
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1759 (Elhawary) - Prisons: classification

Version: May 18, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: June 29, 2026

Policy Vote: PUB. S. 6 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Bob Franzoia

Bill Summary: AB 1759 would require the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to contract an independent research entity to conduct a study of CDCR's security classification system. The study would assess actual safety risk to determine whether classification decisions hold incarcerated persons in higher level facilities longer than necessary.

Fiscal Impact: Major cost one time to contract for a comprehensive research and evaluation study.

Significant cost over the course of the study to CDCR to assist the research entity with data extraction, validation, subject matter expertise and coordination.

Significant cost one time for CDCR to submit a report on the findings and recommendations of the study (General Fund).

Background: According to a 2019 study by the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), CDCR's security classification system may be assigning incarcerated people to more restrictive environments than necessary to ensure safe facilities. The LAO found that the security classification methodology was modified without reassessing its accuracy and that the methodology for recalculating scores annually has never been evaluated.

The research entity selected to perform the study is required to meet various criteria including having demonstrated expertise on CDCR policy and data. For reference, the University of California, Irvine Center for Evidence Based Corrections developed the California Static Risk Assessment for CDCR on a compressed timeline of October, 2007 to January, 2008 at a cost reportedly of \$3 million.

Proposed Law: The study shall contain policy recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the classification system. The research entity's recommendations for a new classification system shall achieve all of the following objectives:

- (1) Expand access to rehabilitation, reducing both recidivism and violence.
- (2) Ensure that incarcerated people are not held at higher levels of security than necessary.
- (3) Improve institutional safety by accurately identifying who poses a higher risk of violence.
- (4) Save the state money by ensuring incarcerated people can earn programming credits that reduce sentence length.

Staff Comments: On or before January 1, 2030, CDCR shall publish on its internet website and submit to the Legislature a report on the findings and recommendations of the study.

Recommended Amendments: Staff Recommends clarifying amendments that require the study by the independent research entity be submitted to CDCR, and posted immediately, no later than January 1, 2030 and CDCR submit its report, presumably containing its responses to the study's recommendations, no more than six months later.