

# Senate Commerce Committee

*Aaron Jones 271-2609*

**HB 467**, defining "social districts" and enabling municipalities to create social districts.

**Hearing Date:** May 6, 2025

**Time Opened:** 10:33 a.m.

**Time Closed:** 10:44 a.m.

**Members of the Committee Present:** Senators Innis, Ricciardi, Murphy, McGough and Reardon

**Members of the Committee Absent :** Senator Fenton

**Bill Analysis:** This bill defines "social districts" and enables municipalities to create social districts.

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**Sponsors:**

Rep. B. Boyd

Rep. Bordes

Rep. Edwards

Rep. Grill

Rep. Moffett

Rep. Nelson

Rep. Osborne

Sen. Murphy

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**Who supports the bill:** Representative Bill Boyd, Brodie Deshaies, Tom Prasol (NH Retail Association), Mike Somers (NH Lodging & Restaurant Association), Drew Cline (Josiah Bartlett Center), James Gardner, Timothy Finney, Curtis Howland, Bill Alleman, Aubrey Freedman

**Who opposes the bill:** Zofia Juranty, Sharon Monahan, Danielle Doughty

**Who is neutral on the bill:** Mark Armaganian (NH Liquor Commission)

**Summary of testimony presented in support:**

***Representative Bill Boyd***

- This bill defined social districts, and it would allow municipalities to create them.
- Social districts are a public common area where alcoholic beverages are allowed to be carried and consumed in designated containers.
- This legislation was modeled after what was done in North Carolina.
- This bill passed the House Commerce Committee 16 to 2, and it passed the House on a division vote of 314 to 14.

- To gain consensus, Representative Boyd said he worked with Chief Armaganian, the New Hampshire Municipal Association, law enforcement, and the Josiah Bartlett Center.
- If communities wanted a social district, they could work with Liquor Enforcement and their local law enforcement to create a plan that made sense for them.
- Representative Boyd said Detroit, Raleigh, and Savannah have had tremendous success. In Detroit, individuals are not allowed to congregate in certain areas, but they can walk into a retail shop or a local cigar bar.
- There are different types of social districts that exist, and it would benefit economic development in communities.
- Tuscan Village, for example, has a social district on their private property. They worked with Chief Armaganian to come up with what made sense for them.

***Brodie Deshaies, New Hampshire Municipal Association***

- The legislative body and the voters would pass a warrant article to permit the governing body to create social districts and determine their boundaries.
- Municipalities would work with the Liquor Commission to ensure requirements are abided by, and there is a working plan to ensure safety within these districts.
- Since New Hampshire is a Dillon Rule state, towns are not currently permitted to adopt these districts or open containers between businesses in close vicinity of each other.
- Mr. Deshaies said this was a private-public partnership with guardrails around the process.

***Drew Cline, President, Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy***

- Mr. Cline said when he visited Hickory, North Carolina last year, there was not a single vacant storefront in their entire downtown. He noticed people were drinking out of plastic cups downtown. When he talked to business owners, he learned it was a social district.
- The ability to have social districts where individuals can responsibly drink in a regulated way has helped to revive downtown areas. Mr. Cline said no one identified any increase in public drunkenness or crime.
- Mr. Cline said social districts do not create a college party atmosphere.
- On Page 3, it stated that “The licensee shall not allow a person to enter or reenter its licensed premises with an alcoholic beverage not sold by the licensee.”
  - Mr. Cline was concerned with the definition of licensee because businesses, who are not bars and restaurants, will take advantage of the social district to do catering. These businesses might get a temporary license or a full license to serve cocktails to go.

**Summary of testimony presented in opposition:** None

**Neutral Information Presented:** None

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Date Hearing Report completed: May 13, 2025