

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 1656 (Davies)

As Amended March 5, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Expands the list of crimes that may support a finding of good cause to continue a case to include human trafficking, as specified and specifies that a good cause continuance in a human trafficking case may only be granted once per case.

Major Provisions**COMMENTS****According to the Author**

According to the author, "AB 1656 is a critical step in modernizing the state's judicial approach to some of the most heinous crimes. By expanding the definition of "good cause" for trial continuances, the bill ensures that human trafficking and child sexual exploitation cases receive the same legal priority and scheduling flexibility as murder and domestic violence trials. This change provides prosecutors with the necessary time to manage the immense complexities of trafficking litigation, such as coordinating witness testimony and handling sensitive evidence, without being forced into rushed proceedings. Ultimately, passing AB 1656 would strengthen the justice system's ability to hold traffickers accountable while reducing the risk of procedural dismissals that can re-traumatize victims."

Arguments in Support

According to *Riverside Sheriff's Association*, "Survivors of human trafficking frequently experience severe trauma, coercive control, and psychological harm. Some are under debt bondage, immigration coercion, or family threats. It is very hard for survivors to trust persons with authority, such as prosecuting attorneys who work overtime to establish trust and communication with the victims. Continuances preserve continuity of counsel, which is particularly important where victims rely on a single, trusted point of contact. Forcing victims to proceed with a substitute attorney due to scheduling conflicts may undermine victim cooperation, increase anxiety and lead to delayed or incomplete testimony."

Arguments in Opposition

According to the *San Francisco Public Defender's Office*, "Existing law establishes the requirements for a continuance to be granted in a criminal case, including a showing of good cause. Existing law defines "good cause" for this purpose to include, but not be limited to, cases involving specified crimes, including murder and domestic violence, and to apply when the prosecuting attorney assigned to the case has another trial, preliminary hearing, or motion to suppress in progress in that court or another court. AB 1656 would expand the list of crimes to specifically include, among other crimes, human trafficking.

"AB 1656 adds yet another category of crimes providing prosecutors with a unilateral exception to the requirements of "good cause" within the meaning of Penal Code Section 1050. AB 1656 contravenes the core legislative intent of Section 1050, which states that "all proceedings in criminal cases shall be set for trial and heard and determined at the earliest possible time" because "criminal courts are becoming increasingly congested with resulting adverse consequences to the welfare of the people and the defendant" and "[e]xcessive continuances contribute substantially to this congestion and cause substantial hardship to victims and other witnesses . . . [and] lead to longer periods of presentence confinement for those defendants in custody and the concomitant overcrowding and increased expenses of local jails." An additional class of crimes that fall within the meaning of "good cause" would only cause more delay, more congestion, more hardship, and longer periods of presentence confinement for people who have not been convicted of a crime. "

FISCAL COMMENTS

Unknown. This bill is keyed non-fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

VOTES

ASM PUBLIC SAFETY: 9-0-0

YES: Schultz, Alanis, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Lackey, Nguyen, Ramos, Wilson

UPDATED

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