

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
BILL SUMMARY**

BILL NO. H1978

TITLE: An Act to ensure the responsible use of advanced robotic technologies

SPONSOR: Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa

COSPONSOR: Rep. Patricia A. Duffy

HEARING DATE: July 15, 2025

PRIOR HISTORY: H4103 (2023 – 2024)

SENATE BILL: S1208 (Moore)

REPORTING DEADLINE: September 13, 2025 (subject extensions, in accordance with House Rule 27)

CURRENT LAW: Section 131 of Chapter 140 of the General Laws enumerates the restrictions and qualifications necessary to obtain a license to possess a firearm. It prohibits large capacity weapons or large capacity feeding devices from being removed from a licensed shooting club except to: (i) transfer of the firearm or feeding device to a licensed dealer; (ii) transport the firearm or feeding device to a licensed gunsmith for repair; (iii) target, trap or skeet shoot on the premises of another club incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth; (iv) attend an exhibition or educational project or event that is sponsored by, conducted under the supervision of or approved by a public law enforcement agency or a nationally or state recognized entity that promotes proficiency in or education about semiautomatic weapons; (v) hunt pursuant to the Chapter’s restrictions; or (vi) surrender the firearm

BILL SUMMARY: This legislation adds a new section to Chapter 140 of the General Laws, Section 131Z. It defines “Robotic device” and “Weapon.” It makes it unlawful for anyone to manufacture, possess or operate a robotic device with a weapon equipped to it. Establishes punishments of up to 2.5 to 5 years in state prison or 18 months to 2.5 years in an HOC for the first offense and escalating penalties for the second and subsequent offenses. It also makes it unlawful to use a robotic device to threaten to commit a crime, criminally harass another person or physically restrain or attempt to physically restrain another person. Establishes punishments of up to 2.5 years

in an HOC and/or a fine of up to \$1,000 for the first offense and increased penalty for subsequent offenses.

It also provides exceptions for the United States Department of Defense and those in contract with them, the Massachusetts National Guard and robotic devices with a waiver from the Attorney General. Law enforcement is exempt for these sections when acting in performance of their duties, but they must receive a warrant or judicial authorization before deploying robots on private property or when conducting surveillance in situations in which they are already legally required to receive these authorizations.

Law enforcement also must document to the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) quarterly, as a public record, when they use these devices. EOPSS must publicly report this information annually on their website. The Secretary of EOPSS may promulgate rules and regulations for law enforcement's use of these devices. The Attorney General must promulgate rules for waivers for the development, testing, educational and entertainment purposes of these devices. It also permits individuals to bring civil action suits for damages and equitable relief resulting from a violation of this section.