

ENROLLED

CS/CS/HB 6519

2017 Legislature

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2 An act for the relief of Amie Draiemann O'Brien,
3 individually and as personal representative of the
4 Estate of Christian Darby Stephenson, deceased, and
5 for the relief of Hailey Morgan Stephenson and
6 Christian Darby Stephenson II, as surviving minor
7 children of the decedent; providing an appropriation
8 to compensate them for the wrongful death of Christian
9 Darby Stephenson, which was due in part to the
10 negligence of the Department of Transportation;
11 providing a limitation on the payment of fees and
12 costs; providing an effective date.

13
14 WHEREAS, on August 12, 2000, 29-year-old Christian Darby
15 Stephenson was driving a gasoline tanker eastbound on the Hart
16 Bridge Expressway in Duval County, and

17 WHEREAS, a clogged drain had caused a large pool of
18 standing water to collect at the base of the bridge, and

19 WHEREAS, the Department of Transportation was responsible
20 for the maintenance of the drains at that location on the Hart
21 Bridge Expressway, and

22 WHEREAS, as Mr. Stephenson drove over the bridge, a Jeep
23 that was traveling toward the tanker hit the pool of water and
24 hydroplaned, and

25 WHEREAS, Mr. Stephenson took evasive action to avoid

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26 hitting the Jeep, as well as two other vehicles that had been
27 involved in previous accidents and which were parked in the
28 striped safety zone alongside the expressway, and

29 WHEREAS, Mr. Stephenson attempted to make a hard right turn
30 onto the Atlantic Avenue exit to avoid the three vehicles, but,
31 as he attempted to exit, the gasoline tanker jackknifed, struck
32 the guardrail, overturned, and exploded, and

33 WHEREAS, Mr. Stephenson was subsequently pronounced dead at
34 the scene, and

35 WHEREAS, Mr. Stephenson's widow, Amie Draiemann O'Brien,
36 brought suit against the Department of Transportation in the
37 Circuit Court of the Fourth Judicial Circuit in and for Duval
38 County, Case No. 01-03428 CA, and on March 22, 2005, the jury
39 returned a verdict that assigned the Department of
40 Transportation with 36 percent of the negligence that was a
41 legal cause of Mr. Stephenson's death, and

42 WHEREAS, the jury verdict states the jury's determination
43 that the total amount of damages sustained by Mr. Stephenson's
44 estate is \$1.3 million; the total amount sustained by Amie
45 Draiemann O'Brien, the widow of Mr. Stephenson, is \$763,000; the
46 total amount sustained by Hailey Morgan Stephenson, a surviving
47 minor child of Mr. Stephenson, is \$1 million; and the total
48 amount sustained by Christian Darby Stephenson II, a surviving
49 minor child of Mr. Stephenson, is \$526,000, and

50 WHEREAS, 36 percent of the aggregate sum of the damages

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51 awarded to Mr. Stephenson's estate and the named survivors under
 52 the final judgment is \$1,292,040, and

53 WHEREAS, the Department of Transportation has paid a total
 54 of \$175,100 under s. 768.28, Florida Statutes, after the payment
 55 of \$24,900 to third parties who brought claims against the
 56 Department of Transportation for damages claimed as a result of
 57 the same occurrence, the remainder subject to being awarded
 58 under this act is \$1,116,940, NOW, THEREFORE,

59
 60 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

61
 62 Section 1. The facts stated in the preamble to this act
 63 are found and declared to be true.

64 Section 2. There is appropriated from the State
 65 Transportation Trust Fund to the Department of Transportation
 66 the sum of \$1,116,940 for the relief of Amie Draiemann O'Brien,
 67 as the personal representative of the Estate of Christian Darby
 68 Stephenson, for the wrongful death of Christian Darby
 69 Stephenson.

70 Section 3. The Chief Financial Officer is directed to draw
 71 warrants in the sum of \$1,116,940 upon the funds of the
 72 Department of Transportation in the State Treasury, and the
 73 Chief Financial Officer is directed to pay the same out of such
 74 funds in the State Treasury as follows:

75 (1) The sum of \$404,575.65, to the Estate of Christian

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76 Darby Stephenson;

77 (2) The sum of \$237,454.78, to compensate Amie Draiemann
 78 O'Brien;

79 (3) The sum of \$311,212.04, to be paid into a trust to
 80 compensate Hailey Morgan Stephenson; and

81 (4) The sum of \$163,697.53, to be paid into a trust to
 82 compensate Christian Darby Stephenson II.

83 Section 4. The amount paid by the Department of
 84 Transportation under s. 768.28, Florida Statutes, and the amount
 85 awarded under this act are intended to provide the sole
 86 compensation for all present and future claims arising out of
 87 the factual situation described in this act which resulted in
 88 the death of Mr. Stephenson. Of the amount awarded under this
 89 act, no amount may be paid for attorney fees, the total amount
 90 paid for lobbying fees may not exceed \$55,847, and the total
 91 amount paid for costs and other similar expenses relating to
 92 this claim may not exceed \$223,388.

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