

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
Senator Thomas Umberg, Chair
2025-2026 Regular Session

AB 1918 (Dixon)
Version: June 4, 2026
Hearing Date: June 16, 2026
Fiscal: Yes
Urgency: No
ME

SUBJECT

Human trafficking: body art practitioners

DIGEST

This bill requires body art facilities to post a specified notice regarding human trafficking and to provide specified human trafficking training to their employees and registered practitioners.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Section 52.6 of the Civil Code (Section 52.6) requires certain establishments to post notices regarding resources for witnesses to, and victims of, human trafficking and slavery. That section also requires rail and bus stations to train their employees in identifying and reporting incidents of human trafficking. The Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) also requires hotel and motel employers to provide at least 20 minutes of training and education regarding human trafficking awareness to their employees, as provided. Both federal and state law authorize actions by victims of human trafficking, and sex trafficking in particular.

In response to reports that traffickers oftentimes brand or tattoo their victims, the author brings this bill to expand the reach of Section 52.6 to include body art facilities on the list of establishments that must post the specified notice regarding forced commercial sex, housework, farm work, construction, factory, retail, or restaurant work, or any other activity.

The bill is author sponsored and supported by 3Strands Global Foundation and the Sunita Jain Anti-Human Trafficking Initiative. The Committee received no timely opposition.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE LAW

Existing law:

- 1) Provides that any person who deprives or violates the personal liberty of another with the intent to obtain forced labor or services is guilty of the crime of human trafficking. (Pen. Code § 236.1 (a).)
- 2) Requires specified businesses and establishments to post notices 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. (Civ. Code § 52.6 (a).)
- 3) Requires the notices to include specific language regarding a textline and various hotlines to contact if one is aware of or is a victim of human trafficking. The Department of Justice is required to create a model notice that may be used by these businesses. (Civ. Code § 52.6 (b)-(d).)
- 4) Provides that a business or other establishment that operates intercity passenger rail or light rail stations, or bus stations shall provide at least 20 minutes of training to 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. A list of topics that must be covered in such training is further provided. (Civ. Code § 52.6 (e)-(g).)
- 5) Subjects businesses that fail to comply with the notice and training requirements of Section 52.6 of the Civil Code to specified civil penalties. (Civ. Code § 52.6 (h).)
- 6) Provides that nothing in Civil Code Section 52.6 prevents local governing bodies from adopting and enforcing a local ordinance, rule, or regulation to prevent slavery or human trafficking. (Civ. Code § 52.6 (i).)
- 7) Provides minimum statewide standards for the regulation of persons engaged in the business or performance of tattooing, body piercing, branding, and the application of permanent cosmetics. (Health & Saf. Code §§ 119300 et. seq.)

This bill:

- 1) Requires body art facilities that are subject to regulation under 7), above, to post the notice regarding slavery and human trafficking.

- 2) Requires a business or other establishment that operates a body art facility to provide at least 20 minutes of training in recognizing the signs of human trafficking and how to report those signs to the appropriate law enforcement agency to registered practitioners who practice in the body art 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 or establishment about suspected human trafficking.
- 3) Defines “registered practitioner” as a person registered pursuant to Health and Safety Code, commencing with Section 1119306.
- 4) Requires trainings developed by nonprofit organizations for use in the required trainings to include evidence-based, trauma-informed curriculum.

COMMENTS

1. The troubling prevalence of human trafficking

Human trafficking is the world’s fastest growing criminal enterprise, bringing in annual profits in the tens of billions of dollars. Human trafficking is generally defined as the use of force, coercion, or fraud to obtain coerced labor or personal services. Existing law provides that any person who deprives or violates the personal liberty of another with the intent to obtain forced labor or services is guilty of the crime of human trafficking.

The International Labour Organization estimates that approximately 40 million people were victims of some form of human slavery worldwide in 2016.¹ This includes 24.9 million people in forced labor, meaning they were being “forced to work under threat or coercion as domestic workers, on construction sites, in clandestine factories, on farms and fishing boats, in other sectors, and in the sex industry.” Over 70 percent of these victims were women and girls and one in four victims were children. In their 2019 Data Report, the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline identified over 22,000 victims and survivors and over 4,300 traffickers.²

Traffickers look for people who are susceptible for a variety of reasons, including psychological or emotional vulnerability, economic hardship, lack of a social safety net, membership in a marginalized group, natural disasters, or political instability. Human trafficking is often described as a hidden crime as victims rarely come forward to seek

¹ *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery* (2017) International Labour Organization, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575479.pdf. All internet citations are current as of May 30, 2026.

² *2019 Data Report*, U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Polaris-2019-US-National-Human-Trafficking-Hotline-Data-Report.pdf>.

help due to a variety of factors, including language barriers, the severe trauma resulting from these crimes, fear of the traffickers, and fear of law enforcement.

