

Date of Hearing: May 13, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1915 (Gabriel) – As Amended March 23, 2026

Policy Committee:	Health	Vote:	16 - 0
	Business and Professions		18 - 0

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

SUMMARY:

This bill makes changes to the California Retail Food Code (CRFC) related to food handling, equipment, and structures in restaurants. This bill also requires the Building Standards Commission (BSC), as part of the next triennial update of the California Building Standards Code, to adopt various building standards related to restrooms, cooking equipment, and dishwashers, among other things. The bill waives inspections for a like-for-like equipment installation in a restaurant and instead requires a local building department to allow a qualified licensed contractor certifier to submit a certification of compliance with applicable codes.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) BSC would need to hire a two-year limited-term associate architect to research, develop, and propose the subject standards. BSC estimates costs of \$296,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2029-30 and \$306,000 in FY 2030-31 (Building Standards Administration Special Revolving Fund and Department of General Services (DGS) Service Revolving Fund). BSC explains this bill will also have an unknown fiscal impact to the State Fire Marshal, Department of Health Care Access and Information, Division of the State Architect, Energy Commission, and other agencies through its effects on the funds cited.
- 2) Costs of an unknown but potentially significant amount to the Contractors State License Board (CSLB), which expects this bill will increase complaints from local building departments, other agencies, and consumers regarding negligent or false certifications of compliance with building codes (Contractors License Fund). CSLB notes such cases require the same level of investigative work as other disciplinary matters, including reviewing certification packets submitted by local agencies, coordinating with local building departments to verify permit timelines, and determining whether misrepresentation or false statements warrant disciplinary action. CSLB states it will need an additional position for every additional 53 complaints per year.
- 3) Costs of an unknown but likely absorbable amount to the California Department of Public Health.
- 4) The California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health anticipates no costs to local environmental health agencies.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** This bill is sponsored by Independent Hospitality Coalition. According to the author:

California's neighborhood restaurants are the heart of our communities, yet so many are fighting just to survive. [This bill] is a commitment to stand beside them, offering the support they need to launch, adapt, and thrive. When local restaurants succeed, our communities are stronger for it.

- 2) **Background.** The California Building Standards Code regulates the design, construction, quality of materials, use and occupancy, location, and maintenance of all buildings and structures in the state. The California Building Standards Code is published every three years, though intervening code adoption cycles produce supplements 18 months into each triennial period. The 2025 Building Standards Code took effect on January 1, 2026. Several state agencies are tasked with developing building standards for various building occupancies and building uses. For example, the California Department of Public Health is responsible for proposing building standards related to food establishments in the CRFC. The CRFC is modeled after the federal Food and Drug Administration's Model Food Code, which is updated every four years to enhance food safety laws based on the best available science. Between each four-year period, the FDA makes available a Food Code Supplement that updates, modifies, or clarifies certain provisions.

Local building departments and environmental health agencies enforce state and local building standards and the CRFC and are responsible for evaluating permit applications for compliance. A local building department cannot issue a permit without approval from the local environmental health agency. Construction work requiring a permit cannot begin until a permit is issued. After the work is completed, local building officials conduct various inspections to ensure the construction work was done correctly.

- 3) **Related and Prior Legislation.** AB 671 (Wicks and Gabriel), Chapter 470, Statutes of 2025, requires a local building department or permitting department to allow a qualified professional certifier to self-certify that tenant improvement plans relating to a restaurant comply with all applicable building, health, and safety codes, and requires local building departments to approve or reject those plans within 20 days.

AB 1470 (Haney), of the current legislative session, would have made substantially similar changes to the CRFC that this bill makes to structures in restaurants, and exemptions for temporary food facilities from overhead protections and other specified protections. AB 1470 was held on the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.

AB 2550 (Gabriel), of the 2023-24 Legislative Session, would have made substantially similar changes to the CRFC that this bill makes for structures in restaurants. AB 2550 would also have required the CBSC to adopt similar building standards for restrooms, drinking fountains, cooking equipment, and dishwashers. AB 2550 was held on the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.