
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1803 (Lowenthal) - Employment: sexual harassment training and education: anti-hate speech training

Version: June 17, 2026

Policy Vote: L., P.E. & R. 4 - 0, JUD. 11 - 1

Urgency: No

Mandate: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Consultant: Robert Ingenito

Bill Summary: AB 1803 would require employers to include, within the categories of topics addressed in biannual employee trainings on sexual harassment prevention pursuant to the California Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA), a component addressing anti-hate speech training.

Fiscal Impact:

- The California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) indicates that this bill would result in one-time costs of \$150,000, and annual costs of \$750,000 for additional system capacity and staffing to support increased course registrations, customer service needs, course assignments, and program reporting requirements (General Fund).
- The Civil Rights Department (CRD) indicates that it would incur a one-time General Fund cost of \$35,000 to implement the provisions of the bill (General Fund, see Staff Comments).

Background: FEHA establishes a comprehensive framework prohibiting employment discrimination, harassment, and retaliation based on specified protected characteristics, including race, sex, gender identity, disability, religion, and other legally protected attributes. FEHA requires employers to take reasonable steps to prevent and address unlawful harassment and discrimination in the workplace, including corrective action when an employer knew or should have known that prohibited conduct occurred.

Existing law requires employers with five or more employees to provide periodic workplace harassment prevention training. Employers must provide at least two hours of interactive training to supervisory employees and at least one hour of interactive training to nonsupervisory employees every two years. The training must address the prevention of sexual harassment, abusive conduct, and harassment based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation.

Existing law defines abusive conduct as workplace conduct undertaken with malice that a reasonable person would find hostile, offensive, and unrelated to legitimate business interests. This may include repeated verbal abuse, derogatory remarks, threatening or humiliating conduct, or actions intended to undermine an individual's work performance. A single act generally does not constitute abusive conduct unless it is particularly severe or egregious.

CRD is responsible for developing model online harassment prevention training courses for employer use, including a two-hour course for supervisors and a one-hour course for nonsupervisory employees. In addition to its workplace discrimination enforcement responsibilities, CRD administers the CA vs. Hate Resource Line and Network, a statewide effort to support individuals and communities impacted by hate incidents. The program provides resources and referrals, assists individuals in identifying available remedies, and collects data to inform hate prevention and response efforts.

CRD distinguishes between hate incidents and hate crimes. Hate incidents are acts or expressions motivated by bias that may or may not violate criminal or civil laws but can cause harm to individuals and communities. Hate crimes are criminal offenses committed, in whole or in part, because of a victim's actual or perceived characteristics, including race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation, or because of the victim's association with a person or group with those characteristics.

The Commission on the State of Hate, established within CRD pursuant to AB 1126 (Bloom, 2021), evaluates trends in hate activity and develops recommendations to reduce hate and promote respect among California's diverse communities. The Commission's 2024-25 Annual Report found that hate continues to affect a significant number of Californians, with an estimated 8 percent of residents over age 12 experiencing at least one act of hate between 2022 and 2023. The report also found that businesses and public spaces are common locations for hate incidents, with more than one-third of adult victims reporting experiencing hate at a business.

The Commission identified race or skin color as the most common motivation for reported hate experiences, followed by ancestry, national origin, language, gender-related characteristics, sexual orientation, religion, disability, and immigration status. Historically targeted communities continue to experience disproportionate rates of hate, and reported hate crimes motivated by religious bias have increased in recent years. The Commission has encouraged additional efforts focused on preventing hate in business settings, including programs designed to promote welcoming and inclusive environments.

Proposed Law: This bill would require an employer to include, as a component of its anti-sexual harassment, abusive conduct and harassment training, anti-hate speech training. The bill would require this training to 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 characteristics protected under the FEHA.

Related Legislation:

- AB 1578 (Jackson) would require an employer that is a state agency or local agency to include anti-hate speech training as a component of the training and education required for sexual harassment prevention for all elected state or local officials. The bill is currently pending in this Committee.
- SB 778 (Committee on Labor, Public Employment and Retirement, Chapter 215, Statutes of 2019) 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, Chapter 956, Statutes of 2018) reduced the sexual harassment training requirement threshold from employers with 50 or more employees to employers with five or more employees, included non-supervisory employees in the training, and requires that CRD develop an online training course and make it available on the Department's website.
- AB 2053 (Gonzalez, Chapter 306, Statutes of 2014) expanded on existing sexual harassment training for supervisory employees to also include training on the prevention of abusive conduct.

Staff Comments: As noted above, this bill would require CRD to update the mandatory sexual harassment in the workplace training to add a training module about responding to hate speech. CRD would require \$35,000 on a one-time basis to pay vendors to translate the updated training into five languages, create the voice files in five languages, and translate updated sexual harassment resources available on the department's website (fact sheet, poster, employer/employee FAQ, and other materials), and remediate all of the files. The department also notes that the bill would also result in additional, absorbable workload to update (1) the content of the harassment training (including course review, course updates, and data collection), and (2) sexual harassment resources on the department's website (fact sheet, poster, employer/employee FAQ, and other materials).

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