

JOINT COMMITTEE ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS, UTILITIES, AND ENERGY

BILL SUMMARY

BILL NO. H.3578

TITLE: An Act expanding the definition of beverage

SPONSOR: Representative Marcus S. Vaughn

COMMITTEE: Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy

HEARING DATE: June 18, 2025

PRIOR HISTORY: 2023-2024: H.4032 heard by Committee; accompanied a study order, see H4778.

CURRENT LAW:

Currently, Section 321 of Chapter 94 of Massachusetts General Law defines a “beverage” as soda water or similar carbonated soft drinks, mineral water, and beer and other malt beverages. The term does not include alcoholic beverages other than beer and malt beverages as defined in Chapter 138; dairy products; natural fruit juices; or wine.

Section 1 of Chapter 138 defines a “malt beverage” as all alcoholic beverages manufactured or produced by the process of brewing or fermentation of malt, with or without cereal grains or fermentable sugars, or of hops, and containing not more than twelve per cent of alcohol by weight.

Section 321 of Chapter 94 further defines a “dealer” as any person, including any operator of a vending machine, who engages in the sale of beverages in beverage containers to consumers in the Commonwealth.

SUMMARY:

This bill expands the definition of “beverage” to include water and all alcoholic beverages. It retains the exemption for dairy products and natural fruit juices. It also amends the definition of a “dealer,” clarifying that the term does not include a brewery, distillery, cidery, or winery that only sell its own beverages on its premises.