

CHAPTER 2025-252

House Bill No. 6503

An act for the relief of Mande Penney-Lemmon by Sarasota County; providing for an appropriation to compensate her for injuries sustained as a result of the negligence of Sarasota County through its employee; providing a limitation on compensation and the payment of attorney fees; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, on or about October 1, 2018, Mande Penney-Lemmon was lawfully driving over the Venice Avenue Bridge in Venice and came to a complete stop when traffic stalled in front of her vehicle at or near the intersection of East Venice Avenue and Tamiami Trail North, and

WHEREAS, at the same time, Jill Parnell, an employee of Sarasota County, who was acting within the course and scope of her official duties as a supervisor for Sarasota County Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources, was driving over the same bridge in a motor vehicle owned by Sarasota County, and

WHEREAS, it was a clear and sunny day, and there were no visual obstructions as Ms. Parnell was driving, and

WHEREAS, Ms. Parnell admitted that she was wearing headphones at the time and did not notice that traffic had come to a stop ahead of her, and

WHEREAS, Ms. Parnell's vehicle collided directly into the back of Ms. Penney-Lemmon's vehicle, the impact of which caused Ms. Penney-Lemmon's vehicle to hit the vehicle stopped in front of her, and

WHEREAS, due to the impacts involving both the rear and front of Ms. Penney-Lemmon's vehicle which were caused by Ms. Parnell's negligent driving, Ms. Penney-Lemmon suffered significant physical and neurological injuries, including, but not limited to, discogenic injuries to her neck, disc herniation in her lower back, a type II SLAP tear in her left shoulder, and bilateral temporomandibular joint dysfunction, all of which have required medical intervention and have had a negative impact on her quality of life, and

WHEREAS, Ms. Penney-Lemmon was subsequently diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury as a result of the accident which will limit her ability to function normally for the remainder of her life, and

WHEREAS, Ms. Penney-Lemmon continues to suffer from chronic headaches and anxiety and depression related to the accident, and

WHEREAS, Ms. Penney-Lemmon brought a civil action against Sarasota County in the Twelfth Judicial Circuit in and for Sarasota County, case

number 2022-CA-2865, for the negligent acts of its employee Ms. Parnell, which resulted in injuries to Ms. Penney-Lemmon, and

WHEREAS, the jury found that negligence on the part of Sarasota County, through the actions of its employee Ms. Parnell, was the cause of the injuries and damages to Ms. Penney-Lemmon and issued a verdict in her favor in the amount of \$2,491,364.63, plus interest at the rate of 9.34 percent per annum, or 0.000255191 percent per day, for past and future damages, and

WHEREAS, Sarasota County has paid the statutory limit of \$200,000 in damages under s. 768.28, Florida Statutes, and

WHEREAS, this claim bill is for recovery of the excess judgment in favor of Ms. Penney-Lemmon, in the amount of \$2,291,364.63, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

Section 1. The facts stated in the preamble to this act are found and declared to be true.

Section 2. Sarasota County is authorized and directed to appropriate from funds not otherwise encumbered and to draw a warrant in the amount of \$2,291,364.63, payable to Mande Penney-Lemmon as compensation for injuries and damages sustained.

Section 3. The amount paid by Sarasota County pursuant to s. 768.28, Florida Statutes, and the amount awarded under this act are intended to provide the sole compensation for all present and future claims arising out of the factual situation described in this act which resulted in injuries and damages to Mande Penney-Lemmon. The total amount paid for attorney fees relating to this claim may not exceed 25 percent of the total amount awarded under this act.

Section 4. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

Became a law without the Governor's approval July 3, 2025.

Filed in Office Secretary of State July 7, 2025.