
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1525
Author: Committee on Judiciary
Amended: 9/4/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE: 11-1, 7/8/25

AYES: Umberg, Allen, Arreguín, Ashby, Caballero, Durazo, Laird, Stern, Wahab,
Weber Pierson, Wiener

NOES: Niello

NO VOTE RECORDED: Valladares

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 76-0, 4/28/25 (Consent) - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Attorneys: discipline: sensitive services

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill provides that an excluded event is not grounds for disciplinary action by the State Bar of California (State Bar), nor does it require an attorney or applicant to report that event to the State Bar. This bill provides that an excluded event does not supply evidence that an attorney is culpable of professional misconduct in this state or serve as grounds to deny admission of an applicant to the State Bar. This bill defines “excluded event” to mean certain actions taken when based on the application of another state’s law that interferes with any person’s right to receive, provide, recommend, enable, or advocate for sensitive services, as defined, that would be lawful in California.

Senate floor amendments of 9/4/25 make a technical, nonsubstantive change to fix a drafting error in the bill.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Requires all attorneys who practice law in California to be licensed by the State Bar and establishes the State Bar, within the judicial branch of state government, for the purpose of regulating the legal profession. (California Constitution, art. VI, § 9; Bus. & Prof. Code §§ 6000 et seq.)
- 2) Establishes that protection of the public, which includes support for greater access to, and inclusion in, the legal system, is the highest priority for the State Bar in exercising their licensing, regulatory, and disciplinary functions. (Business & Professions (Bus. & Prof.) Code § 6001.1.)
- 3) Provides that conviction of a felony or misdemeanor, involving moral turpitude, constitutes a cause for disbarment or suspension. In any proceeding to disbar or suspend an attorney because of that conviction, the record of conviction constitutes conclusive evidence of guilt of the crime of which they have been convicted. (Bus. & Prof. Code § 6101.)
- 4) Provides that a willful disobedience or violation of an order of the court requiring any attorney to do or forbear an act connected with or in the course of their profession, which they ought in good faith to do or forbear, and any violation of the oath taken by them or of their duties as such attorney, constitute causes for disbarment or suspension. (Bus. & Prof. Code § 6103.)
- 5) Provides that the commission of any act involving moral turpitude, dishonesty, or corruption, whether the act is committed in the course of their relations as an attorney or otherwise, and whether the act is a felony or misdemeanor or not, constitutes a cause for disbarment or suspension. (Bus. & Prof. Code § 6106.)
- 6) Requires a licensee of the State to report to the State Bar, within 30 days of the licensee gaining knowledge of any of the following:
 - a) the filing of three or more lawsuits in a 12-month period against the attorney for malpractice or other wrongful conduct committed in a professional capacity;
 - b) the entry of judgment against the attorney in a civil action for fraud, misrepresentation, breach of fiduciary duty, or gross negligence committed in a professional capacity;
 - c) the imposition of judicial sanctions against the attorney, except for sanctions for failure to make discovery or monetary sanctions of less than one thousand dollars (\$1,000);
 - d) the bringing of an indictment or information charging a felony against the attorney;

- e) the conviction of the attorney, including any verdict of guilty, or plea of guilty or no contest, of a felony, or a misdemeanor committed in the course of the practice of law, or in a manner in which a client of the attorney was the victim, as specified;
 - f) the imposition of discipline against the attorney by a professional or occupational disciplinary agency or licensing board, whether in California or elsewhere; and
 - g) reversal of judgment in a proceeding based in whole or in part upon misconduct, grossly incompetent representation, or willful misrepresentation by an attorney. (Bus. & Prof. Code § 6068(o).)
- 7) Provides that a certified copy of a final order made by any court of record or any body authorized by law or by rule of court to conduct disciplinary proceedings against attorneys, of the United States or of any state or territory of the United States or of the District of Columbia, determining that a licensee of the State Bar committed professional misconduct in such other jurisdiction, is conclusive evidence that the licensee is culpable of professional misconduct in this state. (Bus. & Prof. Code §6049.1.)
- 8) Requires the California Supreme Court, upon receipt of the certified copy of the record of conviction where it appears therefrom that the crime of which the attorney was convicted involved, or that there is probable cause to believe that it involved, moral turpitude or is a felony under the laws of California, the United States, or any state or territory thereof, to suspend the he attorney until the time for appeal has elapsed, if no appeal has been taken, or until the judgment of conviction has been affirmed on appeal, or has otherwise become final, and until the further order of the court. (Bus. & Prof. Code § 6102.)

