

1) **Purpose.** The California Federation of Labor Unions writes in support of this bill:

For public sector workers across the state, telework has been a useful method of reducing burnout, addressing persistent staffing shortages, and maintaining quality continuity of care. These benefits directly support safer institutions, improved patient outcomes, and a more stable public workforce. AB 1729 also advances fairness and consistency across state service by establishing clearer expectations around telework eligibility and implementation. Public sector workers have demonstrated their ability to meet performance standards and public service obligations while teleworking, and this bill helps ensure teleworking decisions are made transparently and equitably.

2) **Background.** In 1990, the Legislature established the State Employee Telecommuting Program as a voluntary pilot program and in 1995 all state agencies were required to develop and implement a telecommuting plan for work areas where telecommuting is identified as practical and beneficial. While telecommuting has proliferated significantly in the intervening years, particularly post the COVID-19 Pandemic, this program has yet to be updated by subsequent legislation.

In August of 2025, the California State Auditor (CSA) released a report on state telework policies. While the report is extensive and contains various findings, one of the most pertinent points for this bill is the finding that “the Governor’s return-to-office order could have made better use of important information regarding departments’ needs and costs” in regard to the Governor’s April 2024 directive for state employees to return-to-office two days per week and the March 2025 executive order directing return-to-office four days per week. The report cites an estimated \$117 million in fiscal year 2024-25 spent by the 19 departments reviewed on unused office space facilitated by the two-day in-office schedule. The CSA warns that such savings, potentially as much as \$225 million statewide for all agencies, are not possible under a four-day in-office schedule.

This bill, among other things, requires each state agency to provide justification for requiring employees to report to the workplace based on operational needs and programmatic mission requirements and requires each state agency to evaluate its existing telework program every 10 years.

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