
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1946 (Wicks) - Reporting mechanism: child sexual abuse material

Version: July 2, 2026

Policy Vote: P., D.T., & C.P. 9 - 0, JUD.
13 - 0

Urgency: No

Mandate: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Consultant: Bob Franzosa

Bill Summary: AB 1946 would modify 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 Impact: Significant annual ongoing costs to the Department of Justice (DOJ). 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, 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. (General Fund)

Significant workload cost pressures to the courts to adjudicate civil enforcement actions depending on the number of cases filed and the amount of court time needed to resolve each case. An eight-hour court day costs approximately \$10,500 based on the hourly rate of court personnel including at minimum the judge, clerk, bailiff, court reporter, jury administrator, administrative staff, and jury per-diems. While the courts are not funded on a workload basis, an increase in workload could result in delayed court services and would put pressure on the General Fund to fund additional staff and resources. The FY 2026-27 Budget appropriated \$70 million General Fund for this purpose. (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund)

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.

Related 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.