

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

Liz Ortega, Chair

AB 1980 (Caloza) – As Amended April 16, 2026

SUBJECT: Labor: apprenticeship: Equal Representation in Construction Apprenticeships Grant Program

SUMMARY: Requires, upon appropriation by the Legislature, the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR), through its Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS), to establish and administer the Equal Representation in Construction Apprenticeships (ERiCA) Grant Program, as specified, to increase equitable access to building and construction career pathways for women, nonbinary individuals, and underrepresented populations. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires, upon appropriation by the Legislature, the DIR, through the DAS, to establish and administer the ERiCA Grant Program.
 - a) Provides that the purpose of the program is to increase equitable access to building and construction career pathways for women, nonbinary individuals, and underrepresented populations in California.
- 2) Requires the DIR to issue a competitive request for applications for qualified organizations that provide registered preapprenticeship programs and registered apprenticeship programs designed to prepare women, nonbinary individuals, and underrepresented populations for entry into the building and construction trades.
- 3) Provides that “qualified organizations” include community-based organizations, workforce boards, unions, nonprofit organizations, local education agencies, and registered construction apprenticeship and preapprenticeship program sponsors.
 - a) Requires a qualified organization to either be a registered preapprenticeship program or apprenticeship program, or be in collaboration with one, as validated with letters of support.
 - b) Requires a qualified organization to have a demonstrated history of operating at least two preapprentice or apprentice cohorts focused on equity and inclusion of underrepresented populations in the building and construction industry over the past four years, or marketed, recruited, or advocated for women or nonbinary individuals in registered construction preapprenticeship and apprenticeship programs.
- 4) Requires the DIR, in awarding grants, to prioritize applications from qualified organizations that have programs that serve women, nonbinary individuals, and underrepresented populations who meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - a) Low-income status.
 - b) Unemployed or underemployed.
 - c) Single parents or primary caregivers.

- d) Residents of communities disproportionately impacted by poverty or unemployment.
 - e) Individuals from populations historically underrepresented in apprenticeship and skilled trades.
- 5) Requires grant funds to only be used for the following purposes:
- a) Direct participant stipends to offset lost wages and enable full participation in registered preapprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs.
 - b) Supportive services necessary to improve participant retention and completion, including childcare assistance, transportation support, case management, and referrals for housing or family stabilization services.
 - c) Career navigation, job placement, and transition supportive services for preapprentices and apprentices to move into registered apprenticeship programs or employment.
 - d) Outreach to women, nonbinary individuals, and underrepresented populations interested in careers in the building and construction industry.
 - e) Worksite culture improvements, with a focus on mentoring, community building, and mental health support for apprentices, as well as training for apprentices and journey workers, contractors, and managers on a worksite.
 - f) Administrative and program management costs, as determined by the DIR.
- 6) Requires grantees to report certain outcome data to DIR, including the number and gender demographics of program participants, the amount and distribution of stipends and supportive services, the amount and uses of outreach funding, and employment retention outcomes.
- 7) Requires the DIR to provide a summary report to the Legislature to support ongoing oversight, budget evaluation, and potential program expansion.
- 8) Authorizes the DIR to issue rules, regulations, guidelines, policies, or procedures necessary to implement this measure, including application criteria, grant requirements, and performance measures.
- 9) Defines certain terms.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the DIR within the Labor and Workforce Development Agency to foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners of California, to improve their working conditions, and to advance their opportunities for profitable employment. Labor Code § 50 et seq.
- 2) Provides for preapprenticeship and apprenticeship programs within the DAS, sponsored by specific entities and employers, and requires the Chief of the DAS to perform various functions with respect to apprenticeship programs and the welfare of apprentices. Labor Code § 3070 et seq.

- 3) Requires, upon appropriation by the Legislature, the DIR to establish a Women in Construction Priority Unit to coordinate and help ensure collaboration across the department's divisions, and maximize state and federal funding to support women and nonbinary individuals in the construction workforce. Labor Code § 107.7.1(a).
- 4) Requires the Women in Construction Priority Unit to do all of the following:
 - a) Assist and provide resources to women and nonbinary individuals, including, but not limited to, apprentices and journeypersons in the construction industry, including developing materials for employers and unions to promote the recruitment and retention of women and nonbinary individuals in construction, maintaining a website listing workers' rights, developing training materials specific to women and nonbinary individuals to navigate health and safety and wage and hour laws, and leadership training to increase the upward mobility of women and nonbinary individuals in construction careers.
 - b) Provide resources for employers and project owners, including public agencies, to improve construction worksite culture, address barriers to employment, develop training and materials for workforce pipeline professionals specific to women and nonbinary individuals in construction, and interagency training.
 - c) Upon request by a state agency and approval by the Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development, establish interagency agreements as specified to promote the recruitment and retention of women and nonbinary individuals in construction. Labor Code Sec. 107.7.2(a)-(c).
- 5) Provides that preapprenticeship programs shall be eligible for resources provided under (3) and (4) above. Labor Code Sec. 107.7.2(d).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Women and other populations underrepresented in the construction workforce:*

Nationally, women represent just 11 percent of the construction industry. Women make up an even smaller percentage (4.3 percent in 2025) of the hands-on trades jobs such as electricians, carpenters, laborers, and plumbers.¹ Other populations underrepresented in the building and construction trades include non-binary individuals, justice involved, at-risk youth and certain ethnic minorities.

