

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1946 (Wicks) – As Amended April 27, 2026

Policy Committee:	Privacy and Consumer Protection	Vote:	14 - 1
	Judiciary		12 - 0

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

SUMMARY:

This bill modifies the enforcement mechanisms for the existing requirement that social media platforms maintain a reporting mechanism through which California users may report child sexual abuse material (CSAM), authorizes public prosecutors to bring civil actions against noncompliant platforms, and modifies definitions, reporting standards, and compliance timelines.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Possible costs (General Fund, special funds) to the Department of Justice (DOJ) of an unknown amount. Costs include workload costs for receiving and reviewing submitted audits, responding to local prosecutor requests for audit material, and, if the Attorney General exercises the authority granted by the bill, conducting rulemaking to define “clear and conspicuous.” Additional costs will depend on whether the Attorney General pursues enforcement actions, and, if so, the level of additional staffing DOJ needs to handle the related workload. If DOJ hires staff to handle enforcement actions authorized by this bill, the department would incur significant costs, likely in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars annually at a minimum. If DOJ does not pursue enforcement as authorized by this bill, the department would likely not incur any costs. A portion of DOJ enforcement costs may be offset by reasonable attorney’s fees and costs recovered in successful actions.

- 2) Cost pressures (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund) of an unknown but potentially significant amount to the courts to adjudicate civil enforcement actions authorized by this bill. Actual costs will depend on the number of cases filed and the amount of court time needed to resolve each case. It generally costs approximately \$1,000 to operate a courtroom for one hour. Although courts are not funded on the basis of workload, increased pressure on the Trial Court Trust Fund may create a demand for increased funding for courts from the General Fund. The state budget provides annual General Fund backfills to the Trial Court Trust Fund to offset revenue reductions, totaling approximately \$117.3 million in 2025-26.

The Legislative Analyst’s Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year beginning in the 2027-28 fiscal year.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Although AB 1394 created a framework and mechanism to combat the proliferation of CSAM, there are gaps within the existing law that still allow CSAM to spread on social media platforms. AB 1946 would fill in some of these gaps and expand the mechanism so that the process to report CSAM and the law is clear and functional.

- 2) **Background.** In 2023, the Legislature enacted AB 1394 (Wicks), Chapter 579, Statutes of 2023, which requires social media platforms to maintain a mechanism for identifiable minors depicted in CSAM to report the material to the platform, and to permanently block reported material that meets specified criteria. AB 1394 also authorizes a reporting user to bring a civil action against a platform that fails to comply. This bill expands the reporting and enforcement framework established by AB 1394. It allows any user — not only an identifiable minor depicted in the material — to submit a report; requires a natural person to review reports that do not match a known CSAM hash and are not otherwise blocked; shortens the platform’s compliance timeline from 30 days to 48 hours, generally aligning with the federal TAKE IT DOWN Act; and authorizes the Attorney General, district attorneys, city attorneys, and county counsel to bring civil actions for civil penalties of up to \$250,000 for each day a platform’s reporting mechanism is unavailable or nonfunctional.
- 3) **Prior Legislation.** AB 1137 (Krell), of the 2025-2026 Session, updated and strengthened AB 1394 by expanding reporting and accountability provisions. AB 1137 was held on this committee’s suspense file.

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