
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1979 (Bonta) - Health care services: artificial intelligence

Version: July 2, 2026

Policy Vote: P., D.T., & C.P. 7 - 2,
HEALTH 8 - 0

Urgency: No

Mandate: Yes

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Consultant: Bob Franzoya

Bill Summary: AB 1979 would require health care providers that offer health care chatbots comply with the California Medical Information Act for the purposes of protecting private health information.

Fiscal Impact: Costs of an unknown amount to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to ensure health facilities, clinics, and physician offices comply with the provisions of this bill. If CDPH adopts regulations, one-time costs could be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars (Licensing and Certification Fund).

The Department of Consumer Affairs reports most healing arts boards anticipate an increase in workload due to a higher volume of complaints resulting from this bill. However, the boards are unable to estimate the increase in complaint volume or related enforcement costs due to the lack of data on how frequently artificial intelligence (AI) violations occur (various special funds).

Potentially significant costs to the Department of Justice (DOJ) to bring civil actions for violations against any person who engages in a deceptive act or practice. Actual costs will depend on the number of enforcement actions pursued by DOJ and the amount of additional work created by each action, but costs may be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. In addition, the Unfair Competition Law provides private plaintiff actions. (Unfair Competition Law Fund).

Cost pressures of an unknown but potentially significant amount to the courts to adjudicate any additional filings. Although courts are not funded based on workload, increased pressure on the Trial Court Trust Fund may create a demand for increased funding for courts. The proposed FY 2026-07 Governor's budget would provide \$70 million General Fund support (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund).

Staff Comments: Unlike the AG, who may seek significant civil penalties for UCL violations, the remedies available to private plaintiffs are more limited. They may seek neither penalties nor damages to compensate for injuries caused by the violation. Instead, private plaintiffs may seek an injunction to halt the unfair, unlawful or fraudulent practice and restitution of any gains obtained as a result of the violation. Private UCL actions are tried before a judge, who has the sole discretion to determine if the alleged wrongful act is an unfair, fraudulent, or unlawful business practice and to determine the appropriate equitable remedy. A court may order restitution in a UCL action without individual proof of injury if it determines that such a remedy is necessary to prevent the unfair practice.