

VIRGINIA STATUTES
HEALTH CARE DECISIONS ACT
§ 54.1-2981 - § 54.1-2993

§ 54.1-2981. Short title.

The provisions of this article shall be known and may be cited as the "Health Care Decisions Act."

§ 54.1-2982. Definitions.

As used in this article:

"Advance directive" means (i) a witnessed written document, voluntarily executed by the declarant in accordance with the requirements of § 54.1-2983 or (ii) a witnessed oral statement, made by the declarant subsequent to the time he is diagnosed as suffering from a terminal condition and in accordance with the provisions of § 54.1-2983.

"Agent" means an adult appointed by the declarant under an advance directive, executed or made in accordance with the provisions of § 54.1-2983, to make health care decisions for him, including visitation, provided the advance directive makes express provisions for visitation and subject to physician orders and policies of the institution to which the declarant is admitted. The declarant may also appoint an adult to make, after the declarant's death, an anatomical gift of all or any part of his body pursuant to Article 2 (§ 32.1-289 et seq.) of Chapter 8 of Title 32.1.

"Attending physician" means the primary physician who has responsibility for the treatment and care of the patient.

"Declarant" means an adult who makes an advance directive, as defined in this article, while capable of making and communicating an informed decision.

"Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order" means a written physician's order issued pursuant to § 54.1-2987.1 to withhold cardiopulmonary resuscitation from a particular patient in the event of cardiac or respiratory arrest. For purposes of this article, cardiopulmonary resuscitation shall include cardiac compression, endotracheal intubation and other advanced airway management, artificial ventilation, and defibrillation and related procedures. As the terms "advance directive" and "Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order" are used in this article, a Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order is not and shall not be construed as an advance directive.

"Incapable of making an informed decision" means the inability of an adult patient, because of mental illness, mental retardation, or any other mental or physical disorder which precludes communication or impairs judgment and which has been diagnosed and certified in writing by his attending physician and a second physician or licensed clinical psychologist after personal examination of such patient, to make an informed decision about providing, withholding or withdrawing a specific medical treatment or course of treatment because he is unable to understand the nature, extent or probable consequences of the proposed medical decision, or to make a rational evaluation of the risks and benefits of alternatives to that decision. For purposes of this article, persons who are deaf, dysphasic or have other communication disorders, who are otherwise mentally competent and able to communicate by means other than speech, shall not be considered incapable of making an informed decision.

"Life-prolonging procedure" means any medical procedure, treatment or intervention which (i) utilizes mechanical or other artificial means to sustain, restore or supplant a spontaneous vital function, or is otherwise of such a nature as to afford a patient no reasonable expectation of recovery from a terminal condition and (ii) when applied to a patient in a terminal condition, would serve only to prolong the dying process. The term includes artificially administered hydration and nutrition. However, nothing in this act shall prohibit the administration of medication or the performance of any medical procedure deemed necessary to provide comfort care or to alleviate pain, including the administration of pain relieving medications in excess of recommended dosages in accordance with §§ 54.1-2971.01 and 54.1-3408.1. For purposes of §§ 54.1-2988, 54.1-2989, and 54.1-2991, the term also shall include cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

"Persistent vegetative state" means a condition caused by injury, disease or illness in which a patient has suffered a loss of consciousness, with no behavioral evidence of self-awareness or awareness of surroundings in a learned manner, other than reflex activity of muscles and nerves for low level conditioned response, and from which, to a reasonable degree of medical probability, there can be no recovery.

"Physician" means a person licensed to practice medicine in the Commonwealth of Virginia or in the jurisdiction where the treatment is to be rendered or withheld.

"Qualified patient" means a patient who has made an advance directive in accordance with this article and either (i) has been diagnosed and certified in writing by the attending physician and a second physician or licensed clinical psychologist after personal examination to be incapable of making an informed decision about providing, withholding or withdrawing a specific medical treatment or course of treatment, in accordance with § 54.1-2986 or (ii) has been diagnosed and certified in writing by the attending physician to be afflicted with a terminal condition.