2. California's human trafficking awareness and training law

To increase awareness of human trafficking and provide support to victims, Civil Code Section 52.6 requires certain businesses and establishments, including truck stops, health facilities, massage parlors, and transit centers, to post notices encouraging victims of human trafficking and those who suspect human trafficking to contact a textline or one of several hotlines to access help and services. The law requires the notice to state specified content and requires the Department of Justice to post a model notice.

In addition, several laws, SB 970 (Atkins, Ch. 842, Stats. 2018) and AB 2034 (Kalra, Ch. 812, Stats. 2018), established training requirements for specified employees. AB 2034 amended Section 52.6, requiring businesses that operate intercity passenger rail or light rail stations or bus stations to train certain employees in recognizing the signs of human trafficking and how to report those signs.

SB 970 added Section 12950.3 to the Government Code, which required such employee trainings at hotels and motels. SB 970 also explicitly stated that it was the intent of the Legislature in enacting the bill "to establish a minimum threshold for human trafficking awareness training and education."

SB 630 (Stern, Ch. 57, Stats. 2019) made clear that Section 52.6, and the requirements set out therein, do not prevent local governing bodies from adopting and enforcing a local ordinance, rule, or regulation to prevent slavery or human trafficking. It further provides that Section 52.6 does not supersede or preempt a local ordinance, rule, or regulation that duplicates or supplements the requirements Section 52.6 imposes upon businesses and other establishments. The addition of this clause paves the way for local jurisdictions to take more aggressive approaches to combatting the scourge of human trafficking in California.

AB 1661 (Davies, Ch. 106, Stats. 2022) required businesses that provide hair, nail, electrolysis, and skin care services, and other related businesses or establishments subject to regulation under the Barbering and Cosmetology Act to post the required notice above 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. AB 1740 (Sanchez, Ch. 104, Stats. 2023) added pediatric care to the list of establishments that must post the human trafficking notice.

3. Another expansion of Section 52.6

This bill takes another step forward by requiring body art facilities to post the notice regarding slavery and human trafficking. Additionally, the bill requires a business or other establishment that operates a body art facility to provide at least 20 minutes of training in recognizing the signs of human trafficking and how to report those signs to the appropriate law enforcement agency to registered practitioners who practice in the body art 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 or establishment about suspected human trafficking.

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](https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/human-trafficking), 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 tattoo shops to post a human trafficking notice with information on the signs of human trafficking and how to contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline. Additionally, tattoo artists 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.

Writing in support, the Sunita Jain Anti-Human Trafficking Initiative explains:

Human trafficking remains a pervasive form of exploitation in California. As prior practitioners in our direct service work, SJI has repeatedly seen traffickers use tattoos, burns, and scars to brand victims – markings intending to denote ownership, control, and dehumanization. We have assisted survivors who required tattoo removal as part of their healing and recovery. These markings are not merely cosmetic; they are evidence of coercion and control and can be a critical point of contact for intervention.

SUPPORT

3Strands Global Foundation
Little Hoover Commission
Sunita Jain Anti-Human Trafficking Initiative

OPPOSITION

None known

RELATED LEGISLATION

Pending Legislation: AB 1845 (Krell, 2026) requires postsecondary education institutions to offer as part of the institution’s sexual harassment training specified training regarding human trafficking. AB 1845 is in the Senate Rules Committee.

Prior Legislation:

AB 1740 (Sanchez, Ch. 104, Stats. 2023) *See* Comment 2.

AB 1661 (Davies, Ch. 106, Stats. 2022) *See* Comment 2.

AB 1788 (Cunningham, Ch. 760, Stats. 2022) established a cause of action against hotels for failing to report known sexual trafficking within the hotel, as specified, or where an employee benefits from sexual trafficking activity within the hotel, as specified.

SB 630 (Stern, Ch. 57, Stats. 2019) *See* Comment 2.

SB 970 (Atkins, Ch. 842, Stats. 2018) *See* Comment 2.

AB 2034 (Kalra, Ch. 812, Stats. 2018) *See* Comment 2.

SB 225 (Stern, Ch. 565, Stats. 2017) updated language that is required to be included in notices certain businesses must post. It included a special textline that can be texted for services and support.

SB 597 (Leyva, Ch. 570, Stats. 2017) allowed victims of human trafficking to participate in the Secretary of State's Safe at Home program.

AB 260 (Santiago, Ch. 547, Stats. 2017) included hotels, motels, and other lodging establishments among the businesses that must post signage regarding reporting human trafficking.

AB 1227 (Bonta, Ch. 558, Stats. 2017) required human trafficking prevention education in schools.

SB 1193 (Steinberg, Ch. 515, Stats. 2012) added Section 52.6 to the Civil Code.

PRIOR VOTES:

Assembly Floor (Ayes 73, Noes 0)

Assembly Appropriations Committee (Ayes 13, Noes 0)

Assembly Judiciary Committee (Ayes 12, Noes 0)
