

Senate Judiciary Committee

Pete Mulvey 271-4063

HB 468-FN, establishing the crime of and penalties for unlawful use of unmanned aircraft systems.

Hearing Date: April 1, 2025

Time Opened: 3:05 p.m.

Time Closed: 3:21 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Gannon, Abbas, McConkey and Altschiller

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Reardon

Bill Analysis: This bill establishes the crime of and penalties for unlawful use of small unmanned aircraft systems.

Sponsors:

Rep. Roy

Rep. Wheeler

Sen. Birdsell

Who supports the bill: Janet Lucas, Daniel Richardson, Rep. Jonah Wheeler, Jane Graham, David Dinwoodie, Christopher Ball, and Adam Ciardelli.

Who opposes the bill: Rep. Timothy Horrigan, Curtis Howland, James Gardner, and Aubrey Freedman.

Who is neutral on the bill: N/A

Summary of testimony:

Representative Jonah Wheeler

Hillsborough – District 33

- Representative Wheeler introduced HB 468 as a cosponsor of the bill.
- HB 468 was introduced to address the gaps in the laws governing drone usage.
- Jails and prisons were unable to address the delivery of contraband. The bill also addressed flights of drones over investigations, crime scenes, or other law enforcement activities.
- HB 468 passed the House Criminal Justice and Safety Committee unanimously.
- HB 468 was amended as well. As amended, media outlets would be allowed to use drones so long as they weren't disruptive.
- Rep. Wheeler referred to an incident where a swarm of drones disabled Langley Air Force Base.
- Sen. Altschiller asked where media operations were mentioned in HB 468.
 - Rep. Wheeler said that the language in question was included in the amendment to HB 468.
- Sen. Altschiller confirmed that the language in question appeared on line 18 of HB 468 as amended by the House of Representatives.

Christopher Ball and Adam Ciardelli

New Hampshire State Police / New Hampshire Information Analysis Center

- Mr. Ciardelli testified in support and stated that he spent time under the State's Information Analysis Center, an unmanned aerial system workgroup.
- Trooper Ball supported HB 468 and found its measures necessary and important.
- HB 468 mirrored the federal regulations governing drone usage to provide local enforcement mechanisms which were currently absent from statute.
- Trooper Ball asked the Committee to support the bill as written on behalf of the State Department of Safety.

David Dinwoodie

Defense Director, New Boston Space Force Station

- Mr. Dinwoodie supported HB 468.
- New Boston Space Force Station is the only active-duty military installation in New Hampshire, home of the 23rd operations squadron.
- NBSFS is one of only seven locations worldwide to control the American satellite network.
- These satellites conduct a variety of critical missions related to navigation, weather, communications and more.
- NBSFS has concurrent jurisdiction, meaning state and federal laws applied on the property.
- NBSFS did not have enforcement ability and relied on memorandums of understanding with local departments for such duties.
- Incursions by unmanned aerial systems have grown in number.
- HB 468 did not specifically address military installations. HB 468 simply cited the Code of Federal Regulations.
- Federally restricted airspace above NBSFS has not deterred incursions; The Station faced incursions as recently as March of 2025.
- Mr. Dinwoodie preferred the Senate language and had worked on an amendment to mirror it.
- HB 468 only provided for a violation level offense. Mr. Dinwoodie did not find a level of offense analogous to a speeding ticket appropriate for incurring on a military installation.

Jane Graham

Strategic Communications Administrator, N.H Department of Corrections

- Ms. Graham spoke in support of the bill.
- Drones were increasingly leveraged in unlawful conduct in and around correctional facilities.
- Drones are employed to smuggle contraband such as weapons, drugs, and escape-aids.

PM

Date Hearing Report completed: April 4, 2025