"Terminal condition" means a condition caused by injury, disease or illness from which, to a reasonable degree of medical probability a patient cannot recover and (i) the patient's death is imminent or (ii) the patient is in a persistent vegetative state.

"Witness" means any person over the age of 18, including a spouse or blood relative of the declarant. Employees of health care facilities and physician's offices, who act in good faith, shall be permitted to serve as witnesses for purposes of this article.

§ 54.1-2983. Procedure for making advance directive; notice to physician.

Any competent adult may, at any time, make a written advance directive authorizing the providing, withholding or withdrawal of life-prolonging procedures in the event such person should have a terminal condition. A written advance directive may also appoint an agent to make health care decisions for the declarant under the circumstances stated in the advance directive if the declarant should be determined to be incapable of making an informed decision. A written advance directive shall be signed by the declarant in the presence of two subscribing witnesses.

Further, any competent adult who has been diagnosed by his attending physician as being in a terminal condition may make an oral advance directive to authorize the providing, withholding or withdrawing of life-prolonging procedures or to appoint an agent to make health care decisions for the declarant under the circumstances stated in the advance directive if the declarant should be determined to be incapable of making an informed decision. An oral advance directive shall be made in the presence of the attending physician and two witnesses.

It shall be the responsibility of the declarant to provide for notification to his attending physician that an advance directive has been made. In the event the declarant is comatose, incapacitated or otherwise mentally or physically incapable of communication, any other person may notify the physician of the existence of an advance directive. An attending physician who is so notified shall promptly make the advance directive or a copy of the advance directive, if written, or the fact of the advance directive, if oral, a part of the declarant's medical records.

§ 54.1-2984. Suggested form of written advance directives.

An advance directive executed pursuant to this article may, but need not, be in the following form, and may (i) direct a specific procedure or treatment to be provided, such as artificially administered hydration and nutrition; (ii) direct a specific procedure or treatment to be withheld; or (iii) appoint an agent to make health care decisions for the declarant as specified in the advance directive if the declarant is determined to be incapable of making an informed decision, including the decision to make, after the declarant's death, an anatomical gift of all of the declarant's body or an organ, tissue or eye donation pursuant to Article 2 (§ 32.1-289 et seq.) of Chapter 8 of Title 32.1 and in

compliance with any directions of the declarant. Should any other specific directions be held to be invalid, such invalidity shall not affect the advance directive. If the declarant appoints an agent in an advance directive, that agent shall have the authority to make health care decisions for the declarant as specified in the advance directive if the declarant is determined to be incapable of making an informed decision and shall have decision-making priority over any individuals authorized under § 54.1-2986 to make health care decisions for the declarant. In no case shall the agent refuse or fail to honor the declarant's wishes in relation to anatomical gifts or organ, tissue or eye donation.

ADVANCE MEDICAL DIRECTIVE

I,, willfully and voluntarily make known my desire and do hereby declare: If at any time my attending physician should determine that I have a terminal condition where the application of life-prolonging procedures would serve only to artificially prolong the dying process, I direct that such procedures be withheld or withdrawn, and that I be permitted to die naturally with only the administration of medication or the performance of any medical procedure deemed necessary to provide me with comfort care or to alleviate pain (OPTION: I specifically direct that the following procedures or treatments be provided to me:)

In the absence of my ability to give directions regarding the use of such life-prolonging procedures, it is my intention that this advance directive shall be honored by my family and physician as the final expression of my legal right to refuse medical or surgical treatment and accept the consequences of such refusal.

OPTION: APPOINTMENT OF AGENT (CROSS THROUGH IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO APPOINT AN AGENT TO MAKE HEALTH CARE DECISIONS FOR YOU.)

I hereby appoint (primary agent), of (address and telephone number), as my agent to make health care decisions on my behalf as authorized in this document. If (primary agent) is not reasonably available or is unable or unwilling to act as my agent, then I appoint (successor agent), of (address and telephone number), to serve in that capacity.

