

**SENATE . . . . . No. 843**

---

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

\_\_\_\_\_

PRESENTED BY:

***William N. Brownsberger***

\_\_\_\_\_

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

**An Act to improve medical decision making.**

\_\_\_\_\_

PETITION OF:

NAME:

*William N. Brownsberger*

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

*Second Suffolk and Middlesex*

**SENATE . . . . . No. 843**

---

By Mr. Brownsberger, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 843) of William N. Brownsberger for legislation to improve medical decision making. The Judiciary.

---

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION  
SEE SENATE, NO. 783 OF 2017-2018.]

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**In the One Hundred and Ninety-First General Court  
(2019-2020)**  
\_\_\_\_\_

An Act to improve medical decision making.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Section 1 of chapter 201D of the General Laws, as so appearing in the  
2 2016 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the definition of “attending physician”  
3 and inserting in place thereof the following definition:-

4 “attending physician”, a licensed physician in Massachusetts selected by or assigned to  
5 the patient or person and who has primary responsibility for treatment and care of the patient or  
6 person. If more than one physician shares that responsibility, the physician most familiar with  
7 the patient’s or the person’s status and condition may act as the attending physician.

8 SECTION 2. Said section 1 of said chapter 201D, as so appearing, is hereby further  
9 amended by inserting after the definition of “attending physician” the following definition:-

10 “available”, a person who is not unavailable.

11 SECTION 3. . Said section 1 of said chapter 201D, as so appearing, is hereby further  
12 amended by inserting after the definition of “health care proxy” the following definition:-

13 “incapacitated person”, a person is incapacitated for decision-making regarding his or her  
14 health care if the person is unable to understand the nature and consequences of proposed  
15 medical treatment, including its risks and benefits, or is unable to express a preference regarding  
16 the treatment.

17 SECTION 4. Said section 1 of said chapter 201D, as so appearing, is hereby further  
18 amended by inserting after the definition of “principal” the following 2 definitions:-

19 "Surrogate decision-maker" or "surrogate" means an adult individual who has health care  
20 decision-making capacity, is available upon reasonable inquiry, is willing to make health care  
21 decisions on behalf of a person who lacks health care decision-making capacity, and is identified  
22 by the attending physician as the person who is to make those decisions in accordance with the  
23 provisions of this chapter.

24 “unavailable”, a person is unavailable if (i) the person’s existence is not known, or (ii) the  
25 person has not been able to be contacted by telephone or mail, or (iii) the person lacks decisional  
26 capacity, refuses to accept the office of surrogate, or is unwilling to respond in a manner that  
27 indicates an informed choice among the treatment matters at issue.

28 SECTION 5. Section 17 of said chapter 201D, as so appearing, is hereby further  
29 amended by inserting after the word “under”, in line 5, the following words:- sections one  
30 through seventeen of

31 SECTION 6. Chapter 201D of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after  
32 section 17 the following section:-

33 Section 18. (a) This section applies to incapacitated persons as defined in this chapter.  
34 This section does not apply to instances in which the person has an operative and unrevoked  
35 health care proxy under this chapter, or has an operative medical order for life sustaining  
36 treatment form and the person's conditions falls within the coverage of the health care proxy or  
37 the medical order for life sustaining treatment form. In those instances, the health care proxy or  
38 medical order for life sustaining treatment form shall be given effect according to its terms.

39 (b) Decisions concerning medical treatment on behalf of a person without decisional  
40 capacity are presumed to be lawful, without court order or judicial involvement, if a person does  
41 not have a condition subject to section 5-306A of chapter 190B, and if decisions are made in  
42 accordance with this section. A surrogate decision maker appointed pursuant to this section has  
43 authority to make decisions regarding transfers or an admission to a nursing facility. A surrogate  
44 decision maker appointed pursuant to this section shall not have the authority to admit or commit  
45 a person without decisional capacity to an inpatient mental health facility.

46 Nothing in this section shall affect the ability of a court to appoint a guardian pursuant to  
47 chapter 190B to make medical decisions on behalf of an incapacitated person.

48 (c) Decisions concerning medical treatment on behalf of an incapacitated person may be  
49 made by surrogates in the order of priority provided in subsection (g) in consultation with the  
50 attending physician. A surrogate decision maker shall make decisions for the person conforming  
51 as closely as possible to what the person would have done or intended under the circumstances,  
52 taking into account evidence that includes, but is not limited to, the person's philosophical,

53 religious and moral beliefs and ethical values relative to the purpose of life, sickness, medical  
54 procedures, suffering and death. Where possible, the surrogate shall determine how the person  
55 would have weighed the burdens and benefits of initiating recommended medical treatment  
56 against the burdens and benefits of refusing treatment. In the event an unrevoked health care  
57 proxy is no longer valid due to a technical deficiency or is not applicable to the person's  
58 condition, that document may be used as evidence of a person's wishes. If the person's wishes  
59 are unknown and remain unknown after reasonable efforts to discern them, the surrogate shall  
60 weigh the burdens on and benefits to the person of initiating recommended medical treatment  
61 against the burdens and benefits of refusing treatment and shall take into account any other  
62 information, including the views of family and friends, that the surrogate decision maker  
63 believes the person would have considered if able to act for herself or himself.

64 (d) For purposes of this section, a person lacks capacity to make a decision regarding his  
65 or her health care if the person is unable to understand the nature and consequences of a  
66 proposed medical treatment, including its risks and benefits, or is unable to express a preference  
67 regarding the treatment. To make the determination regarding capacity, the physician shall  
68 interview the person, review the person's medical records and consult with skilled nursing or  
69 intermediate care facilities as appropriate. The physician may also interview individuals having  
70 recent care and custody of the person, as well as family members and friends of the person, if  
71 any have been identified.

