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2009-2010 Regular Sessions

I N A S S E M B L Y

May 19, 2009

Introduced by M. of A. KOON, DINOWITZ, GOTTFRIED, P. RIVERA, POWELL, GALEF, GIANARIS, MAYERSOHN, PEOPLES-STOKES, ARROYO, WRIGHT, COLTON, P. LOPEZ, FIELDS, GABRYSZAK, JAFFEE, NOLAN, MAISEL, ROSENTHAL, TITONE, DelMONTE, CARROZZA, RAMOS, SCHROEDER, PRETLOW, BUTLER, ENGLEBRIGHT, BARRON, HEVESI, D. WEPRIN -- Multi-Sponsored by -- M. of A. ALFANO, BARRA, BING, BOYLAND, CAMARA, CHRISTENSEN, CLARK, COOK, DUPREY, ERRI-GO, FARRELL, GIGLIO, GUNTHER, HOOPER, HYER-SPENCER, KELLNER, KOLB, LATIMER, LAVINE, LIFTON, V. LOPEZ, LUPARDO, MAGEE, MAGNARELLI, McKEV-ITT, J. MILLER, MILLMAN, MOLINARO, PAULIN, PERRY, PHEFFER, QUINN, J. RIVERA, ROBINSON, SAYWARD, SCARBOROUGH, SPANO, STIRPE, THIELE, TOWNS, TOWNSEND, WEISENBERG -- read once and referred to the Committee on Health -- recommitted to the Committee on Health in accordance with Assembly Rule 3, sec. 2 -- reported and referred to the Committee on Codes -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend the public health law and the domestic relations law, in relation to enacting the "bill of adoptee rights"

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

1 Section 1. The public health law is amended by adding a new section
2 4138-e to read as follows:
3 S 4138-E. BILL OF ADOPTEE RIGHTS. 1. THIS SECTION SHALL BE KNOWN AND
4 MAY BE CITED AS THE "BILL OF ADOPTEE RIGHTS".
5 2. THE LEGISLATURE HEREBY STATES ITS INTENTION TO ACKNOWLEDGE, SUPPORT
6 AND ENCOURAGE THE LIFE-LONG HEALTH AND WELL-BEING NEEDS OF PERSONS WHO
7 HAVE BEEN AND WILL BE ADOPTED IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK. THE LEGISLATURE
8 FURTHER RECOGNIZES THAT THE DENIAL OF ACCESS TO ACCURATE AND COMPLETE
9 MEDICAL AND SELF-IDENTIFYING DATA OF ANY ADOPTED PERSON, KNOWN AND
10 WILFULLY WITHHELD BY OTHERS, MAY RESULT IN SUCH PERSON SUCCUMBING TO
11 PREVENTABLE DISEASE, PREMATURE DEATH OR OTHERWISE UNHEALTHY LIFE, IS A
12 VIOLATION OF THAT PERSON'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND IS CONTRARY TO THE TENETS OF

EXPLANATION--Matter in ITALICS (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[] is old law to be omitted.

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GOVERNANCE. AS SUCH, THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION SEEK TO ESTABLISH CONSIDERATIONS UNDER THE LAW FOR ADOPTED PERSONS EQUAL TO SUCH CONSIDERATIONS PERMITTED BY LAW TO ALL NON-ADOPTED PERSONS; THIS SECTION DOES SO WHILE PROVIDING FOR THE PRIVACY OF AN ADOPTED PERSON AND HIS OR HER BIRTH AND ADOPTIVE FAMILIES.

3. (A) NOTWITHSTANDING ANY OTHER PROVISION OF LAW, WHEN AN ADOPTED PERSON ATTAINS THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN YEARS, THAT PERSON SHALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO RECEIPT OF A NON-CERTIFIED COPY OF HIS OR HER ORIGINAL (LONG FORM, LINE BY LINE VAULT COPY) BIRTH CERTIFICATE AND ANY CHANGE HIS OR HER BIRTH PARENT OR PARENTS MAY HAVE ATTACHED TO THAT CERTIFICATE, AND/OR A MEDICAL HISTORY FORM IF AVAILABLE, UPON APPLICATION, PRESENTATION OF PROOF OF IDENTIFICATION AND THE PAYMENT OF A NOMINAL FEE.

