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SENATE BILL NO. 34**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE**(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations
on February 11, 2026)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Favola)

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 24.2-232, 24.2-410, 64.2-2000, 64.2-2003, 64.2-2009, and 64.2-2009.1 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 64.2-2009.2, relating to incapacitated persons; finding of lack of capacity to understand act of voting.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 24.2-232, 24.2-410, 64.2-2000, 64.2-2003, 64.2-2009, and 64.2-2009.1 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 64.2-2009.2 as follows:

§ 24.2-232. Vacancy occurring when officer determined "mentally incompetent" (incapacitated).

A person who is determined to be incapacitated in a judicial proceeding as provided for in Chapter 20 (§ 64.2-2000 et seq.) of Title 64.2 shall be deemed for purposes of ~~Article II, Section 4 of the Constitution of Virginia and this title to be "mentally incompetent." as that term is used in those provisions.~~ The office of any person who is so determined to be incapacitated; shall become vacant and the vacancy filled in the manner provided by law. Notwithstanding the provisions of Chapter 20 (§ 64.2-2000 et seq.) of Title 64.2, however, any officer shall have a jury trial unless it is waived by him or for him by his counsel of record.

§ 24.2-410. Clerks of circuit courts to furnish lists of certain adjudications.

The clerk of each circuit court shall furnish monthly to the Department of Elections a complete list of all persons adjudicated incapacitated pursuant to Chapter 20 (§ 64.2-2000 et seq.) of Title 64.2 or whose incapacity has been recognized pursuant to § 64.2-2115; and ~~therefore "mentally incompetent" for purposes of this title unless the court order specifically provides otherwise, who have been deemed to be disqualified to vote due to lack of capacity~~ during the preceding month or a statement that no such adjudications have occurred that month. The list shall contain each such person's name; address; county, city, or town of residence; social security number, if any; date and place of birth; and date of adjudication. The Commissioner of Elections and the Executive Secretary shall determine the procedure for furnishing such lists, which may be by electronic means. The Department shall transmit the information from the list to the appropriate general registrars.

§ 64.2-2000. Definitions.

As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Advance directive" shall have the same meaning as provided in § 54.1-2982.

"Annual report" means the report required to be filed by a guardian pursuant to § 64.2-2020.

"Conservator" means a person appointed by the court who is responsible for managing the estate and financial affairs of an incapacitated person and, where the context plainly indicates, includes a "limited conservator" or a "temporary conservator." "Conservator" includes (i) a local or regional program designated by the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services as a public conservator pursuant to Article 6 (§ 51.5-149 et seq.) of Chapter 14 of Title 51.5 or (ii) any local or regional tax-exempt charitable organization established pursuant to § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code to provide conservatorial services to incapacitated persons. Such tax-exempt charitable organization shall not be a provider of direct services to the incapacitated person. If a tax-exempt charitable organization has been designated by the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services as a public conservator, it may also serve as a conservator for other individuals.

"Estate" includes both real and personal property.

"Facility" means a state or licensed hospital, training center, psychiatric hospital, or other type of residential or outpatient mental health or mental retardation facility. When modified by the word "state," "facility" means a state hospital or training center operated by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, including the buildings and land associated with it.

"Guardian" means a person appointed by the court who has the powers and duties set out in § 64.2-2019, or § 63.2-1609 if applicable, and who is responsible for the personal affairs of an incapacitated person, including responsibility for making decisions regarding the person's support, care, health, safety, habilitation, education, therapeutic treatment, and, if not inconsistent with an order of involuntary admission, residence. Where the context plainly indicates, the term includes a "limited guardian" or a "temporary guardian." The term includes (i) a local or regional program designated by the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services as a public guardian pursuant to Article 6 (§ 51.5-149 et seq.) of Chapter 14 of Title 51.5 or (ii) any local or regional tax-exempt charitable organization established pursuant to § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code to provide guardian services to incapacitated persons. Such tax-exempt charitable organization shall not be a provider of direct services to the incapacitated person. If a tax-exempt charitable organization

60 has been designated by the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services as a public guardian, it may
61 also serve as a guardian for other individuals.

