

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
BILL SUMMARY**

<b>BILL NO.</b>	H.2061
<b>TITLE:</b>	An Act updating hunter harassment laws
<b>SPONSOR:</b>	Rep. Jonathan Zlotnik
<b>COSPONSORS:</b>	Rep. Susannah Whipps
<b>HEARING DATE:</b>	April 8, 2025
<b>COMPANION BILL:</b>	S.1202 (Moore)
<b>PRIOR HISTORY:</b>	2023-2024, H1829 (Zlotnik) 2021-2022, H.1934 (Zlotnik)
<b>CURRENT LAW:</b>	<p>Chapter 131 of the General Laws covers inland fisheries and game and other natural resources.</p> <p>Section 5C prohibits the obstruction or interference with lawful hunting or fishing. The section prohibits using your person, a vehicle, barriers or other natural or artificial stimuli to intentionally interrupt, block, impede or hinder the lawful taking of fish or wildlife. The Superior Court may issue an injunction against such conduct or conspiracy and a person who sustains damages as a result of an act prohibited by this section may bring a civil action for punitive damages. Owners of the lands or waters or tenants or other person acting under their authority are exempt from this section.</p> <p>Section 90 authorizes a fine of not less than \$100 but not more than \$500, imprisonment for not more than 14 days or both fine and imprisonment for a violation of section 5C.</p> <p>Section 3 states that any fines recovered in a prosecution of laws relative to fish, birds and mammals will be equally divided between the county of prosecution and the city or town where the offence is committed. If the complaining officer is paid by the Commonwealth, then the fine will be credited to the Inland Fisheries and Game Fund created by section 2C. The fund may be used for all general purposes of the division which includes hunter education programs created under section 14.</p>

**BILL SUMMARY:**

This bill cuts and replaces section 5C with new language stating that citizens of the Commonwealth have the right to harvest fish and wildlife free from harassment subject to rules and regulations established to maintain sustainable and healthy populations of natural resources. It maintains the violations listed under current law and adds that it is unlawful to harass, threaten or intimidate the person engaged in a lawful taking or to use mechanical aerial devices to drive away wildlife, harass or intimidate. The bill maintains the 1-year imprisonment penalty for a violation and increases the potential fine to not more than \$1,000.

The bill also adds three additional crimes and penalties to this section. It prohibits the destruction or vandalism of equipment used for the lawful harvest of fish or wildlife with a penalty of up to 2 years or a fine of not more than \$5,000 or both. It adds an increased punishment for a violation of this section which causes bodily injury to another of imprisonment up to 5 years or a fine of not more than \$10,000 or both. It makes unlawful the posting of land closed or restricted to the lawful harvest of fish or wildlife without the authority of the property owner. A violation shall be punished of up to 1 year imprisonment and up to \$1,000 fine or both.

The bill also removes the exemption for landowners and tenants and disallows any fine proceeds from going to the county, city or town of prosecution or violation. Instead, all fines collected will be deposited into the Inland Fisheries and Game Fund and may be utilized for the purposes of the Hunter Education Program.