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HOUSE BILL NO. 786
AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
(Proposed by the House Committee for Courts of Justice
on _____)
(Patron Prior to Substitute--Delegate Hope)

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 64.2-2009 and 64.2-2012 of the Code of Virginia, relating to guardianship and conservatorship; restoration or modification or termination of order; informal written communication.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 64.2-2009 and 64.2-2012 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 64.2-2009. Court order of appointment; limited guardianships and conservatorships.

A. The court's order appointing a guardian or conservator shall (i) state the nature and extent of the person's incapacity; (ii) define the powers and duties of the guardian or conservator so as to permit the incapacitated person to care for himself and manage property to the extent he is capable; (iii) specify whether the appointment of a guardian or conservator is limited to a specified length of time, as the court in its discretion may determine; (iv) specify the legal disabilities, if any, of the person in connection with the finding of incapacity, including but not limited to mental competency for purposes of Article II, § 1 of the Constitution of Virginia or Title 24.2; (v) include any limitations deemed appropriate following consideration of the factors specified in § 64.2-2007; (vi) set the bond of the guardian and the bond and surety, if any, of the conservator; and (vii) where a petition is brought prior to the incapacitated person's eighteenth birthday, pursuant to subsection C of § 64.2-2001, whether the order shall take effect immediately upon entry or on the incapacitated person's eighteenth birthday.

A1. Beginning July 1, 2023, the court shall set a schedule in the order of appointment for periodic review hearings, to be held no later than one year after the initial appointment and no later than every three years thereafter, unless the court orders that such hearings are to be waived because they are unnecessary or impracticable or that such hearings shall be held on such other schedule as the court shall determine.

27 Any such determination to waive the hearing or use a schedule differing from that prescribed in this
28 subsection shall be supported in the order and address the reason for such determination, including (i) the
29 likelihood that the respondent's condition will improve or the respondent will regain capacity, (ii) whether
30 concerns or questions were raised about the suitability of the person appointed as a guardian or conservator
31 at the time of the initial appointment, and (iii) whether the appointment of a guardian or conservator or
32 the appointment of the specifically appointed guardian or conservator was contested by the respondent or
33 another party.

34 The court shall not waive the initial periodic review hearing scheduled pursuant to this subsection
35 where the petitioner for guardianship or conservatorship is a hospital, convalescent home, or certified
36 nursing facility licensed by the Department of Health pursuant to § 32.1-123; an assisted living facility,
37 as defined in § 63.2-100, or any other similar institution; or a health care provider other than a family
38 member. If the petitioner is a hospital, convalescent home, or certified nursing facility licensed by the
39 Department of Health pursuant to § 32.1-123 or an assisted living facility as defined in § 63.2-100, nothing
40 in this chapter shall require such petitioner to attend any periodic review hearing.

41 Any person may file a petition, which may be on a form developed by the Office of the Executive
42 Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, to hold a periodic review hearing prior to the scheduled date
43 set forth in the order of appointment. The court shall hold an earlier hearing upon good cause shown. At
44 such a hearing, the court shall review the schedule set forth in the order of appointment and determine
45 whether future periodic review hearings are necessary or may be waived.

46 A2. If the court has ordered a hearing pursuant to subsection A1, the court shall appoint a guardian
47 ad litem, who shall conduct an investigation in accordance with the stated purpose of the hearing and file
48 a report. The incapacitated person has a right to be represented by counsel, and the provisions of § 64.2-
49 2006 shall apply, mutatis mutandis. The guardian ad litem shall provide notice of the hearing to the
50 incapacitated person and to all individuals entitled to notice as identified in the court order of appointment.
51 Fees and costs shall be paid in accordance with the provisions of §§ 64.2-2003 and 64.2-2008. The court
52 shall enter an order reflecting any findings made during the review hearing and any modification to the
53 guardianship or conservatorship.

54 B. The court may appoint a limited guardian for an incapacitated person who is capable of
55 addressing some of the essential requirements for his care for the limited purpose of medical decision
56 making, decisions about place of residency, or other specific decisions regarding his personal affairs. The
57 court may appoint a limited conservator for an incapacitated person who is capable of managing some of
58 his property and financial affairs for limited purposes that are specified in the order.