(B) WHEN IT SHALL BE IMPOSSIBLE THROUGH GOOD-FAITH EFFORTS TO PROVIDE A COPY OF AN ADULT ADOPTED PERSON'S ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE (AS IN THE CASE OF AN ADOPTED PERSON BORN OUTSIDE OF, BUT ADOPTED WITHIN, THE STATE OF NEW YORK), THE ADULT ADOPTED PERSON SHALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO SECURE FROM A COURT OF COMPETENT JURISDICTION OR THE ADOPTION AGENCY, THE TRUE AND CORRECT IDENTIFYING INFORMATION THAT WOULD HAVE APPEARED ON HIS OR HER ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE. IN SUCH CASE THE AGENCY SHALL BE HELD HARMLESS FROM ANY LIABILITY ARISING OUT OF THE DISCLOSURE.

4. A BIRTH PARENT MAY AT ANY TIME REQUEST FROM THE DEPARTMENT A CONTACT PREFERENCE FORM THAT SHALL ACCOMPANY A BIRTH CERTIFICATE ISSUED UNDER THIS TITLE. THE CONTACT PREFERENCE FORM SHALL PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION TO BE COMPLETED AT THE OPTION OF THE BIRTH PARENT:

(A) I WOULD LIKE TO BE CONTACTED.

(B) I WOULD PREFER TO BE CONTACTED ONLY THROUGH AN INTERMEDIARY.

(C) I HAVE COMPLETED A MEDICAL HISTORY FORM AND HAVE FILED IT WITH THE DEPARTMENT.

(D) PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT ME. IF I DECIDE LATER THAT I WOULD LIKE TO BE CONTACTED, I WILL SUBMIT AN UPDATED CONTACT PREFERENCE FORM TO THE DEPARTMENT.

THE MEDICAL HISTORY FORM SHALL BE IN A FORM PRESCRIBED BY THE DEPARTMENT AND SHALL BE SUPPLIED TO THE BIRTH PARENT UPON REQUEST OF A CONTACT PREFERENCE FORM FROM THE DEPARTMENT.

ONLY THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE AUTHORIZED TO PROCESS APPLICATIONS MADE UNDER THIS TITLE MAY PROCESS CONTACT PREFERENCE AND MEDICAL HISTORY FORMS.

THE MEDICAL HISTORY FORM AND CONTACT PREFERENCE FORM ARE CONFIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE BIRTH PARENT TO THE PERSON NAMED ON THE SEALED BIRTH CERTIFICATE AND SHALL BE PLACED IN SEPARATE SEALED ENVELOPES UPON RECEIPT FROM THE BIRTH PARENT. THE SEALED ENVELOPES SHALL BE MATCHED WITH AND PLACED IN THE FILE CONTAINING THE SEALED BIRTH CERTIFICATE.

THE SEALED ENVELOPES CONTAINING THE CONTACT PREFERENCE FORM AND MEDICAL HISTORY FORM MAY BE RELEASED TO A PERSON REQUESTING HIS OR HER OWN ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE UNDER THIS TITLE. THE CONTACT PREFERENCE FORM AND MEDICAL HISTORY FORM ARE PRIVATE COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE BIRTH PARENT TO THE PERSON NAMED ON THE SEALED BIRTH CERTIFICATE AND NO COPIES OF THE FORMS SHALL BE RETAINED BY THE DEPARTMENT. WHERE ONLY A MEDICAL HISTORY FORM IS REQUESTED THE BIRTH CERTIFICATE AND CONTACT PREFERENCE FORM SHALL NOT BE SENT, BUT MAY BE REQUESTED AT A LATER DATE.

