

Date of Hearing: March 10, 2026
Counsel: Kimberly Horiuchi

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY
Nick Schultz, Chair

AB 1716 (Stefani) – As Introduced February 4, 2026

SUMMARY: Authorizes the California Victim Compensation Board (CalVCB) to reimburse a victim of sexual assault or violence up to \$10,000 of tuition at an educational institution, as specified. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) States that a victim may be eligible for reimbursement if they are a full- or part-time student, and if the victim is unable to continue attendance or suffers an academic setback because of the sexual assault or violence.
- 2) Defines “academic setback” to include, but is not limited to, a victim failing the current or next term or enrolling in additional terms to pass courses necessary for graduation.
- 3) States reimbursement for a victim may be limited to the term the crime took place and the term immediately following the crime.
- 4) Requires that compensation for tuition loss not exceed \$10,000 and be based on the cost of tuition minus any tuition refunded by the school and further reduced by additional financial sources, including a grant, scholarship, or gift.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) States that the Legislature finds and declares that it is in the public interest to assist residents of the State of California in obtaining compensation for the pecuniary losses they suffer as a direct result of criminal acts. (Gov. Code, § 13950, subd. (a).)
- 2) Establishes the board to operate the Cal VCP. (Gov. Code, §§ 13950 et. seq.)
- 3) Provides that an application for compensation shall be filed with the board in the manner determined by the board. (Gov. Code, § 13952, subd. (a).)
- 4) Requires an application to be filed in accordance with the following timelines:
 - a) Within seven years of the date of the crime;
 - b) Seven years after the victim attains 21 years of age; or
 - c) Seven years of the time the victim or derivative victim knew or in the exercise of ordinary diligence could have discovered that an injury or death had been sustained as a direct result of crime, whichever is later. (Gov. Code, § 13953, subd. (a).)

- 5) Authorizes the board to reimburse for pecuniary loss for the following types of losses:
 - a) Medical or medical-related expenses incurred by the victim for services provided by a licensed medical provider;
 - b) Out-patient psychiatric, psychological or other mental health counseling-related expenses incurred by the victim or derivative victim, including peer counseling services provided by a rape crisis center, not to exceed \$10,000;
 - c) Compensation equal to the loss of income or loss of support, or both, that a victim or derivative victim incurs as a direct result of the victim's injury or the victim's death;
 - d) Cash payment to, or on behalf of, the victim for job retraining or similar employment-oriented services;
 - e) The expense of installing or increasing residential security not to exceed \$1,000;
 - f) The expense of renovating or retrofitting a victim's residence or a vehicle to make them accessible or operational, if it is medically necessary;
 - g) Relocation expenses, not to exceed \$3,418, if the expenses are determined by law enforcement to be necessary for the victim's personal safety, or by a mental health treatment provider to be necessary for the emotional well-being of the victim;
 - h) Funeral or burial expenses, not to exceed \$12,818;
 - i) Costs to clean the scene of the crime, not to exceed \$1,709; and,
 - j) Costs of veterinary services, not to exceed \$10,000. (Gov. Code, § 13957, subd. (a).)
- 6) Limits the total award to or on behalf of each victim or derivative victim to \$35,000, except that this award may be increased to an amount not exceeding \$70,000 if federal funds are available. (Gov. Code, § 13957, subd. (b).)
- 7) Defines "victim" to mean an individual who sustains injury or death as a direct result of a crime as specified. (Gov. Code, § 13951, subd. (e).)
- 8) Defines "derivative victim" to mean an individual who sustains pecuniary loss as a result of injury or death to a victim. (Gov. Code, § 13951, subd. (e).)
- 9) Authorizes the board to require submission of additional information supporting the application that is reasonably necessary to verify the application and determine eligibility for compensation. (Gov. Code, § 13952, subd. (c)(1).)
- 10) Requires Cal VCB staff to determine whether an application for compensation contains all of the information required by the board. If the staff determines that an application does not contain all of the required information, the staff shall communicate that determination to the

applicant with a brief statement of the additional information required. (Gov. Code, § 13952, subd. (c)(2).)

