

**SENATE . . . . . No. 962**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

*Cynthia Stone Creem*

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act improving the accuracy of eyewitness identification procedures.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

*Cynthia Stone Creem*

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

*First Middlesex and Norfolk*

**SENATE . . . . . No. 962**

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By Ms. Creem, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 962) of Cynthia Stone Creem for legislation to improve the accuracy of eyewitness identification procedures. The Judiciary.

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[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION  
SEE SENATE, NO. 894 OF 2019-2020.]

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Second General Court  
(2021-2022)**  
\_\_\_\_\_

An Act improving the accuracy of eyewitness identification procedures.

*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. Legislative Findings

2           The General Court hereby finds that a substantial number of convictions of innocent  
3 persons result from erroneous eyewitness identifications. The General Court further finds that  
4 adoption by law enforcement of more careful and uniform procedures for conducting and  
5 documenting eyewitness identifications is likely to reduce the frequency of misidentification.  
6 Avoiding erroneous eyewitness identifications not only serves to avoid convicting the innocent,  
7 but also allows law enforcement to continue its pursuit of the guilty. To promote these ends, the  
8 Legislature enacts the following statute.

9           SECTION 2. The General Laws are hereby amended by inserting after Chapter 276B, the  
10 following new chapter:—

11 Chapter 276C

12 Eyewitness Identification Procedures

13 Section 1. Definitions.

14 As used in this chapter, the following words shall have the following meanings, unless  
15 the context clearly requires otherwise:--

16 “Filler” shall mean a person or photograph of a person included in a live or a photo  
17 lineup who is not a suspect in a criminal investigation.

18 “Leading Question” shall mean a question fashioned in such a manner as to suggest a  
19 particular answer.

20 “Lineup” shall describe the displaying of a group of individuals including a suspect to an  
21 eyewitness so that the eyewitness may determine whether she or he believes the suspect to be the  
22 perpetrator of the crime.

23 “Live lineup” shall refer to a lineup that consists of persons.

24 “Photo lineup” shall refer to a lineup that consists of photographs.

25 “Sequential lineup” shall refer to a lineup where the persons or photographs are displayed  
26 to the witness one at a time, rather than displayed simultaneously.

27 “Showup” shall refer to a field identification procedure in which a suspect is displayed to  
28 an eyewitness so that the eyewitness may determine whether she or he believes the suspect is the  
29 perpetrator of the crime.

30           Section 2. Answering Emergency Calls

31           An emergency call-taker or dispatcher must obtain and disseminate, in a nonsuggestive  
32 manner, complete and accurate information from the caller. An emergency call-taker should  
33 avoid asking suggestive or leading questions.

34           Section 3. Investigation of the Scene of an Incident

35           A preliminary investigating officer shall obtain, preserve, and use the maximum amount  
36 of accurate information from the scene. The preliminary investigating officer shall reduce to  
37 writing the names and addresses of all persons present at the scene of the crime.

38           Section 4. Questioning of Witnesses at the Scene of the Incident

39           Witnesses present at the scene of the incident should be separated prior to being  
40 questioned. The area should be canvassed for other witnesses. All witnesses should be  
41 instructed to avoid discussing details of the incident with other witnesses. The preliminary  
42 investigating officer should:

43           (i) establish rapport with the witness;

44           (ii) inquire about the witness's condition;

45           (iii) avoid leading questions;

46           (iv) if necessary clarify information received from the witness;

47           (v) document information obtained from the witness, including the witness' identity, in a  
48 written report;

- 49 (vi) record witness statements as close to verbatim as possible;
- 50 (vii) encourage the witness to contact investigators with any further information;
- 51 (viii) instruct the witness to avoid discussing details of the incident with other potential
- 52 witnesses.

53 The original notes of all responding and investigating officers should be preserved, in

54 addition to their formal reports.

#### 55 Section 5. Preparation and Use of Books of Photographs of Potential Suspects

56 Display of photographs of previously arrested persons, arranged in a book format, is

57 permitted only when a suspect has not been determined and other reliable sources have been

58 exhausted.

