STATE OF NEW YORK

8314

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

May 13, 2025

Introduced by M. of A. PAULIN -- read once and referred to the Committee on Health

AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to requiring the department of health to enter into a contract for the digitalization and indexing of certain vital records

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The public health law is amended by adding a new section 4180 to read as follows:

§ 4180. Vital records digitalization. 1. For the purposes of this section, the term:

(a) "vital records index" or "index" shall mean a systematically organized listing, compilation, or database derived from original vital records maintained by the state local registrars, including but not limited to vital records relating to birth, death, marriage, and dissolution of marriage, which includes at a minimum, the names of any registrants, the date and location of the event's registration, and any assigned identifying reference numbers.

(b) "qualified entity" shall mean a natural person, firm, organization, partnership, association, corporation, or any other entity experienced in maintaining genealogical research databases.

2. The department shall enter into a long-term contract with a qualified entity to create, maintain, and update an online genealogical research database of images of New York state birth, marriage, dissolution of marriage, and death certificates at no direct cost to the state, in exchange for allowing the qualified entity to also provide such database to its subscribers and customers. Such online database shall be designed and constructed to have the capability of allowing a vital records index of birth, marriage, dissolution of marriage, and death certificates to be linked to a digital image of the underlying original birth, marriage, dissolution of marriage, or death record once

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

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any such underlying record has become public information under section forty-one hundred seventy-four of this title, and the online genealogical research database shall be designed to allow the department to create and activate such links to digital images of the original records. Any social security numbers appearing on such records shall be redacted from the digital images provided to the public, which may include bulk redaction of social security fields from the images via automated methods. Such indexes shall be a public record and subject to the state freedom of information law under article six of the public officers law.

§ 2. Subdivision 3 of section 4174 of the public health law, as amended by section 2 of part W-2 of chapter 62 of the laws of 2003, is amended to read as follows:

3. (a) Notwithstanding any contrary provision of law, the commissioner shall have the authority to determine the means and methods by which the following genealogical records shall be released to an applicant meeting the qualifications to receive the relevant record type as described in this section or in article three of the domestic relations law: (a) a record of birth that has been on file for at least seventy-five years; (b) a record of marriage, dissolution of marriage, or death that has been on file for at least fifty years; or (c) any record of birth, marriage, dissolution of marriage, or death for which the requester is a lineal or collateral descendant.

(b) For any search of the files and records conducted for authorized genealogical or research purposes, the commissioner or any person authorized by [~~him~~] the commissioner shall be entitled to, and the applicant shall pay, a fee of twenty dollars for each hour or fractional part of an hour of time of search, together with a fee of two dollars for each uncertified copy or abstract of such record requested by the applicant or for a certification that a search discloses no record.

§ 3. This act shall take effect one year after it shall have become a law. Effective immediately, the addition, amendment and/or repeal of any rule or regulation necessary for the implementation of this act on its effective date are authorized to be made and completed on or before such effective date.