

# WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

## 2017 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

### House Bill 2465

FISCAL  
NOTE

BY DELEGATE COWLES AND SOBONYA

[Introduced February 15, 2017; Referred  
to the Committee on the Judiciary.]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §62-6B-2, §62-6B-3 and §62-6B-4 of the Code of West Virginia,  
2 1931, as amended, all relating to modifying the requirements that allow a child witness to  
3 testify by live, one-way, closed circuit television; defining terms; expanding the allowance  
4 of closed circuit testimony to other alleged criminal offenses; authorizing use for persons  
5 with certain intellectual disabilities; clarifying the use and requirements of one-way closed-  
6 circuit television; setting forth findings to be made by the circuit court prior to ordering  
7 testimony through live, one-way, closed circuit television; granting the court discretion to  
8 appoint a psychiatrist, licensed psychologist or licensed social worker to provide an expert  
9 opinion regarding the factors and findings to be made by the court in deciding whether to  
10 order testimony through live, one-way, closed circuit television; requiring court-appointed  
11 expert witness to provide written report within established deadline; providing for the effect  
12 of failure to comply with filing deadline; revising the procedures required for taking  
13 testimony of child witness by live, one-way, closed-circuit television; setting forth the  
14 procedures for testimony by live, one-way, closed-circuit television; establishing a location  
15 for witness testimony and individuals allowed in the witness room; setting requirements  
16 for display in the courtroom; providing who may question the child witness and the  
17 procedures therefor; providing for requirement of electronic means for defendant to confer  
18 with counsel during the taking of the testimony; providing for instruction to jury regarding  
19 use of live, one-way, closed-circuit television; authorizing the defendant to waive jury  
20 instruction regarding use of live, one-way, closed-circuit television; prohibiting counsel  
21 from making comments in the presence of the jury; authorizing the court to establish  
22 measures for the physical safety of the child witness and for the confidentiality of sensitive  
23 information; authorizing the court to allow accommodations for child witness testimony in  
24 court rather than by live, one-way, closed-circuit television; authorizing the allowance of a  
25 toy, blanket or similar item to be in possession of child witness while testifying; authorizing  
26 the allowance of a designated support person and seating of the support person in the

27 courtroom; and providing requirements for allowance of a designated support person by  
28 motion.

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

1 That §62-6B-2, §62-6B-3 and §62-6B-4 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended,  
2 be amended and reenacted, all to read as follows:

**ARTICLE 6B. PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF STATEMENTS AND  
TESTIMONY OF CHILD WITNESS.**

**§62-6B-2. Definitions.**

1 For the purposes of this article, the words or terms defined in this section, and any variation  
2 of those words or terms required by the context, have the meanings ascribed to them in this  
3 section. These definitions are applicable unless a different meaning clearly appears from the  
4 context.

5 (1) "Child witness" means a person under the age of sixteen ~~years of age~~ or who has an  
6 intellectual disability that causes the person to function under the age of sixteen, who is or will be  
7 called to testify in a criminal matter concerning an alleged violation of the provisions of ~~sections~~  
8 ~~three, four, five and seven~~ article eight-b, article eight-c, or article eight-d of chapter sixty-one of  
9 this code in which the child is the alleged victim.

10 (2) "Live, closed-circuit television" means a simultaneous transmission, by one-way  
11 closed-circuit television or other electronic means, between the courtroom and the testimonial  
12 room, such that the witness is visible on monitors in the courtroom, but the courtroom and the  
13 defendant are not visible to the witness in the testimonial room.

14 (3) "Operator" means the individual authorized by the court to operate the closed-circuit  
15 television equipment used in accordance with the provisions of this article.

16 (4) "Testimonial room" means a room within the courthouse other than the courtroom from  
17 which the testimony of a child witness ~~or the defendant~~ is transmitted to the courtroom by means

18 of live, closed-circuit television.

19 (5) "Interviewed child" ~~shall mean~~ means any person under the age of eighteen who has  
20 been interviewed by means of any type of recording equipment in connection with alleged criminal  
21 behavior or allegations of abuse or neglect of any child under the age of eighteen.

