

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING  
AB 1803 (Lowenthal and Zbur)  
As Amended April 9, 2026  
Majority vote

## SUMMARY

Adds to the sexual harassment and abusive conduct training requirement for employers of five or more employees, a component on anti-hate speech. The anti-hate speech training shall provide supervisors and employees with practical guidance on recognizing, reporting, and confronting workplace speech that vilifies, humiliates, or incites hatred against people based on the protected characteristics provided under the Fair Housing and Employment Act.

### Major Provisions

See the summary above.

## COMMENTS

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 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>

### According to the Author

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

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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/>.

<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.

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."

### **Arguments in Support**

Equality California is in support and states, "LGBTQ+ workers are disproportionately affected by workplace hostility. Research from the UCLA Williams Institute finds that nearly one in five LGBTQ+ employees report experiencing harassment or discrimination in the workplace in the past year. Ensuring that workers and employers understand how hate speech contributes to hostile work environments is an important step toward creating workplaces where all Californians can work safely and with dignity.

AB 1803 closes this gap by incorporating anti-hate speech content into employers' existing harassment prevention training. Importantly, the bill does not increase the total number of training hours required; rather, it ensures that anti-hate speech education becomes a standard component of the training that employers are already required to provide.

By embedding this requirement within California's existing training framework, AB 1803 promotes the sustained cultural change needed to meaningfully reduce hate in workplaces."

### **Arguments in Opposition**

The California Family Council is opposed and states, "Many California employers, including churches, religious nonprofits, and faith-motivated small businesses, hold sincere beliefs about human sexuality, marriage, and gender that mainstream culture increasingly labels "hateful." AB 1803 provides no religious exemption or conscience protection. Employees and employers who hold traditional religious convictions could be required to sit through, or deliver, training that characterizes their sincerely held beliefs as a form of hate. This places religious organizations in direct conflict with state mandates, threatening their ability to operate according to their convictions.

States and localities that have implemented hate speech frameworks in workplace or educational settings have documented significant chilling effects on free expression. A 2021 survey by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education found that over 60% of college students self

sensor due to fear that their views would be considered offensive. Applying similar mandates to private workplaces predictably produces the same result: employees silence legitimate viewpoints rather than risk being flagged during mandated training reviews."

## FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 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).

## VOTES

### ASM LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT: 6-0-1

**YES:** Ortega, Chen, Elhawary, Kalra, Lee, Arambula

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Alanis

### ASM JUDICIARY: 9-2-1

**YES:** Kalra, Lee, Bryan, Connolly, Harabedian, Pacheco, Papan, Stefani, Zbur

**NO:** Macedo, Sanchez

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Dixon

### ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 9-2-4

**YES:** Wicks, Arambula, Caloza, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache

**NO:** Hoover, Tangipa

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Calderon, Dixon, Muratsuchi, Ta

## UPDATED

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