

Date of Hearing: March 18, 2026

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT**

Liz Ortega, Chair

AB 1803 (Lowenthal) – As Introduced February 10, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Employment: sexual harassment training and education: anti-hate speech training

**SUMMARY:** Adds to the sexual harassment and abusive conduct training requirement for employers of five or more employees, a component on anti-hate speech.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Requires an employer having five or more employees to provide at least two hours of classroom or other effective interactive training and education regarding sexual harassment to all supervisory employees and at least one hour of classroom or other effective interactive training and education regarding sexual harassment to all nonsupervisory employees in California once every two years. (Gov. Code 12950.1(a)(1)).
- 2) Permits an employer to provide this training in conjunction with other training provided to the employees. The training may be completed by employees individually or as part of a group presentation, and may be completed in shorter segments, as long as the applicable hourly total requirement is met. (Gov. Code 12950.1(a)(1)).
- 3) Requires the training to include information and practical guidance regarding the federal and state statutory provisions concerning the prohibition against and the prevention and correction of sexual harassment and the remedies available to victims of sexual harassment in employment. (Gov. Code 12950.1(a)(1)).
- 4) Requires the training to also include practical examples aimed at instructing supervisors in the prevention of harassment, discrimination, and retaliation, and to be presented by trainers or educators with knowledge and expertise in the prevention of harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. (Gov. Code 12950.1(a)(1)).
- 5) Requires the training to be inclusive of harassment based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. (Gov. Code 12950.1(a)(3)).
- 6) Requires the employer to also include prevention of abusive conduct as a component of the training. (Gov. Code 12950.1(a)(2)).
- 7) Defines “abusive conduct” to mean conduct of an employer or employee in the workplace, with malice, that a reasonable person would find hostile, offensive, and unrelated to an employer’s legitimate business interests. Abusive conduct may include repeated infliction of verbal abuse, such as the use of derogatory remarks, insults, and epithets, verbal or physical conduct that a reasonable person would find threatening, intimidating, or humiliating, or the gratuitous sabotage or undermining of a person’s work performance. A single act shall not constitute abusive conduct, unless especially severe and egregious. (Gov. Code 12950.1(h)(2)).

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown.

**COMMENTS:** This bill is double referred to the Assembly Judiciary Committee upon passage out of this Committee.

According to the author, “California must make meaningful progress to train Californians on the danger of hate speech not only in the workplaces, but in society as a whole. Our laws have not kept pace with the hate that millions of Californians experience every single day. AB 1803 fills a critical void by ensuring that employers provide workers with the training they need to recognize, report, and confront hate speech in our society. This bill is part of a broader legislative package developed in partnership with the Select Committee on Racism, Hate, and Xenophobia and Assemblymember Corey Jackson, reflecting our shared commitment to addressing the root causes of hate in our communities.

No Californian should have to endure slurs, bigotry, or bias-motivated hostility at work, or anywhere in California. AB 1803 is a commonsense, evidence-based step toward making California more equitable for everyone, particularly the communities that have been most harmed by the rise of hate across our state.”

The author continues, “AB 1803 (also) promotes equity solutions by directly confronting racial bias and hate speech in one of the spaces where Californians frequent the most. By requiring mandatory anti-hate speech training, the bill seeks to transform workplace culture not only for employees, but also for the clients and communities those businesses serve. As the data demonstrates, over one in three adult hate victims in California report experiencing hate at a business location, underscoring the urgent need for intervention at the employer level.

Underserved and marginalized communities bear a disproportionate burden of hate speech and its consequences. The steep rise in hate crimes against Black, Latino, and Asian Californians between 2019 and 2022 reflects the real and compounding harm that unchecked bias and hate speech inflicts on communities of color. By mandating that all employees, a part of business with 5 employees or more receive training on recognizing and reporting hate speech, AB 1803 maximizes benefits for these communities by creating a structural safeguard within one of the most common environments in which hate is experienced. Establishing this baseline not only empowers targeted individuals to identify and report misconduct, but also holds bystanders and supervisors accountable, fostering a broader culture of intervention and accountability that serves California's most vulnerable workers.”

As noted in the background materials for the bill, hate crime incidents overall are on the rise and there’s an urgent need to address this disturbing trend. According to the author, “over the last decade, reported hate crimes in California increased by 159.9%. From 2019 to 2022 alone, hate crimes against Black Californians nearly tripled from 243 to 661, hate crimes against Latinos almost doubled from 110 to 210, and hate crimes against Asians more than tripled from 43 to 143.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, California's Civil Rights Department estimated that 2.6 million Californians experienced at least one act of hate between 2022 and 2023, with approximately 525,000 encountering hate that was potentially criminal and another 5 million reporting that they

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<sup>1</sup> Public Policy Institute of California, “Hate Crime Trends in California,” May 28, 2024. <https://www.ppic.org/blog/hate-crime-trends-in-california/>.