- 11) States that the applicant, within 30 calendar days of being notified that the application is incomplete, may either supply the additional information or appeal the staff's determination to board, which shall review the application to determine whether it is complete. (Gov. Code, § 13952, subd. (c)(2).)
- 12) Makes emergency awards available to a person eligible for compensation if the board determines that such an award is necessary to avoid or mitigate substantial hardship that may result from delaying compensation until complete and final consideration of an application. (Gov. Code, § 13952.5, subd. (a).)
- 13) Requires the board to verify with hospitals, physicians, law enforcement officials, or other interested parties involved, the treatment of the victim or derivative victim, circumstances of the crime, amounts paid or received by or for the victim or derivative victim, and any other pertinent information deemed necessary by the board. (Gov. Code, § 13954, subd. (a).)
- 14) Requires an applicant to cooperate with the staff of the board or the victim center in the verification of the information contained in the application and states that failure to cooperate shall be reported to the board, which, in its discretion, may reject the application solely on this ground. (Gov. Code, § 13954, subd. (b).)
- 15) States that an applicant's refusal to apply for other benefits potentially available to them from other sources, including, but not limited to, worker's compensation, state disability insurance, social security benefits, and unemployment insurance may be used to reject the application. (Gov. Code, § 13954, subd. (b)(2)(C).)
- 16) States that if the applicant threatens violence or bodily harm to a member of the board of board's staff, the application may be denied. (Gov. Code, § 13954, subd. (b)(2)(D).)
- 17) States that the Department of Justice (DOJ) shall furnish, upon application of the board, all information necessary to verify the eligibility of any applicant for benefits to recover any restitution fine or order obligations that are owed to the Restitution Fund or to any victim of crime, or to evaluate the status of any criminal disposition. (Gov. Code, § 13954, subd. (f).)
- 18) States that a person who is convicted of a violent felony shall not be granted compensation until that person has been discharged from probation or has been released from a correctional institution and has been discharged from parole or has been discharged from post-release community supervision or mandatory supervision, if any, for that violent crime. (Gov. Code, § 13956, subd. (c)(1).)
- 19) Prohibits compensation from being granted to an applicant during any period of time the applicant is held in a correctional institution or while an applicant is required to register as a sex offender. (*Ibid.*)

- 20) States that lack of cooperation shall also not be found solely because a victim of sexual assault, domestic violence, or human trafficking delayed reporting the qualifying crime. (Gov. Code, § 13956, subd. (b)(1).)
- 21) Authorizes compensation for loss of income directly resulting from the injury, except that loss of income shall not be paid by the board for more than 5 years following the crime, unless the victim is disabled as a direct result of the injury. (Gov. Code, §13957.6, subd. (a)(1).)
- 22) States that an adult derivative victim may be compensated for loss of income subject to the following:
- a) The derivative victim is the parent or legal guardian of a victim, who at the time of the crime was under 18 years of age and is hospitalized as a direct result of the crime;
 - b) The minor victim’s treating physician certifies in writing that the presence of the victim’s parent or legal guardian at the hospital is necessary for the treatment of the victim; and,
 - c) Reimbursement for loss of income under this paragraph may not exceed the total value of the income that would have been earned by the adult derivative victim during a 30-day period. (Gov. Code, §13957.5, subd. (a)(2).)
- 23) States that an adult derivative victim may be compensated for loss of income for a victim who has died as a direct result of the crime, subject to the following:
- a) The derivative victim is the parent or legal guardian of a victim who at the time of the crime was under 18 years of age; and,
 - b) The board shall pay for loss of income under this paragraph for not more than 30 calendar days from the date of the victim’s death. (a)(3).
- 24) Provides that a derivative victim who was legally dependent on the victim at the time of the crime may be compensated for loss of support incurred by that person as a direct result of the crime, subject to the following:
- a) Loss of support shall be paid by the board for income lost by an adult for a period up to, but not more than, five years following the date of the crime; and,
 - b) Loss of support shall not be paid by the board on behalf of a minor for a period beyond the child’s attaining 18 years of age. (Gov. Code, §13957.5, subd. (a)(4).)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Author's Statement:** According to the author, “AB 1716 recognizes that for many college students, surviving sexual violence can mean not only enduring trauma, but also facing academic disruption and unexpected financial hardship. Survivors may end up in a position where they must withdraw from classes, repeat coursework, or delay graduation – costs that

can push them out of school entirely, especially if they lack financial support. By allowing tuition reimbursement through CalVCB, this bill provides meaningful relief that helps survivors remain enrolled and continue their education. AB 1716 affirms that students should not have to choose between healing from violence and staying in school and strengthens our commitment to a more holistic and survivor-centered justice system.”