22 (6) "Recorded interview" means any electronic recording of the interview, and any  
23 transcript thereof, of an interviewed child conducted by: (1) An employee or representative of a  
24 child advocacy center as that term is defined in section one hundred one, article three, chapter  
25 forty-nine of this code; (2) any psychologist, psychiatrist, physician, nurse, social worker or other  
26 person appointed by the court to interview the interviewed child as provided in subsection (c),  
27 section three of this article; or (3) a child protective services worker, law-enforcement officer,  
28 prosecuting attorney or any representative of his or her office, or any other person investigating  
29 allegations of criminal behavior or behavior alleged to constitute abuse or neglect of a child.

**§62-6B-3. Findings of fact required for taking testimony of child witness by closed-circuit  
television; considerations for court.**

1 (a) Upon a ~~written~~ motion ~~filed by~~ of the prosecuting attorney, the child's attorney or the  
2 child's guardian ad litem, and upon findings of fact determined pursuant to subsection (b) of this  
3 section, a circuit court may order that the testimony of a child witness may be taken at a pretrial  
4 proceeding or at trial through the use of live, closed-circuit television.

5 (b) Prior to ordering that the testimony of a child witness may be taken through the use of  
6 live, closed-circuit television, the circuit court must find by clear and convincing evidence, after  
7 conducting an evidentiary hearing on this issue, that:

8 (1) The child ~~is an otherwise competent witness~~ is otherwise competent to testify;

9 (2) ~~That, absent the use of live, closed-circuit television the child witness will be unable to~~  
10 ~~testify due solely to being required to be in the physical presence of the defendant while testifying~~

11 The use of live, closed circuit television is necessary to protect the welfare of the particular  
12 child witness who seeks to testify;

13 ~~(3) The child witness can only testify if live, two-way closed-circuit television is used in the~~  
14 ~~trial; and~~

15 ~~(4) That the state's ability to proceed against the defendant without the child witness' live~~  
16 ~~testimony would be substantially impaired or precluded~~

17 (3) Requiring the child witness to testify in the physical presence of the defendant would  
18 result in substantial emotional distress to the child which would impair the ability of the child  
19 witness to truthfully and effectively communicate; and

20 (4) The emotional distress which would be suffered by the child witness in the presence  
21 of the defendant is more than nervousness, excitement or general reluctance to testify.

22 (c) The court ~~shall~~ may additionally consider the following factors in determining the  
23 necessity of allowing a child witness to testify by the use of live, closed-circuit television:

24 (1) The age and maturity of the child witness;

25 (2) The facts and circumstances of the alleged offense; and

26 ~~(3) The necessity of the child's live testimony to the prosecution's ability to proceed as well~~  
27 ~~as any prejudice to the defendant by allowing testimony through closed-circuit television;~~

28 ~~(4) Whether or not the facts of the case involve the alleged infliction of bodily injury to the~~  
29 ~~child witness or the threat of bodily injury to the child or another; and~~

30 ~~(5)~~ (3) Any mental or physical handicap of the child witness.

31 (d) In determining whether to allow a child witness to testify through live, closed-circuit  
32 television the court ~~shall~~ may appoint a psychiatrist, ~~or~~ a licensed psychologist with at least five  
33 years clinical experience ~~who shall serve as an advisor or friend of the court to provide the court~~  
34 ~~with an expert opinion as to whether, to a reasonable degree of professional certainty, the child~~  
35 ~~witness will suffer severe emotional harm, be unable to testify based solely on being in the~~  
36 ~~physical presence of the defendant while testifying and that the child witness does not evidence~~  
37 ~~signs of being subjected to undue influence or coercion. The opinion of the psychiatrist or licensed~~  
38 ~~psychologist shall be filed with the circuit court at least thirty days prior to the final hearing on the~~

39 ~~use of live, closed-circuit television and the defendant shall be allowed to review the opinion and~~  
40 ~~present evidence on the issue by the use of an expert or experts or otherwise~~ or a licensed clinical  
41 social worker with at least five years of significant clinical experience in the treatment and  
42 evaluation of children for the purpose of providing the court with an expert opinion regarding the  
43 factors set forth in subsection (b) and (c) above.