I hereby grant to my agent, named above, full power and authority to make health care decisions on my behalf as described below whenever I have been determined to be incapable of making an informed decision about providing, withholding or withdrawing medical treatment. The phrase "incapable of making an informed decision" means unable to understand the nature, extent and probable consequences of a proposed medical decision or unable to make a rational evaluation of the risks and benefits of a proposed medical decision as compared with the risks and benefits of alternatives to that decision, or unable to communicate such understanding in any way. My agent's authority hereunder is effective as long as I am incapable of making an informed decision.

The determination that I am incapable of making an informed decision shall be made by my attending physician and a second physician or licensed clinical psychologist after a personal examination of me and shall be certified in writing. Such certification shall be required before treatment is withheld or withdrawn, and before, or as soon as reasonably practicable after, treatment is provided, and every 180 days thereafter while the treatment continues.

In exercising the power to make health care decisions on my behalf, my agent shall follow my desires and preferences as stated in this document or as otherwise known to my agent. My agent shall be guided by my medical diagnosis and prognosis and any information provided by my physicians as to the intrusiveness, pain, risks, and side effects associated with treatment or nontreatment. My agent shall not authorize a course of treatment which he knows, or upon reasonable inquiry ought to know, is contrary to my religious beliefs or my basic values, whether expressed orally or in writing. If my agent cannot determine what treatment choice I would have made on my own behalf, then my agent shall make a choice for me based upon what he believes to be in my best interests.

OPTION: POWERS OF MY AGENT (CROSS THROUGH ANY LANGUAGE YOU DO NOT WANT AND ADD ANY LANGUAGE YOU DO WANT.)

The powers of my agent shall include the following:

A. To consent to or refuse or withdraw consent to any type of medical care, treatment, surgical procedure, diagnostic procedure, medication and the use of mechanical or other procedures that affect any bodily function, including, but not limited to, artificial respiration, artificially administered nutrition and hydration, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation. This authorization specifically includes the power to consent to the administration of dosages of pain-relieving medication in excess of recommended dosages in an amount sufficient to relieve pain, even if such medication carries the risk of addiction or inadvertently hastens my death;

B. To request, receive, and review any information, verbal or written, regarding my physical or mental health, including but not limited to, medical and hospital records, and to consent to the disclosure of this information;

C. To employ and discharge my health care providers;

D. To authorize my admission to or discharge (including transfer to another facility) from any hospital, hospice, nursing home, adult home or other medical care facility for services other than those for treatment of mental illness requiring admission procedures provided in Article 1 (§ 37.2-800 et seq.) of Chapter 8 of Title 37.2; and

E. To take any lawful actions that may be necessary to carry out these decisions, including the granting of releases of liability to medical providers.

Further, my agent shall not be liable for the costs of treatment pursuant to his authorization, based solely on that authorization.

OPTION: APPOINTMENT OF AN AGENT TO MAKE AN ANATOMICAL GIFT OR ORGAN, TISSUE OR EYE DONATION (CROSS THROUGH IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO APPOINT AN AGENT TO MAKE AN ANATOMICAL GIFT OR ANY ORGAN, TISSUE OR EYE DONATION FOR YOU.)

Upon my death, I direct that an anatomical gift of all of my body or certain organ, tissue or eye donations may be made pursuant to Article 2 (§ 32.1-289 et seq.) of Chapter 8 of Title 32.1 and in accordance with my directions, if any. I hereby appoint as my agent, of (address and telephone number), to make any such anatomical gift or organ, tissue or eye donation following my death. I further direct that: (declarant's directions concerning anatomical gift or organ, tissue or eye donation). This advance directive shall not terminate in the event of my disability.

By signing below, I indicate that I am emotionally and mentally competent to make this advance directive and that I understand the purpose and effect of this document.

(Date)

(Signature of Declarant)

The declarant signed the foregoing advance directive in my presence.