This bill:

- 1) Prohibits an excluded event from being grounds for suspension, disbarment, or other disciplinary action.
- 2) Provides that no attorney or applicant is required to report the excluded event to the State Bar, or supply evidence that an attorney is culpable of professional misconduct in this state, and that an excluded event cannot serve as grounds to deny admission for any applicant for admission to practice law.

- 3) Provides that the provisions of 1) through 2) do not apply to events that would subject an attorney or applicant to a similar claim, charge, or action under the laws of this state.
- 4) Defines, for these purposes, the following terms:
 - a) “attorney” means an attorney admitted to practice law in this state;
 - b) “applicant” means an applicant for admission to practice law in this state;
 - c) “excluded event” means the entry of a judgment, imposition of sanctions, filing of an indictment or criminal charges or implementation of professional discipline against an attorney or applicant that is based on the application of another state’s law that interferes with any person’s right to receive, provide, recommend, enable, or advocate for sensitive services that would be lawful in this state, regardless of the location in which the event takes place and regardless of the location of the attorney or applicant; and
 - d) “sensitive services” means all health care services related to mental or behavioral health, sexual and reproductive health, sexually transmitted infections, substance use disorder, gender-affirming care, and intimate partner violence, obtained by a patient at or above the minimum age specified for consenting to the service, as specified.

Comments

In 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court published its opinion in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health* (2022) 597 U.S. 215., overturning 50 years of precedent and revoking a constitutional right. Prior to *Dobbs*, the Supreme Court had continuously upheld the holding of *Roe v. Wade*, that found the implied constitutional right to privacy extended to a person’s decision whether to terminate a pregnancy, while allowing some state regulation of abortion access as permissible. ((1973) 410 U.S. 113.) As a result of the *Dobbs* decision, people in roughly half the country may lose access to abortion services or have them severely restricted. In addition, a growing number of states have been passing laws putting residents who seek essential gender-affirming care at risk of being prosecuted. States are attempting to classify the provision and seeking of gender-affirming health care as a crime warranting prison time and are threatening parents with criminal penalties if they attempt to travel to another state in order to secure life-saving gender-affirming care for their child. California has enacted laws to protect health care professionals providing sensitive healthcare services from disciplinary action by their licensing entity. This bill seeks to provide similar protections for attorneys providing legal advice and other services related to the provision of sensitive services.

In the wake of the *Dobbs* decision, many states have enacted statutes targeting providers of abortions or those who “aid and bet” a person in receiving an abortion. For example, a Texas law prohibits a physician from knowingly performing or inducing an abortion on a pregnant woman if the physician detected a fetal heartbeat, as specified, or failed to perform a test to detect a fetal heartbeat¹ and prohibits anyone from “aiding and abetting” a person in obtaining such abortion (see Tex. Health & Safety Code § 171.201 et seq.; 171.208.) In the wake of the enactment of this law, the international law firm of Sidley Austin, LLP offered staff in its Houston and Dallas offices travel reimbursement policies to seek reproductive healthcare services if needed.² In response to this, the Texas Freedom Caucus sent a letter to the firm stating that it believed the firm is complicit in providing illegal abortions and wrote that “[l]itigation is already underway to uncover the identity of those who aided or abetted these and other illegal abortions.”³ The letter further detailed that the caucus was seeking further legislation to require the state to disbar any attorney licensed in Texas who assists someone in obtaining an abortion.⁴ Additionally, some states have begun targeting transgender individuals and providers of gender affirming care, particularly when it comes to transgender youth. According to Human Rights Watch, as of February 2023, legislatures nationwide had introduced over 340 anti-LGBTQ+ bills, over 150 of which specifically targeted transgender people.⁵

The Legislature has enacted several bills over the past years to protect not only those seeking sensitive services, but also those providing those services and assisting individuals in obtaining those services.⁶ These bills demonstrate California’s commitment to protecting individuals’ rights to both reproductive freedom and access to gender-affirming care. In 2019, Governor Newsom issued a proclamation reaffirming California’s commitment to making reproductive freedom a fundamental right in response to the numerous attacks on reproductive

¹ Committee staff notes that the application of the term “fetal heartbeat” as applied in restrictive abortion laws, such as ones in Texas, may be misleading. See Kaitlin Sullivan, *Heartbeat bills: Is there a fetal heartbeat at six weeks of pregnancy?*, NBC News, (Apr. 17, 2022) <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/womens-health/heartbeat-bills-called-fetal-heartbeat-six-weeks-pregnancy-rcna24435>.

