



new york state RIGHT TO LIFE COMMITTEE, INC.

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Except where otherwise noted, the following statement can be attributed to Lori Kehoe, Executive Director of the New York State Right to Life Committee.

New York State Right to Life Committee Hails Signing into Law of 'Family Health Care Decisions Act'

The New York State Right to Life Committee hails the signing into law of the Family Health Care Decisions Act, which, as a result of the Committee's efforts, protects the right of patients not to be denied life-saving medical treatment and food and fluids against their will. Governor Paterson, flanked by bill sponsors, New York State Right to Life and other supportive organizations, signed the bill today.

In the past approximately 15 years, we have seen an increasing tendency on the part of some hospitals and their ethics committees to discriminate against people with disabilities by denying treatment and even food and fluids against the express wishes of patients and their families on the grounds that some health care providers deem their quality of life too poor. The NYSRTL has always condemned this act of imposing a value judgment under the intimidating guise of a medical one but it nonetheless has become more and more commonplace.

NYSRTL is pleased that, in 2007, the Family Health Care Decisions Act was amended to include critically important provisions protecting the rights of people, especially those with disabilities, who choose life-sustaining medical treatment or food and fluids, to have their choices respected.

Thanking NYSRTL in particular, Assembly Health Committee Chairman Richard Gottfried said, "One organization I want to mention, in part because they're not often represented at bill signings of bills of mine, is the New York State Right to Life Committee - because they helped make the argument, which I have been making for 17 years, that this bill, while it is often seen as being a bill about people who want to pull the plug, is also a bill about people who want to fight to keep the plug in. It is a bill about making sure that patients' wishes and best interests are protected."

The provisions incorporated in the bill ensure that when a patient, the patient's chosen proxy, or the patient's surrogate choose life-sustaining treatment that is not physiologically futile but that a health care provider is unwilling to provide, she or he must be allowed to transfer to a willing provider and be given the treatment until the transfer can be effectuated.

Adoption of the Family Health Care Decisions Act, with these protective provisions, will significantly ensure the rights of all New Yorkers to be free from involuntary denial of life-saving medical treatment and food and fluids.

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