(Witness) _____

(Witness) _____

§ 54.1-2985. Revocation of an advance directive.

An advance directive may be revoked at any time by the declarant (i) by a signed, dated writing; (ii) by physical cancellation or destruction of the advance directive by the declarant or another in his presence and at his direction; or (iii) by oral expression of intent to revoke. Any such revocation shall be effective when communicated to the attending physician. No civil or criminal liability shall be imposed upon any person for a failure to act upon a revocation unless that person has actual knowledge of such revocation.

§ 54.1-2986. Procedure in absence of an advance directive; procedure for advance directive without agent; no presumption; persons who may authorize treatment for patients incapable of informed decisions; applicability restricted to nonprotesting patients.

A. Whenever (i) the attending physician of an adult patient has determined after personal examination that such patient, because of mental illness, mental retardation, or any other mental disorder, or a physical disorder which precludes communication or impairs judgment, is incapable of making an informed decision about providing, withholding or withdrawing a specific medical treatment or course of treatment and such adult patient has not made an advance directive in accordance with this article or (ii) the attending physician of an adult patient has determined after personal examination that such patient, because of mental illness, mental retardation, or any other mental disorder, or a physical disorder which precludes communication or impairs judgment, is incapable of making an informed decision about providing, withholding or withdrawing a specific medical treatment or course of treatment and the adult patient has made an advance directive in accordance with this article which does not indicate his wishes with respect to the specific course of treatment at issue and does not appoint an agent to make health care decisions upon his becoming incapable of making an informed decision, the attending physician may, upon compliance with the provisions of this section, provide to, withhold or withdraw from such patient medical or surgical care or treatment, including, but not limited to, life-prolonging procedures, upon the authorization of any of the following persons, in the specified order of priority, if the physician is not aware of any available, willing and competent person in a higher class:

1. A guardian or committee for the patient. This subdivision shall not be construed to require such appointment in order that a treatment decision can be made under this section; or
2. The patient's spouse except where a divorce action has been filed and the divorce is not final; or
3. An adult child of the patient; or
4. A parent of the patient; or
5. An adult brother or sister of the patient; or
6. Any other relative of the patient in the descending order of blood relationship.

If two or more of the persons listed in the same class in subdivisions A 3 through A 6 with equal decision-making priority inform the attending physician that they disagree as to a particular treatment decision, the attending physician may rely on the authorization of a majority of the reasonably available members of that class.

Any person authorized to consent to the providing, withholding or withdrawing of treatment pursuant to this article shall (i) prior to giving consent, make a good faith effort to ascertain the risks and benefits of and alternatives to the treatment and the religious beliefs and basic values of the patient receiving treatment, and to inform the patient, to the extent possible, of the proposed treatment and the fact that someone else is authorized to make a decision regarding that treatment and (ii) base his decision on the patient's religious beliefs and basic values and any preferences previously expressed by the patient regarding such treatment to the extent they are known, and if unknown or unclear, on the patient's best interests. Regardless of the absence of an advance directive, if the patient has expressed his intent to be an organ donor in any written document, no person noted in this section shall revoke, or in any way hinder, such organ donation.

B. The absence of an advance directive by an adult patient shall not give rise to any presumption as to his intent to consent to or refuse life-prolonging procedures.

C. (Effective until October 1, 2005) The provisions of this article shall not apply to authorization of nontherapeutic sterilization, abortion, psychosurgery, or admission to a mental retardation facility or psychiatric hospital, as defined in § 37.1-1; however, the provisions of this article, if otherwise applicable, may be employed to authorize a specific treatment or course of treatment for a person who has been lawfully admitted to a mental retardation facility or psychiatric hospital.

Further, the provisions of this article shall not authorize providing, continuing, withholding or withdrawing of treatment if the provider of the treatment knows that such an action is protested by the patient. No person shall authorize treatment, or a course of treatment, pursuant to this article, that such person knows, or upon reasonable inquiry ought to know, is contrary to the religious beliefs or basic values of the patient unable to make a decision, whether expressed orally or in writing.

