

Date of Hearing: April 8, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

Liz Ortega, Chair

AB 1961 (Ahrens) – As Introduced February 13, 2026

SUBJECT: Civil actions: protective orders: workplace violence

SUMMARY: Authorizes an employer, beginning on July 1, 2027, to seek a temporary restraining order (TRO) and an order after hearing on behalf of a reasonably identifiable group of employees if a credible threat of violence is directed at the employer’s workplace or at the employer’s employees generally. If an employer seeks relief on behalf of a group of employees, the employer shall not be required to name any individual employee as a protected party. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) States that if a credible threat of violence is directed at the employer’s workplace or a location where a group of employees performs their primary job duties, “employee” also includes a group of employees identified by their workplace or location where their primary job duties are performed.
- 2) Authorizes an employer, beginning on July 1, 2027, to seek a TRO and an order after hearing on behalf of a reasonably identifiable group of employees if a credible threat of violence is directed at the employer’s workplace or at the employer’s employees generally. If an employer seeks relief on behalf of a group of employees, the employer shall not be required to name any individual employee as a protected party.
- 3) Requires the Judicial Council to update its forms related to actions taken pursuant to 2) above by July 1, 2027.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Authorizes any employer or collective bargaining representative of an employee who has suffered harassment, unlawful violence, or a credible threat of violence from any individual, that can reasonably be construed to be carried out or to have been carried out at the workplace, to seek a TRO and an order after hearing on behalf of the employee and, at the discretion of the court, any number of other employees at the workplace, and, if appropriate, other employees at other workplaces of the employer. Code of Civil Procedure §527.8(a).
- 2) States that, for purposes of filing a TRO at a workplace, the terms “employer” and “employee” mean persons as defined in Section 350 of the Labor Code. “Employer” also includes a federal agency, the state, a state agency, a city, county, or district, a joint powers authority, or a public transit operator, whether operated directly by a public entity or through a contract or subcontract, and a private, public, or quasi-public corporation, or any public agency thereof or therein. “Employee” also includes the members of boards of directors of private, public, and quasi-public corporations and elected and appointed public officers. “Employee” also includes a volunteer or independent contractor who performs services for the employer at the employer’s worksite. Code of Civil Procedure §527.8(b)(3).
- 3) Defines “credible threat of violence” to mean a knowing and willful statement or course of conduct that would place a reasonable person in fear for their safety, or the safety of

their immediate family, and that serves no legitimate purpose. Code of Civil Procedure §527.8(b)(2).

- 4) Defines “harassment” to mean a knowing and willful course of conduct directed at a specific person that seriously alarms, annoys, or harasses the person, and that serves no legitimate purpose. The course of conduct must be that which would cause a reasonable person to suffer substantial emotional distress and must actually cause substantial emotional distress. Code of Civil Procedure §527.8(b)(4).
- 5) Defines “unlawful violence” to mean any assault or battery, or stalking as prohibited in the Penal Code, or any violation of Section 243.3 of the Penal Code but shall not include lawful acts of self-defense or defense of others. Code of Civil Procedure §527.8(b)(8).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS: This bill is double-referred to the Assembly Judiciary Committee upon passage from this Committee.

As mentioned in the author’s background materials, threats that target school sites are not always directed at a specific individual. Current law requires that an individual be listed when an employer, such as a local education agency, seeks a TRO on behalf of a group of employees. In an attempt to comply with this requirement, schools will list a school principal or superintendent on the required Judicial Council forms. Courts may deny these TRO requests on the grounds that the individual listed was neither personally present during the incident nor did they personally fear for their safety.

Some examples from the sponsor of threats to group of employees in the educational context:

- A Bay Area urban elementary district where a parent claimed to have a concealed firearm and threatened to “shoot up the school.”
- A Bay Area suburban elementary district where a student posted written threats online to kill teachers and classmates, including threats targeting students of color.
- A Bay Area suburban district where a community member repeatedly loitered on campus without legitimate business, claiming to be looking for a “girlfriend” who did not exist, prompting safety concerns among families.
- A Central Valley County Office of Education where a former employee drove recklessly through a parking lot in an apparent attempt to intimidate staff.

According to the author, “AB 1961 addresses a critical gap in our workplace safety laws. Currently, employers can obtain workplace violence restraining orders when a specific employee is targeted. However, there has been a rise in threats directed at entire workplaces, especially schools, without naming any individual. In these cases, courts may deny protection, leaving workers and students at risk.

This bill enables restraining orders to be issued when threats are aimed at groups of employees at a workplace, rather than targeting individuals. It is a sensible solution that equips employers with the necessary tools to act swiftly, protect their workforce, and prevent violence before it occurs.”

Committee Comments

Committee staff recommends the author consider amending the bill subsequent to this committee to align the language of proposed CCP Section 527.8(b)(3)(B): “...a credible threat of violence is directed at the employer’s workplace **or a location where a group of employees performs their primary job duties...**” with proposed CCP Section 527.8(e)(2) “...a credible threat of violence is directed at the employer’s workplace **or at the employer’s employees generally.**”

Arguments in Support

The Association of California School Administrators, sponsor of the bill, states, “Regrettably, school employees throughout California are the target of credible threats of violence through verbal exchanges, physical interactions, and written communication including emails and online postings. This may come from parents, students, other employees or members of the community who are not associated with the school. Under current law, employers may petition for a temporary restraining order, but a specific individual must be named in that process. This creates a challenge when the threat speaks to a location (such as a school campus or district office) or a group of employees (coaches) and not an individual.

Local educational agencies have tried alternative methods in their petitions to the courts to match their circumstances to the existing forms but those are not always successful, leaving the presence of potential danger unchecked. AB 1961 would address this problem by adding to the definition of “employee” under Code of Civil Procedure Section 527.8 “reasonable identifiable groups or class of employees” who are the subject of a credible threat of violence.

Recent state laws have acknowledged the need for intervention when threats target not an individual but rather groups of employees based on the location, types of programs offered, services provided, standards of practice, or mission and values of the worksite, be it actual or perceived by the source of the threat. AB 1961 offers an additional tool to address a threat and mitigate additional or advanced threats, or even worse, when those threats of violence turn into acts.”

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

Prior Legislation

SB 1374 (Niello) of 2026 would allow a public post-secondary education agency chief administrative officer to seek a TRO and injunction following a credible threat of violence against a campus or facility. This bill is pending a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

AB 2096 (Petrie-Norris) Statutes of 2024, Chapter 947 authorizes the administrator of a public postsecondary educational institution to seek a temporary restraining order and an injunction on behalf of a student who has suffered unlawful violence or a credible threat of violence to protect them on the school campus.

SB 553 (Cortese) Statutes of 2023, Chapter 289, expanded the authority of collective bargaining representatives to also seek a TRO on behalf of employees.

SB 428 (Blakespear) Statutes of 2023, Chapter 286, made various changes to the TRO process when sought by an employer on behalf of an employee, including allowing the employee to decline being named in the TRO.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Association of California School Administrators (Sponsor)
Alameda County Office of Education
California Hospital Association
Engineers and Scientists of California, IFPTE Local 20, AFL-CIO
Los Angeles Unified School District
School Employers Association of California
Schools Excess Liability Fund
Small School Districts Association
Utility Workers Union of America

Opposition

None on File.

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