

1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act for the relief of Kristen and Lia McIntosh;  
3 providing an appropriation to compensate Kristen and  
4 Lia McIntosh for injuries and damages sustained as a  
5 result of the negligence of an employee of the  
6 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services;  
7 providing a limitation on the payment of compensation  
8 and attorney fees; providing an effective date.

9  
10 WHEREAS, at approximately 8:30 p.m. on February 12, 2022,  
11 Officer James Michael McWhorter of the Law Enforcement Division  
12 of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, while  
13 operating a state-owned 2019 Dodge Charger in Nassau County,  
14 attempted to cross Interstate 95 in a westerly direction across  
15 northbound and southbound travel lanes in the dark and with  
16 complete disregard for the right-of-way of approaching motorists  
17 traveling within authorized highway speeds, and

18 WHEREAS, in traversing the interstate, Officer McWhorter  
19 drove into the path of a vehicle traveling southbound containing  
20 a driver and three passengers, husband and wife Ronald and  
21 Elizabeth Thornton, who were in the front seats, and their two  
22 teenage daughters, Kristen and Lia McIntosh, who were in the  
23 rear seats, and

24 WHEREAS, Officer McWhorter's actions caused the two  
25 vehicles to violently collide on the interstate, resulting in

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26 | serious injuries to Mr. and Mrs. Thornton and their daughters,  
27 | and to Officer McWhorter, who subsequently died as a result of  
28 | his injuries, and

29 |       WHEREAS, as a result of the collision, Kristen McIntosh  
30 | suffered a traumatic brain injury, multiple spinal fractures,  
31 | and posttraumatic stress disorder, resulting in pain and  
32 | suffering, disability, disfigurement, mental anguish, emotional  
33 | distress, loss of capacity for the enjoyment of life, expense of  
34 | hospitalization, medical and nursing care and treatment, loss of  
35 | earnings, loss of ability to earn money, and aggravation of any  
36 | previously existing condition, and

37 |       WHEREAS, as a result of the collision, Lia McIntosh  
38 | suffered a fractured neck, a spinal fracture, a collapsed lung,  
39 | internal bleeding, a bowel tear, and posttraumatic stress  
40 | disorder, resulting in pain and suffering, disability or  
41 | physical impairment, disfigurement, mental anguish,  
42 | inconvenience, loss of capacity for the enjoyment of life, and  
43 | aggravation of any previously existing condition, and

44 |       WHEREAS, the Thornton-McIntosh family filed a lawsuit in  
45 | the Circuit Court of the Fourth Judicial Circuit in and for  
46 | Nassau County under case number 2023-CA-0014 against the  
47 | Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services seeking  
48 | compensatory damages for the injuries sustained in the crash,  
49 | and

50 |       WHEREAS, during the course of the litigation, the

51 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services agreed that the  
 52 injuries sustained by Kristen and Lia McIntosh far exceeded the  
 53 statutory limit of \$200,000 per person and \$300,000 per incident  
 54 and would likely result in a multimillion-dollar verdict in  
 55 their favor if tried before a judge or jury, and

56 WHEREAS, in April 2024, a settlement agreement was entered  
 57 into between the parties, whereby the Department of Agriculture  
 58 and Consumer Services agreed to pay its capped statutory limits  
 59 of \$300,000 to the family and support a claim bill to recover  
 60 additional damages for the severe injuries sustained by Kristen  
 61 and Lia McIntosh, and

62 WHEREAS, pursuant to the settlement agreement, a consent  
 63 judgment was entered by the circuit court in the amount of  
 64 \$1.001 million to Kristen McIntosh and \$1.251 million to  
 65 Elizabeth Thornton as parent and natural guardian of Lia  
 66 McIntosh, a minor child, with payment of this judgment  
 67 contingent upon passage of this claim bill, which is fully  
 68 supported by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer  
 69 Services, NOW, THEREFORE,

70  
 71 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

72  
 73 **Section 1.** The facts stated in the preamble to this act  
 74 are found and declared to be true.

75 **Section 2.** The sum of \$2.252 million is appropriated from

76 the General Revenue Fund to the Department of Agriculture and  
77 Consumer Services for the relief of Kristen and Lia McIntosh for  
78 injuries and damages sustained.

79 **Section 3.** The Chief Financial Officer is directed to draw  
80 warrants payable to Kristen McIntosh in the sum of \$1.001  
81 million and to Elizabeth Thornton as parent and natural guardian  
82 of Lia McIntosh, a minor child, in the sum of \$1.251 million  
83 upon funds of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer  
84 Services in the State Treasury and to pay the same out of such  
85 funds in the State Treasury.

86 **Section 4.** The amount paid by the Department of  
87 Agriculture and Consumer Services pursuant to s. 768.28, Florida  
88 Statutes, under the settlement agreement and the amount awarded  
89 under this act are intended to provide the sole compensation for  
90 all present and future claims arising out of the factual  
91 situation described in this act which resulted in injuries and  
92 damages to Kristen and Lia McIntosh. The total amount paid for  
93 attorney fees relating to this claim may not exceed 25 percent  
94 of the total amount awarded under this act.

95 **Section 5.** This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.