44 (e) Not less than thirty days prior to the evidentiary hearing provided for in subsection (b)  
45 above, the expert witness appointed by the court shall file with the court a written report outlining  
46 the substance of the facts and opinions to which the expert intends to testify, together with a  
47 summary of the grounds for each opinion. Failure to file the report within the time provided does  
48 not constitute grounds for a denial of the motion for taking the testimony of the child witness by  
49 closed-circuit television, but may, in the discretion of the court, constitute grounds for a  
50 continuance of the evidentiary hearing.

**§62-6B-4. Procedures required for taking testimony of child witness by closed-circuit television; election of defendant; jury instruction; sanction for failure to follow procedures; additional accommodation options; recordings and confidentiality.**

1 ~~(a) If the court determines that the use of live, two-way closed-circuit testimony is~~  
2 ~~necessary and orders its use the defendant may, at any time prior to the child witness being~~  
3 ~~called, elect to absent himself from the courtroom during the child witness' testimony. If the~~  
4 ~~defendant so elects the child shall be required to testify in the courtroom.~~

5 ~~(b)(1) If live, closed-circuit television is used in the testimony of the child witness, he or~~  
6 ~~she shall be taken into the testimonial room and be televised live, by closed-circuit equipment to~~  
7 ~~the view of the defendant, counsel, the court and, if applicable, the jury. The projected image of~~  
8 ~~the defendant shall be visible for child witness to view if he or she chooses to do so and the view~~  
9 ~~of the child witness available to those persons in the courtroom shall include a full body view.~~  
10 ~~Only the prosecuting attorney, the attorney for the defendant, and the operator of the equipment~~  
11 ~~may be present in the room with the child witness during testimony. Only the court, the prosecuting~~

12 ~~attorney and the attorney for the defendant may question the child. In pro se proceedings, the~~  
13 ~~court may modify the provisions of this subdivision relating to the role of the attorney for the~~  
14 ~~defendant to allow the pro se defendant to question the child witness in such a manner as to~~  
15 ~~cause as little psychological trauma as possible under the circumstances. The court shall permit~~  
16 ~~the defendant to observe and hear the testimony of the child witness contemporaneous with the~~  
17 ~~taking of the testimony. The court shall provide electronic means for the defendant and the~~  
18 ~~attorney for the defendant to confer confidentially during the taking of the testimony.~~

19 ~~(2) If the defendant elects to not be physically present in the courtroom during the~~  
20 ~~testimony of the child witness, the defendant shall be taken into the testimonial room and be~~  
21 ~~televised live, by two-way closed circuit equipment to the view of the finder of fact and others~~  
22 ~~present in the courtroom. The defendant shall be taken to the testimonial room prior to the~~  
23 ~~appearance of the child witness in the courtroom. There shall be made and maintained a recording~~  
24 ~~of the images and sounds of all proceedings which were televised pursuant to this article. While~~  
25 ~~the defendant is in the testimonial room, the defendant shall be permitted to view the live, televised~~  
26 ~~image of the child witness and the image of those other persons in the courtroom whom the court~~  
27 ~~determines the defendant is entitled to view. Only the court, the prosecuting attorney and the~~  
28 ~~attorney for the defendant may question the child. In pro se proceedings, the court may modify~~  
29 ~~the provisions of this subdivision relating to the role of the attorney for the defendant to allow the~~  
30 ~~pro se defendant to question the child witness in such a manner as to cause as little emotional~~  
31 ~~distress as possible under the circumstances. The transmission from the courtroom to the~~  
32 ~~testimonial room shall be sufficient to permit the defendant to observe and hear the testimony of~~  
33 ~~the child witness contemporaneous with the taking of the testimony. No proceedings other than~~  
34 ~~the taking of the testimony of the child witness shall occur while the defendant is outside the~~  
35 ~~courtroom. In the event that the defendant elects that the attorney for the defendant remain in the~~  
36 ~~courtroom while the defendant is in the testimonial room, the court shall provide electronic means~~  
37 ~~for the defendant and the attorney for the defendant to confer confidentially during the taking of~~

