

Q. & A. on Massachusetts 2026 Safer Tech Petition

Paid for by the ballot committee Safer Tech at LastTreeLaws.com

Q. Why is this petition limited to technology's non-ionizing radiation, and why doesn't it include other technology? A. In Massachusetts, petition initiatives are required to be limited in scope. In other words, petitions cannot cover a wide range of topics because it is considered unfair to voters. Some petition initiatives have been *eliminated* based simply on one phrase or idea, and eliminated *after* gathering over 100,000 signatures—instead of simply severing the troublesome phrase or concept.

Because this petition initiative creates an office that examines technology through a wide lens of topics, this petition is limited by choosing one facet of technology. Perhaps the entire area of information technology could be included, in addition to non-ionizing radiation, but this is unknown. Non-ionizing radiation was also selected over information technology because it is a neglected area.

Q. How will safer technology be implemented without a mandate, since ORTO is an advisory office? A. By describing how to make technology safer, ORTO will provide an opportunity for choice. Vendors that follow ORTO recommendations could increase in popularity. By describing ways in which technology is less safe, ORTO will increase the pressure upon industry and government to change. Additionally, ORTO may provide legal briefs and scientific information in legal cases to support safer technology, which is especially helpful to provide independent information to the courts.

Q. Can ORTO help address the consequences of AI upon society? A. ORTO can prepare analyses of AI impacts, such as job losses, hidden energy costs, and hidden dangers when specific to non-ionizing radiation. ORTO can also examine relevant state and federal policy to see how this impacts AI implementation, and prepare recommendations for safer technology, as well as provide legal assistance. While ORTO cannot mandate changes, providing expertise, model ordinances, legal assistance, and recommendations can provide a path for change.

Shining a light on hidden dangers can help to awaken politicians, as well as the public, and is necessary given that industry often prefers to conceal dangers as a potential liability.

Q. What court assistance is available? A. In special cases where a legal decision would help influence technology safety, ORTO specialists are authorized to file legal briefs and provide scientific or technical information, such as RF testing. ORTO has the choice to assist, depending on the relevance of the case and its' current resources and availability.

Q. Why can't ORTO set mandates for safer technology, such as on non-ionizing radiation? A. Mandates are difficult to set in place, especially through a petition initiative, since petitions must be narrow in scope and comply with many other rules. Massachusetts law also prohibits unfunded mandates, and a mandate to require new technology practices could incur costs.

At the federal level, wireless is regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The Constitution of the United States claims that the federal government has authority over inter-state commerce through the Supremacy Clause, the federal courts and the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court have interpreted this to mean that only the FCC can regulate wireless transmissions. Other state judicial systems may choose to disagree, but currently in Massachusetts a legal avenue to regulate wireless transmissions does not exist.

Regulating other emissions, such as from electricity, is also difficult through a petition initiative. The state could set limits, or a petition initiative could be prepared to set limits. Yet, it is difficult for a lay person to define a limit or limits that addresses all uses and conditions. ORTO would be better situated to establish limits that are ‘ASARAA’ or ‘As Safe as Reasonable and Achievable.’ The same is true for recommending any guidelines for wireless emissions: it is difficult for a lay person to define any limits.

Q. How will ORTO remain independent? A. Leadership of ORTO is vetted for qualifications and conflicts of interest by a select group of non-profit organizations, that must be free of conflicts of interests as well. Leadership and staff must comply with state conflict of interest rules, and also are prohibited from investment or employment in relevant industries, may not worked for a prohibited industry within 5 years, and must file annual disclosures of any other potential conflicts of interest. In certain cases, when specialized, necessary expertise cannot be found, leadership can change reduce the required years of removal from working in a prohibited industry.

Q. What will this cost taxpayers? A. Because the “Office of Research and Technology Optimization” (ORTO) begins remotely and begins with only a few staff, that is with 4 heads and 3 additional staff, the initial cost for these salaries might be just over 1 million. However, with additional hires needed and the potential costs of equipment, this cost would increase, but likely to less than 2 million.

In contrast, the Cannabis Control Commission (CCC) cost the state between \$10 to \$20 million annually at launch, because it is a heavy enforcement, background-checking, and business-licensing bureaucracy that requires massive numbers of physical inspectors, financial auditors, and expensive “seed-to-sale” tracking tracking systems. ORTO is an informational research and data synthesis bureau, which does not require licensing overhead or field enforcement staff.

Q. Are there any cost savings through ORTO? A. Yes, ORTO is allowed to petition the judicial system for cost recovery of certain services provided in a winning case. Additionally, ORTO is allowed to set reasonable rates for specialized services, such as radiofrequency (RF) testing. These funds enter a trust fund to support ORTO’s mission, such as for equipment costs, but are never to be used for merit pay or bonuses.

Additionally, other cost savings can occur if recommendations for safer technology are adopted by individuals and government. ORTO may recommend the use of less technology and safer technological practices, which if adopted could lower costs and prevent costs such as that incurred by hacking, infrastructure outages, unemployment, and poor health.

Q. What are the required costs for municipalities and individuals? A. Municipalities and individuals have **zero required costs**. ORTO is to provide model ordinances and general information freely, including providing an academic journal and public reports to increase knowledge and understanding of how to ensure safer technology.

Q. What cost-based services are provided for municipalities? A. Municipalities can pay for radiofrequency (RF) testing of cell towers and other electromagnetic equipment by the independent ORTO engineer, provided the engineer has an appointment available. Municipalities can also pay for direct assistance for implementing model ordinances into their codes, provided ORTO legal staff has the time available.