

# STATE OF NEW YORK

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2019-2020 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

January 23, 2019

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Introduced by Sen. LANZA -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Health

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 or  
18 a local registrar or any person authorized by the commissioner or a  
19 local registrar, upon application, proof of identity and payment of a  
20 nominal fee, shall issue certified copies of original long form line by  
21 line, vault copy birth certificates and any change attached to that  
22 certificate by a birth parent or parents, and, if available, medical  
23 history forms upon specific request therefor (i) by an adopted person,  
24 if eighteen years of age or more, or (ii) if the adopted person is

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

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1 deceased, the adopted person's direct line descendants, or (iii) the  
2 lawful representatives of such adopted person, or lawful representatives  
3 of such deceased adopted person's direct line descendants, as the case  
4 may be.

5 (b) When it shall be impossible through good-faith efforts to provide  
6 a copy of an adult adopted person's original birth certificate (as in  
7 the case of an adopted person born outside of, but adopted within, the  
8 state), the true and correct identifying information that would have  
9 appeared on such original birth certificate shall be provided by a court  
10 of competent jurisdiction or the adoption agency, upon specific request  
11 therefor, to: (i) the adult adopted person, if eighteen years of age or  
12 more, or (ii) if the adopted person is deceased, the adopted person's  
13 direct line descendants, or (iii) lawful representatives of such adopted  
14 person, or lawful representatives of such deceased adopted person's  
15 direct line descendants, as the case may be. In such case the agency  
16 shall be held harmless from any liability arising out of the disclosure.

17 (c) For purposes of this subdivision:

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

22 (ii) The term "department" shall include the department of health and  
23 mental hygiene of the city of New York and, for records of birth prior  
24 to January first, nineteen hundred fourteen, the office of vital statis-  
25 tics of the city of Albany, the office of vital records of the city of  
26 Buffalo and the office of clerk of the city of Yonkers.

27 § 2. Subdivision 4 of section 4138 of the public health law, as  
28 amended by chapter 559 of the laws of 1992, is amended to read as  
29 follows:

30 4. The commissioner may make a microfilm or other suitable copy of the  
31 original certificate of birth and all papers pertaining to the new  
32 certificate of birth. In such event, the original certificate and papers  
33 may be destroyed. All undestroyed certificates and papers and copies  
34 thereof shall be confidential and the contents thereof shall not be  
35 released or otherwise divulged except by order of a court of competent  
36 jurisdiction or pursuant to section forty-one hundred thirty-eight-c  
37 ~~[ex]~~, forty-one hundred thirty-eight-d or forty-one hundred thirty-  
38 eight-e of this ~~[article]~~ title.

39 § 3. Subdivision 5 of section 4138 of the public health law, as  
40 amended by chapter 201 of the laws of 1972, is amended to read as  
41 follows:

42 5. Thereafter, when a certified copy or certified transcript of the  
43 certificate of birth of such a person, or a certification of birth for  
44 such person is issued, it shall be based upon the new certificate of  
45 birth, except when an order of a court of competent jurisdiction shall  
46 require the issuance of a copy of the original certificate of birth or  
47 upon application by an adopted person eighteen years of age or more once  
48 proper proof of identity is provided to the registrar.

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

52 (b) Thereafter, when a verified transcript or certification of birth  
53 of such person is issued by the registrar, it shall be based upon the  
54 new certificate, except when an order of a court of competent jurisdic-  
55 tion shall require the issuance of a verified transcript or certifi-  
56 cation based upon the original local record of birth or upon applica-

tion by an adopted person eighteen years of age or more once proper proof of identity is provided to the registrar.

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

7. Whenever the commissioner makes a new birth certificate for any person pursuant to the provisions of subdivision one of this section, he ~~or she~~ shall forward to (i) such person, if eighteen years of age or more, [or to the parents of such person,] or (ii) if the adoptee is deceased, the adoptee's direct line descendants, or (iii) lawful representatives of such adoptee, or lawful representatives of such deceased adoptee's direct line descendants, as the case may be, a certified copy, a certified transcript ~~[or]~~ and a certification of birth, ~~[whichever he deems appropriate under the circumstances,]~~ without making any charge therefor.

§ 6. Section 4138 of the public health law is amended by adding a new subdivision 8 to read as follows:

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

§ 7. 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.

§ 8. 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 and eight 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.

§ 9. 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

1 parents or parent. In determining whether the best interests of the  
2 adoptive child will be promoted by the adoption, the judge or surrogate  
3 shall give due consideration to any assurance by a local commissioner of  
4 social services that he or she will provide necessary support and main-  
5 tenance for the adoptive child pursuant to the social services law. Such  
6 order shall contain the full name, date and place of birth and reference  
7 to the schedule annexed to the petition containing the medical history  
8 of the child in the body thereof and shall direct that the child's  
9 medical history, heritage of the birth parents, which shall include  
10 nationality, ethnic background and race; education, which shall be the  
11 number of years of school completed by the birth parents at the time of  
12 the birth and also at the time of surrender of the adoptive child;  
13 general physical appearance of the birth parents at the time of the  
14 birth and also at the time of surrender of the adoptive child, which  
15 shall include height, weight, color of hair, eyes, skin; occupation of  
16 the birth parents at the time of the birth and also at the time of  
17 surrender of the adoptive child; health and medical history of the birth  
18 parents at the time of the birth and also at the time of surrender of  
19 the adoptive child, including all available information setting forth  
20 conditions or diseases believed to be hereditary, any drugs or medica-  
21 tion taken during the pregnancy by the child's mother; and any other  
22 information which may be a factor influencing the child's present or  
23 future health, including the talents, hobbies and special interests of  
24 the birth parents as contained in the petition, be furnished to the  
25 adoptive parents. If the judge or surrogate is also satisfied that  
26 there is no reasonable objection to the change of name proposed, the  
27 order shall direct that the name of the adoptive child be changed to the  
28 name stated in the agreement of adoption and that henceforth he or she  
29 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 § 10. This act shall take effect January 15, 2020. Effective imme-  
7 diately, the addition, amendment and/or repeal of any rule or regulation  
8 necessary for the implementation of this act on its effective date are  
9 authorized to be made and completed on or before such effective date.