

Date of Hearing: April 8, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
Buffy Wicks, Chair
AB 1648 (Michelle Rodriguez) – As Introduced January 28, 2026

Policy Committee: Health

Vote: 16 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to establish the California Epilepsy Program (program) for the purposes of conducting epidemiological assessments of the incidence and prevalence of epilepsy and seizures.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Defines epilepsy to mean a disorder of the brain characterized by one or more unprovoked seizures or the diagnosis of an epilepsy syndrome.
- 2) Requires CDPH to establish the program, and specifies the program must encompass any area of the state for which epilepsy and seizure incidence or prevalence data are available.
- 3) Authorizes CDPH to seek, receive, and spend any funds received through appropriations, grants, or donations from public or private sources for the purposes of the program.
- 4) Requires CDPH to convene an advisory panel of medical professionals, researchers, advocates, and other individuals with relevant expertise to provide support and advice for the implementation of the program.
- 5) Authorizes CDPH to contract with an entity for the purposes of collecting and collating epilepsy and seizure incidence and prevalence data.
- 6) Requires CDPH to analyze available epilepsy and seizure incidence and prevalence data, and to prepare and publish reports on its website.
- 7) Requires CDPH to publish on its website a list of public agencies that offer services to individuals affected by epilepsy, including, Medi-Cal, regional centers, and the Department of Education, as well as private entities that offer services to individuals affected by epilepsy.

FISCAL EFFECT:

General Fund costs to CDPH of an unknown amount, potentially in the low millions of dollars per year.

The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** This bill is sponsored by Epilepsy Foundation Los Angeles. According to the author:

Epilepsy affects hundreds of thousands of Californians, yet the state lacks a coordinated approach to understanding and addressing the needs of this population. Without reliable statewide data and clear pathways to services, individuals and families face unnecessary barriers to care, leading to poorer health outcomes and preventable emergency interventions. [This bill] establishes the California Epilepsy Program to improve data collection, coordination, and public access to resources, helping ensure that all Californians living with epilepsy have a fair opportunity to receive timely, effective care.

- 2) **Background.** Epilepsy is the fourth most common neurological disorder, with an estimated 450,000 Californians living with epilepsy. Epilepsy is a chronic disease where abnormal electrical activity in the brain causes recurrent seizures, which are brief episodes of involuntary movement. Some people with epilepsy may have convulsions and lose consciousness, while others may simply have a brief staring spell and lapse of awareness. Epilepsy may develop after a brain injury, stroke, infection, or tumor, but for many, the cause is unknown.

The most common approach to treating epilepsy is to prescribe antiseizure medications. More than 40 different antiseizure medications are available today. While antiseizure medications are effective for many people with epilepsy, some people do not respond to or are not able to take medications. Those individuals may be candidates for surgery, dietary changes, or devices to stop their seizures.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued Reduction in Force notices to staff in its epilepsy program in April 2025. According to information provided by the author, all positions in the program were eliminated.

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