

THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1918
Author: Dixon (R), et al.
Amended: 8/21/26 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE: 11-0, 6/16/26

AYES: Umberg, Niello, Allen, Caballero, Durazo, Laird, Reyes, Stern,
Valladares, Wahab, Wiener

NO VOTE RECORDED: Ashby, Weber Pierson

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 73-0, 5/4/26 (Consent) - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Human trafficking: body art practitioners

SOURCE: Author

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.

Senate Floor Amendments of 8/21/26 make clarifying changes to the training requirement under the bill and extend the compliance date for tattoo artists to July 1, 2027, from January 1, 2027.

ANALYSIS:

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. (Penal (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. (Civil (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 & Safety 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

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.

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.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/21/26)

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

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/21/26)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 73-0, 5/4/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Ward, Wicks, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arambula, Bennett, Caloza, Chen, Flora, Wallis, Wilson

Prepared by: Margie Estrada / JUD. / (916) 651-4113
8/24/26 11:11:22

**** **END** ****