38 ~~the testimony.~~

39 ~~(c) In every case where the provisions of the article are used, the jury, at a minimum, shall~~  
40 ~~be instructed, unless such instruction is waived by the defendant, that the use of live, closed-~~  
41 ~~circuit television is being used solely for the child's convenience, that the use of the medium~~  
42 ~~cannot as a matter of law and fact be considered as anything other than being for the convenience~~  
43 ~~of the child witness and that to infer anything else would constitute a violation of the oath taken~~  
44 ~~by the jurors.~~

45 (a) If live, closed-circuit television is used in the testimony of the child witness, he or she  
46 shall be taken into the testimonial room and be televised live, by closed-circuit equipment to the  
47 view of the defendant, counsel, the court and, if applicable, the jury. The live, closed circuit  
48 television testimony shall be presented to the jury such that the jury has a clear image of the  
49 witness and all counsel present in the testimonial room. The prosecuting attorney, the attorney  
50 for the defendant, the attorney for the child and the operator of the equipment may be present in  
51 the room with the child witness during testimony. The court may authorize the presence of other  
52 persons in the testimonial room upon good cause shown.

53 (b) Only the court, the prosecuting attorney and the attorney for the defendant may  
54 question the child. In proceedings where the defendant has elected to proceed *pro se*, the court  
55 shall appoint an attorney to represent the defendant for the limited purpose of questioning the  
56 child witness. The court shall permit the defendant to observe and hear the testimony of the child  
57 witness contemporaneous with the taking of the testimony. The court shall provide electronic  
58 means for the defendant and the attorney for the defendant to confer confidentially during the  
59 taking of the testimony.

60 (c) In every case where the provisions of the article are used, the jury, at a minimum, shall  
61 be instructed, unless such instruction is waived by the defendant, that the use of live, closed-  
62 circuit television is being used solely for the child's convenience, that the use of the medium  
63 cannot as a matter of law and fact be considered as anything other than being for the convenience



64 of the child witness and that to infer anything else would constitute a violation of the oath taken  
65 by the jurors. Counsel is prohibited from commenting in the presence of the jury upon the decision  
66 to utilize closed circuit television.

67 (d) If the child is a victim, the court shall ensure that all steps necessary to secure the  
68 physical safety of the child while in the courtroom, the testimonial room, and during periods of  
69 time that the child may spend waiting prior or subsequent to testifying have been taken.

70 (e) The court shall take all steps necessary to ensure that any sensitive information,  
71 including address or physical location of the child witness and/or the immediate family of the child  
72 witness, remains confidential.

73 (f) The court may, upon motion made by the child's representative or any party to the  
74 proceeding and upon a finding by the court that the accommodation will assist the child witness  
75 in testifying effectively and that the accommodation will not cause unfair prejudice, grant the  
76 following accommodations to a child witness who testifies in court rather than by live, closed circuit  
77 television:

78 (1) The court may allow the child witness to have a toy, blanket or similar item in his or her  
79 possession while testifying; and

80 (2) The court may designate a support person, who shall be seated in the courtroom, in  
81 view of the child witness either at one of the counsel tables, in the first row of seating for the  
82 general public or in some other similar seating location. The support person may not provide the  
83 child with an answer to any question directed to the child witness during the course of the child's  
84 testimony or otherwise prompt the child or influence the testimony of the child witness. If the  
85 support person attempts to influence the testimony of the child witness at any time the court may  
86 exclude that support person. If the support person does not obscure the child witness from the  
87 view of the parties, the judge or the jury, the court may allow the support person to remain in close  
88 proximity to the child witness during the child's testimony if:

89 (A) All the parties agree; or

- 90           (B) The movant proves by clear and convincing evidence that:
- 91           (i) The child witness in question cannot reliably testify without the support person in his or
- 92 her presence;
- 93           (ii) No other alternative to having the support person in his or her presence would allow
- 94 the child witness to reliably testify; and
- 95           (iii) The presence of the support person is not likely to prejudice the trier of fact in hearing
- 96 and evaluating the child witness's testimony.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to modify the requirements that allow a child witness to testify by closed circuit television.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.