

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1803 (Lowenthal) – As Amended April 9, 2026

Policy Committee:	Labor and Employment	Vote:	6 - 0
	Judiciary		9 - 2

Urgency: No                      State Mandated Local Program: No                      Reimbursable: No

**SUMMARY:**

This bill adds anti-hate speech training as a component of the existing sexual harassment training certain employers must provide to employees.

The anti-hate speech training must provide supervisors and employees with practical guidance on recognizing, reporting, and confronting workplace speech that vilifies, humiliates, or incites hatred against people based on protected characteristics under California’s Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA).

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) One-time costs of an absorbable amount to the Civil Rights Department (CRD) in staff workload to update required harassment training course content, related website resources (such as a fact sheet, poster, and frequently asked questions for employers and employees), and regulations. Additionally, one-time costs of approximately \$35,000 to CRD in vendor contract payments to translate the updated training content into five languages, including the creation of voice files and related website resources (General Fund).
- 2) Costs of an unknown, but potentially absorbable amount, across the state as an employer, to the extent a state agency must update its sexual harassment training program to include an anti-hate speech training component (General Fund or special fund). Similarly, potential costs to local government agency employers (non-reimbursable).

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) **Purpose.** The author notes that this bill is part of a broader legislative package developed in partnership with the Select Committee on Racism, Hate, and Xenophobia. According to the author:

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.

- 2) **FEHA and Related Training.** FEHA protects employees from discrimination based on various protected characteristics, including race, religious creed, and sex. Thus, an employer has a legal obligation to protect employees from related harassment, as well as self-interest in

ensuring all employees are aware of what constitutes harassment under the law. Consistent with this interest, existing law requires an employer with five or more employees to provide employees with classroom or other interactive training designed to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, which must also include training to prevent “abusive conduct.” A supervisory employee must receive two hours of such training every two years, with a one-hour requirement for a non-supervisory employee. CRD must develop or obtain two online training courses that meet these hourly requirements and make the courses available on CRD’s website.

This bill adds anti-hate speech training as a component of an employer’s existing sexual harassment training requirement. As noted in the Assembly Judiciary Committee’s analysis of this bill:

While “hate speech” will not always constitute a form of sexual harassment, existing law already specifies that the training on sexual harassment should include training on the recognition and prevention of “abusive conduct,” which is defined to include “repeated infliction of verbal abuse, such as the use of derogatory remarks, insults, and epithets.” Not surprisingly, then, many existing training programs already include discussions of hate speech as part of the discussion of abusive conduct.

- 3) **Support and Opposition.** This bill is supported by civil and workers’ rights groups, with the California Employment Lawyers Association arguing, “California workplaces have been increasingly affected by a surge in hate, yet existing mandatory training law does not cover hate speech targeting race, religion, ethnicity, or national origin – among the most commonly reported forms of workplace hostility.”

This bill is opposed by groups citing First Amendment concerns, with the California Family Council arguing this bill’s “core defect is definitional: ‘hate speech’ has no settled legal meaning in U.S. law. The bill fails to define the term, leaving employers and trainers to rely on shifting cultural or ideological frameworks to determine what speech is ‘hateful.’”

- 4) **Related Legislation.** AB 1578 (Jackson) requires local and state officials to complete training related to anti-hate speech. AB 1578 is pending hearing by the Assembly Governmental Organization Committee.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Irene Ho / APPR. / (916) 319-2081