

STATE OF NEW YORK

7631--A

IN SENATE

February 1, 2018

Introduced by Sen. LANZA -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Health -- 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 authorizing adoptees to obtain a certified copy of their birth certificate

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 § 4138-e. Adoptee's right to a certified copy of his or her birth
4 certificate. 1. The legislature hereby states its intention to acknowl-
5 edge, support and encourage the life-long health and well-being needs of
6 persons who have been and will be adopted in this state. The legislature
7 further recognizes that the denial of access to accurate and complete
8 medical and self-identifying data of any adopted person, known and
9 wilfully withheld by others, may result in such person succumbing to
10 preventable disease, premature death or otherwise unhealthy life, is a
11 violation of that person's human rights and is contrary to the tenets of
12 governance. As such, the provisions of this section seek to establish
13 considerations under the law for adopted persons equal to such consider-
14 ations permitted by law to all non-adopted persons; this section does so
15 while providing for the privacy of an adopted person and his or her
16 birth.

17 2. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the commissioner,
18 or any person authorized by him or her, shall issue certified copies of
19 original long form birth certificates upon specific request therefor (i)
20 by an adoptee, if eighteen years of age or more, or (ii) if the adoptee
21 is deceased, by the adoptee's direct line descendants, or (iii) by
22 lawful representatives of such adoptee, or lawful representatives of
23 such deceased adoptee's direct line descendants, as the case may be, or
24 (iv) authorized representatives of a local social services district if

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

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1 the adoptee is in the care and custody or custody and guardianship of
2 such district.

3 (b) When it shall be impossible through good-faith efforts to provide
4 a copy of an adult adopted person's original birth certificate (as in
5 the case of an adopted person born outside of, but adopted within, the
6 state), the adult adopted person shall have the right to secure from a
7 court of competent jurisdiction or the adoption agency, the true and
8 correct identifying information that would have appeared on his or her
9 original birth certificate. In such case the agency shall be held harm-
10 less from any liability arising out of the disclosure.

11 (c) For purposes of this subdivision:

12 (i) The term "commissioner" shall include the commissioner of health
13 and mental hygiene of the city of New York and for records of birth
14 prior to January first, nineteen hundred fourteen, the local registrars
15 of the cities of Albany, Buffalo and Yonkers; and

16 (ii) The term "department" shall include the department of health and
17 mental hygiene of the city of New York and, for records of birth prior
18 to January first, nineteen hundred fourteen, the office of vital statis-
19 tics of the city of Albany, the office of vital records of the city of
20 Buffalo and the office of clerk of the city of Yonkers.

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

24 5. Thereafter, when a certified copy or certified transcript of the
25 certificate of birth of such a person, or a certification of birth for
26 such person is issued, it shall be based upon the new certificate of
27 birth, except when an order of a court of competent jurisdiction shall
28 require the issuance of a copy of the original certificate of birth or
29 upon a written notarized request by the adult adopted person himself or
30 herself once proper proof of identity is provided to the registrar.

31 § 3. Paragraph (b) of subdivision 3 of section 4138 of the public
32 health law, as added by chapter 201 of the laws of 1972, is amended to
33 read as follows:

34 (b) Thereafter, when a verified transcript or certification of birth
35 of such person is issued by the registrar, it shall be based upon the
36 new certificate, except when an order of a court of competent jurisdic-
37 tion shall require the issuance of a verified transcript or certifi-
38 cation based upon the original local record of birth or upon a written
39 notarized request by the adult adopted person himself or herself once
40 proper proof of identity is provided to the registrar.

41 § 4. Subdivision 7 of section 4138 of the public health law, as
42 amended by chapter 644 of the laws of 1988, is amended to read as
43 follows:

44 7. Whenever the commissioner makes a new birth certificate for any
45 person pursuant to the provisions of subdivision one of this section, he
46 or she shall forward to such person, if eighteen years of age or more,
47 ~~[or to the parents of such person,]~~ a certified copy, a certified tran-
48 script ~~[or]~~ and a certification of birth, ~~[whichever he deems appropri-~~
49 ~~ate under the circumstances,]~~ without making any charge therefor.

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

52 8. An adopted person eighteen years of age or older, or the birth
53 parent or parents, may submit to the registrar a notice of change of
54 name and/or address and such information shall be attached to the
55 original birth certificate of the adopted person.

9. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, when an adopted person attains the age of eighteen years, he or she shall have the right, upon application, proof of identity and payment of a nominal fee, to a certified copy of his or her original long form, line by line, vault copy birth certificate and/or a medical history form, if available.

§ 6. Paragraph (b) of subdivision 3 of section 4138-d of the public health law, as amended by chapter 181 of the laws of 2010, is amended to read as follows:

(b) If the agency determines that the agency was involved in such adoption, it shall transmit the registration to the adoption information registry operated by the department and the agency shall release the non-identifying information, as defined in section forty-one hundred thirty-eight-c of this title, to the ~~[adoptive registrant. The agency may restrict the nature of the non-identifying information released pursuant to this section upon a reasonable determination that disclosure of such non-identifying information would not be in the adoptee's, the biological sibling's or parent's best interest]~~ adopted person.