C. (Effective October 1, 2005) The provisions of this article shall not apply to authorization of nontherapeutic sterilization, abortion, psychosurgery, or admission to a facility, as defined in § 37.2-100; however, the provisions of this article, if otherwise applicable, may be employed to authorize a specific treatment or course of treatment for a person who has been lawfully admitted to such a facility.

Further, the provisions of this article shall not authorize providing, continuing, withholding or withdrawing of treatment if the provider of the treatment knows that such an action is protested by the patient. No person shall authorize treatment, or a course of treatment, pursuant to this article, that such person knows, or upon reasonable inquiry ought to know, is contrary to the religious beliefs or basic values of the patient unable to make a decision, whether expressed orally or in writing.

D. Prior to withholding or withdrawing treatment for which authorization has been obtained or will be sought pursuant to this article and prior to, or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter, the initiation of treatment for which authorization has been obtained or will be sought pursuant to this article, and no less frequently than every 180 days while the treatment continues, the attending physician shall obtain written certification that the patient is incapable of making an informed decision regarding the treatment from a licensed physician or clinical psychologist which shall be based on a personal examination of the patient. Whenever the authorization is being sought for treatment of a mental illness, the second physician or licensed clinical psychologist shall not be otherwise currently involved in the treatment of the person assessed. The cost of the assessment shall be considered for all purposes a cost of the patient's treatment.

E. On petition of any person to the circuit court of the county or city in which any patient resides or is located for whom treatment will be or is currently being provided, withheld or withdrawn pursuant to this article, the court may enjoin such action upon finding by a preponderance of the evidence that the action is not lawfully authorized by this article or by other state or federal law.

§ 54.1-2987. Transfer of patient by physician who refuses to comply with advance directive or treatment decision.

An attending physician who refuses to comply with (i) the advance directive of a qualified patient or (ii) the treatment decision of a person designated to make the decision by the declarant in his advance directive pursuant to § 54.1-2984 or (iii) the treatment decision of an authorized person pursuant to § 54.1-2986 shall make a reasonable effort to transfer the patient to another physician and shall comply with § 54.1-2990.

§ 54.1-2987.1. Durable Do Not Resuscitate Orders.

A. A Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order may be issued by a physician for his patient with whom he has a bona fide physician/patient relationship as defined in the guidelines of the Board of Medicine, and only with the consent of the patient or, if the patient is a minor or is otherwise incapable of making an informed decision regarding consent for such an order, upon the request of and with the consent of the person authorized to consent on the patient's behalf.

B. This section shall not authorize any health care provider or practitioner to follow a Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order for any patient who is able to, and does, express to such health care provider or practitioner the desire to be resuscitated in the event of cardiac or respiratory arrest.

If the patient is a minor or is otherwise incapable of making an informed decision, the expression of the desire that the patient be resuscitated by the person authorized to

consent on the patient's behalf shall so revoke the provider's or practitioner's authority to follow a Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order.

The expression of such desire to be resuscitated prior to cardiac or respiratory arrest shall constitute revocation of the Order; however, a new Order may be issued upon consent of the patient or the person authorized to consent on the patient's behalf.

C. Durable Do Not Resuscitate Orders issued in accordance with this section shall remain valid and in effect until revoked. In accordance with this section and regulations promulgated by the Board of Health, (i) qualified emergency medical services personnel as defined in § 32.1-111.1 and (ii) licensed health care practitioners in any facility, program or organization operated or licensed by the Board of Health or by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services or operated, licensed or owned by another state agency are authorized to follow Durable Do Not Resuscitate Orders that are available to them in a form approved by the Board of Health.

