

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 1980 (Caloza)

As Amended May 18, 2026

Majority vote

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.

Major Provisions

- 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) Authorizes grant funds to be used only 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, if applicable to the purpose of the grant.
- 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.

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

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

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:

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:

- 1) Assisting and providing resources to women and nonbinary individuals including apprentices and journeypersons in the construction industry
- 2) Providing resources to employers and project owners to improve worksite culture and address barriers to employment
- 3) Developing materials and training for employers and unions to promote recruitment and retention
- 4) 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.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee: Ongoing cost pressures of an unknown amount, likely in the tens of millions of dollars annually, to appropriate funds to DIR to continue administering a permanent and potentially more expansive ERiCA grant program (General Fund (GF)). The author is requesting a budget appropriation in the 2026-27 state budget to support ERiCA. For reference, DAS awarded approximately \$25 million during the first round of grants for program year (PY) 2023-2025 and approximately \$26.2 million during the second round of grants for PY 2025-27, and DAS would likely continue to utilize approximately 15% of appropriated funds for ongoing program administration costs.

VOTES

ASM LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT: 7-0-0

YES: Ortega, Alanis, Chen, Elhawary, Kalra, Lee, Ward

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

YES: Wicks, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache

ABS, ABST OR NV: Hoover, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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FN: 0002991