- 2) **California Victim Compensation Program:** The victim compensation program was created in 1965, the first such program in the country. The program provides compensation for victims of violent crime. It reimburses eligible victims for many crime-related expenses, such as counseling and medical fees. Funding for the CalVCB comes from restitution fines and penalty assessments paid by criminal offenders, general fund (GF) moneys, and federal matching funds.¹ Criminal and traffic fines and fees for restitution fund purposes have largely been eliminated to date.

The victim compensation program is the payor of last resort, which means applicants are compensated for covered expenses that have not been and will not be compensated from any other source. Reimbursement is limited to the actual amount paid out-of-pocket or bills accrued by the victim. The maximum amount reimbursed to a victim or derivative victim is \$35,000, except this amount may be increased to \$70,000 if federal funds are available.

In 2022, AB 160 (Committee on Budget), the public safety trailer bill amended Government Code sections 13956 and 13957 to specifically make them contingent on GF allocations. It appears that victim compensation may only be paid out generally to the extent it is covered by the GF.

This section shall become inoperative on July 1, 2024, only if General Fund (GF) moneys over the multiyear forecasts beginning in the 2024–25 fiscal year are available to support ongoing augmentations and actions, and if an appropriation is made to backfill the Restitution Fund to support the actions in this section. If those conditions are met, this section is repealed January 1, 2025. (Gov. Code, § 13957, subd. (c).)

That triggering event does not appear to have occurred in 2024, and the Victim Compensation Fund remains entirely reliant on GF moneys and federal funds.

Victim compensation may cover: (a) medical, medical-related, dental care; (b) outpatient mental health treatment or counseling; (c) funeral and burial; (d) wage or income loss up to five years following the date of the crime due to the victim’s disability resulting from the qualifying crime. If the victim is permanently disabled, wage or income loss may be extended; (e) support loss for legal dependents of a deceased or injured victim; (f) up to 30 days wage loss for the parent or legal guardian of a minor victim who is hospitalized or dies as a direct result of a crime; (g) job retraining; (h) medically necessary renovation or retrofitting of a home or vehicle for a person permanently disabled as a result of the crime; (i) home security installation or improvements; (j) in-patient psychiatric hospitalization costs; (k) relocation; (l) crime scene clean-up; (m) veterinary fees, or replacement costs for a guide,

¹ See CalVCB, *About the Board*, located at <https://victims.ca.gov/board/>

signal or service dog; (n) roundtrip mileage reimbursement to medical, dental or mental health appointments; or (o) minors who suffer emotional injuries from witnessing a violent crime may be eligible for mental health counseling. To qualify, the minor witness must have been in close proximity to the crime.

- 3) **Condition of the Restitution Fund:** The Restitution Fund, which funds Cal VCB reimbursements, has been operating under a structural deficiency for several years. In 2015, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) reported the Restitution Fund was depleting and would eventually face insolvency. Although revenue has remained consistent through budget allocations, expenditures have outpaced revenues since FY 2015-16.

The Governor's proposed 2026-27 budget allocates \$546.8 million for victim services including \$303 million to backfill federal Victims of Crime Act Supplemental Funding. The total estimated budget of Cal VCB according to the Comparative Statement of Expenditures, including any federal funds in 2026-27, is approximately \$49 million for state operations and \$42 million in local assistance.² The total estimated Victim Compensation Fund balance for 2026-27 is approximately \$47 million. Based on the requirements of the 2022 Budget, if this bill were to be enacted, it will only go into effect if it receives a GF allocation.

- 4) **Eligibility Requirements for Victim Compensation:** Persons eligible to receive victim compensation are victims and derivative victims where the crime either occurred in California or the victim is a resident of California or a member or a family member living with a member of the military stationed in California.

The victim or derivative victim must have sustained either physical injury or emotional injury for specified violent crimes. Compensation is not available for a person who is convicted of a violent felony until that person has been discharged from probation or has been released from a correctional institution and has been discharged from parole or has been discharged from post-release community supervision or mandatory supervision, if any, for that violent crime. Compensation is also not available during any period of time the applicant is held in a correctional institution or while an applicant is required to register as a sex offender. (Gov. Code, § 13956, subd. (c).)

