

Albany Medical College

Albert Einstein
College of Medicine

Columbia University
Vagelos College of
Physicians and
Surgeons

CUNY School of
Medicine

Icahn School of
Medicine at Mount Sinai

Jacobs School of
Medicine and
Biomedical Sciences,
the University at Buffalo

New York Institute of
Technology College of
Osteopathic Medicine

New York Medical
College

New York University
School of Medicine

Renaissance School of
Medicine at Stony Brook
University

School of Medicine and
Dentistry at the
University of Rochester
Medical Center

SUNY Downstate
Medical Center

SUNY Upstate
Medical University

Touro College of
Osteopathic Medicine

Weill Cornell
Medicine

Zucker School of
Medicine at
Hofstra/Northwell

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

May 1, 2019

A.536 (Cahill)

AN ACT to amend the state finance law, in relation to the monies of the spinal cord injury research trust fund.

Approximately 1,000 New York residents suffer traumatic Spinal Cord Injuries (SCIs) each year, at great personal and financial cost to these individuals, their families and the State. New York State's Spinal Cord Injury Research Program (SCIRP) continues to enable highly qualified researchers to develop treatments, alleviate pain associated with SCI, restore function and search for a cure for SCIs.

Previously thought incurable, the advancements in SCI research – much of it conducted in New York State – have led to new clinical trials and potentially breakthrough therapies. While it is not yet possible to reliably conduct human spinal cord repairs, new treatments are dramatically improving the lives of SCI patients, and scientists continue to advance the field at a remarkable pace.

Motor vehicle accidents, falls, sports injuries, or acts of violence are the most frequent causes of SCIs, abruptly altering the quality of life and financial security of SCI patients. In addition to individual and societal costs incurred for treatment and through lost productivity, there are significant costs for home and vehicle modifications, equipment purchase, medications and personal assistance services. The National Spinal Cord Injury Statistical Center reported that first-year costs for an individual with SCI range from approximately \$352,279 to more than \$1,079,412, with annual costs thereafter ranging from approximately \$42,789 to \$187,443.

The Spinal Cord Injury Research Board (SCIRB) and Trust Fund was created in 1998 to support innovative scientific ideas and approaches that would lead to breakthroughs in curing spinal cord injury paralysis. At the time of inception, New York was the first to establish a trust fund dedicated solely to finding a cure for spinal cord injuries. Since that time, more than \$86 million has been awarded to fund basic neurological tissue regeneration projects.

New York's investment in SCI research has coincided with millions of dollars in additional funding for New York State researchers from sources such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation and the Department of Defense, among others, and has resulted in at least 22 spinal cord injury-related patent applications filed by New York State researchers since 2001. The scientific advancements of New York State's research community continue to improve lives for patients and their families.

For these reasons, AMSNY strongly supports A.5436, which would require that 5.6 percent of the revenue collected by New York State from the mandatory surcharges on motor vehicle violations be allocated to the Spinal Cord Injury Research Trust Fund, and urges the Legislature and the Governor to enact this legislation.

For more information, please contact Jo Wiederhorn, President & CEO
Associated Medical Schools of New York, 212-218-4610, jowiederhorn@amsny.org