59 C. Unless the guardian has a professional relationship with the incapacitated person or is employed
60 by or affiliated with a facility where the person resides, the court's order may authorize the guardian to
61 consent to the admission of the person to a facility pursuant to § 37.2-805.1, upon finding by clear and
62 convincing evidence that (i) the person has severe and persistent mental illness that significantly impairs
63 the person's capacity to exercise judgment or self-control, as confirmed by the evaluation of a licensed
64 psychiatrist; (ii) such condition is unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future; and (iii) the guardian has
65 formulated a plan for providing ongoing treatment of the person's illness in the least restrictive setting
66 suitable for the person's condition.

67 D. A guardian need not be appointed for a person who has appointed an agent under an advance
68 directive executed in accordance with the provisions of Article 8 (§ 54.1-2981 et seq.) of Chapter 29 of
69 Title 54.1, unless the court determines that the agent is not acting in accordance with the wishes of the
70 principal or there is a need for decision making outside the purview of the advance directive. A guardian
71 need not be appointed for a person where a health care decision is made pursuant to, and within the scope
72 of, the Health Care Decisions Act (§ 54.1-2981 et seq.).

73 A conservator need not be appointed for a person (i) who has appointed an agent under a durable
74 power of attorney, unless the court determines pursuant to the Uniform Power of Attorney Act (§ 64.2-
75 1600 et seq.) that the agent is not acting in the best interests of the principal or there is a need for decision
76 making outside the purview of the durable power of attorney or (ii) whose only or major source of income
77 is from the Social Security Administration or other government program and who has a representative
78 payee.

79 E. All orders appointing a guardian shall include the following statements in conspicuous bold
80 print in at least 14-point type:

81 1. Pursuant to § 64.2-2009 of the Code of Virginia, (name of guardian), is hereby appointed as
82 guardian of (name of respondent) with all duties and powers granted to a guardian pursuant to § 64.2-2019
83 of the Code of Virginia, including but not limited to: (enter a statement of the rights removed and retained,
84 if any, at the time of appointment; whether the appointment of a guardian is a full guardianship, public
85 guardianship pursuant to § 64.2-2010 of the Code of Virginia, limited guardianship pursuant to § 64.2-
86 2009 of the Code of Virginia, or temporary guardianship; and the duration of the appointment).

87 2. Pursuant to the provisions of subsection E of § 64.2-2019 of the Code of Virginia, a guardian,
88 to the extent possible, shall encourage the incapacitated person to participate in decisions, shall consider
89 the expressed desires and personal values of the incapacitated person to the extent known, and shall not
90 restrict an incapacitated person's ability to communicate with, visit, or interact with other persons with
91 whom the incapacitated person has an established relationship, unless such restriction is reasonable to
92 prevent physical, mental, or emotional harm to or financial exploitation of such incapacitated person and
93 after consideration of the expressed wishes of the incapacitated person. Such restrictions shall only be
94 imposed pursuant to § 64.2-2019.1.

95 3. Pursuant to § 64.2-2020 of the Code of Virginia, an annual report shall be filed by the guardian
96 with the local department of social services for the jurisdiction where the incapacitated person resides.

97 4. Pursuant to § 64.2-2012 of the Code of Virginia, all guardianship orders are subject to petition
98 for restoration of the incapacitated person to capacity; modification of the type of appointment or areas of
99 protection, management, or assistance granted; or termination of the guardianship. In lieu of such a
100 petition, if the person subject to the guardianship is not represented by counsel, such person may initiate
101 the process by sending informal written communications to the court. All orders appointing a guardian,
102 conservator, or both shall include the current mailing address, email address, and physical address of the
103 court issuing the order and to which such informal written communication shall be directed.

