308 given to applicants that focus on enhancing both research and  
309 treatment by increasing participation in clinical trials related  
310 to the targeted area of cancer research, including all of the  
311 following:

312 1. Identifying strategies to increase enrollment in cancer  
313 clinical trials.

314 2. Supporting public and private professional education  
315 programs to raise awareness and knowledge about cancer clinical  
316 trials.

317 3. Providing tools for cancer patients and community-based  
318 oncologists to help identify available cancer clinical trials in  
319 this state.

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320 4. Creating opportunities for the state's academic cancer  
321 centers to collaborate with community-based oncologists in  
322 cancer clinical trial networks.

323 (c) Priority may be given to grant proposals that foster  
324 collaborations among institutions, researchers, and community  
325 practitioners to support the advancement of cures through basic  
326 or applied research, including clinical trials involving cancer  
327 patients and related networks.

328 (d) Applications for incubator funding may be submitted by  
329 any Florida-based specialty hospital as defined in s.  
330 395.002(28)(a) which provides cancer treatment for patients from  
331 birth to 18 years of age. All qualified applicants must have  
332 equal access and opportunity to compete for research funding.  
333 Incubator grants must be recommended by the collaborative and  
334 awarded by the department on the basis of scientific merit, as  
335 determined by a competitively open and peer-reviewed process to  
336 ensure objectivity, consistency, and high quality.

337 (e) To ensure that all proposals for research funding are  
338 appropriate and are evaluated fairly on the basis of scientific  
339 merit, the department shall appoint peer review panels of  
340 independent, scientifically qualified individuals to review the  
341 scientific merit of each proposal and establish its priority  
342 score. The priority scores must be forwarded to the  
343 collaborative and must be considered in determining which  
344 proposals the collaborative recommends for funding.

345 (f) The collaborative and the peer review panels shall  
346 establish and follow rigorous guidelines for ethical conduct and  
347 adhere to a strict policy with regard to conflicts of interest  
348 regarding the assessment of incubator grant applications. A

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349 member of the collaborative or a panel may not participate in  
350 any discussion or decision of the collaborative or a panel  
351 regarding a research proposal from any firm, entity, or agency  
352 with which the member is associated as a governing body member,  
353 as an employee, or through a contractual arrangement.

354 (g) Each recipient of incubator grant funds must enter into  
355 an allocation agreement with the department. Each such  
356 allocation agreement must include all of the following:

357 1. A line-item budget narrative documenting the annual  
358 allocation of funds to a recipient.

359 2. A cap on the annual award of 15 percent for  
360 administrative expenses.

361 3. A requirement for the recipient to submit quarterly  
362 reports of all expenditures made by the recipient with funds  
363 received through the incubator.

364 4. A provision to allow the department and other state  
365 auditing bodies to audit all financial records, supporting  
366 documents, statistical records, and any other documents  
367 pertinent to the allocation agreement.

368 5. A provision requiring the annual reporting of outcome  
369 data and protocols used in achieving those outcomes.

370 (h) Beginning December 1, 2026, and annually through  
371 December 1, 2030, the collaborative shall prepare and submit a  
372 report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the  
373 Speaker of the House of Representatives which evaluates research  
374 conducted through the incubator and provides details on outcomes  
375 and findings available through the end of the fiscal year  
376 immediately preceding each report. If the collaborative  
377 recommends that the incubator be extended beyond its 5-year

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378 lifespan, the collaborative shall make such recommendation in  
379 the report due December 1, 2029, and shall include a  
380 recommendation for the next targeted area of cancer research.  
381 The report due on December 1, 2030, must include all of the  
382 following:

383 1. Details of all results of the research conducted with  
384 incubator funding which has been completed or the status of  
385 research in progress.

386 2. An evaluation of all research conducted with incubator  
387 funding during the 5 fiscal years preceding the report.

388 Section 2. Paragraph (d) is added to subsection (2) of  
389 section 381.922, Florida Statutes, to read:

390 381.922 William G. "Bill" Bankhead, Jr., and David Coley  
391 Cancer Research Program.—

392 (2) The program shall provide grants for cancer research to  
393 further the search for cures for cancer.

394 (d) There is established within the program the Bascom  
395 Palmer Eye Institute VisionGen Initiative. The purpose of the  
396 initiative is to advance genetic and epigenetic research on  
397 inherited eye diseases and ocular oncology by awarding grants  
398 through the peer-reviewed, competitive process established under  
399 subsection (3). Funding for the initiative is subject to the  
400 annual appropriation of funds by the Legislature.

401 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.