

CS/HB 497

2026

A bill to be entitled
An act relating to the neurofibromatosis research grants; creating s. 381.994, F.S.; creating the Neurofibromatosis Disease Grant Program within the Department of Health; providing purpose of the program; requiring, subject to appropriation, the program to award certain grants; providing requirements for grant applications; requiring the Rare Disease Advisory Council and the peer review panels to establish and follow specified guidelines; prohibiting members of the council and panels from participating in certain discussions and decisions under certain circumstances; authorizing certain appropriation funds to be carried forward under certain circumstances; providing an effective date.

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

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

381.994 Neurofibromatosis Disease Grant Program—
(1) (a) There is created within the Department of Health
the Neurofibromatosis Disease Grant Program. The purpose of the
program is to advance the progress of research and cures for
neurofibromatosis by awarding grants through a competitive,

26 peer-reviewed process.

27 (b) Subject to legislative appropriation, the program
28 shall award grants for scientific and clinical research to
29 further the search for new diagnostics, treatments, and cures
30 for neurofibromatosis.

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

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

51 applied research.

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

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

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

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