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Press Release

DA Morrissey, Rep. Chan testify on sexual predator bill *Ayers, Keenan are co-sponsors*

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Rep. Tackey Chan and District Attorney Michael Morrissey testified this week on their bill, cosponsored by several area legislators, to force predators to provide their online identities and email addresses when they register as sex offenders.

Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey was at the State House this week, standing with Rep. Tackey Chan to push their bill to force convicted predators to provide their email addresses and other online information when they register as sex offenders.

"As we investigate crimes, we see cases where defendants started with electronic contact, under false names or false identities, with their eventual victims," Morrissey said. "This is an effort to curtail that kind of activity from those previously convicted of sexual assaults."

Morrissey said the legislation should improve public safety in two ways:

First, it will be useful for law enforcement. When a sex offender does comply with the new requirement, it will create a meaningful resource to cross-check online identities without having to subpoena user information, Morrissey said. When a sex offender does not comply, and an online identity traces back to them while police are investigating another crime, there would be an immediate right of arrest on the failure to register charge – even if police did not yet have probable cause to arrest on the central crime under investigation.

Second, part of the premise of community supervision of sex offenders is that recidivism can be reduced by keeping the post-conviction offender away from behaviors and patterns of thought that precede re-offense. "Creating false identities in order to communicate on-line under false premises should resonate as obvious bellwether behavior," District Attorney Morrissey told the Joint Committee on the Judiciary at its May 7 hearing on House Bill No. 1252.

"There has been a revolution in the way we communicate in the years since the Sex Offender Registry was designed and implemented in Massachusetts, but the registry has not evolved in kind," District Attorney Morrissey said. "When the national enabling legislation known as Meghan's Law passed in 1994, the public wasn't communicating through email or social media."

Representative Chan said "The legislation expands the way we protect our families from potential danger by sex offenders. So much of our lives are connected through the Internet and identities we created. We must update our laws to reflect the high technology world we live in."

Morrissey has been pushing for the change since 2007, when he was serving as Quincy's State Senator. He said New Hampshire enacted an analogous measure in 2009.

Morrissey and Chan received bi-partisan support of 19 other legislators who co-sponsored the bill, including Sen. John F. Keenan, Sen. Brian Joyce, Rep Paul McMurtry, Rep. Louis L. Kafka, Rep. William Galvin, Rep. Bruce Ayers, Rep. James Murphy and Rep. John H. Rogers.