

JOINT COMMITTEE ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS, UTILITIES, AND ENERGY

BILL SUMMARY

BILL NO. H.4035

TITLE: An Act authorizing the City of Somerville to establish a net zero emissions standard for new constructed buildings and major renovation projects

SPONSOR: Representative Christine Barber

COMMITTEE: Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy

HEARING DATE: October 29, 2025

PRIOR HISTORY: *New bill*

CURRENT LAW:

Section 84 of Chapter 179 of the Acts of 2022 authorizes ten cities and towns to require fossil fuel-free new construction, but with two important provisos: (1) each community must first meet the 10% affordable housing target set by state law (chapter 40B); and (2) each must exempt life sciences labs and health care facilities from the all-electric requirement.

SUMMARY:

This legislation authorizes the City of Somerville to adopt or amend general or zoning ordinances to require that all new buildings construction or major renovation projects in the City be fossil-fuel free. It also allows the City to enforce restrictions and prohibitions on new buildings or major renovation projects that are not fossil-fuel free, including through the withholding or conditioning of local building permits.

*Note: The City of Somerville was not one of the 10 Massachusetts municipalities chosen by DOER to participate in the Municipal Fossil Fuel Free Building Demonstration Program established by Section 84 of the 2022 Climate Law. However, in 2023 Somerville submitted a completed application to DOER to be available as a “substitute community” for the demonstration program. As of September 2025, it has not been selected for program participation.