D. The provisions of this section shall not authorize any qualified emergency medical services personnel or licensed health care provider or practitioner who is attending the patient at the time of cardiac or respiratory arrest to provide, continue, withhold or withdraw treatment if such provider or practitioner knows that taking such action is protested by the patient incapable of making an informed decision. No person shall authorize providing, continuing, withholding or withdrawing treatment pursuant to this section that such person knows, or upon reasonable inquiry ought to know, is contrary to the religious beliefs or basic values of a patient incapable of making an informed decision or the wishes of such patient fairly expressed when the patient was capable of making an informed decision. Further, this section shall not authorize the withholding of other medical interventions, such as intravenous fluids, oxygen or other therapies deemed necessary to provide comfort care or to alleviate pain.

E. For the purposes of this section:

"Health care provider" includes, but is not limited to, qualified emergency medical services personnel.

"Person authorized to consent on the patient's behalf" means any person authorized by law to consent on behalf of the patient incapable of making an informed decision or, in the case of a minor child, the parent or parents having custody of the child or the child's legal guardian or as otherwise provided by law.

F. This section shall not prevent, prohibit or limit a physician from issuing a written order, other than a Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order, not to resuscitate a patient in the event of cardiac or respiratory arrest in accordance with accepted medical practice.

G. Valid Do Not Resuscitate Orders or Emergency Medical Services Do Not Resuscitate Orders issued before July 1, 1999, pursuant to the then-current law, shall remain valid and shall be given effect as provided in this article.

§ 54.1-2988. Immunity from liability; burden of proof; presumption.

A health care facility, physician or other person acting under the direction of a physician shall not be subject to criminal prosecution or civil liability or be deemed to have engaged in unprofessional conduct as a result of issuing a Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order or the withholding or the withdrawal of life-prolonging procedures under authorization or consent obtained in accordance with this article or as the result of the provision, withholding or withdrawal of ongoing life-sustaining care in accordance with § 54.1-2990. No person or facility providing, withholding or withdrawing treatment or physician issuing a Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order under authorization or consent obtained pursuant to this article or otherwise in accordance with § 54.1-2990 shall incur liability arising out of a claim to the extent the claim is based on lack of authorization or consent for such action.

A person who authorizes or consents to the providing, withholding or withdrawal of ongoing life-sustaining care in accordance with § 54.1-2990 or of life-prolonging procedures in accordance with a qualified patient's advance directive or as provided in § 54.1-2986 or a Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order pursuant to § 54.1-2987.1 shall not be subject, solely on the basis of that authorization or consent, to (i) criminal prosecution or civil liability for such action or (ii) liability for the cost of treatment.

The provisions of this section shall apply unless it is shown by a preponderance of the evidence that the person authorizing or effectuating the withholding or withdrawal of life-prolonging procedures, or issuing, consenting to, making or following a Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order in accordance with § 54.1-2987.1 did not, in good faith, comply with the provisions of this article.

The distribution to patients of written advance directives in a form meeting the requirements of § 54.1-2984 and assistance to patients in the completion and execution of such forms by health care providers shall not constitute the unauthorized practice of law pursuant to Chapter 39 (§ 54.1-3900 et seq.) of this title.

An advance directive or Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order made, consented to or issued in accordance with this article shall be presumed to have been made, consented to, or issued voluntarily and in good faith by a competent adult, physician or person authorized to consent on the patient's behalf.

§ 54.1-2989. Willful destruction, concealment, etc., of declaration or revocation; penalties.

Any person who willfully conceals, cancels, defaces, obliterates, or damages the advance directive or Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order of another without the declarant's or patient's consent or the consent of the person authorized to consent for the patient or who falsifies or forges a revocation of the advance directive or Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order of another, thereby causing life-prolonging procedures to be utilized in contravention of the previously expressed intent of the patient or a Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order shall be guilty of a Class 6 felony.

Any person who falsifies or forges the advance directive or Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order of another, or willfully conceals or withholds personal knowledge of the revocation of an advance directive or Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order, with the intent to cause a withholding or withdrawal of life-prolonging procedures, contrary to the wishes of the declarant or a patient, and thereby, because of such act, directly causes life-prolonging procedures to be withheld or withdrawn and death to be hastened, shall be guilty of a Class 2 felony.

