

Date of Hearing: April 7, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
Ash Kalra, Chair  
AB 1918 (Dixon) – As Amended March 24, 2026

PROPOSED CONSENT

**SUBJECT:** HUMAN TRAFFICKING: BODY ART PRACTITIONERS

**KEY ISSUE:** SHOULD BODY ARTISTS AND LICENSED FACILITIES BE REQUIRED TO POST NOTICES RELATING TO IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO SIGNS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND COMPLETE A TRAINING ON THE SAME TOPIC?

**SYNOPSIS**

*The impacts of human trafficking on victims cannot be overstated. Victims, largely women and children, can suffer immense physical and psychological trauma as a result of being trafficked. One practice that is apparently commonplace among human trafficking victims who have been sex trafficked is the act of tattooing, or branding. In an effort to give body artists the tools to identify and respond to potential victims of human trafficking in their tattoo and body art establishments, this author-sponsored bill would incorporate body art facilities and licensees into the existing statutory framework that already requires certain businesses to post a specified notice in their establishments and to complete a 20-minute training on how to identify and respond to signs of human trafficking.*

*This bill is supported by 3Strands Global Foundation. There is currently no opposition on file.*

**SUMMARY:** Requires body art facilities to post a specified notice regarding signs of human trafficking and how to report it, and requires body artists to complete a 20-minute training on the same. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Adds body art facilities subject to regulation under Division 104 of the Health and Safety Code to the list of business establishments that must post a notice on human trafficking and how to spot and report suspected instances of human trafficking.
- 2) Adds body art practitioners to the businesses that must provide at least 20 minutes of training regarding human trafficking to registered practitioners who practice in the facility and who may interact with, or come into contact with, a victim of human trafficking or who are likely to receive a report from an employee of the business about suspected human trafficking.
- 3) Defines “registered practitioner” as a person registered pursuant to the relevant provisions of the Health and Safety Code.
- 4) Expands examples of the types of trainings to include evidence-based, trauma-informed curriculum developed by private, nonprofit organizations that represent the interests of human trafficking victims.
- 5) Makes various conforming changes.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Prohibits a person from performing body art at any location other than a permitted permanent or temporary body art facility. (Health and Safety Code (HSC) Section 119306 (a).)
- 2) Prohibits a person from performing body art if not registered with the local enforcement agency. (HSC Section 119306 (b).)
- 3) Requires an applicant to provide the following as conditions of registration:
  - a) Evidence of current hepatitis B vaccination, including applicable boosters, unless the practitioner can demonstrate hepatitis B immunity or has complied with current OSHA hepatitis B vaccination declination requirements;
  - b) Evidence of completion of OSHA Bloodborne Pathogen Training consistent with specified provisions of existing law;
  - c) Proof that the applicant is 18 years of age or older;
  - d) Self-certification of, knowledge of, and commitment to meet state law and relevant local regulations pertaining to body art safety;
  - e) The applicant's business address and the address at which they will perform any activity regulated by the HSC;
  - f) Payment of a registration fee directly to the local enforcement agency. Requires the local enforcement agency to set the fee at an amount not to exceed the amount necessary but that is sufficient to cover the actual costs of administering the program.
- 4) Defines all of the following:
  - a) "Body art" means body piercing, tattooing, branding, or application of permanent cosmetics;
  - b) "Body art facility" means the specified building, section of a building, or vehicle in which a practitioner performs, or demonstrates for the purpose of instruction, body art, including reception areas, the procedure area, and the decontamination and sterilization area. "Body art facility" does not include a facility that only pierces the ear with a disposable, single-use, presterilized clasp or stud or solid needle that is applied using a mechanical device to force the needle or stud through the ear;
  - c) "Local enforcement agency" means the local health agency of the county, city, or city and county. (HSC Section 119301 (c), (d), and (o), respectively.)
- 5) Requires certain businesses and other establishments to post a notice that complies with specified requirements in a conspicuous place near the public entrance of the establishment or in another conspicuous location in clear view of the public and employees where similar notices are customarily posted. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (a).)
- 6) Requires a business or other establishment that operates an intercity passenger rail or light rail stations, or bus stations to provide at least 20 minutes of training to its new and existing

employees who may interact with, or come into contact with, a victim of human trafficking or who are likely to receive, in the course of their employment, a report from another employee about suspected human trafficking, in recognizing the signs of human trafficking and how to report those signs to the appropriate law enforcement agency. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (e).)