Once an application is filed, the applicant is required to cooperate with the staff of the board or the victim center in the verification of the information contained in the application. Failure to cooperate may constitute grounds to reject the application. (Gov. Code, § 13954, subd. (b)(1).)

CalVCB may deny an application based on a finding that the victim was involved in the events leading to the crime or the victim's failure to reasonably cooperate with law enforcement. (Gov. Code, § 13956, subd. (b)(1).) If a victim is determined to have been involved in the events leading to the qualifying crime, factors that may be considered to mitigate or overcome involvement include, but are not limited to: (a) the victim's injuries were significantly more serious than reasonably could have been expected based on the victim's level of involvement; (b) a third party interfered in a manner not reasonably foreseeable by the victim or derivative victim; and (c) the board shall consider the victim's

² <https://ebudget.ca.gov/home>; 2026-27 Budget Summary, p. 238.

age, physical condition, and psychological state, as well as any compelling health and safety concerns, in determining whether the application should be denied pursuant to this section. (Gov. Code, §13956, subd. (a)(2).)

Similarly, existing law provides that in determining whether cooperation with law enforcement has been reasonable, CalVCB shall consider the victim's or derivative victim's age, physical condition, and psychological state, cultural or linguistic barriers, any compelling health and safety concerns, including, but not limited to, a reasonable fear of retaliation or harm that would jeopardize the well-being of the victim or the victim's family or the derivative victim or the derivative victim's family, and giving due consideration to the degree of cooperation of which the victim or derivative victim is capable in light of the presence of any of these factors. (Gov. Code, § 13956, subd. (b).) The law specifies that a victim of domestic violence shall not be determined to have failed to cooperate based on the victim's conduct with law enforcement at the scene of the crime. Lack of cooperation shall also not be found solely because a victim of sexual assault, domestic violence, or human trafficking delayed reporting the qualifying crime. (*Ibid.*)

This bill authorizes CalVCB to reimburse a victim "of sexual assault or violence" for the cost of tuition during the term when the crime occurred or the term immediately following the crime. The maximum amount of reimbursement is \$10,000. The cost of tuition per term at a University of California college is approximately \$7,500-\$8,500. The cost of tuition per term at a California State University college is approximately \$3,000-\$4,000.

- 5) **Argument in Support:** According to *University of California, Office of the President*, "Sexual harassment, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking are unfortunate realities of the college landscape. Although campuses offer a variety of preventative measures, including mandatory annual sexual violence and sexual harassment awareness and prevention education training for students, bystander intervention workshops, safety escort programs, self-defense classes, and Take Back the Night events, a 2019 Association of American Universities campus climate survey found that 14 to 32 percent of undergraduate women faced campus sexual violence.

"When an incidence of sexual violence occurs, victims often understandably do poorer academically, sometimes failing classes or getting on academic probation. A 2016 Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice article found that students who suffered from sexual assault and violence had lower GPAs and were more likely to drop out of college compared to other populations.

"These academic consequences can lead to negative financial outcomes as well; students who face such setbacks may need to extend their enrollment period, necessitating payment for additional terms required to complete their course workload. While UC can sometimes reimburse tuition or help reimburse financial aid, some students may need to cover additional costs that were not originally planned.

"AB 1716 would support these students by making tuition an eligible reimbursement from CalVCB of up to \$10,000 for students who have faced sexual assault or violence. Under current law, crime victims may receive reimbursement for medical expenses, including counseling and other mental-health treatments. By allowing tuition to be a reimbursable expense, student sexual violence victims would be provided an avenue to recoup some of

their lost tuition to help ease the financial impact of the crime they experienced.”

- 6) **Argument in Opposition:** According to the *Local 148 LA County Public Defenders Union*, “Every person who is the victim of a crime in California and suffers a loss is entitled to be reimbursed for that loss. Criminal defendants must pay restitution. In addition, the State of California, through the mechanism of the California Victim Compensation Board, pays money to crime victims for their losses. There are many categories of losses that may be compensated. Medical and psychiatric expenses, moving expenses, and the cost of enhanced security are but a few of the losses that may be reimbursed. The Restitution Fund from which these payments are taken is a finite resource. One can see how a medical expense or security expense can be directly related to a crime. The reimbursement for tuition, however, is too attenuated for the Board to determine whether a person’s decision not to continue in college or another education institution is due to a sexual assault.

