

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESB 5379

C 228 L 03
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Revising rules for public access to dependency hearings.

Sponsors: Senators Stevens, Hargrove, Carlson, Regala, Parlette, McAuliffe and Winsley.

Senate Committee on Children & Family Services & Corrections
House Committee on Children & Family Services

Background: Dependency proceedings are court hearings which deal with the abandonment, abuse or neglect of a child by a parent, guardian, or custodian. Due to the sensitive nature of the information presented in such proceedings, courts currently exclude the public, allowing only those who have a direct interest in the case to be present in the courtroom. Some parents have experienced this closed proceeding as intimidating and secretive.

Summary: All dependency hearings are open to the public unless the judge believes that it is in the best interests of the child to close the hearing. Either parent may request that the hearing be closed. Additional limitations are described relating to public access.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	48	0	
House	93	0	(House amended)
Senate	47	0	(Senate concurred)

Effective: July 27, 2003