- 7) Requires the training to include, but not be limited to, all of the following:
  - a) The definition of human trafficking, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking;
  - b) Myths and misconceptions about human trafficking;
  - c) Physical and mental signs to be aware of that may indicate that human trafficking is occurring. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (f).)
- 8) Authorizes the training to include, but does not limit it, to information and material utilized in training Santa Clara County Valley Transportation Authority employees, private nonprofit organizations that represent the interest of human trafficking victims, and the Department of Justice. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (g)(1).)
- 9) Establishes that the failure to report human trafficking by an employee shall not, by itself, result in the liability of the business or other establishment that operates a facility that is required to provide the training or of any other entity. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (h).)
- 10) Imposes liability for a civil penalty of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for a first offense and two thousand dollars (\$2,000) for each subsequent offense on a business entity or establishment that fails to comply with the notice and training requirements of Civil Code Section 52.6, and authorizes a public prosecutor to bring an action to impose the civil penalty if a local or state agency with authority to regulate the business or establishment has 1) provided the business with reasonable notice of noncompliance and informed them that it is subject to a civil penalty if it does not correct the violation within 30 days from the date of notice and 2) verifies that the violation was not corrected within the 30-day period. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (h).)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** As currently in print this bill is keyed fiscal.

**COMMENTS:** In an era of bipartisan bickering, one of the issues that the entire Legislature can rally around is the campaign against human trafficking. The Penal Code defines human trafficking as the act of depriving or violating the personal liberty of another with the intent to obtain forced labor or services. Someone convicted of human trafficking in California can face up to life in prison, depending on the alleged type of trafficking. The impacts of human trafficking on victims cannot be overstated. Victims, largely women and children, can suffer immense physical and psychological trauma as a result of being trafficked. One practice that is apparently commonplace among human trafficking victims who have been sex trafficked is the act of tattooing, or branding. According to the author:

Human trafficking is a horrific crime that persists in California. We must take every step possible to help victims and their families bring a swift end to this abhorrent practice. According to 2024 statistics from the National Human Trafficking Hotline, in California alone there were 1,733 cases identified. In some cases, human traffickers will “trick, defraud

or physically force victims”. In other cases, “victims are lied to, assaulted, threatened or manipulated into working under inhumane, illegal or otherwise unacceptable conditions”.  
(Link: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/human-trafficking>)

AB 1918 would require body art facilities (including tattoo shops) to post a human trafficking notice in a clearly visible location to both the public and employees that includes information on the signs of human trafficking as well as how to contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline. Additionally, registered practitioners would also be required to complete at least 20 minutes of training to recognize the signs of human trafficking and how to report those signs to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Human traffickers will often tattoo, burn or scar their victims as a way to denote ownership. Tattoos can have multiple purposes for the trafficker. From a study done by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill—“It is a strategy to dehumanize victims, demonstrating who controls their bodies and communicating “ownership” to other traffickers.”

AB 1918 would empower tattoo artists to become a critical point of intervention. By recognizing signs of human trafficking, tattoo artists can actively identify victims and significantly contribute to the documentation and gathering of intelligence for law enforcement or other investigators. Not only is it possible that tattoos can be linked back to specific traffickers and communities, but also connections can be made among multiple victims of one trafficker.

