

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the neurofibromatosis research
3 grants; creating s. 381.994, F.S.; creating the
4 Neurofibromatosis Disease Grant Program within the
5 Department of Health; providing purpose and funding of
6 the program; providing requirements for grant
7 applications; requiring the Rare Disease Advisory
8 Council and the peer review panels to establish and
9 follow specified guidelines; prohibiting members of
10 the council and panels from participating in certain
11 discussions and decisions under certain circumstances;
12 authorizing certain appropriation funds to be carried
13 forward under certain circumstances; providing an
14 effective date.

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

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18 **Section 1. Section 381.994, Florida Statutes, is created**
19 **to read:**

20 381.994 Neurofibromatosis Disease Grant Program—
21 (1) (a) There is created within the Department of Health
22 the Neurofibromatosis Disease Grant Program. The purpose of the
23 program is to advance the progress of research and cures for
24 neurofibromatosis by awarding grants through a competitive,
25 peer-reviewed process.

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

30 (2)(a) Applications for grants for neurofibromatosis
31 disease research may be submitted by any university or
32 established research institute in the state. All qualified
33 investigators in the state, regardless of institutional
34 affiliation, shall have equal access and opportunity to compete
35 for the research funding. Preference may be given to grant
36 proposals that foster collaboration among institutions,
37 researchers, and community practitioners, as such proposals
38 support the advancement of treatments and cures of
39 neurofibromatosis through basic or applied research. Grants
40 shall be awarded by the department, after consultation with the
41 Rare Disease Advisory Council, pursuant to s. 381.99, on the
42 basis of scientific merit, as determined by the competitive,
43 peer-reviewed process to ensure objectivity, consistency, and
44 high quality. The following types of applications may be
45 considered for funding:

- 46 1. Investigator-initiated research grants.
47 2. Institutional research grants.
48 3. Collaborative research grants, including those that
49 advance the finding of treatment and cures through basic or
50 applied research.

51 (b) To ensure appropriate and fair evaluation of grant
52 applications based on scientific merit, the department shall
53 appoint peer review panels of independent, scientifically
54 qualified individuals to review the scientific merit of each
55 proposal and establish its priority score. The priority scores
56 shall be forwarded to the council and must be considered in
57 determining which proposals shall be recommended for funding.

58 (3) The Rare Disease Advisory Council and the peer review
59 panels shall establish and follow rigorous guidelines for
60 ethical conduct and adhere to a strict policy with regard to
61 conflicts of interest. A member of the council or panel may not
62 participate in any discussion or decision of the council or
63 panel with respect to a research proposal by any firm, entity,
64 or agency that the member is associated with as a member of the
65 governing body or as an employee or with which the member has
66 entered into a contractual arrangement.

67 (4) Notwithstanding s. 216.301 and pursuant to s. 216.351,
68 the balance of any appropriation from the General Revenue Fund
69 for the Neurofibromatosis Disease Grant Program that is not
70 disbursed but that is obligated pursuant to contract or
71 committed to be expended by June 30 of the fiscal year in which
72 the funds are appropriated may be carried forward for up to 5
73 years after the effective date of the original appropriation.

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