104 **§ 64.2-2012. Petition for restoration, modification, or termination; effects.**

105 A. Upon petition by the incapacitated person, the guardian or conservator, or any other person or
106 upon motion of the court, the court may (i) declare the incapacitated person restored to capacity; (ii)
107 modify the type of appointment or the areas of protection, management, or assistance previously granted

108 or require a new bond; (iii) terminate the guardianship or conservatorship; (iv) order removal of the
109 guardian or conservator as provided in § 64.2-1410; or (v) order other appropriate relief. The fee for filing
110 the petition shall be as provided in subdivision A 42 of § 17.1-275.

111 A1. Instead of the filing of a petition or upon motion provided by subsection A, if the person
112 subject to the guardianship or conservatorship is not represented by counsel, such person may initiate the
113 process to be restored to capacity or have guardianship or conservatorship modified or terminated by
114 informal written communication to the court.

115 Upon receipt of such informal written communication, the court shall review the communication
116 to determine whether there is good cause to take action and may (i) set the matter for hearing pursuant to
117 the provisions of this section, (ii) take no action if there is not good cause for such a hearing, or (iii) order
118 other appropriate relief. The court shall communicate its decision to the incapacitated person and any
119 guardian, conservator, and guardian ad litem then serving. The court's response may be made by the same
120 mode of informal written communication as used to make the request to the court.

121 No filing fee shall be assessed for the receipt of such informal communication unless the judge
122 orders a hearing be held, in which case any filing fee shall be as provided in subdivision A 42 of § 17.1-
123 275.

124 B. In the case of a petition for modification to expand the scope of a guardianship or
125 conservatorship, the incapacitated person shall be entitled to a jury, upon request. Notice of the hearing
126 and a copy of the petition shall be personally served on the incapacitated person and mailed to other
127 persons entitled to notice pursuant to § 64.2-2004. The court shall appoint a guardian ad litem for the
128 incapacitated person and may appoint one or more licensed physicians or psychologists or licensed
129 professionals skilled in the assessment and treatment of the physical or mental conditions of the
130 incapacitated person, as alleged in the petition, to conduct an evaluation. Upon the filing of any other such
131 petition or upon the motion of the court, and after reasonable notice to the incapacitated person, any
132 guardian or conservator, any attorney of record, any person entitled to notice of the filing of an original
133 petition as provided in § 64.2-2004, and any other person or entity as the court may require, the court shall
134 hold a hearing. Upon the filing of any petition or submission of informal written communications pursuant

135 to subsection A1, the incapacitated person has a right to be represented by counsel, and the provisions of
136 § 64.2-2006 shall apply, mutatis mutandis.

137 C. An order appointing a guardian or conservator may be revoked, modified, or terminated upon
138 a finding that it is in the best interests of the incapacitated person and that:

139 1. The incapacitated person is no longer in need of the assistance or protection of a guardian or
140 conservator;

141 2. The extent of protection, management, or assistance previously granted is either excessive or
142 insufficient considering the current need of the incapacitated person;

143 3. The incapacitated person's understanding or capacity to manage his estate and financial affairs
144 or to provide for his health, care, or safety has so changed as to warrant such action; or

145 4. Circumstances are such that the guardianship or conservatorship is no longer necessary or is
146 insufficient.

147 D. The court shall declare the person restored to capacity and discharge the guardian or conservator
148 if, on the basis of evidence offered at the hearing, the court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that
149 the incapacitated person has substantially regained his ability to (i) care for his person in the case of a
150 guardianship or (ii) manage and handle his estate in the case of a conservatorship.

151 In the case of a petition for modification of a guardianship or conservatorship, the court shall order
152 (a) limiting or reducing the powers of the guardian or conservator if the court finds by a preponderance of
153 the evidence that it is in the best interests of the incapacitated person to do so, or (b) increasing or
154 expanding the powers of the guardian or conservator if the court finds by clear and convincing evidence
155 that it is in the best interests of the incapacitated person to do so.

156 The court may order a new bond or other appropriate relief upon finding by a preponderance of
157 the evidence that the guardian or conservator is not acting in the best interests of the incapacitated person
158 or of the estate.

159 E. The powers of a guardian or conservator shall terminate upon the death, resignation, or removal
160 of the guardian or conservator or upon the termination of the guardianship or conservatorship.