59 (i) be grouped by format to ensure that no photograph unduly stands out;

60 (ii) be selected so that photographs are uniform with regard to general physical

61 characteristics, including, but not limited to, race, age and gender;

62 (iii) as a general matter, be grouped by specific crime;

63 (iv) be included only when positive identifying information exists for all individuals

64 whose photographs are included;

65 (v) be reasonably contemporary;

66 (vi) be selected so that no individual's photograph is included more than once.

67 B. The person conducting the procedure should:

- 68 (i) instruct each witness in the absence of any other witnesses;
- 69 (ii) describe the book to the witness only as a “collection of photographs”;
- 70 (iii) instruct the witness that the person who committed the crime may or may not be  
71 present in the book;
- 72 (iv) suggest that the witness think back to the event and her or his frame of mind at the  
73 time;
- 74 (v) instruct the witness to select a photograph if the witness is able and to state, if  
75 possible, the basis on which she or he has made the identification;
- 76 (vi) assure the witness that regardless of whether the witness makes an identification the  
77 police will continue to investigate the case;
- 78 (vii) instruct the witness that the person conducting the procedure is required to ask the  
79 witness to state in her or his own words the level of certainty of any identification.

80 C. The person conducting the procedure should:

- 81 (i) document the results of the procedure in writing, including the witness' own words  
82 regarding her or his level of certainty of any identification made;
- 83 (ii) document and preserve the photographs shown to the witness whether or not an  
84 identification is made.

85 Section 6. Developing and Using Composite Images

86 A. A person preparing a composite image of a perpetrator should:

- 87 (i) assess the ability of the witness to provide a description of the perpetrator;
- 88 (ii) select the procedure to be used from those available, including, but not limited to,
- 89 identikit-type, artist, or computer-generated image;
- 90 (iii) avoid showing the witness any photographs immediately prior to development of the
- 91 composite;
- 92 (iv) select an environment for conducting the procedure that minimizes distractions
- 93 (v) conduct the procedure with each witness separately.

94 B. A person preparing a composite image of a perpetrator should:

- 95 (i) explain to each witness, in the absence of any other witness, the composite technique
- 96 to be used and how the composite will be used in the investigation;
- 97 (ii) instruct the witness to think back to the event and her or his frame of mind at the
- 98 time;
- 99 (iii) determine with the witness whether the composite is a reasonable representation of
- 100 the perpetrator.

101 C. A person preparing a composite image of a perpetrator should:

- 102 (i) document in writing the procedure employed and whether a satisfactory composite
- 103 was developed;
- 104 (ii) preserve all composites generated.

105 Section 7. Interviewing of Eyewitnesses by the Follow-up Investigator

- 106 A. Prior to conducting the interview, the investigator should:
- 107 (i) review available information;
- 108 (ii) plan to conduct the interview as soon as the witness is physically and emotionally  
109 capable;
- 110 (iii) select an environment that minimizes distractions while maintaining the comfort  
111 level of the witness;
- 112 (iv) ensure that resources such as an interview room, notepad, tape recorder, camcorder  
113 and/or other useful resources are available;
- 114 (v) separate the witnesses;
- 115 (vi) determine the nature of the witness' prior law enforcement contact, including whether  
116 the witness has a prior arrest record or record of convictions.

117 B. Prior to beginning the interview, the investigator should:

- 118 (i) develop a rapport with the witness;
- 119 (ii) inquire about the nature of the witness' prior law enforcement contact related to the  
120 incident;
- 121 (iii) volunteer no specific information about the suspect or the case.

122 C. During the interview, the investigator should:

- 123 (i) encourage the witness to volunteer information without prompting;
- 124 (ii) encourage the witness to report all details even if they seem trivial;



- 125 (iii) ask open-ended, general questions (e.g., "what can you tell me about the car?") and  
126 augment with close-ended, specific questions (e.g., "what color was the car?");
- 127 (iv) avoid leading questions;
- 128 (v) caution the witness not to guess;
- 129 (vi) ask the witness to mentally recreate the circumstances of the event;
- 130 (vii) encourage nonverbal communication such as drawings, gestures, and use of objects;
- 131 (viii) avoid interrupting the witness;
- 132 (ix) encourage the witness to contact investigators when additional information is  
133 recalled;
- 134 (x) instruct the witness to avoid discussing details of the incident with other potential  
135 witnesses;
- 136 (xi) encourage the witness to avoid contact with the media or exposure to media accounts  
137 concerning the incident;
- 138 (xii) thank the witness for her or his cooperation.