62 "Guardian ad litem" means an attorney appointed by the court to represent the interests of the respondent
63 and whose duties include evaluation of the petition for guardianship or conservatorship and filing a report
64 with the court pursuant to § 64.2-2003.

65 "Incapacitated person" means an adult who has been found by a court to be incapable of receiving and
66 evaluating information effectively or responding to people, events, or environments to such an extent that the
67 individual lacks the capacity to (i) meet the essential requirements for his health, care, safety, or therapeutic
68 needs without the assistance or protection of a guardian or (ii) manage property or financial affairs or provide
69 for his support or for the support of his legal dependents without the assistance or protection of a conservator.
70 A finding that the individual displays poor judgment alone shall not be considered sufficient evidence that the
71 individual is an incapacitated person within the meaning of this definition. A finding that a person is
72 incapacitated shall be construed as a finding that the person is "mentally incompetent" as that term is used in
73 Article II, Section 4 of the Constitution of Virginia and Title 24.2 unless the court order entered pursuant to
74 this chapter specifically provides otherwise.

75 "Individualized education plan" or "IEP" means a plan or program developed annually to ensure that a
76 child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational
77 institution receives specialized instruction and related services as provided by 20 U.S.C. § 1414.

78 "Individual receiving services" or "individual" means a current direct recipient of public or private mental
79 health, developmental, or substance abuse treatment, rehabilitation, or habilitation services and includes the
80 terms "consumer," "patient," "resident," "recipient," or "client."

81 "Limited conservator" means a person appointed by the court who has only those responsibilities for
82 managing the estate and financial affairs of an incapacitated person as specified in the order of appointment.

83 "Limited guardian" means a person appointed by the court who has only those responsibilities for the
84 personal affairs of an incapacitated person as specified in the order of appointment.

85 "Mental illness" means a disorder of thought, mood, emotion, perception, or orientation that significantly
86 impairs judgment, behavior, capacity to recognize reality, or ability to address basic life necessities and
87 requires care and treatment for the health, safety, or recovery of the individual or for the safety of others.

88 "Petition" means the document filed with a circuit court to initiate a proceeding to appoint a guardian or
89 conservator.

90 "Power of attorney" has the same meaning ascribed to it in § 64.2-1600.

91 "Property" includes both real and personal property.

92 "Respondent" means an allegedly incapacitated person for whom a petition for guardianship or
93 conservatorship has been filed.

94 "Supported decision-making agreement" has the same meaning ascribed to it in § 37.2-314.3.

95 "Temporary conservator" means a person appointed by a court for a limited duration of time as specified
96 in the order of appointment.

97 "Temporary guardian" means a person appointed by a court for a limited duration of time as specified in
98 the order of appointment.

99 "Transition plan" means the plan that is required as part of the IEP used to help students and families
100 prepare for the future after the student reaches the age of majority.

101 **§ 64.2-2003. Appointment of guardian ad litem.**

102 A. On the filing of every petition for guardianship or conservatorship, the court shall appoint a guardian
103 ad litem to represent the interests of the respondent. The guardian ad litem shall be paid a fee that is fixed by
104 the court to be paid by the petitioner or taxed as costs, as the court directs.

