

Save Florida's Trauma Care

It's Critical



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

GOVERNOR SIGNS HB 497, HELP SAVE FLORIDA'S TRAUMA CENTERS

HB497 Increases Fines On Red Light Running, Additional Funds Raised Go To Trauma Centers

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (June 14, 2005) – Governor Bush signed House Bill (HB) 497 (the Velez Memorial Traffic Safety Act) into law which provides funding to help support Florida's trauma centers by increasing the penalty for running a red light. The Florida House and Senate unanimously passed HB 497 at the end of Florida's 2005 session.

The Velez Memorial Traffic Safety Act (HB 497) was named after two Orlando girls, 5-year-old Anjelica Velez and her sister, 2-year-old Victoria Velez, who were struck and killed by a sport utility vehicle that police said ran a red light.

HB 497 will increase the fine for running a red light from \$60 to \$125. The additional funds raised will provide Florida's trauma centers with millions of dollars annually (depending on the number of infractions incurred) to help alleviate the funding crisis currently facing these centers. Additionally, HB 497 would increase the number of license points (from three to four) assessed against a person for running a red light.

The funding crisis facing Florida's trauma centers is due to rising readiness costs and the increasing amount of uncompensated and/or under-compensated care they provide. In accordance with federal and state standards, trauma centers must provide the highest level of care and expertise, with the most cutting edge technology and resources available for treatment. Additionally, trauma centers must have dozens of specialists available 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week and are capable of dealing with the most severe, life-threatening situations. This includes patients who have experienced an injury or wound caused by force, multiple internal injuries, burns, multiple broken bones and severe shock.

In 2003, the cost for Florida's trauma centers to be prepared totaled more than \$96 million, with a net loss of \$93 million including reimbursement, according to a recent study mandated by the 2004 Florida Legislature and conducted by the University of Florida and the University of South Florida on behalf of the Florida Department of Health.

These staggering numbers led the Alliance and Florida's legislators to seek long-term funding solutions for the state's trauma centers. Because motor vehicle crashes comprise more than 50 percent of trauma incidents in Florida, the Alliance recommended legislation that would increase fines on dangerous motor vehicle violations and distribute the funds raised into Florida's trauma system.

Interview opportunities are available with Alliance members, Florida Legislators, the Velez family and former trauma patients.

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