§ 7. Section 4104 of the public health law, as amended by chapter 153 of the laws of 2011, is amended to read as follows:

§ 4104. Vital statistics; application of article. The provisions of this article except for the provisions contained in paragraph (i) of subdivision two and subdivision four of section four thousand one hundred, section four thousand one hundred three, subdivision two of section four thousand one hundred thirty-five, section four thousand one hundred thirty-five-b, subdivision eight of section four thousand one hundred seventy-four, paragraphs (b) and (e) of subdivision one, paragraph (b) of subdivision three, and subdivisions five, seven, eight and nine of section four thousand one hundred thirty-eight, subdivision eleven of section four thousand one hundred thirty-eight-c, paragraph (b) of subdivision three of section four thousand one hundred thirty-eight-d, section four thousand one hundred thirty-eight-e and section four thousand one hundred seventy-nine of this article, shall not apply to the city of New York.

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

1. If satisfied that the best interests of the adoptive child will be promoted thereby, the judge or surrogate shall make an order approving the adoption and directing that the adoptive child shall thenceforth be regarded and treated in all respects as the child of the adoptive parents or parent. In determining whether the best interests of the adoptive child will be promoted by the adoption, the judge or surrogate shall give due consideration to any assurance by a local commissioner of social services that he or she will provide necessary support and maintenance for the adoptive child pursuant to the social services law. Such order shall contain the full name, date and place of birth and reference to the schedule annexed to the petition containing the medical history of the child in the body thereof and shall direct that the child's medical history, heritage of the birth parents, which shall include nationality, ethnic background and race; education, which shall be the number of years of school completed by the birth parents at the time of the birth and also at the time of surrender of the adoptive child; general physical appearance of the birth parents at the time of the birth and also at the time of surrender of the adoptive child, which shall include height, weight, color of hair, eyes, skin; occupation of the birth parents at the time of the birth and also at the time of

1 surrender of the adoptive child; health and medical history of the birth
2 parents at the time of the birth and also at the time of surrender of
3 the adoptive child, including all available information setting forth
4 conditions or diseases believed to be hereditary, any drugs or medica-
5 tion taken during the pregnancy by the child's mother; and any other
6 information which may be a factor influencing the child's present or
7 future health, including the talents, hobbies and special interests of
8 the birth parents as contained in the petition, be furnished to the
9 adoptive parents. In recognition of the imperative lifelong importance
10 of such information for the health and well-being of the adopted person,
11 it shall be the duty of the law guardian as provided for by sections two
12 hundred forty-one, two hundred forty-two, two hundred forty-nine and two
13 hundred forty-nine-a of the family court act to ensure the comprehensive
14 completion and filing of all the above referenced information prior to
15 the acceptance of the termination of parental rights or the entry of a
16 certificate of adoption. It shall be deemed by that legal representative
17 that such information is always in the best interest of the child and is
18 a protected right. Prior to termination of duties, such law guardian
19 shall provide, as directed by section forty-one hundred thirty-eight-c
20 of the public health law and sections three hundred seventy-three and
21 three hundred seventy-three-a of the social services law, to the respec-
22 tive responsible parties all such collected data, and provide an affida-
23 vit to the court reporting all diligent efforts to obtain such data. A
24 copy of such affidavit shall be appended to the original and any and all
25 amended birth certificates. If the judge or surrogate is also satisfied
26 that there is no reasonable objection to the change of name proposed,
27 the order shall direct that the name of the adoptive child be changed to
28 the name stated in the agreement of adoption and that henceforth he or
29 she shall be known by that name. All such orders made by a family court
30 judge of Westchester county since September first, nineteen hundred
31 sixty-two, and on file in the office of the county clerk of such county
32 shall be transferred to the clerk of the family court of such county.
33 Such order and all the papers in the proceeding shall be filed in the
34 office of the court granting the adoption and the order shall be entered
35 in books which shall be kept under seal and which shall be indexed by
36 the name of the adoptive parents and by the full original name of the
37 child. Such order, including orders heretofore entered, shall be subject
38 to inspection and examination only as hereinafter provided. Notwith-
39 standing the fact that adoption records shall be sealed and secret, they
40 may be microfilmed and processed pursuant to an order of the court,
41 provided that such order provides that the confidentiality of such
42 records be maintained. If the confidentiality is violated, the person or
43 company violating it can be found guilty of contempt of court. The fact
44 that the adoptive child was born out of wedlock shall in no case appear
45 in such order. The written report of the investigation together with all
46 other papers pertaining to the adoption shall be kept by the judge or
47 surrogate as a permanent record of his or her court and such papers must
48 be sealed by him or her and withheld from inspection. No certified copy
49 of the order of adoption shall issue unless authorized by court order,
50 except that certified copies may issue to the agency or agencies in the
51 proceeding prior to the sealing of the papers. Before the record is
52 sealed, such order may be granted upon written ex parte application on
53 good cause shown and upon such conditions as the court may impose. After
54 the record is sealed, such order may be granted only upon notice as
55 hereinafter provided for disclosure or access and inspection of records.
56 The clerk upon request of a person or agency entitled thereto shall

1 issue certificates of adoption which shall contain only the new name of
2 the child and the date and place of birth of the child, the name of the
3 adoptive parents and the date when and court where the adoption was
4 granted, which certificate as to the facts recited therein shall have
5 the same force and effect as a certified copy of an order of adoption.

6 § 9. Section 114 of the domestic relations law is amended by adding a
7 new subdivision 5 to read as follows:

8 5. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, when an adopted person
9 attains the age of eighteen years, such adopted person shall have the
10 right, upon application, proof of identity and payment of a nominal fee,
11 to a certified copy of his or her original long form, line by line,
12 vault copy birth certificate and/or medical history form, if available.

13 § 10. This act shall take effect January 15, 2019, provided, however,
14 that, effective immediately, the commissioner of health is directed to
15 promulgate such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out
16 the provisions of this act.