

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
BILL SUMMARY**

BILL NO. H1963

TITLE: An Act relative to child custody

SPONSOR: Rep. John Rogers

COSPONSORS: None

HEARING DATE: April 22, 2025

PRIOR HISTORY: H1742 (2023-2024) H946 (2017-2018)
H1858 (2021-2022) H1564 (2015-2016)
H1546 (2019-2020) H1581 (2013-2014)

SENATE BILL: None

CURRENT LAW: General Law c. 208 §31 governs custody of children and shared custody plans. It establishes the processes including the trial on the merits to determine custody, which if one failed to appear for could result in an unfavorable ruling.

SUMMARY: Section 1 - Adds definitions of the relevant terms to the legislation: Deployment, Mobilization, and Temporary duty.

Section 2 - Specifically enumerates that a party's absence, relocation or failure to comply with custody and parenting orders shall not be considered when determining whether to modify a custody or parenting order if the reason is due to the party's activation to military duty. In addition, if a party with sole or joint custody or parenting time receives temporary duty, deployment or mobilization orders from the military, the court may issue a temporary custody or parenting time order and/or issue an order delegating all or part of the party's parenting time rights to a family member with a close relationship to the child. Furthermore, if said deployment would interfere with a regularly scheduled court appearance, the court may order an expedited hearing prior to departure or accommodate testimony through electronic means.