
SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT AND RETIREMENT
Senator Lola Smallwood-Cuevas, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1980	Hearing Date:	June 17, 2026
Author:	Caloza		
Version:	June 8, 2026		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Emma Bruce		

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

KEY ISSUE

This bill directs the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR), upon appropriation by the Legislature, to establish the Equal Representation in Construction Apprenticeships Grant Program (ERiCA Grant Program) to increase equitable access to building and construction career pathways for women, nonbinary individuals, and underrepresented populations in California.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the Department of Industrial Relations (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 §50.5)
- 2) Establishes the Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS) within DIR to oversee apprenticeship programs and requires the Chief of the Division (Chief) to perform various functions to promote the welfare of apprentices. (Labor Code §3070 et seq.)
- 3) Provides for preapprenticeship and apprenticeship programs within DAS, sponsored by specific entities and employers, and requires the Chief to perform various functions with respect to apprenticeship programs and the welfare of apprentices. (Labor Code §3070 et seq.)
- 4) Requires DIR, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to establish a Women in Construction Priority Unit to coordinate and help ensure collaboration across DIR's divisions, and maximize state and federal funding to support women and nonbinary individuals in the construction workforce. (Labor Code §107.7.1)
- 5) 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 an internet 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 §107.7.2(a-c))

- 6) Provides that preapprenticeship programs shall be eligible for resources provided under 4) and 5). (Labor Code §107.7.2(d))

This bill:

- 1) Requires, upon appropriation by the Legislature, DIR, through DAS, to establish and administer the Equal Representation in Construction Apprenticeships Grant Program (ERiCA Grant Program).
- 2) Requires 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) Requires DIR, when 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.
- 4) Authorizes 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 department.
- 5) Requires each grantee to report outcome data to DIR, including, but not limited to, all of the following, if applicable to the purpose of the grant:
 - a) The number of participants enrolled in a registered preapprenticeship *or* apprenticeship program, and how many enrolled completed the program.
 - b) Amount and distribution of stipends.
 - c) Amount and distribution of supportive services.
 - d) Amount and uses of outreach funding.
 - e) Gender demographics for program participants.
 - f) Employment retention outcomes at 6 and 12 months postprogram exit for registered preapprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs.
- 6) Requires DIR to provide a summary report to the Legislature, as specified, to support ongoing oversight, budget evaluation, and potential program expansion.
- 7) Authorizes DIR to issue rules, regulations, guidelines, policies, or procedures necessary to implement these provisions, including application criteria, grant requirements, and performance measures.
- 8) 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.
- 9) Defines “registered” as registered with DAS.

COMMENTS

1. Background:

Women and Other Underrepresented Populations in the Trades

Careers in the building and construction trades offer a reliable pathway into the middle class. Journeypersons and apprentices enjoy high wages, as well as health and pension benefits. In California, an increasing demand for housing, infrastructure, and climate-resilient development has led to sustained investments in apprenticeship programs. In April 2026, for example, the State announced \$18.6 million in grants to support apprenticeship in the building and construction trades. The construction industry's urgent need for skilled workers creates opportunities to diversify its 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.

Women in Construction Priority Unit

As part of the 2022/2023 Budget Act, Governor Newsom signed into law legislation to create the Women in Construction Unit at DIR. The goal of the Unit is to support women and nonbinary individuals in entering the construction workforce. Among other things, the Unit was tasked with:

- 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 addition to the Unit, a Women in Construction Advisory Committee was created to develop recommendations to diversify the construction workforce. The Advisory Committee is composed of representatives from certified collective bargaining agents who represent construction workers, construction industry employers, labor-management groups in the industry, and representatives from the Labor Commissioner's Office, Cal/OSHA, and the Department of Fair Employment and Housing.

Equal Representation in Construction Apprenticeship Grant (ERiCA Grant Program)

Using money appropriated in each of the Budget Acts from 2022 to 2025, the Unit established the ERiCA Grant Program. ERiCA grants seek to improve access to training and employment opportunities for underrepresented populations in construction trades throughout the state. Grantees can apply for 3 categories of funding:

- 1) **Recruitment:** Expanding recruitment efforts to be more inclusive of women and non-binary individuals to better facilitate their entry into construction careers,
- 2) **Childcare:** supportive resources for childcare and,
- 3) **Worksite culture:** mentoring and mental health support for apprentices and pre-apprentices and training for all on the worksite to better navigate the worksite interactions.

DAS awarded \$25 million in funds during the first round of the ERiCA grant program (2023-2025). The second round of grants is underway, with an expected performance period of June/July 2025- June 30, 2027. DAS awarded \$26,169,217 for this round.

Recruitment

Eligible activities for recruitment grants include developing more inclusive materials and strategies for career counselors at high schools and community colleges, updating website content to be more inclusive of historically underrepresented populations, attending women's

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

career fairs, and networking with contractors and employers to address any concerns around hiring women, non-binary individuals, and underrepresented pre-apprentices. Grantees are required to work in collaboration with the DIR Office of Communications & Media Relations to collaborate on marketing campaigns. This may include, but is not limited to, providing content such as videos, pictures, text or graphics for marketing campaigns, cross promoting events and opportunities, and social media and event collaboration. Additionally, grantees should aim to organize or attend at least one in-person and one virtual event per reporting period specifically for tabling or outreach purposes.