105 B. Duties of the guardian ad litem include (i) personally visiting the respondent; (ii) advising the
106 respondent of rights pursuant to §§ 64.2-2006 and 64.2-2007 and certifying to the court that the respondent
107 has been so advised; (iii) recommending that legal counsel be appointed for the respondent, pursuant to
108 § 64.2-2006, if the guardian ad litem believes that counsel for the respondent is necessary; (iv) notifying the
109 court as soon as practicable if the respondent requests counsel regardless of whether the guardian ad litem
110 recommends counsel; (v) investigating the petition and evidence, requesting additional evaluation if
111 necessary, considering whether a less restrictive alternative to guardianship or conservatorship is available,
112 including the use of an advance directive, supported decision-making agreement, or durable power of
113 attorney, and filing a report pursuant to subsection C; (vi) making a good faith effort to consult directly with
114 the respondent's primary health care provider, if any, unless the evaluation report required by § 64.2-2005 is
115 prepared in whole or in part by such provider; and (vii) personally appearing at all court proceedings and
116 conferences. If the respondent is between 17 and a half and 21 years of age and has an Individualized
117 Education Plan (IEP) and transition plan, the guardian ad litem shall review such IEP and transition plan and
118 include the results of his review in the report required by clause (v).

119 C. In the report required by clause (v) of subsection B, the guardian ad litem shall address the following
120 major areas of concern: (i) whether the court has jurisdiction; (ii) whether a guardian or conservator is needed
121 based on evaluations and reviews conducted pursuant to subsection B; (iii) the extent of the duties and

122 powers of the guardian or conservator; (iv) the propriety and suitability of the person selected as guardian or
 123 conservator after consideration of (a) the person's geographic location, (b) the person's familial or other
 124 relationship with the respondent, (c) the person's ability to carry out the powers and duties of the office, (d)
 125 the person's commitment to promoting the respondent's welfare, (e) any potential conflicts of interests, (f)
 126 whether the person works as a professional guardian on a full-time basis, (g) the person's expected capacity as
 127 a guardian, (h) the wishes of the respondent, (i) the recommendations of relatives, ~~and~~ (j) whether the person
 128 is named as a perpetrator in any substantiated adult protective services complaint involving the respondent
 129 following allegations of abuse or neglect, *and* (k) *whether the respondent lacks the capacity to understand the*
 130 *act of voting*; (v) a recommendation as to the amount of surety on the conservator's bond, if any; and (vi)
 131 consideration of proper residential placement of the respondent. The report shall also contain an explanation
 132 by the guardian ad litem as to any (a) decision not to recommend the appointment of counsel for the
 133 respondent, (b) determination that a less restrictive alternative to guardianship or conservatorship is not
 134 advisable, and (c) determination that appointment of a limited guardian or conservator is not appropriate. If
 135 the guardian ad litem was unable to consult directly with the respondent's primary health care provider, such
 136 information shall also be included in such report.

137 D. Any individual or entity with information, records, or reports relevant to a guardianship or
 138 conservatorship proceeding, including any (i) health care provider, local school division, or local department
 139 of social services; (ii) criminal justice agency as that term is defined in § 9.1-101, unless the disclosure of
 140 such information, records, or reports would impede an ongoing criminal investigation or proceeding; and (iii)
 141 financial institution as that term is defined in § 6.2-100, investment advisor as that term is defined in
 142 § 13.1-501, or other financial service provider shall disclose or make available to the guardian ad litem, upon
 143 request, any information, records, and reports concerning the respondent that the guardian ad litem
 144 determines necessary to perform his duties under this section to the extent allowed under the
 145 Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (15 U.S.C. § 6801 et seq.) and 12 U.S.C. § 3403. The request from the guardian ad
 146 litem shall be accompanied by a copy of the court order (a) appointing the guardian ad litem for the
 147 respondent and (b) that allows the release of the respondent's nonpublic personal information to the guardian
 148 ad litem. All such information, records, and reports shall be provided to the guardian ad litem at no charge.
 149 Disclosures, records, and reports can be provided in electronic form to the guardian ad litem and may be
 150 accompanied by a statement of expenses or an invoice, which shall be filed with the report of the guardian ad
 151 litem to be considered by the court when awarding costs among the parties pursuant to § 64.2-2008. Absent
 152 gross negligence or willful misconduct, the person or entity making disclosures, and their staff, shall be
 153 immune from civil or criminal liability for providing information or records to a court-appointed guardian ad
 154 litem pursuant to this section.

