
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1785 (Hoover) - California Uniform Controlled Substances Act: online retailer

Version: February 9, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: June 22, 2026

Policy Vote: B., P. & E.D. 10 - 0

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Janelle Miyashiro

Bill Summary: AB 1785 expands the definition of “retail distributor” in the Uniform Controlled Substances Act (UCSA) to include online retailers for purposes of selling ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, norpseudoephedrine, or phenylpropanolamine products (PSE medications), subject to the same reporting requirements and distribution limits.

Fiscal Impact: Unknown, potentially significant workload cost pressures to the state funded trial court system to adjudicate any misdemeanor violations resulting from this bill (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund). The fiscal impact of this bill to the courts will depend on many unknowns, including the number of cases filed and the factors unique to each case. An eight-hour court day costs approximately \$8,000 in staff in workload. If court days exceed 10, costs to the trial courts could reach hundreds of thousands of dollars. While the courts are not funded on a workload basis, an increase in workload could result in delayed court services and would put pressure on the General Fund to fund additional staff and resources and to increase the amount appropriated to backfill for trial court operations.

Background: In California, PSE medications are not scheduled substances, but they are regulated as precursor chemicals under the UCSA and classified as “List I” substances under the federal Controlled Substances Act (CSA). The regulatory framework surrounding their manufacture, distribution, and sale was heavily shaped by the federal Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act (CMEA) of 2005. Designed to prevent PSE from being used in the illegal manufacture of methamphetamine, the CMEA established strict recordkeeping, reporting, and age-verification controls. Many of these federal requirements are directly mirrored in California’s UCSA, forming the foundation of the state’s subsequent legislation on PSE medications.

Under these aligned federal and state regulations, retail distributors face specific limitations. They must verify that customers are at least 18 years of age and ensure no individual purchases more than three packages, or nine grams, of PSE medication within a 30-day period. Currently, lawful sales in California are restricted to retail distributors who register with the Department of Justice and submit periodic sales reports. Furthermore, the UCSA defines a “retail distributor” strictly as a physical entity, such as a grocery store, general merchandise store, or drugstore. Because online retailers do not currently meet this definition, they are prohibited from selling PSE medications directly to consumers in California.

Proposed Law:

- Updates the definition of “retail distributor”, for purposes of PSE sale limitations, to also include an online retailer.

- Clarifies that the sale of PSE medications for personal use by a retail distributor can be facilitated via direct in-store sales, or online sales fulfilled via delivery, in-person pickup, or curbside pickup.
- Makes other technical changes.

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