“Most properly, any reimbursement for lost tuition should come from the educational institution itself. The college or other school is the only entity that is truly aware of the student’s situation. Was the student failing or having academic setbacks prior to the assault? Were there other pressures, such as financial or personal, that caused the student to falter? The Victim Compensation Board sits at arms-length without access to the student’s academic history – something well within the knowledge of the school.

“Instead of routing reimbursement through the Victim Compensation Board, the bill should be amended to require reimbursement to come from the particular educational institution. A supplemental appropriation to state-operated institutions would allow reimbursement to be fairly and properly disbursed.

“Private institutions are admittedly different. But, state funding of tuition reimbursement at private institutions seems to be a bit elitist. Should the state be refunding tuition at, for example, a private high school that charges up to \$70,000 a year and that only the rich can afford? And what of institutions that fail to protect their students from sexual assault? Shouldn’t those institutions be responsible for their failures and thus refund lost tuition at their expense? Instead of relying upon the Victim Restitution Fund, reimbursement of tuition should come from the educational institution, and the bill should be amended to make that happen.”

7) **Prior Legislation:**

- a) AB 1100 (Sharp-Collins), of the 2025-2026 Legislative Session, would have made various changes to California’s Victim Compensation Program including repealing provisions that authorize denial of compensation based on the victim’s involvement in the events leading up to the crime or failure of the applicant to cooperate reasonably with law enforcement in the apprehension and conviction of the perpetrator of the crime. AB 1100 was held on the Assembly Committee on Appropriations suspense file.
- b) SB 655 (Durazo), of the 2023-2024 Legislative Session, would have made various changes to the CalVCP including some of the changes made by this bill regarding eligibility. SB 655 was held in the Senate Appropriations’ suspense file.

- c) SB 838 (Menjivar), of the 2023-2024 Legislative Session, would have, in the case of a claim based on a victim's serious bodily injury or death that resulted from a law enforcement officer's use of force, prohibit the board from denying an application based on certain circumstances, including the victim's or other applicant's involvement in the crime, except as specified, the victim's failure to cooperate, or the contents of a police report, or the lack thereof. SB 655 was held in the Senate Appropriations' suspense file.
- d) AB 160 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 771, Statutes of 2022, made various changes to the CalVCP, subject to appropriation, including new calculations for loss of income, removing ineligibility factors, and increasing the maximum compensation amount.
- e) SB 993 (Skinner), of the 2021-2022 Legislative Session, would have made various changes to the CalVCP including some of the changes made by this bill regarding eligibility. AB 993 was held on the Assembly Floor.
- f) AB 767 (Grayson), of the 2019-2020 Legislative Session, would have expanded eligibility for compensation under the CalVCP for injuries or death caused by use of force by a police officer. AB 767 was held in Senate Appropriations Committee.
- g) SB 375 (Durazo), Chapter 375, Statutes of 2019, extended deadline for victims of violent crimes to file an application for compensation from 3 to 7 years.
- h) AB 629 (Smith), Chapter 575, Statutes of 2019, authorized CalVCB to provide compensation equal to loss of income or support to human trafficking victims.
- i) AB 415 (Maienschein), Chapter 572, Statutes of 2019, authorized CalVCB to compensate a crime victim for the costs of temporary housing for a pet.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Arcadia Police Officers' Association
Brea Police Association
Burbank Police Officers' Association
California Association of School Police Chiefs
California Coalition of School Safety Professionals
California Narcotic Officers' Association
California Reserve Peace Officers Association
Californians for Safety and Justice (CSJ)
Claremont Police Officers Association
Corona Police Officers Association
Culver City Police Officers' Association
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
Fullerton Police Officers' Association
Los Angeles School Police Management Association
Los Angeles School Police Officers Association
Murrieta Police Officers' Association

Newport Beach Police Association
Palos Verdes Police Officers Association
Placer County Deputy Sheriffs' Association
Pomona Police Officers' Association
Riverside Police Officers Association
Riverside Sheriffs' Association
Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition
University of California Office of the President
University of California Student Association
Valor US

Opposition

Local 148 LA County Public Defenders Union
California Public Defenders Association

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