Protect Vital Research: Preserve Full Funding for the Minnesota Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) & Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Research Grant Program

Background: A Minnesota Success Story

In 2015, Minnesota created the SCI/TBI Research Grant Program to fund innovative treatments for spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries. Managed by the Office of Higher Education and a 12-member advisory council with lived-experience community members and professional stakeholders, the program initially received $500,000 annually. Due to its success, funding was boosted to $3 million per year. Since then, many medical innovations have been translated due to this program…and Minnesota has emerged as a leader in the field.

Proven Impact: Advancing Treatments and Therapies

This dedicated state funding has yielded meaningful results, enabling critical research projects that directly help Minnesotans. Past grants supported:

- Multiple clinical studies have restored some level of function for hundreds of people living with SCI like movement, improvements in pain, bowel/bladder function and more.
- A large-scale study involving 9,000 participants to better detect, understand, and treat TBI, including concussions, using advanced imaging, blood markers, and eye-tracking.
- 5 to 1 return on investment from federal, private funders, and industry partnerships.
- Reduction in Costs of Care resulting from increased independence, improved diagnosing and treatment, improvements in secondary complications: less medication, less hospitalization and less caregiver hours
- This program ensures Minnesota stays at the forefront of SCI/TBI research, providing hope and tangible progress for affected individuals and their families.

The Threat: Devastating Budget Cuts Proposed for 2025

Despite its proven success and the critical need for continued research, the proposed 2025 Minnesota State House budget includes a drastic **83% cut** to the SCI/TBI Research Grant Program, reducing its funding from $3 million to only $500,000 per year.

Consequences of the Cut:

- **Halting Progress:** This reduction would severely impede or stop promising research initiatives currently underway.
- **Reduced Access:** It would limit timely access to new, potentially life-changing therapies for Minnesotans living with SCI and TBI.
- **Loss of Momentum:** Minnesota risks losing its leadership role in this crucial area of medical research. Labs would close, top researchers would leave the state, and educational opportunities would be limited.
- **Losing Minnesota's Competitive Edge** as federal funding becomes more competitive: **9 of the top 10 states for SCI/TBI funding have a state mechanism to seed research**

Call to Action: Preserve Funding, Protect Progress

We urge the Minnesota Legislature to **reject the proposed House budget cut** and **preserve full funding of $3 million annually** for the Spinal Cord and Traumatic Brain Injury Research Grant Program in the 2025 budget. This program invests in the health, education, function, and future of tens of thousands of Minnesotans and millions globally. Continued funding is crucial for research, treatment development, and support for those with spinal cord and brain injuries. In 2025, there were 35 grants requested totaling an estimated $10 million. The proposed cut would hinder the program to fund 1:20 grant proposals.

Please contact Rob Wudlick or Matthew Rosreick for more information at rob@gusu2cure.org and matthewrodreick@u2fp.org for more information.

Supported by: Get Up Stand Up to Cure Paralysis, Unite 2 Fight Paralysis, MN SCI Association, The MN Brain Alliance

Testimonials from Grant Recipients:

- *"We received a MN state pilot grant and used that preliminary data to* ***secure a $2.3 million NIH grant****…We also leveraged the state grant to receive* ***a $300,000 2-year Pilot Grant from the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation*** *to continue our SCI studies." -***Dr. Brendan Dougherty UMN**
- *Our state TBI grant provided the preliminary data to receive National Institute of Health grants, NS R61/R33115089 grant entitled: "Full human gene-replacement mouse models of ADRDs".* ***The total award over the 5-year period (9/1/2019 - 8/21/2024) is $3,788,392. -Dr. Tim Ebner UMN***
- *"Enabled my lab to develop technology for epidural spinal cord stimulation helping more than 70 patients, many of whom have traveled from all over the country to have surgery in Minneapolis."* **-Dr. *Uzma Samadani, Neurosurgeon, Minneapolis VA***
- *"Abbott Industries Thus far, Abbott Laboratories has donated all spinal cord stimulation devices for use in the E-STAND Clinical Trial. Our most recent donation is set to include forty additional devices.* ***Total donations from Abbott are now estimated to be around $2-3 million****…we also received a grant from Get Up Stand Up to Cure Paralysis Foundation." -***Dr. Tay Netoff, UMN***
- *"The ESTAND simply would not have been possible without OHE grant. The ESTAND team did not have the history or the pedigree to be competitive for an NIH grant. With OHE funding we have been able to start a study and gather data that has put us at the forefront of SCI therapy. The ESTAND program developed by David Darrow with support from OHE was a big reason he stayed in Minnesota after completion of his residency. Isabella Pino is a Neurosurgery Resident that came to work for the ESTAND study initially and stayed in Minnesota for residency. Brandon Hoglund was an undergraduate student that worked with ESTAND, went to medical school, and is returning to UMN for residency based on his experience****." -Dr Tay Netoff UMN***
- *"We now have preliminary data in an acute mouse model of cervical spinal cord injury, that daily intranasal injury can improve functional recovery. We are using this data to support a grant application to the Department of Defense" -****Dr. Leah Hanson Health Partners Neuroscience Center***
- *"The grant helped attract a talented PhD student to the laboratory, who is paid by Mayo Clinic Graduate School Fellowship and is now working full-time on the project. The talented Research Scientist, Technologist and Student are key parts of the MN workforce and future of spinal cord injury research, particularly that related to chronic injuries."* ***-Dr. Isobel Scarisbrick Mayo Clinic***
- *"State grant funding has had a transformative impact on our lab, enabling us to advance critical research at its early stage. It provided essential support for developing and testing innovative neuromodulation and regenerative therapies, particularly in large-animal models that bridge the gap between basic science and clinical application. This funding was crucial not only for sustaining momentum in our ongoing projects, but also for securing additional federal and collaborative support."* ***-Dr. Igor Lavrov, Mayo Clinic***
- *"One excellent outcome from the State SCI/TBI funding has been that our work funded by that program has* ***led to the establishment of a company Anatomic Inc****.* *https://www.anatomic.tech/* ***The Business has raised capital to expand and has generated 3 new full-time positions." -Dr. James Dutton UMN***

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