

SENATE NO. 917

AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE PROTECTION OF CHILD WITNESSES

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled,
And by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Definitions —

2 (A) The term "child" shall mean a person who is under the age of 18, who is a witness to a crime
3 committed against another person;

4 (B) The term “members of the media” shall mean the group of journalists and others who constitute
5 the communications industry and profession. “Members of the media” shall include, but not be
6 limited to, those who work in the field of print or electronic journalism.

7 (C) The term “attendees” shall mean any person, who is neither an employee of the court, judge, the
8 defendant, an employee of the defendant, nor a member of the jury, who is present in the court room at
9 any point during the course of the trial. Members of the media, who attend the trial, are considered
10 attendees for the purposes of this act.

11 Section (2) Confidentiality of information —

12 (A) A person acting in a capacity described in subparagraph (B) in connection with a criminal
13 proceeding shall not

14 (i) disclose or release documents, which divulge the name or any other information,
15 concerning a child or the information in them that concerns a child except to persons who, by
16 reason of their participation in the proceeding, have reason to know such information; or

17 (ii) disclose or release a picture of the child, except to persons who, by reason of their
18 participation in the proceeding, have reason to possess such a picture.

19 (B) Subparagraph (A) applies to--

20 (i) all employees of the Government connected with the case, including employees of the
21 Department of Justice, any law enforcement agency involved in the case, and any person hired
22 by the Government to provide assistance in the proceeding;

23 (ii) employees of the court;

24 (iii) the defendant and employees of the defendant, including the attorney for the defendant and
25 persons hired by the defendant or the attorney for the defendant to provide assistance in the
26 proceeding; and

27 (iv) members of the jury.

28 (v) attendees at the trial.

29 (vi) members of the media, who come across such documents or information regardless of the
30 source of such documents or information.

31 (3) Filing under seal.--All papers to be filed in court that disclose the name of or any other information
32 concerning a child shall be filed under seal without necessity of obtaining a court order. The person
33 who makes the filing shall submit to the clerk of the court--

34 (A) the complete paper to be kept under seal; and

35 (B) the paper with the portions of it that disclose the name of or other information concerning a
36 child redacted, to be placed in the public record.

37 (4) Disclosure of information.--This subsection does not prohibit disclosure of the name of or other
38 information concerning a child to the defendant, the attorney for the defendant, a multidisciplinary

39 child abuse team, a guardian ad litem, or an adult attendant, or to anyone to whom, in the opinion of
40 the court, disclosure is necessary to the welfare and well-being of the child.

41 (5) Enforcement -- A knowing or intentional violation of the privacy protection accorded by section 2
42 of this act is a criminal contempt punishable by not more than one year's imprisonment, or a fine under
43 this title, or both.