S 2. Subdivision 5 of section 4138 of the public health law, as amended by chapter 201 of the laws of 1972, is amended to read as follows:

5. Thereafter, when a certified copy or certified transcript of the certificate of birth of such a person, or a certification of birth for such person is issued, it shall be based upon the new certificate of

1 birth, except when an order of a court of competent jurisdiction shall
2 require the issuance of a copy of the original certificate of birth OR
3 UPON A WRITTEN NOTARIZED REQUEST BY THE ADULT ADOPTED PERSON HIMSELF OR
4 HERSELF ONCE PROPER PROOF OF IDENTITY IS PROVIDED TO THE REGISTRAR.

5 S 3. Paragraph (b) of subdivision 3 of section 4138 of the public
6 health law, as added by chapter 201 of the laws of 1972, is amended to
7 read as follows:

8 (b) Thereafter, when a verified transcript or certification of birth
9 of such person is issued by the registrar, it shall be based upon the
10 new certificate, except when an order of a court of competent jurisdic-
11 tion shall require the issuance of a verified transcript or certif-
12 ication based upon the original local record of birth OR UPON A WRITTEN
13 NOTARIZED REQUEST BY THE ADULT ADOPTED PERSON HIMSELF OR HERSELF ONCE
14 PROPER PROOF OF IDENTITY IS PROVIDED TO THE REGISTRAR.

15 S 4. Subdivision 7 of section 4138 of the public health law, as
16 amended by chapter 644 of the laws of 1988, is amended to read as
17 follows:

18 7. Whenever the commissioner makes a new birth certificate for any
19 person pursuant to the provisions of subdivision one of this section, he
20 OR SHE shall forward to such person, if eighteen years of age or more,
21 [or to the parents of such person,] a certified copy, a certified tran-
22 script [or] AND a certification of birth, [whichever he deems appropri-
23 ate under the circumstances,] without making any charge therefor.

24 S 5. Section 4138 of the public health law is amended by adding two
25 new subdivisions 8 and 9 to read as follows:

26 8. (A) AN ADOPTED PERSON EIGHTEEN YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER, OR THE BIRTH
27 PARENT OR PARENTS, MAY SUBMIT TO THE REGISTRAR A NOTICE OF CHANGE OF
28 NAME AND/OR ADDRESS AND SUCH INFORMATION SHALL BE ATTACHED TO THE
29 ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE OF THE ADOPTED PERSON.

30 (B) THE REGISTRAR SHALL DISCLOSE TO THE BIRTH PARENT OR PARENTS AT
31 SUCH PARENT'S OR PARENTS' REQUEST, THE MOST CURRENT NAME AND ADDRESS OF
32 AN ADOPTED PERSON IF THAT ADOPTED PERSON HAS REQUESTED SO BY FILING A
33 NOTARIZED LETTER WITH THE REGISTRAR.

34 9. NOTWITHSTANDING ANY OTHER PROVISION OF LAW, WHEN AN ADOPTED PERSON
35 ATTAINS THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN YEARS, HE OR SHE SHALL HAVE THE RIGHT, UPON
36 APPLICATION, PROOF OF IDENTITY AND PAYMENT OF A NOMINAL FEE, TO A
37 NON-CERTIFIED COPY OF HIS OR HER ORIGINAL LONG FORM, LINE BY LINE, VAULT
38 COPY BIRTH CERTIFICATE AND/ OR A MEDICAL HISTORY FORM, IF AVAILABLE.

39 S 6. Paragraph (b) of subdivision 3 of section 4138-d of the public
40 health law, as amended by chapter 588 of the laws of 1999, is amended to
41 read as follows:

42 (b) If the agency determines that the agency was involved in such
43 adoption, it shall transmit the registration to the adoption information
44 registry operated by the department and the agency shall release the
45 non-identifying information, as defined in section four thousand one
46 hundred thirty-eight-c of this [article] TITLE, to the [adoptee regis-
47 trant] ADOPTED PERSON or the biological sibling registrant. [The agency
48 may restrict the nature of the non-identifying information released
49 pursuant to this section upon a reasonable determination that disclosure
50 of such non-identifying information would not be in the adoptee's, the
51 biological sibling's or parent's best interest.]

