

**Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure
2025-2026 (194th) Bill Summary**

BILL NUMBER: H437

TITLE: An Act returning liquor license control to municipalities

SPONSOR(S): McKenna, Joseph

HEARING DATE: May 12, 2025

REPORTING DEADLINE: July 11, 2025

PRIOR HISTORY

(2017-2018): H176 – Accompanied a study order, see H4638.

(2019-2020): H290 - Accompanied a study order, see H5043.

(2021-2022): H431 - Accompanied a study order, see H4880.

(2023-2024): H367 - Accompanied a study order, see H4680.

CURRENT LAW

Chapter 138 of the General Laws governs alcohol consumption in the Commonwealth.

Section 12 of said chapter regulates on premises alcohol consumption and licensure of such establishments.

Section 14 of said chapter regulates special licenses for indoor or outdoor activities and fees.

Section 15 of said chapter regulates off-premises consumption alcohol retail licensees.

Section 16A of said chapter regulates the renewal of annual licenses, limitations on the number of licenses issued, and rejection of license applications.

Section 17 of said chapter governs the number of available licenses within each city or town. The number of licenses available within each city or town is based on population, and set by a statutory formula in this section.

Section 17A of said chapter allows cities and towns that granted seasonal Section 12 licenses for on premise consumption of all-alcoholic or wine and malt beverages on or before June 13, 1984 to convert such licenses to annual Section 12 licenses at the rate of one conversion per year.

Section 17B of said chapter allows cities and towns who granted seasonal Section 15 licenses for off premises consumption of all-alcoholic or wine and malt beverages on or before June 13, 1984 to convert to such licenses to annual Section 15 licenses at the rate of one conversion per year.

Section 17C of said chapter allows any city or town that adopted Section 17A before January 1, 1985 to grant additional Section 12 liquor licenses, notwithstanding quota limitations imposed by Section 17.

Section 29 of said chapter regulates the use and sale of alcoholic beverages by registered pharmacists.

SUMMARY

This legislation seeks to amend Chapter 138 to allow the local licensing authority of each city or town, after a date certain, to grant licenses for the sale of alcoholic beverages (i.e. seasonals, all alcoholic beverages, and wine & malt) for on premises consumption apart from the current statutory quota limitations. Further, cities and towns would have a statutory minimum of 2 off-premises consumption retail licenses, with an additional license per 5,000 population units.