

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
BILL SUMMARY

BILL NO. H1780

TITLE: An Act relative to identifying costs associated with legal counsel for classification hearings.

SPONSOR: Rep. Bradley H. Jones, Jr.

COSPONSOR(S): Rep. Kimberly N. Ferguson
Rep. Paul K. Frost
Rep. Todd M. Smola

HEARING DATE: June 17, 2025

PRIOR HISTORY: H1579 (2023-2024)
H1694 (2021-2022)
H1465 (2019-2020)

SENATE BILL: None

CURRENT LAW: Section 178D of Chapter 6 establishes the sex offender registry board which requires every sex offender to register with registration data consisting of name, aliases used, date and place of birth, sex, race, height, weight, eye and hair color, social security number, home address, any secondary addresses and work address and, if the sex offender works at or attends an institution of higher learning, the name and address of the institution, photograph, fingerprints and a description of the offense. It also creates an online registry that publishes the following information for offenders: (i) the name of the sex offender; (ii) the offender's home address and any secondary addresses; (iii) the offender's work address; (iv) the offense for which the offender was convicted or adjudicated and the date of the conviction or adjudication; (v) the sex offender's age, sex, race, height, weight, eye and hair color; (vi) a photograph of the sex offender, if available; (vii) whether the sex offender has been designated a sexually violent predator; and (viii) whether the offender is in compliance with the registration obligations of sections 178C to 178P, inclusive.

Section 178K of Chapter 6 creates the sex offender registry board. The board is staffed by seven members who shall be appointed by the governor for terms of six years. The board is responsible for making guidelines including three levels of notification based on risk of re-offense and degree of dangerousness posed to the public.

Section 178L of Chapter 6 provides any person aggrieved by the board's sex offender classification recommendation a right to petition the board to request an evidentiary hearing to challenge said classification. Counsel will be appointed to the person if they are found to be indigent and the board may further grant payment of fees for an expert witness if necessary.

Section 178Q of Chapter 6 requires the sex offender registry board (SORB) assess every sex offender a \$75 registration fee paid upon initial registration and annually thereafter until termination as a sex offender. No fee if there is ongoing challenge on duty to register or other legal remedy is being sought. Waiver is permitted if SORB finds the payment to be an undue hardship.

BILL SUMMARY:

Section 1 – Establishes a commission charged with studying the cost of providing counsel for sex offender classification hearings.

Section 2 – The commission consists of 14 members: the house and senate chairs of the joint committee on judiciary, one member of the committee to be appointed by the minority leader of the senate, one member of the committee to be appointed by the minority leader of the house, the house and senate chairs of the joint committee on public safety and homeland security, one member of the committee to be appointed by the minority leader of the senate, one member of the committee appointed by the minority leader of the house, two members appointed by the attorney general, two members appointed by the appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court and two members appointed by the governor.

Sections 3 & 4 – Charge the commission with measuring the cost annually of providing counsel at these hearings and with submitting a report within a year of the acts passage to the joint committee on transportation.