72 (e) When a person becomes an incapacitated person, the health care provider must make  
73 a reasonable inquiry as to the availability and authority of a health care proxy. When no health  
74 care proxy is available, the health care provider shall make a reasonable inquiry as to the  
75 availability of possible surrogates listed in subsection (g). A reasonable inquiry includes, but is

76 not limited to, identifying a member of the person's family or other health care agent by  
77 examining the person's personal effects or medical records. If one or more family members or  
78 health care agents or alternate health care agents are identified, the health care provider shall  
79 attempt to contact them. No person shall be liable for civil damages or subject to professional  
80 discipline based on a claim of violating a person's right to confidentiality as a result of making a  
81 reasonable inquiry as to the availability of a person's family member or health care agent or  
82 alternate health care agent except for willful or wanton misconduct.

83 (f) The person's surrogate shall be an adult who has exhibited special care and concern  
84 for the person, who is familiar with the person's personal values, who is reasonably available,  
85 and who is willing to serve.

86 A health care provider shall require an individual claiming the right to act as surrogate for  
87 the person to provide a written declaration under penalty of perjury, stating facts and  
88 circumstance reasonably sufficient to establish the claimed authority.

89 (g) Consideration may be given, in order of descending preference for service as a  
90 surrogate, to:

91 A. The person's spouse, unless legally separated;

92 B. The person's adult child;

93 C. The person's parent;

94 D. The person's adult sibling;

95 E. Any other adult who satisfies the requirement of subsection (f).

96 (h) Where there are multiple possible surrogate decision makers at the same priority  
97 level, the attending physician or the advanced practice nurse practitioner shall, after a reasonable  
98 inquiry, select as the surrogate the person who reasonably appears to be best qualified. The  
99 following criteria shall be considered in the determination of the person best qualified to serve as  
100 the surrogate:

101 a. Whether the proposed surrogate reasonably appears to be better able to make decisions  
102 either in accordance with the known wishes of the person or in accordance with the person's best  
103 interests;

104 b. The proposed surrogate's regular contact with the person prior to and during the  
105 incapacitating illness;

106 c. The proposed surrogate's demonstrated care and concern;

107 d. The proposed surrogate's availability to visit the incapacitated person during his or her  
108 illness; and

109 e. The proposed surrogate's availability to engage in face-to-face contact with health care  
110 providers for the purpose of fully participating in the decision-making process

111 (i) The attending physician may select a proposed surrogate who is ranked lower in  
112 priority if, in his or her judgment, that individual is best qualified, as described in subsection (h),  
113 to serve as the incapacitated person's surrogate. The attending physician shall document in the  
114 incapacitated person's medical records his or her reasons for selecting a surrogate in exception to  
115 the priority order provided in subsection (g).

116 (j) The following persons may not serve as a surrogate:

117 (i) A person who is the subject of a protective order or other court order that directs that  
118 person to avoid contact with the incapacitated person;

119 (ii) A person whom the incapacitated person expressly objects to at any time;

120 (iii) A treating health care provider of the person who is incapacitated;

121 (iv) an employee of a treating health care provider not related to the person who is  
122 incapacitated;

123 (v) an owner, operator or administrator of a health care facility serving the person who is  
124 not related to the person who is incapacitated; or

125 (vi) any person who is an employee of an owner, operator or administrator of a health  
126 care facility serving the person who is incapacitated who is not related to that person.

127 (k) Unless the principal regains health decision-making capacity, or specifies a shorter  
128 period, a surrogate designation under this section is effective only during the episode of  
129 treatment or illness when the surrogate decision is made, or for 90 days, whichever period is  
130 shorter.

131 (l) After a surrogate has been identified, the name, address, telephone number, and  
132 relationship of that person to the person shall be recorded in the person's medical record.

133 Any surrogate who becomes unavailable for any reason may be replaced by applying the  
134 provisions of subsections (f) through (j), in the same manner as for the initial choice of surrogate.



135 In the event an individual of a higher priority to an identified surrogate becomes available  
136 and willing to be the surrogate, the individual with higher priority may be identified by the  
137 attending physician if such identification satisfied the requirements of subsections (f) through (j).

138 The surrogate decision maker shall have the same right as the person to receive medical  
139 information and medical records and consent to disclosure.

140 No physician shall be required to identify a surrogate, and may, in the event a surrogate  
141 has been identified, revoke the surrogacy if the surrogate is unwilling or unable to act.

142 (m) No health care provider or employee thereof shall be subject to criminal or civil  
143 liability or be deemed to have engaged in unprofessional conduct, for carrying out in good faith a  
144 health care decision by a surrogate.

145 No person acting as a surrogate shall be subject to criminal or civil liability for making a  
146 health care decision in good faith pursuant to this section.

147 (n) The health care provider, staff or facility caring for the person without decisional  
148 capacity, the conservator, members of the person without decisional capacity's family, a close  
149 friend of the person without decisional capacity, or the commissioner of public health may  
150 commence a special proceeding in a court of competent jurisdiction, with respect to any dispute  
151 arising under this chapter, including, but not limited to, a proceeding to:

152 (i) have the surrogate decision maker removed on the ground that the surrogate decision  
153 maker is not reasonably available, willing or competent to fulfill his or her obligations under this  
154 chapter or is acting in bad faith; or

155           (ii) override the surrogate decision maker's decision about health care treatment on the  
156 grounds that: the decision was made in bad faith or the decision is not in accordance with the  
157 standards set forth in section five of this chapter.