

Date of Hearing: May 5, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Lorena Gonzalez, Chair

AB 557 (Muratsuchi) – As Amended March 25, 2021

Policy Committee: Public Safety

Vote: 8 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the Department of Justice (DOJ) to establish, maintain and publicize a toll free public hotline telephone number for reporting hate crimes. This bill also requires the hotline be accessible to people with disabilities and people who do not speak English. This bill also requires DOJ to post, maintain and publicize a form for reporting of hate crimes and hate incidents on their website that can be completed and submitted online.

FISCAL EFFECT:

One-time and annual costs (General Fund (GF)), possibly in the mid-to-upper hundreds of thousands of dollars, to the DOJ in additional staff and infrastructure to create a toll free telephone number for reporting hate crimes and connecting victims of hate crimes with local law enforcement.

COMMENTS:

1) Purpose and Background. According to the author:

The 2001 final report of the California Civil Rights Commission on Hate Crimes recommended that the California DOJ ‘should establish and publicize a toll-free hotline number for reporting hate incidents and hate crimes, and should post an incident reporting form on its Web site, which can be completed on-line.

Current law defines “hate crime” as a criminal act committed, in whole or in part, because of one or more actual or perceived characteristics of the victim, including: disability; gender; nationality; race or ethnicity; religion; sexual orientation; and association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics. Current law also requires DOJ, subject to the availability of funding, to direct local law enforcement agencies to report to DOJ any information about the number of hate crimes committed and specific information about the facts of those cases. California, as well as the nation as a whole, has seen a recent increase in hate crime activity. Due to the nature of the communities being targeted, such as immigrant communities, many incidents go unreported for fear of interactions with local law enforcement authorities. States that have implemented hotlines, such as New York, Massachusetts and Maryland, are seeing significant benefits. For example, both the New York and Massachusetts systems have led to increased substantive reports of hate crimes that demonstrate how often these crimes go unreported. The 2001 final report of the California

Civil Rights Commission on Hate Crimes recommended the DOJ (a) establish and publicize a toll-free hotline number for reporting hate incidents and hate crimes, and (b) post an incident reporting form on its website, which can be completed on-line.

- 2) **Prior Legislation.** AB 800 (Chiu), of 2017-2018 Legislative Session, was identical to this bill and held on this committee's Suspense File.

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