155 **§ 64.2-2009. Court order of appointment; limited guardianships and conservatorships.**

156 A. The court's order appointing a guardian or conservator shall (i) state the nature and extent of the
 157 person's incapacity; (ii) define the powers and duties of the guardian or conservator so as to permit the
 158 incapacitated person to care for himself and manage property to the extent he is capable; (iii) specify whether
 159 the appointment of a guardian or conservator is limited to a specified length of time, as the court in its
 160 discretion may determine; (iv) *specify whether the person has been found disqualified to vote due to lack of*
 161 *capacity for the purposes of Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution of Virginia in accordance with the*
 162 *provisions of § 64.2-2009.2 and any specific findings of fact and conclusions of law in support of such finding*
 163 *of lack of capacity*; (v) specify ~~the other~~ legal disabilities, if any, of the person in connection with the finding
 164 of incapacity, including ~~but not limited to~~ mental competency for purposes of ~~Article II, § 1 of the~~
 165 ~~Constitution of Virginia or~~ Title 24.2; ~~(v)~~ (vi) include any limitations deemed appropriate following
 166 consideration of the factors specified in § 64.2-2007; ~~(vi)~~ (vii) set the bond of the guardian and the bond and
 167 surety, if any, of the conservator; and ~~(vii)~~ (viii) where a petition is brought prior to the incapacitated person's
 168 eighteenth birthday, pursuant to subsection C of § 64.2-2001, *specify* whether the order shall take effect
 169 immediately upon entry or on the incapacitated person's eighteenth birthday.

170 A1. Beginning July 1, 2023, the court shall set a schedule in the order of appointment for periodic review
 171 hearings, to be held no later than one year after the initial appointment and no later than every three years
 172 thereafter, unless the court orders that such hearings are to be waived because they are unnecessary or
 173 impracticable or that such hearings shall be held on such other schedule as the court shall determine. Any
 174 such determination to waive the hearing or use a schedule differing from that prescribed in this subsection
 175 shall be supported in the order and address the reason for such determination, including (i) the likelihood that
 176 the respondent's condition will improve or the respondent will regain capacity, (ii) whether concerns or
 177 questions were raised about the suitability of the person appointed as a guardian or conservator at the time of
 178 the initial appointment, and (iii) whether the appointment of a guardian or conservator or the appointment of
 179 the specifically appointed guardian or conservator was contested by the respondent or another party.

180 The court shall not waive the initial periodic review hearing scheduled pursuant to this subsection where
 181 the petitioner for guardianship or conservatorship is a hospital, convalescent home, or certified nursing
 182 facility licensed by the Department of Health pursuant to § 32.1-123; an assisted living facility, as defined in
 183 § 63.2-100, or any other similar institution; or a health care provider other than a family member. If the

184 petitioner is a hospital, convalescent home, or certified nursing facility licensed by the Department of Health
185 pursuant to § 32.1-123 or an assisted living facility as defined in § 63.2-100, nothing in this chapter shall
186 require such petitioner to attend any periodic review hearing.

187 Any person may file a petition, which may be on a form developed by the Office of the Executive
188 Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, to hold a periodic review hearing prior to the scheduled date set
189 forth in the order of appointment. The court shall hold an earlier hearing upon good cause shown. *For the*
190 *purposes of this subsection, "good cause" shall include a petition filed pursuant to subsection C of*
191 *§ 64.2-2009.2.* At such a hearing, the court shall review the schedule set forth in the order of appointment and
192 determine whether future periodic review hearings are necessary or may be waived.

