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Support Family Health Care Decision Act

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To the Readers' Forum:

The Family Health Care Decision Act was first introduced in the New York State Legislature in 1994 and still awaits passage. It has been reintroduced this session as Senate Bill #03164. While New York State has failed to protect its citizens, 47 other states have enacted similar laws to deal with this complex issue. It would enable family members to act as a surrogate and to decide about treatment for incapacitated loved ones who have not signed a health care proxy.

Over 75,000 people die annually in New York health care institutions and only 20 percent of them have a health care proxy. Most people are also unaware that current law prohibits parents of children over the age of 18 from making health care decisions for their son or daughter if they become incapacitated.

The Family Health Care Decision Act provides legal authority for a decision-making system that effectively balances empowerment of a surrogate and adequate protections for an incapacitated patient. The Act specifically establishes procedures for honoring patient wishes, while at the same time involving family and loved ones in decision-making for a person unable to make their own health care choices.

Please encourage your state representatives to support this important piece of legislation when it is considered again this year so that all citizens of the State of New York receive the protections they deserve. Most importantly, complete a health care proxy and ensure that all members of your family over age eighteen have one.

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Chief Executive Officer

HomeCare & Hospice

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