The construction industry, like many others, is facing upcoming retirements of record levels of skilled tradespeople and urgently needs a pipeline of new workers. Furthermore, jobs in the building and construction trades offer individuals meaningful work with good pay. This creates an ideal environment for women and other historically-underrepresented populations to enter into and advance in the industry.

Women in Construction Priority Unit:

¹ Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey. 2025. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>

To help more women and underrepresented populations enter the trades, the Legislature and Governor, via the 2022-23 Budget Act, established the Women in Construction Priority Unit at the DIR. The unit was tasked with, among other things:

- Assisting and providing resources to women and nonbinary individuals including apprentices and journeypersons in the construction industry
- Providing resources to employers and project owners to improve worksite culture and address barriers to employment
- Developing materials and training for employers and unions to promote recruitment and retention
- Leadership training to increase the upward mobility of women and nonbinary individuals in construction careers

In each of the Budget Acts from 2022 to 2025, \$15 million was appropriated to support the unit, for a total of \$60 million. That funding was used, in part, to stand up the ERiCA grant program.

ERiCA grant program:

The ERiCA grant program aims to increase outreach to and reduce barriers for women, non-binary individuals, and underrepresented populations to enter the building and construction trades. The program provides funding to pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs for recruitment and outreach, childcare stipends, and improvements to worksite culture.

To date, DIR has awarded approximately \$51 million in funding through the ERiCA grants. The remaining \$9 million appropriated by the Legislature for the Women in Construction Priority Unit was used for staffing, program evaluation and other administrative costs.

Neither the Women in Construction Priority unit nor the ERiCA program have remaining funding unless more is appropriated in this or future years' budget acts. This bill would codify the ERiCA program, as well as expand on how the funding can be used, and the applicant eligibility and prioritization criteria. The author indicates she is pursuing an accompanying budget allocation in this year's budget act.

According to the author:

“Today, women hold only about 10 percent of construction trade jobs and apprenticeships nationwide. Despite making up more than half of our country's population, the industry has been historically male-dominated, and too many talented and capable women stay on the sidelines, not realizing that these opportunities are within reach. AB 1980 turns opportunity into success, equipping women—especially from historically underrepresented populations—with the training, stipends, and support services they need to provide for their families, while building long-term, thriving careers in skilled trades. Because when we invest in women, we invest in California's future.”

Arguments in Support

Women in Non Traditional Employment Roles, co-sponsor of the measure, states that, “As an organization that directly serves women seeking careers in the skilled trades, WINTER has seen firsthand how financial barriers, such as lost wages, lack of childcare, and transportation challenges, prevent capable and motivated women from completing training programs. AB 1980 directly addresses these barriers by providing stipends, supportive services, and career navigation, ensuring that more women can successfully enter and complete pre-apprenticeship programs and transition into registered apprenticeships or employment.”

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

Prior and Related Legislation

AB 2550 (Caloza) of 2026 would require the Employment Development Department to collect and report to the Legislature specified data related to the state’s construction workforce, including the current number of construction workers who are women. Pending in this Committee.

SB 101 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 4, Statutes of 2025, among other provisions, appropriated \$14,993,000 to support the Women in Construction Priority Unit within the DIR.

AB 107 (Gabriel), Chapter 22, Statutes of 2024, among other provisions, appropriated \$15 million to support the Women in Construction Priority Unit within the DIR.

SB 105 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 862, Statutes of 2023, among other provisions, appropriated \$15 million to support the Women in Construction Priority Unit within the DIR.

SB 154 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 43, Statutes of 2022, among other provisions, appropriated \$60 million to the DAS and required it to be used, in part, to support the Women in Construction Priority Unit within the DIR; provided that it is the intent of the Legislature that \$15 million be provided on an ongoing basis to support this unit.

SB 191 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 67, Statutes of 2022, among other provisions, required the DIR to establish a Women in Construction Priority Unit to coordinate and help ensure collaboration across the DIR’s divisions, and maximize state and federal funding to support women and nonbinary individuals in the construction workforce.

SB 1115 (Skinner) of 2022 would have required, upon appropriation by the Legislature, the DIR to establish a Women in Construction Priority Unit to coordinate and help ensure collaboration across the DIR’s divisions and maximize state and federal funding to support women and non-binary individuals in the construction workforce. Died in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 2358 (Carrillo), Chapter 675, Statutes of 2018, prohibited discrimination in any building and construction trades apprenticeship program on the basis of certain enumerated categories with regards to acceptance into or participation in the program as specified.

AB 2288 (Burke), Chapter 692, Statutes of 2016, required the California Workforce Development Board and local workforce development boards to ensure specified funds go toward programs and services that develop a plan for outreach and retention for women participants in pre-apprenticeship programs.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (Co-Sponsor)
Women in Non Traditional Employment Roles (Co-Sponsor)

Opposition

None on File

Analysis Prepared by: Erin Hickey / L. & E. /