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

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

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

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

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

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

227 1. Pursuant to § 64.2-2009 of the Code of Virginia, (name of guardian), is hereby appointed as guardian of
228 (name of respondent) with all duties and powers granted to a guardian pursuant to § 64.2-2019 of the Code of
229 Virginia, including but not limited to: (enter a statement of the rights removed and retained, if any, at the time
230 of appointment; whether the appointment of a guardian is a full guardianship, public guardianship pursuant to
231 § 64.2-2010 of the Code of Virginia, limited guardianship pursuant to § 64.2-2009 of the Code of Virginia, or
232 temporary guardianship; and the duration of the appointment).

233 2. Pursuant to the provisions of subsection E of § 64.2-2019 of the Code of Virginia, a guardian, to the
234 extent possible, shall encourage the incapacitated person to participate in decisions, shall consider the
235 expressed desires and personal values of the incapacitated person to the extent known, and shall not restrict
236 an incapacitated person's ability to communicate with, visit, or interact with other persons with whom the
237 incapacitated person has an established relationship, unless such restriction is reasonable to prevent physical,
238 mental, or emotional harm to or financial exploitation of such incapacitated person and after consideration of
239 the expressed wishes of the incapacitated person. Such restrictions shall only be imposed pursuant to
240 § 64.2-2019.1.

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

243 4. Pursuant to § 64.2-2012 of the Code of Virginia, all guardianship orders are subject to petition for
244 restoration of the incapacitated person to capacity; modification of the type of appointment or areas of
245 protection, management, or assistance granted; or termination of the guardianship. In lieu of such a petition,

246 if the person subject to the guardianship is not represented by counsel, such person may initiate the process
 247 by sending informal written communications to the court. All orders appointing a guardian, conservator, or
 248 both shall include the current mailing address, email address, and physical address of the court issuing the
 249 order and to which such informal written communication shall be directed.

250 **§ 64.2-2009.1. Periodic review hearings.**

251 A hearing held pursuant to the schedule set forth in subsection A1 of § 64.2-2009 shall include the
 252 following assessments by the court: (i) whether the guardian or conservator is fulfilling his duties ~~and~~; (ii)
 253 whether continuation of the guardianship or conservatorship is necessary and, if so, whether the scope of such
 254 guardianship or conservatorship warrants modification; *and (iii) whether the respondent's incapacity status*
 255 *pursuant to § 64.2-2009.2 has changed.*

256 **§ 64.2-2009.2. Finding of lack of capacity to understand act of voting.**

257 *A. No person shall be deemed disqualified to vote due to lack of capacity for the purposes of Article II,*
 258 *Section 1 of the Constitution of Virginia unless a court makes a specific finding by clear and convincing*
 259 *evidence that such person lacks the capacity to understand the act of voting. No court shall find a person*
 260 *disqualified to vote due to lack of capacity pursuant to this section based on the determination of a guardian*
 261 *ad litem in the report submitted in accordance with § 64.2-2003 without a showing that reasonable*
 262 *accommodation appropriate to such person's diagnosis or condition has been provided for the purpose of*
 263 *determining such person's capacity to understand the act of voting.*

264 *B. No court shall, in determining that a person lacks capacity pursuant to this section, consider the results*
 265 *of or such person's failure to complete or comply with any test or device that evaluates such person's (i)*
 266 *ability to read or write, (ii) educational achievement or knowledge of any particular subject, or (iii) moral*
 267 *character. For purposes of this subsection, medical reports or medical information shall not constitute such*
 268 *prohibited tests or devices.*

269 *C. When a person who has been deemed disqualified to vote due to lack of capacity for the purposes of*
 270 *Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution of Virginia prior to July 1, 2026, either in accordance with the*
 271 *provisions of this section or by a finding of incapacity without a court order to the contrary, a review of such*
 272 *determination shall be conducted at such person's next periodic review hearing pursuant to § 64.2-2009 in*
 273 *accordance with the provisions of this section.*

274 **2. That nothing in the provisions of this act shall be construed to automatically nullify or void any**
 275 **determination of mental incompetence made, whether explicitly or construed by a finding of incapacity**
 276 **without a court order to the contrary, prior to July 1, 2026.**