§ 54.1-2989.1. Failure to deliver advance directive.

An agent in possession of an advance medical directive vesting any power or authority in him shall, when the instrument is otherwise valid, be deemed to possess the powers and authority granted by such instrument notwithstanding any failure by the declarant to deliver the instrument to him, and persons dealing with such agent shall have no obligation to inquire into the manner or circumstances by which such possession was acquired; provided, however, that nothing herein shall preclude the court from considering such manner or circumstances as relevant factors in a proceeding brought to remove the agent or revoke the directive.

§ 54.1-2990. Medically unnecessary treatment not required; procedure when physician refuses to comply with an advance directive or a designated person's treatment decision; mercy killing or euthanasia prohibited.

A. Nothing in this article shall be construed to require a physician to prescribe or render medical treatment to a patient that the physician determines to be medically or ethically inappropriate. However, in such a case, if the physician's determination is contrary to the terms of an advance directive of a qualified patient or the treatment decision of a person designated to make the decision under this article or a Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order, the physician shall make a reasonable effort to inform the patient or the patient's designated decision-maker of such determination and the reasons for the determination. If the conflict remains unresolved, the physician shall make a reasonable effort to transfer the patient to another physician who is willing to comply with the terms of the advance directive. The physician shall provide the patient or his authorized decision-maker a

reasonable time of not less than fourteen days to effect such transfer. During this period, the physician shall continue to provide any life-sustaining care to the patient which is reasonably available to such physician, as requested by the patient or his designated decision-maker.

B. For purposes of this section, "life-sustaining care" means any ongoing medical treatment that utilizes mechanical or other artificial means to sustain, restore or supplant a spontaneous vital function, including hydration, nutrition, maintenance medication, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

C. Nothing in this section shall require the provision of treatment that the physician is physically or legally unable to provide, or treatment that the physician is physically or legally unable to provide without thereby denying the same treatment to another patient.

D. Nothing in this article shall be construed to condone, authorize or approve mercy killing or euthanasia, or to permit any affirmative or deliberate act or omission to end life other than to permit the natural process of dying.

§ 54.1-2991. Effect of declaration; suicide; insurance; declarations executed prior to effective date.

The withholding or withdrawal of life-prolonging procedures in accordance with the provisions of this article shall not, for any purpose, constitute a suicide. Nor shall the making of an advance directive pursuant to this article affect the sale, procurement or issuance of any policy of life insurance, nor shall the making of an advance directive or the issuance of a Durable Do Not Resuscitate Order pursuant to this article be deemed to modify the terms of an existing policy of life insurance. No policy of life insurance shall be legally impaired or invalidated by the withholding or withdrawal of life-prolonging procedures from an insured patient in accordance with this article, notwithstanding any term of the policy to the contrary. A person shall not be required to make an advance directive or consent to a Durable Do Not Resuscitate order as a condition for being insured for, or receiving, health care services.

The declaration of any qualified patient made prior to July 1, 1983, an advance directive made prior to July 1, 1992, or the issuance, in accordance with the then current law, of a Do Not Resuscitate Order or an Emergency Medical Services Do Not Resuscitate Order prior to July 1, 1999, shall be given effect as provided in this article.

§ 54.1-2992. Preservation of existing rights.

The provisions of this article are cumulative with existing law regarding an individual's right to consent or refuse to consent to medical treatment and shall not impair any existing rights or responsibilities which a health care provider, a patient, including a minor or incapacitated patient, or a patient's family may have in regard to the providing,

withholding or withdrawal of life-prolonging medical procedures under the common law or statutes of the Commonwealth; however, this section shall not be construed to authorize violations of § 54.1-2990.

§ 54.1-2993. Reciprocity.

An advance directive executed in another state shall be deemed to be validly executed for the purposes of this article if executed in compliance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia or the laws of the state where executed. Such advance directives shall be construed in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia.