

**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. Garballey

Rep. Higgins

Rep. Jones

Rep. Kane

Rep. Kilcoyne

Rep. Sullivan-Almeida

Rep. Xiarhos

HEARING DATE: April 8, 2025

PRIOR HISTORY: 2017-2018, H.2277 (Ferguson)
2019-2020, H3657 (Ferguson)
2021-2022, H.1563 (Ferguson)
2023-2024, H1480 (Ferguson)
2023-2024, H1480 (Ferguson)

COMPANION 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.