

The General Court
Summary of H.5131 Committee Redraft

Bill #: H.56 (Sections 1-17, 20-44, 73-82, 87)
Title: An Act empowering municipalities and local government
Sponsor: Governor Maura Healey
Committee: Municipalities and Regional Government
Hearing Date: October 28, 2025

Prior History: S.2571 (2023-2024) reported favorably as committee redraft
S.2827; sent to Senate Ways and Means; no further action.

Current Law:

MGL Ch. 4: Definitions

Ch. 17: Department of Public Health

Ch. 29: State finance

Ch. 30A, Sections 18-25: Open Meeting Law

Ch. 30B: Uniform Procurement Act

Ch. 39: Municipal government

Ch. 40: Powers and duties of cities and towns

Ch. 40Q: District improvement financing

Ch. 41: Officers and employees of cities, towns and districts

Ch. 44: Municipal Finance Law

Ch. 44B: Community Preservation Act

Ch. 66: Public Records Act

Ch. 71: Public Schools; School Transportation; Regional School Districts

Ch. 94C: Controlled Substances Act

Ch. 138: Alcoholic liquors

Ch. 151A: Unemployment Insurance

Ch. 164: Manufacturer and sale of gas and electricity; Section 34B: Replacement of existing poles

Ch. 268A: Conduct of public officials and employees (ethics)

Summary of Committee Redraft:

H.5131, the Municipal Empowerment Act, makes administrative, technical, and policy changes that promote efficiency, fiscal diligence, and modernization in carrying out functions of municipal government. Substantive components of the redrafted bill include, but are not limited to:

- Revamping the incentive and penalty process for the removal of double poles to better reflect real-world conditions

- Making the local option permanent for remote participation in meetings of public bodies and representative town meeting
- Increasing buying thresholds for the municipal procurement process
- Requiring cybersecurity incident reporting
- Creating a local option to form regional boards of assessors
- Decriminalizing the good-faith use of fentanyl test strips
- Empowering municipalities to combine certain government positions and enter into intermunicipal employee-sharing agreements
- Standardizing the complaint and response processes for open meeting law complaints
- Requiring agencies and municipalities subject to the public records law to create and maintain comprehensive information governance plans
- Allowing the serving of alcohol on Sundays beginning at 8:00 a.m.