52 S 7. Section 4104 of the public health law, as amended by chapter 435
53 of the laws of 2008, is amended to read as follows:

54 S 4104. Vital statistics; application of article. The provisions of
55 this article except for the provisions contained in paragraph (i) of
56 subdivision two of section four thousand one hundred, section four thou-

1 sand one hundred three, subdivision two of section four thousand one
2 hundred thirty-five, section four thousand one hundred thirty-five-b,
3 subdivision eight of section four thousand one hundred seventy-four,
4 paragraphs (b) and (e) of subdivision one, PARAGRAPH (B) OF SUBDIVISION
5 THREE, AND SUBDIVISIONS FIVE, SEVEN, EIGHT AND NINE of section four
6 thousand one hundred thirty-eight, subdivision eleven of section four
7 thousand one hundred thirty-eight-c, PARAGRAPH (B) OF SUBDIVISION THREE
8 OF SECTION FOUR THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-EIGHT-D, SECTION FOUR THOU-
9 SAND ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-EIGHT-E and section four thousand one hundred
10 seventy-nine of this article, shall not apply to the city of New York.

11 S 8. Subdivision 1 of section 114 of the domestic relations law, as
12 amended by chapter 751 of the laws of 1989 and designated by chapter 601
13 of the laws of 1994, is amended to read as follows:

14 1. If satisfied that the best interests of the adoptive child will be
15 promoted thereby, the judge or surrogate shall make an order approving
16 the adoption and directing that the adoptive child shall thenceforth be
17 regarded and treated in all respects as the child of the adoptive
18 parents or parent. In determining whether the best interests of the
19 adoptive child will be promoted by the adoption, the judge or surrogate
20 shall give due consideration to any assurance by a LOCAL commissioner of
21 social services that he OR SHE will provide necessary support and main-
22 tenance for the adoptive child pursuant to the social services law. Such
23 order shall contain the full name, date and place of birth and reference
24 to the schedule annexed to the petition containing the medical history
25 of the child in the body thereof and shall direct that the child's
26 medical history, heritage of the BIRTH parents, which shall include
27 nationality, ethnic background and race; education, which shall be the
28 number of years of school completed by the BIRTH parents at the time of
29 the birth AND ALSO AT THE TIME OF SURRENDER of the adoptive child;
30 general physical appearance of the BIRTH parents at the time of the
31 birth AND ALSO AT THE TIME OF SURRENDER of the adoptive child, which
32 shall include height, weight, color of hair, eyes, skin; occupation of
33 the BIRTH parents at the time of the birth AND ALSO AT THE TIME OF
34 SURRENDER of the adoptive child; health and medical history of the BIRTH
35 parents at the time of the birth AND ALSO AT THE TIME OF SURRENDER of
36 the adoptive child, including all available information setting forth
37 conditions or diseases believed to be hereditary, any drugs or medica-
38 tion taken during the pregnancy by the child's mother; and any other
39 information which may be a factor influencing the child's present or
40 future health, INCLUDING THE talents, hobbies and special interests of
41 THE BIRTH parents as contained in the petition, be furnished to the
42 adoptive parents. IN RECOGNITION OF THE IMPERATIVE LIFELONG IMPORTANCE
43 OF SUCH INFORMATION FOR THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF THE ADOPTED PERSON,
44 IT SHALL BE THE DUTY OF THE LAW GUARDIAN AS PROVIDED FOR BY SECTIONS TWO
45 HUNDRED FORTY-ONE, TWO HUNDRED FORTY-TWO, TWO HUNDRED FORTY-NINE AND TWO
46 HUNDRED FORTY-NINE-A OF THE FAMILY COURT ACT TO ENSURE THE COMPREHENSIVE
47 COMPLETION AND FILING OF ALL THE ABOVE REFERENCED INFORMATION PRIOR TO
48 THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS OR THE ENTRY OF A
49 CERTIFICATE OF ADOPTION. IT SHALL BE DEEMED BY THAT LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE
50 THAT SUCH INFORMATION IS ALWAYS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD AND IS
51 A PROTECTED RIGHT. PRIOR TO TERMINATION OF DUTIES, SUCH LAW GUARDIAN
52 SHALL PROVIDE, AS DIRECTED BY SECTION FORTY-ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-EIGHT-C
53 OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH LAW AND SECTIONS THREE HUNDRED SEVENTY-THREE AND
54 THREE HUNDRED SEVENTY-THREE-A OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES LAW, TO THE RESPEC-
55 TIVE RESPONSIBLE PARTIES ALL SUCH COLLECTED DATA, AND PROVIDE AN AFFIDA-
56 VIT TO THE COURT REPORTING ALL DILIGENT EFFORTS TO OBTAIN SUCH DATA. A