***Existing law provides extensive notices regarding human trafficking.*** Civil Code Section 52.6 requires numerous businesses and workplaces to post a notice in their establishments informing the employees and the general public of the risk of human trafficking and the hotlines one may call to report suspected instances of trafficking. The full list currently captures fifteen different types of businesses, including hotels and short-term stay establishments; hair, nail, electrolysis, and other similar beauty treatment facilities; emergency rooms and urgent care centers; bus stations; adult or sexually oriented businesses; pediatric facilities; and airports. Additionally, existing law requires two of those existing businesses (bus stations and intercity passenger rail or light rail stations) to ensure their employees who may interact with a victim of human trafficking or who are likely to receive a report from another employee about suspected human trafficking complete a 20-minute training about how to recognize the signs of human trafficking and how to appropriately report those signs. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (e).)

A business’ failure to comply with either the notice provision or the training requirements exposes the business to a civil penalty of \$1,000 for the first violation and \$2,000 for each subsequent violation. Public prosecutors are authorized to bring a claim in court against the misbehaving business but must give the business notice that they are out of compliance and give them a 30-day window to come into compliance before initiating an action.

Importantly, Section 52.6 explicitly states that no liability attaches simply because an employee did not make a report to law enforcement about suspected human trafficking. This provision acknowledges the complexity of human trafficking, and the potential risk to both the victim and the employee that may result from engaging with potential human traffickers.

***This bill*** proposes to attack the issue of human trafficking and its apparent nexus to the body art industry by incorporating body art practitioners and establishments into Civil Code 52.6. The bill

would require tattoo and piercing shops to both post the statutory notice and to ensure that practitioners complete the training requirement identified in statute.

One question committee staff could not find data to answer is what percentage of human trafficking victims that are tattooed are tattooed by a registered body artist in a licensed establishment. It seems entirely possible that human traffickers, rather than risk bringing a victim of human trafficking into a licensed tattoo shop would, instead, tattoo their victim in a private location. In these circumstances it seems unlikely that the requirements proposed by this bill will have the intended effect. However, it is also completely possible that a licensed tattoo artist would see at least one, if not more, victims of human trafficking come through their shop. Without appropriate training in how to identify these would-be clients as victims of human trafficking, even the most well-meaning tattoo artist may not be able to respond appropriately. Their lack of knowledge may lose the victims a possibility of escape. In these cases it seems perfectly reasonable, in the name of increased education and empowerment, to require an additional establishment that may very well host victims of human trafficking to post the already-developed notice and comply with existing training requirements.

***ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:*** This bill is supported by 3Strands Global Foundation. In support of the bill they submit:

Human trafficking continues to impact communities across California, often operating in plain sight within legitimate industries. Body art facilities, including tattoo and piercing establishments—are uniquely positioned as environments where practitioners may encounter individuals who are being controlled, coerced, or exploited. AB 1918 takes a critical and practical step forward by expanding existing posting and training requirements to include these establishments, ensuring that more professionals are equipped to recognize and respond to trafficking.

We are particularly encouraged by the bill’s inclusion of **evidence-based, trauma-informed training developed by nonprofit organizations representing the interests of survivors**. This provision is essential. Survivors often face significant barriers to disclosure, and without proper training, opportunities for safe identification and intervention can be missed. Trauma-informed approaches not only improve recognition of trafficking indicators but also reduce the risk of re-traumatization and increase the likelihood that victims will be connected to appropriate support services.

Prevention education is at the core of 3Strands Global Foundation’s mission. We have seen firsthand that equipping professionals across sectors with the tools to identify trafficking can lead to earlier intervention and better outcomes for survivors. By requiring training for both employees and registered practitioners in body art facilities, AB 1918 strengthens California’s comprehensive approach to prevention and expands the network of informed community members who can act as a first line of defense.

AB 1918 reflects a thoughtful, survivor-informed approach to addressing human trafficking—one that prioritizes awareness, accessibility, and prevention without imposing undue burden on businesses.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

3Strands Global Foundation

**Opposition**

None on file

**Analysis Prepared by:** Manuela Boucher-de la Cadena / JUD. / (916) 319-2334