139 D. Recording Witness Recollections

140 1. The investigator should:

- 141 (i) after informing the witness that the interview will be videotaped, record the entire  
142 contents of the interview by videotape;

143 (ii) in circumstances in which videotaping cannot reasonably be accomplished, and after  
144 informing the witness that the interview will be audiotaped, record the entire contents of the  
145 interview by audiotape;

146 (iii) record by videotape or audiotape the conversation in which the witness is informed  
147 that the interview will be videotaped or audio taped.

148 2. In the event that video or audiotaping cannot reasonably be accomplished, the  
149 investigator should record the witness' statement in writing as close to verbatim as possible and  
150 request that the witness correct any errors in the written transcription and sign the written notes.

151 3. The investigator should review any written documentation and inquire of the witness  
152 whether there is anything she or he wishes to change, add, or emphasize. Any changes should be  
153 signed by the witness.

#### 154 E. Assessing the Accuracy of Individual Elements of a Witness' Statement

155 After conducting the interview, the investigator should:

156 (i) consider each individual component of the witness' statement separately;

157 (ii) review each element of the witness' statement in the context of the entire statement  
158 and look for inconsistencies within the statement;

159 (iii) review each element of the statement in the context of evidence known to the  
160 investigator from other sources, including but not limited to, other witnesses' statements and  
161 physical evidence.

#### 162 F. Maintaining Contact with the Witness

163 During any post interview contact with the witness, the investigator should:

164 (i) reestablish rapport with the witness;

165 (ii) inquire whether the witness has recalled any additional information;

166 (iii) follow interviewing and documentation procedures in Section 7 A-D;

167 (iv) provide no information from any other sources.

168 Section 8. Field Identification Procedures: Show-ups

169 A. When conducting a show-up, the investigator should:

170 (i) determine and document a description of the perpetrator prior to the show-up;

171 (ii) when possible transport the witness to the location of the detained suspect;

172 (iii) when multiple witnesses are involved;

173 a. separate the witnesses and instruct them not to discuss the incident with other

174 witnesses

175 b. consider using other identification procedures such as a lineup or photo array

176 for the remaining witnesses when a witness has made a positive identification

177 (iv) caution the witness that the person she or he is viewing may or may not be the

178 perpetrator;

179 (v) obtain and document a statement of the degree of certainty for both identifications and

180 nonidentifications.

181 B. When conducting a show-up, the investigator should:

182 (i) document the time and location of the procedure;

183 (ii) record both identification and nonidentification results in writing, including the  
184 witness' own words regarding her or his level of certainty.

185 Section 9. Procedures for Eyewitness Identification of Suspects: Live Lineup

186 A. In composing a live lineup, the investigator should

187 (i) include only one suspect in each identification procedure;

188 (ii) select fillers who generally fit the witness' description of the perpetrator;

189 (iii) when there is a limited or inadequate description of the perpetrator provided by the  
190 witness or when the witness' description of the perpetrator differs significantly from the  
191 appearance of the suspect, choose fillers who resemble the suspect in significant features;

192 (iv) place suspects in different positions in each lineup both across cases and with  
193 multiple witnesses in the same case;

194 (v) position the suspect randomly unless the suspect's attorney requests a particular  
195 position;

196 (vi) include a minimum of four fillers per identification procedure;

197 (vii) when showing a new suspect, avoid reusing fillers in lineups shown to the same  
198 witness;

199 (vii) be aware that complete uniformity of features between suspects and fillers is not  
200 required;

201 (viii) avoid using fillers who so closely resemble the suspect that a person familiar with  
202 the suspect might find it difficult to distinguish the suspect from the fillers;

203 (ix) create a consistent appearance between the suspect and fillers with respect to any  
204 unique feature, such as scars or tattoos, used to describe the perpetrator by artificially adding or  
205 concealing that feature.

