

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. Senate Bill 31

PRINTER NO. 12

AMOUNT

No Fiscal Impact

FUND

General Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

January 12, 2017

PRIME SPONSOR

Senator Scavello

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF BILL

Senate Bill 31 establishes the Spinal Cord Injury Research Program and allocates funding from the Tobacco Settlement Fund (fund) for appropriate research.

Senate Bill 31 Amends the Tobacco Settlement Act by adding section 903.1 which establishes within the Department of Health (department) the Spinal Cord Injury Research Program (research program).

Appropriations from the fund to the department will be used for research projects regarding spinal cord injuries and related infrastructure. Funds may be used to conduct peer reviews and performance reviews.

The bill establishes the Spinal Cord Research Advisory Committee (committee) within the department. The committee will consist of nine members appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Health. Membership on the committee shall consist of:

- A representative of a Pennsylvania medical college or university;
- Two neurosurgeons;
- Two physicians who specialize in physical medicine and rehabilitation;
- A physician specializing in spinal cord injuries;
- An individual with a spinal cord injury;
- A family member of a person with a spinal cord injury; and
- A veteran with a spinal cord injury.

Members of the committee shall not be paid for their service, but members who are not state government employees shall receive reasonable expenses incurred in the course of their official duties.

The bill amends section 904 to provide that the committee, together with the department and the Health Research Advisory Committee, shall establish the research priorities for Pennsylvania.

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The bill amends section 906 to change the allocation of research funds. Fifteen percent of the funds appropriated under section 906 shall be allocated in the following manner:

- Not less than \$1,000,000 shall be used for spinal cord injury research under section 909.1.
- The balance of the funds shall be used for other research projects by eligible participants.

The bill adds section 909.1 to provide that an institution that conducts research on spinal cord injuries shall be eligible to receive a grant from the \$1,000,000 allocated for spinal cord research in section 906(3).

Grants shall be awarded to conduct research into new treatments and rehabilitative efforts for the functional improvement of people with spinal cord injuries, which may include pharmaceuticals, medical devices, brain stimulus and rehabilitative approaches and techniques.

The bill authorizes the department to solicit funds to supplement grants awarded for spinal cord research under section 906(3).

This act shall take effect in 60 days.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Senate Bill 31 will have no fiscal impact. The bill does not impact the total amount of available grant funding, but it will change how the current research allocations are distributed.

In addition, the Department of Health would be required to reimburse members of the committee who are not state employees for travel and related expenses. Assuming two meetings are conducted annually and using the latest IRS mileage reimbursement rate, travel and related expenses are estimated to be less than \$1,000 if three advisory committee members seek reimbursement. This reimbursement can be accommodated by Department of Health's General Government Operations appropriation.