(S. B. 2022)

(No. 220-2011)

(Approved November 10, 2011)

AN ACT

To add a paragraph (9) to subsection (c) of Section 2.22 of Act No. 22 of January 7, 2000, as amended, known as the “Puerto Rico Vehicle and Traffic Act,” in order to include poliomyelitis (polio) patients among the persons with disabilities under this paragraph, and to serve them justice, since it is known that there is no cure for this progressive condition.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

Poliomyelitis (polio) is a viral infectious disease affecting principally the central nervous system, causing permanent muscle paralysis and frequently, death. The disease is caused by the poliovirus, of which three (3) types have been identified: Brinhilde (type I), Lansing (type II), and Leon (type III). Type I is most often the cause of epidemics. The disease, also called infantile paralysis, mainly affects children ages five (5) to ten (10).

This disease is highly infectious, easily transmitted person-to-person through respiratory secretions or by the fecal-oral route. Once in the intestine, the infection spreads throughout the body, affecting more severely the brain and spinal cord. Polio incubation period is approximately four (4) to thirty-five (35) days. At present, thanks to vaccination plans, poliomyelitis has been practically eradicated from industrialized countries.

According to data from the Department of Health and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention of Atlanta, Puerto Rico experienced an epidemic in the 1960s in which 495 paralytic polio cases were reported. The type 1 polio pandemic affected sixty-eight (68) of the seventy-eight (78) municipalities, and those
affected were mainly unvaccinated school-aged children. It was the largest polio epidemic in the Western Hemisphere. Immunization campaigns reduced this number until the disease disappeared in Puerto Rico by 1974. Other data indicate that polio was eradicated in the Americas in 1994.

Poliovirus is a highly infectious disease that affects the central nervous system, and can be fought through vaccination. In its most severe form, it causes inflammation in the motor neurons of the spinal cord and the brain and leads to paralysis, muscular atrophy, and very often, deformity. In the worst case scenario, it may cause permanent paralysis or death.

However, in Puerto Rico there still are polio patients from that time. These patients face the difficulty of having to repeat all their medical tests and obtain their health certificate every six (6) years to obtain the removable placard for their vehicles, even though their condition is progressive and there is no cure therefor.

Pursuant to subsection (c) of Section 2.22 of Act No. 22 of January 7, 2000, as amended, better known as the “Puerto Rico Vehicle and Traffic Act,” entitled “Applications for the Issue of Removable Placards to Authorize Parking in Restricted Areas,” only persons with cerebral palsy, quadriplegia, paraplegia, amputation of lower limbs extremities or their replacement with prostheses, injuries of the central or peripheral nervous system, and total blindness, qualify and shall not be required to submit all their medical exams and certificates to renew the removable placard, that is, their placards are for life. However, even though poliomyelitis is also a permanent condition as the ones mentioned above, it is not included in the list protected by law.

This Legislative Assembly deems it necessary to amend Act No. 22, supra, to do justice to poliomyelitis patients so that they need not apply for the issue of their placard every six (6) years, since their condition is a permanent and progressive one.
BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.- Paragraph (9) is hereby added to subsection (c) of Section 2.22 of Act No. 22 of January 7, 2000, as amended, known as the “Puerto Rico Vehicle and Traffic Act,” to read as follows:

“Section 2.22.- Applications for the issue of Removable Placards to Authorize Parking in Restricted Areas.-

Every disabled person who applies for the removable parking placard, provided in Sections 2.21 and 2.21(a) of this Act, shall meet the following requirements:

(a) . . .

(b) . . .

(c) A new medical certificate shall not be necessary at the time of renewing the removable placard in the case of the following permanent conditions:

(1) . . .

(2) . . .

(3) . . .

(4) . . .

(5) . . .

(6) . . .

(7) . . .

(8) . . .

(9) Poliomyelitis (polio)

(d) . . .

...”

Section 2.- Effectiveness.-

This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval.
CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following Act No. 220-2011 (S. B. 2022) of the 6th Regular Session of the 16th Legislature of Puerto Rico:

AN ACT to add a paragraph (9) to subsection (c) of Section 2.22 of Act No. 22 of January 7, 2000, as amended, known as the “Puerto Rico Vehicle and Traffic Act,” in order to include poliomyelitis (polio) patients among the persons with disabilities under this paragraph, and to serve them justice, since it is known that there is no cure for this progressive condition.

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, on the 5th day of December, 2014.

Juan Luis Martinez Martinez
Acting Director