#### 206 B. Instructing the Witness Prior to Viewing a Lineup

207 Prior to presenting a live lineup, the investigator should:

208 (i) instruct the witness that she or he will be asked to view a group of individuals;

209 (ii) instruct the witness that it is just as important to clear the innocent from suspicion as  
210 to identify the guilty;

211 (iii) instruct the witness that individuals in the lineup may not appear exactly as they did  
212 on the date of the incident because features such as head and facial hair are subject to change;

213 (iv) instruct the witness that the person who committed the crime may or may not be  
214 present in the group;

215 (v) assure the witness that the police will continue to investigate the incident regardless of  
216 whether an identification is made;

217 (vi) instruct the witness that the procedure requires the investigator to ask the witness to  
218 state in her or his own words the level of certainty of any identification.

219 C. Conducting the Live Lineup

220 1. In order to ensure that inadvertent verbal cues or body language do not influence a  
221 witness, whenever practical, considering the time of day, day of the week, and other personnel  
222 conditions within the agency or department, the person conducting the live lineup identification  
223 procedure should be someone other than the primary investigator assigned to the case. In those  
224 cases where the primary investigating officer conducts the live lineup identification procedure,  
225 she or he should be careful to avoid inadvertent signaling to the witness of the "correct"  
226 response.

227 2. Live lineup identification procedures should be conducted sequentially.

228 3. When presenting a live lineup, the lineup administrator should provide the viewing  
229 instructions to the witness set forth at Section 9B.

230 4. When presenting a live lineup, the lineup administrator should also provide the  
231 following instructions to the witness:

232 (i) individuals will be viewed one at a time;

233 (ii) individuals will be presented in random order;

234 (iii) take as much time as is needed in making a decision about each individual before  
235 moving to the next one;

236 (iv) if the person who committed the crime is present, identify her or him;

237 (v) all individuals will be presented, even if an identification is made or the procedure  
238 will be stopped at the point of an identification (consistent with jurisdictional/departmental  
239 procedures).

240 5. Begin with all lineup participants out of the view of the witness.

241 6. Instruct all those present at the lineup not to suggest in any way the position or identity  
242 of the suspect in the lineup.

243 7. Present each individual to the witness separately, in a previously determined order,  
244 removing those previously shown.

245 8. Ensure that any identification actions such as speaking or moving are performed by all  
246 members of the lineup.

247 9. Avoid saying anything to the witness that may influence the witness' selection.

248 10. If an identification is made, avoid reporting to the witness any information regarding  
249 the individual she or he has selected prior to obtaining the witness' statement of certainty.

250 11. After notifying the witness that his or her statements will be recorded, document any  
251 identification results and witness' statement of certainty by video recording. When video  
252 recording cannot reasonably be accomplished, document any identification results and witness'  
253 statement of certainty by audio recording

254 12. Document the lineup procedures and content in writing, including:

255 (i) identification information of lineup participants;

256 (ii) names of all persons present at the lineup;

257 (iii) date and time the identification procedure was conducted.

258 13. Document the lineup by video. This documentation should be of a quality that  
259 represents the lineup clearly and fairly. If video documentation cannot reasonably be  
260 accomplished, document the lineup by photo. Photo documentation can be of either the group or  
261 each individual.

262 14. Instruct the witness not to discuss the identification procedure or its results with other  
263 witnesses involved in the case and discourage contact with the media.

264 Section 10. Procedures for Eyewitness Identification of Suspects: Photographic Array

265 A. In composing a photo lineup, the investigator should:

266 (i) include only one suspect in each identification procedure;

267 (ii) select fillers who generally fit the witness' description of the perpetrator;

268 (iii) when there is a limited or inadequate description of the perpetrator provided by the  
269 witness, or when the witness' description of the perpetrator differs significantly from the  
270 appearance of the suspect, select fillers who resemble the suspect in significant features;

271 (iv) if multiple photos of the suspect are reasonably available to the investigator, select a  
272 photo that resembles the suspect description or appearance at the time of the incident;

273 (v) include a minimum of five fillers per identification procedure;

274 (vi) be aware that complete uniformity of features between suspects and fillers is not  
275 required;



276 (vii) avoid using fillers who so closely resemble the suspect that a person familiar with  
277 the suspect might find it difficult to distinguish the suspect from the fillers;

278 (viii) create a consistent appearance between the suspect and fillers with respect to any  
279 unique feature, such as scars or tattoos, used to describe the perpetrator by artificially adding or  
280 concealing that feature;

281 (ix) place suspects in different positions in each photo array both across cases and with  
282 multiple witnesses in the same case;

283 (x) position the photo of the suspect randomly unless the suspect's attorney requests a  
284 particular position;

285 (xi) when showing a new suspect, avoid reusing fillers in photo arrays already shown to  
286 the same witness;

287 (xii) ensure that no writings or information concerning previous arrests will be visible to  
288 the witness;

289 (xiii) view the completed spread to ensure that the suspect does not unduly stand out;

290 (xiv) preserve the presentation order of the photo array;

291 (xv) preserve the photos in their original condition.

