

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
BILL SUMMARY**

BILL NO: H1686

TITLE: An Act relative to a commission to study the intentional misrepresentation of a service animal

SPONSOR: Rep. Kimberley Ferguson

COSPONSORS: Rep. Sean Garballey Rep. Meghan Kilcoyne
Rep. Natalie Higgins Rep. Alyson Sullivan-Almeida
Rep. Brad Jones Rep. Steven Xiarhos
Rep. Hannah Kane

HEARING DATE: April 8, 2025

RIOR HISTORY: 2023-2024, H1480
2021-2022, H1563
2019-2020, H3657
2017-2018, H2277

SENATE BILL: S1254 (Rush)

CURRENT LAW: Section 139 of Chapter 140 of the General Laws exempts service animals from licensing fees.

SUMMARY: This legislation would create a 17-member special legislative commission to study the use, misuse, and regulation of service animals and file a report of its findings and recommendations by April 1, 2026. The report must include recommended changes to Massachusetts law governing the use of service animals, if any, including the definition of “service animal” and whether to introduce legislation prohibiting and civilly penalizing service animal fraud; and determining the feasibility of certifying, registering or licensing service animals.

Commissioners include: (i) chairs of the Judiciary Committee or their designee, who will serve as chairs; (ii) members appointed by the Speaker of the House, Senate President, and Minority Leaders in the House and Senate; (iii) Governor or designee (iv) AG or designee; (v) Director of Massachusetts Office on Disability or

designee; (vi) Chair of MCAD or designee; (vii) Executive Director of MPTC or designee; (viii) Executive Director of MHLAC or designee; (ix) President of Massachusetts Restaurant Association or designee; and (x) four members appointed by the Governor who represent a service animal organizations, other animal training organizations and retailers associations.