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SENATE BILL NO. 1072

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary
on February 5, 2020)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Mason)

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 64.2-2007 of the Code of Virginia, relating to prohibition against appointing certain persons as guardian or conservator.*

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 64.2-2007 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 64.2-2007. Hearing on petition to appoint.

A. The respondent is entitled to a jury trial upon request, and may compel the attendance of witnesses, present evidence on his own behalf, and confront and cross-examine witnesses.

B. The court or the jury, if a jury is requested, shall hear the petition for the appointment of a guardian or conservator. The hearing may be held at such convenient place as the court directs, including the place where the respondent is located. The hearing shall be conducted within 120 days from the filing of the petition unless the court postpones it for cause. The proposed guardian or conservator shall attend the hearing except for good cause shown and, where appropriate, shall provide the court with a recommendation as to living arrangements and a treatment plan for the respondent. The respondent is entitled to be present at the hearing and all other stages of the proceedings. The respondent shall be present if he so requests or if his presence is requested by the guardian ad litem. Whether or not present, the respondent shall be regarded as having denied the allegations in the petition.

C. In determining the need for a guardian or a conservator and the powers and duties of any guardian or conservator, if needed, consideration shall be given to the following factors: (i) the limitations of the respondent; (ii) the development of the respondent's maximum self-reliance and independence; (iii) the availability of less restrictive alternatives, including advance directives and durable powers of attorney; (iv) the extent to which it is necessary to protect the respondent from neglect, exploitation, or abuse; (v) the actions needed to be taken by the guardian or conservator; (vi) the suitability of the proposed guardian or conservator; and (vii) the best interests of the respondent.

D. If, after considering the evidence presented at the hearing, the court or jury determines on the basis of clear and convincing evidence that the respondent is incapacitated and in need of a guardian or conservator, the court shall appoint a suitable person, who may be the spouse of the respondent, to be the guardian or the conservator or both, giving due deference to the wishes of the respondent. *The court shall not appoint as guardian or conservator for the respondent the attorney for the petitioner or an attorney or employee of the same law firm as the attorney for the petitioner. Except for good cause shown, the court also shall not appoint an attorney, or an attorney associated with or employee of the same law firm, who has represented the petitioner in any other matter within the three calendar years preceding the appointment. The court shall require the proposed guardian or conservator to certify at the time of appointment that he has disclosed to the court any such representation of the petitioner or association with a law firm that represented the petitioner within the three calendar years preceding the appointment. For good cause shown, the court may order that the costs for the guardian or conservator be paid by the petitioner; however, in cases in which the petitioner is ordered to pay such costs, the court shall not appoint a guardian or conservator chosen by the petitioner.*

The court in its order shall make specific findings of fact and conclusions of law in support of each provision of any orders entered.