## 292 B. Instructing the Witness Prior to Viewing a Photo Lineup

293 Prior to presenting a photo lineup, the investigator should:

294 (i) instruct the witness that she or he will be asked to view a set of photographs;

295 (ii) instruct the witness that it is just as important to clear the innocent from suspicion as  
296 to identify the guilty;

297 (iii) instruct the witness that individuals in the photo lineup may not appear exactly as  
298 they did on the date of the incident because features such as head and facial hair are subject to  
299 change;

300 (iv) instruct the witness that the person who committed the crime may or may not be  
301 present in the photographs presented;

302 (v) assure the witness that the police will continue to investigate the incident regardless of  
303 whether an identification is made;

304 (vi) instruct the witness that the procedure requires the investigator to ask the witness to  
305 state in her or his own words the level of certainty of any identification.

### 306 C. Conducting the Photo Lineup

307 1. In order to ensure that inadvertent verbal cues or body language do not influence a  
308 witness, whenever practical, considering the time of day, day of the week, and other personnel  
309 conditions within the agency or department, the person conducting the photo identification  
310 procedure should be someone other than the primary investigator assigned to the case. In those  
311 cases where the primary investigating officer conducts the photo identification procedure, she or  
312 he should be careful to avoid inadvertent signaling to the witness of the "correct" response.

313 2. Photo identification procedures should be conducted sequentially.

314 3. When presenting the photo lineup, the lineup administrator should provide the viewing  
315 instructions to the witness set forth above at Section 10B.

316 4. When presenting a photo lineup, the lineup administrator should also provide the  
317 following instructions to the witness:

318 (i) individual photographs will be viewed one at a time;

319 (ii) the photos will be presented in random order;

320 (iii) take as much time as is needed in making a decision about each photo before moving  
321 to the next one;

322 (iv) all photos will be shown, even if an identification is made; or the procedure will be  
323 stopped at the point of an identification (consistent with jurisdictional/departmental procedures).

324 5. The photo lineup administrator should confirm that the witness understands the nature  
325 of the sequential procedure.

326 6. The photo lineup administrator should present each photo to the witness separately, in  
327 a previously determined order, removing those previously shown.

328 7. The photo lineup administrator should avoid saying anything to the witness that may  
329 influence the witness's selection.

330 8. Once identification is made, the photo lineup administrator should avoid reporting to  
331 the witness any information regarding the individual she or he has selected prior to obtaining the  
332 witness' statement of certainty.

333 9. After informing the witness that her or his statements will be recorded, the photo  
334 lineup administrator should record any identification results and witness' statement of certainty  
335 either by video or audio recording. When video or audio recording cannot reasonably be

336 accomplished, the identification results and a verbatim statement of certainty should be  
337 documented in writing and signed by the witness.

338 10. The photo lineup administrator should document in writing the photo lineup  
339 procedures, including:

340 (i) identification information and sources of all photos used;

341 (ii) names of all persons present at the photo lineup;

342 (iii) date and time of the identification procedure.

343 11. The photo lineup administrator should instruct the witness not to discuss the  
344 identification procedure or its results with other witnesses involved in the case and should  
345 discourage contact with the media.

#### 346 Section 11. Remedies for Noncompliance

347 A. Evidence of a failure to comply with any of the provisions of this statute shall be  
348 considered by the trial courts in adjudicating motions to suppress eyewitness identification.

349 B. Evidence of a failure to comply with any of the provisions of this statute shall be  
350 admissible in support of claims of eyewitness misidentification so long as such evidence is  
351 otherwise admissible.

352 C. When evidence of a failure to comply with any of the provisions of this statute has  
353 been presented at trial, the jury shall be instructed that it may consider credible evidence of  
354 noncompliance in determining the reliability of eyewitness identifications.