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I N   A S S E M B L Y

July 6, 2010

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Introduced by COMMITTEE ON RULES -- (at request of M. of A. Gottfried)  
-- read once and referred to the Committee on Health

AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to allowing an adult to opt to make a health care agent's authority effective without a determination of incapacity

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

1     Section 1. The legislature finds that the health care proxy has proven  
2     invaluable as a means for an adult to appoint a health care agent to  
3     protect his or her wishes and interests in the event the adult loses the  
4     capacity to make those decisions personally. Yet in some instances an  
5     adult may wish the assistance of a health care agent even while he or  
6     she still has decisional capacity. For example, an adult who finds it  
7     very difficult to make health care decisions personally because of a  
8     chronic illness or disability may wish a trusted family member's assist-  
9     ance in making some or all such decisions for him or her, even though  
10    the adult does not lack decision-making capacity.

11    The legislature finds that allowing adults to opt to make their health  
12    care proxy become effective immediately or upon some other event defined  
13    by the adult, as opposed to only upon a determination of incapacity,  
14    would enable adults to secure that needed assistance. This "enhanced  
15    health care proxy" would also help patients overcome the reluctance of  
16    some health care professionals to share health information with a  
17    patient's family member or friend, or involve such person in decision-  
18    making, unless such person has effective authority under a health care  
19    proxy.

20    At the same time, the legislature recognizes that health care provid-  
21    ers must always involve an adult patient who has capacity in significant  
22    health care decisions, even if the patient had empowered an agent to act  
23    for him or her.

24    S 2. Subdivision 4 of section 2981 of the public health law, as added  
25    by chapter 752 of the laws of 1990, is amended to read as follows:

26    4. Commencement of agent's authority. The agent's authority shall  
27    commence (I) upon a determination, made pursuant to subdivision one of

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

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1 section two thousand nine hundred eighty-three of this article, that the  
2 principal lacks capacity to make health care decisions; OR (II) WITHOUT  
3 A DETERMINATION THAT THE PRINCIPAL LACKS CAPACITY, IF AND AS SPECIFIED  
4 IN THE HEALTH CARE PROXY.

5 S 3. Subdivision 1 of section 2982 of the public health law, as added  
6 by chapter 752 of the laws of 1990, is amended to read as follows:

7 1. Scope of authority. Subject to any express limitations in the  
8 health care proxy, an agent shall have the authority to make any and all  
9 health care decisions on the principal's behalf that the principal could  
10 make. Such authority shall be subject to the provisions of section twen-  
11 ty-nine hundred eighty-nine of this article. WHEN AN AGENT'S AUTHORITY  
12 HAS COMMENCED WITHOUT A DETERMINATION THAT THE PRINCIPAL LACKS CAPACITY,  
13 THE AGENT'S HEALTH CARE DECISION IS SUBJECT TO THE HEALTH CARE PROVID-  
14 ER'S OBLIGATION TO CONSULT WITH THE PATIENT AND SECURE THE PATIENT'S  
15 CONSENT OR NON-OBJECTION, AS PROVIDED BY PARAGRAPH (B) OF SUBDIVISION  
16 TWO OF SECTION TWENTY-NINE HUNDRED EIGHTY-FOUR OF THIS ARTICLE.

17 S 4. Subdivision 2 of section 2984 of the public health law, as added  
18 by chapter 752 of the laws of 1990, is amended to read as follows:

19 2. (A) A health care provider shall comply with health care decisions  
20 made by an agent in good faith under a health care proxy to the same  
21 extent as if such decisions had been made by the principal, subject to  
22 any limitations in the health care proxy and pursuant to the provisions  
23 of subdivision five of section [two thousand nine] TWENTY-NINE hundred  
24 eighty-three of this article.

25 (B) NOTWITHSTANDING THE FOREGOING, WHEN A PATIENT'S HEALTH CARE PROXY  
26 PROVIDES FOR AN AGENT'S AUTHORITY TO COMMENCE WITHOUT A DETERMINATION  
27 THAT THE PRINCIPAL LACKS CAPACITY, BEFORE IMPLEMENTING A DECISION THAT  
28 REQUIRES INFORMED CONSENT (INCLUDING A DECISION TO WITHHOLD OR WITHDRAW  
29 LIFE-SUSTAINING TREATMENT) WITH RESPECT TO A PATIENT WHO HAS CAPACITY,  
30 THE HEALTH CARE PROVIDER MUST EITHER:

31 (I) SECURE AND DOCUMENT THE INFORMED CONSENT OF THE PATIENT TO THE  
32 TREATMENT DECISION; OR

33 (II) SECURE AND DOCUMENT THE INFORMED CONSENT OF THE AGENT AND, TO THE  
34 EXTENT REASONABLY PRACTICABLE, CONSULT WITH THE PATIENT ABOUT THE  
35 AGENT'S DECISION AND SECURE AND DOCUMENT THE NON-OBJECTION OF THE  
36 PATIENT TO THE AGENT'S DECISION.

37 S 5. This act shall take effect immediately.