² Jacqueline Thomsen, *Texas lawmakers target law firms for aiding abortion access*, Reuters (July 8, 2022) available at <https://www.reuters.com/legal/legalindustry/texas-lawmakers-target-law-firms-aiding-abortion-access-2022-07-08/>.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Human Rights Watch, Press Release, Human Rights Campaign Working to Defeat 340 Anti-LGBTQ+ Bills at State Level Already, 150 of Which Target Transgender People – Highest Number on Record (Feb. 15, 2023), <https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/human-rights-campaign-working-to-defeat-340-anti-lgbtq-bills-at-state-level-already-150-of-which-target-transgender-people-highest-number-on-record> (all links current as of June 20, 2022).

⁶ See **Prior Legislation** section, below.

rights across the nation.⁷ Additionally, Governor Newsom’s signing message of SB 107 (Wiener, Chapter 810, Statutes of 2022) stated “[i]n California we believe in equality and acceptance. We believe that no one should be prosecuted or persecuted for getting the care they need—including gender-affirming care.”⁸ This bill furthers these policies by providing protections to California licensed attorneys from discipline by the State Bar for actions in another state related to sensitive services that are legal in California.

Attorneys who wish to practice law in California generally must be admitted and licensed by the State Bar. (Cal. Const., art. VI, Sec. 9.) The State Bar of California is a public corporation. The Office of Chief Trial Counsel is charged with receiving complaints against attorneys, conducting investigations, determining whether to file formal charges, and prosecuting cases in the State Bar Court. Under existing law, conviction of a felony or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude constitutes a cause for disbarment or suspension, and the record of such conviction constitutes conclusive evidence of guilt of that crime in any proceeding to disbar or suspend an attorney. (Bus. & Prof. Code § 6101.) A licensed attorney is required to notify the State Bar of California of criminal and civil charges files against the attorney in another jurisdiction, as well as any professional misconduct charges levied against the attorney by a sister state’s regulatory body. (Bus. & Prof. Code § 6068(o).) This bill prohibits an excluded event from being used to discipline an attorney licensed in this state or deny an application for licensure in this state. An “excluded event” means the entry of a judgment, imposition of sanctions, filing of an indictment or criminal charges or implementation of professional discipline against an attorney or applicant that is based on the application of another state’s law that interferes with any person’s right to receive, provide, recommend, enable, or advocate for sensitive services that would be lawful in this state.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: No Local: No

SUPPORT: (Verified 9/4/25)

None received

OPPOSITION: (Verified 9/4/25)

None received

⁷ California Proclamation on Reproductive Freedom (May 31, 2019) available at <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Proclamation-on-Reproductive-Freedom.pdf>.

⁸ Governor’s signing message on Sen. Bill No. 107 (Sep. 29, 2022), available at <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/SB-107-SIGNING.pdf?emrc=1a80c5>.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: The author writes:

As a new administration has taken hold in Washington D.C., dedicated legal professionals are finding themselves targeted for retaliation, retribution, and job losses. From unfairly laid off federal attorneys to large law firms being cowered by threats of loss of business and legal sanctions.

However, these challenges provide opportunities for California to reaffirm its commitment to justice and the rule of law. Building on prior protections for medical professionals, this bill protects California attorneys who provide legitimate legal advice to clients even if another jurisdiction believes such advice violates laws preventing a person from assisting another in seeking specified medical care. Jointly, these proposals will strengthen and protect the legal profession in California from attacks from outside of the state.

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 76-0, 4/28/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Flora, Krell, Sanchez

Prepared by: Amanda Mattson / JUD. / (916) 651-4113
9/8/25 21:46:09

**** END ****