witnessed such acts.<sup>2</sup>” In terms of hate incidents in the workplace, the 2023 California Health Interview Survey found that more than 1 in 3 Californians experienced hate at a business in the previous year.<sup>3</sup>

While the effectiveness of workplace training on topics such as harassment, discrimination, or bias merits additional study, at least one recent literature review found positive outcomes from such trainings. For example, a review of antiracism trainings found that “five out of seven of the antiracism training studies reported statistically significant results for at least one measured outcome, including improvements in knowledge and awareness or attitudes (e.g. decreased color-blind attitudes, more open attitudes about racial issues, privilege, and institutional discrimination, increased confidence in applying antiracism knowledge in the workplace and teaching antiracism awareness to others) following completion of trainings.”<sup>4</sup>

## Committee Comments

### Definition of Hate Speech

As drafted, AB 1803 does not define hate speech. Committee staff is not aware of a definition of hate speech in California law. Hate speech itself is not illegal but can violate employment law if it rises to an actionable level of workplace harassment or discrimination. Nevertheless, the author may wish to consider defining hate speech in the bill so as to give guidance to employers and the CRD since these entities will be developing the anti-hate speech training. Various organizations have proposed a definition for hate speech. For example, the American Library Association defines hate speech to mean “any form of expression through which speakers intend to vilify, humiliate, or incite hatred against a group or class of persons on the basis of race, religion, skin color, sexual identity, gender identity, ethnicity, disability or national origin.” Similarly, the United Nations defines hate speech as referring to “offensive discourse targeting a group or an individual based on inherent characteristics (such as race, religion or gender) and that may threaten social peace. Hate speech can be conveyed through any form of expression, including images, cartoons, memes, objects, gestures and symbols and it can be disseminated offline or online. Hate speech is “discriminatory” (biased, bigoted or intolerant) or “pejorative” (prejudiced, contemptuous or demeaning) of an individual or group.”

### Need for the bill?

California’s mandatory workplace sexual harassment training includes a component on abusive conduct. The definition of abusive conduct in existing law is “conduct of an employer or employee in the workplace, with malice, that a reasonable person would find hostile, offensive, and unrelated to an employer’s legitimate business interests. Abusive conduct may include repeated infliction of verbal abuse, such as the use of derogatory remarks, insults, and epithets,

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<sup>2</sup> Civil Rights Department, State of California, “Civil Rights Department Highlights Results of First State-Sponsored Survey on Hate Acts Across California,” April 10, 2025. <https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/2025/04/10/civil-rights-department-highlights-results-of-first-state-sponsored-survey-on-hate-acts-across-california/>

<sup>3</sup> Commission on the State of Hate, 2024-2025 Annual Report, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Wang, Monica L., Gomes, Alexis, and Rosa, Marielis, et al. “A systematic review of diversity, equity, and inclusion and antiracism training studies: Findings and future directions,” *Journal of Translational Behavioral Medicine*, October 19; 2023, pgs. 156–171.

verbal or physical conduct that a reasonable person would find threatening, intimidating, or humiliating, or the gratuitous sabotage or undermining of a person's work performance. A single act shall not constitute abusive conduct, unless especially severe and egregious." Hate speech is arguably covered under this definition, particularly in the form of "derogatory remarks, insults, and epithets."

### **Arguments in Support**

Equality California is in support, and states, "Workplaces are not immune from rising incidents of hate, yet existing mandatory training laws contain a significant gap. Current law requires employers to provide training on sexual harassment, abusive conduct, and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. However, there is no requirement that workers receive training on anti-hate speech. This gap leaves employees vulnerable to hostile work environments, while also leaving employers without clear guidance on how to prevent and address these behaviors."

### **Arguments in Opposition**

None on file.

### **Related and Prior Legislation**

AB 1578 (Jackson) of 2026 would require a local agency official to receive at least one hour of antihate speech training and education within the first 6 months of taking office and every 4 years thereafter. This bill is pending in the Assembly Local Government Committee.

SB 778 (Committee on Labor, Public Employment and Retirement) Statutes of 2019, Chapter 215 extended the deadline for specified employers to provide sexual harassment prevention training and education, clarifies when such training and education must be provided to new employees, and outlines when refresher training must be provided.

SB 1343 (Mitchell) Statutes of 2018, Chapter 956 reduced the sexual harassment training requirement threshold from employers with 50 or more employees to employers with five or more employees, include non-supervisory employees in the training, and requires that the Department of Fair Employment and Housing develop an online training course and make it available on the Department's website.

AB 2053 (Gonzalez) Statutes of 2014, Chapter 306 expanded on existing sexual harassment training for supervisory employees to also include training on the prevention of abusive conduct.

### **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

#### **Support**

Engineers and Scientists of California, IFPTE Local 20, AFL-CIO  
Equality California

**Opposition**

None on File

**Analysis Prepared by:** Megan Lane / L. & E. /