

CHAPTER 2025-253

House Bill No. 6521

An act for the relief of Jacob Rodgers by the City of Gainesville; providing for an appropriation to compensate Jacob Rodgers for injuries sustained as a result of the negligence of an employee of the City of Gainesville; providing a limitation on compensation and the payment of attorney fees; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, on October 7, 2015, Jacob Rodgers was a passenger in a vehicle when it was struck by a vehicle owned by the City of Gainesville, d/b/a Gainesville Regional Utilities, and operated by an employee, and

WHEREAS, the City of Gainesville, d/b/a Gainesville Regional Utilities, employee ran a stop sign and struck the side of the vehicle occupied by Mr. Rodgers, and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rodgers, who was 20 years old at the time, sustained catastrophic injuries, including spinal fractures that resulted in Mr. Rodgers becoming a paraplegic, which will require him to receive supervised medical care, home health care, future medical care, and other services in the future, and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rodgers brought suit against the City of Gainesville, d/b/a Gainesville Regional Utilities, in the Circuit Court of the Eighth Judicial Circuit in and for Alachua County under case number 2016-CA-000659, and

WHEREAS, the suit was tried before an Alachua County jury, and the jury found the City of Gainesville 100 percent at fault and assessed total damages of \$120 million, and

WHEREAS, the trial court ordered a remittitur, which resulted in a final judgment of \$18,319,181.20, and

WHEREAS, the City of Gainesville appealed the final judgment, resulting in Mr. Rodgers agreeing to the remittitur of \$18,319,181.20 and the City of Gainesville obtaining a new trial on the issue of comparative negligence of Mr. Rodgers, and the damage award of \$18,319,181.20 was not reversed by the trial court, and

WHEREAS, the parties mediated the case pursuant to a court order and reached a settlement agreement that the City of Gainesville, d/b/a Gainesville Regional Utilities, would consent to a final judgment of \$11 million, and

WHEREAS, the Gainesville Regional Utilities Authority board adopted and approved the settlement agreement, and

WHEREAS, the City of Gainesville paid the statutory limit of \$200,000 under s. 768.28, Florida Statutes, 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. The City of Gainesville is authorized and directed to appropriate from funds not otherwise encumbered and to draw a warrant in the sum of \$10.8 million payable to Jacob Rodgers as compensation for injuries and damages sustained.

Section 3. The amount paid by the City of Gainesville 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 Jacob Rodgers. 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.

Approved by the Governor June 13, 2025.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 13, 2025.