

By Senator Rodriguez

40-00931A-26

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29 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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31 Section 1. Section 381.994, Florida Statutes, is created to
32 read:

33 381.994 Neurofibromatosis Disease Grant Program.—

34 (1) (a) There is created within the Department of Health the
35 Neurofibromatosis Disease Grant Program. The purpose of the
36 program is to advance the progress of research and cures for
37 neurofibromatosis by awarding grants through a competitive,
38 peer-reviewed process.

39 (b) Subject to an annual recurring appropriation of \$5
40 million by the Legislature, the program shall award grants for
41 scientific and clinical research to further the search for new
42 diagnostics, treatments, and cures for neurofibromatosis.

43 (2) (a) Applications for grants for neurofibromatosis
44 disease research may be submitted by any university or
45 established research institute in this state. All qualified
46 investigators in this state, regardless of institutional
47 affiliation, shall have equal access and opportunity to compete
48 for the research funding. Preference may be given to grant
49 proposals that foster collaboration among institutions,
50 researchers, and community practitioners, as such proposals
51 support the advancement of treatments and cures of
52 neurofibromatosis through basic or applied research. Grants
53 shall be awarded by the department, after consultation with the
54 Rare Disease Advisory Council under s. 381.99, on the basis of
55 scientific merit, as determined by the competitive, peer-
56 reviewed process to ensure objectivity, consistency, and high
57 quality. The following types of applications may be considered
58 for funding:

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59 1. Investigator-initiated research grants.
60 2. Institutional research grants.
61 3. Collaborative research grants, including those that
62 advance the finding of treatment and cures through basic or
63 applied research.

64 (b) To ensure appropriate and fair evaluation of grant
65 applications based on scientific merit, the department shall
66 appoint peer review panels of independent, scientifically
67 qualified individuals to review the scientific merit of each
68 proposal and establish its priority score. The priority scores
69 shall be forwarded to the council and must be considered in
70 determining which proposals are recommended for funding.

71 (3) For purposes of performing their duties under this
72 section, the Rare Disease Advisory Council and the peer review
73 panels shall establish and follow rigorous guidelines for
74 ethical conduct and adhere to a strict policy with regard to
75 conflicts of interest. A member of the council or panel may not
76 participate in any discussion or decision of the council or
77 panel with respect to a research proposal by any firm, entity,
78 or agency with which the member is associated as a member of the
79 governing body or as an employee or with which the member has
80 entered into a contractual arrangement.

81 (4) Notwithstanding s. 216.301 and pursuant to s. 216.351,
82 the balance of any appropriation from the General Revenue Fund
83 for the Neurofibromatosis Disease Grant Program which is not
84 disbursed but is obligated pursuant to contract or committed to
85 be expended by June 30 of the fiscal year in which the funds are
86 appropriated may be carried forward for up to 5 years after the
87 effective date of the original appropriation.

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Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.