1 COPY OF SUCH AFFIDAVIT SHALL BE APPENDED TO THE ORIGINAL AND ANY AND ALL
2 AMENDED BIRTH CERTIFICATES. If the judge or surrogate is also satisfied
3 that there is no reasonable objection to the change of name proposed,
4 the order shall direct that the name of the adoptive child be changed to
5 the name stated in the agreement of adoption and that henceforth he OR
6 SHE shall be known by that name. All such orders made by a family court
7 judge of Westchester county since September first, nineteen hundred
8 sixty-two, and on file in the office of the county clerk of such county
9 shall be transferred to the clerk of the family court of such county.
10 Such order and all the papers in the proceeding shall be filed in the
11 office of the court granting the adoption and the order shall be entered
12 in books which shall be kept under seal and which shall be indexed by
13 the name of the adoptive parents and by the full original name of the
14 child. Such order, including orders heretofore entered, shall be subject
15 to inspection and examination only as hereinafter provided. Notwith-
16 standing the fact that adoption records shall be sealed and secret, they
17 may be microfilmed and processed pursuant to an order of the court,
18 provided that such order provides that the confidentiality of such
19 records be maintained. If the confidentiality is violated, the person or
20 company violating it can be found guilty of contempt of court. The fact
21 that the adoptive child was born out of wedlock shall in no case appear
22 in such order. The written report of the investigation together with all
23 other papers pertaining to the adoption shall be kept by the judge or
24 surrogate as a permanent record of his OR HER court and such papers must
25 be sealed by him OR HER and withheld from inspection. No certified copy
26 of the order of adoption shall issue unless authorized by court order,
27 except that certified copies may issue to the agency or agencies in the
28 proceeding prior to the sealing of the papers. Before the record is
29 sealed, such order may be granted upon written ex parte application on
30 good cause shown and upon such conditions as the court may impose. After
31 the record is sealed, such order may be granted only upon notice as
32 hereinafter provided for disclosure or access and inspection of records.
33 The clerk upon request of a person or agency entitled thereto shall
34 issue certificates of adoption which shall contain only the new name of
35 the child and the date and place of birth of the child, the name of the
36 adoptive parents and the date when and court where the adoption was
37 granted, which certificate as to the facts recited therein shall have
38 the same force and effect as a certified copy of an order of adoption.

39 S 9. Section 114 of the domestic relations law is amended by adding a
40 new subdivision 5 to read as follows:

41 5. NOTWITHSTANDING ANY OTHER PROVISION OF LAW, WHEN AN ADOPTED PERSON
42 ATTAINS THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN YEARS, SUCH ADOPTED PERSON SHALL HAVE THE
43 RIGHT, UPON APPLICATION, PROOF OF IDENTITY AND PAYMENT OF A NOMINAL FEE,
44 TO A NON-CERTIFIED COPY OF HIS OR HER ORIGINAL LONG FORM, LINE BY LINE,
45 VAULT COPY BIRTH CERTIFICATE AND/OR MEDICAL HISTORY FORM, IF AVAILABLE.

46 S 10. This act shall take effect on the first of January next succeed-
47 ing the date on which it shall have become a law, provided, however,
48 that, effective immediately, the commissioner of health is directed to
49 promulgate such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out
50 the provisions of this act.