Childcare

Childcare grants support participants in DAS-approved pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs who have a demonstrated need for childcare services. Grantees can use the funds for stipends or reimbursements. Pre-apprentices and apprentices must be a parent or legal guardian to children under the age of 13, or to dependent children with disabilities requiring documented specific care needs. Eligible pre-apprentices receive \$5,000, while apprentices receive \$10,000.

Worksite Culture

Worksite culture funding is new to the second round of the ERiCA Grant Program. Funding for this category is focused on mentoring, community building, and training for apprentices, journeypersons, contractors, and managers to improve worksite culture. Eligible activities include recruiting and training mentors to support women, non-binary and other underrepresented populations, coordinating with public officials at Cal/OSHA and the Labor Commissioner's Office on trainings on workplace health, safety, and wage and hour rights, supplying mental health support for apprentices, and drafting template worksite culture norms and processes to offer to employers and programs. Funded activities must be in addition to or complement required training already in place.

Grant Eligibility

Eligible Grant applicants must have a demonstrated history of operating at least two pre-apprentice or apprentice cohorts focusing on equity and inclusion of underrepresented populations in the construction industry over the past four years *or* marketed, recruited or advocated for women or non-binary individuals in DAS-registered construction pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. All applicants must be a DAS-registered pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship program or be in collaboration with one, validated with letters of support. The following are eligible entity types:

- Non-profits
- Community-based Organizations
- Local Education Agencies
- Workforce Development Boards
- Unions
- State Registered construction apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship program sponsors

Applicants are scored according to five criteria: 1) fulfills eligibility requirements; 2) demonstrated history of serving under-represented populations in construction; 3) effective use of funding; 4) strength of projected outcomes; and 5) feasibility of proposed plan.

Reporting Requirements

Applicants that are approved as grantees are required to abide by specified reporting requirements. The first reporting period is one month into the grant, at which time grantees provide a narrative progress report towards contracted deliverables. After that, quarterly reporting is required for the duration of the grant. Quarterly reporting includes narrative reporting, fiscal reporting demonstrating use of funds, and participant reporting. The structure and detail of participant reporting varies depending on the type of grant. For example, grantees focused on recruitment need to articulate the number of participants served and clearly identify the type of outreach/recruitment that will be used, along with measurable metrics for success.

This Bill

Neither the Women in Construction Priority Unit nor the ERiCA Grant Program have remaining funding unless more is appropriated in this or future years' budget acts. AB 1980 would codify the ERiCA Grant Program and require DIR to submit a report to the Legislature to support ongoing oversight, budget evaluation, and potential program expansion. The program criteria outlined in this bill closely align with the program criteria DIR uses to administer ERiCA grants.

2. Need for this bill?

According to the author:

“California’s growing economy depends on a skilled workforce capable of meeting labor demand in high-growth industries, including construction and other skilled trades that provide family-sustaining wages and long-term career mobility. Women, particularly low-income women, women of color, and women who are primary caregivers, remain significantly underrepresented in registered apprenticeship programs and other high-road workforce pathways due to structural barriers.

Pre-apprenticeship programs have demonstrated to effectively prepare participants for apprenticeship opportunities. However, the lack of financial support, as well as affordable and reliable childcare, during training often prevents women from being able to fully participate in training programs that require consistent attendance on nontraditional hours.

Between January and August of 2025, over 450,000 women left the workforce, underscoring the urgent need to ensure women have the opportunities and support to re-enter public and private industries. Moreover, careers in California’s construction industry offer a starting median annual wage of \$55,000, which demonstrates the economic potential of these trades and the importance of equitable access for women.

AB 1980 will institutionalize the Equal Representation in Construction Apprenticeships (ERiCA) Grant Program within the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) as a State program, and will authorize competitive grants to eligible entities, including community-based organizations, workforce development organizations, labor-management partnerships, and public education institutions.”

3. Proponent Arguments:

Women in Non Traditional Roles, a co-sponsor of the measure, argues:

“AB 1980 will institutionalize the Equal Representation in Construction Apprenticeships (ERiCA) Grant Program within the Department of Industrial Relations, ensuring sustained, statewide support for pre-apprenticeship training and workforce entry for women. This action is essential: while pre-apprenticeship programs have proven effective pathways into registered apprenticeship, too many women are unable to complete them due to financial and structural barriers.

Through our direct service to women entering the skilled trades, WINTER sees these barriers every day. Lost wages, lack of affordable childcare, transportation challenges, and the need for basic training supports prevent otherwise qualified participants from completing programs and transitioning into high-quality careers. AB 1980 directly addresses these gaps by providing:

- Participant stipends to offset lost income
- Training-related resources, including tools, certifications, and curriculum
- Supportive services such as childcare, transportation, and case management
- Career navigation and placement into registered apprenticeships or employment...

The urgency of this investment cannot be overstated. Women remain significantly underrepresented in apprenticeship pathways, particularly low-income women, women of color, and caregivers who face compounded structural barriers. At the same time, California’s construction industry offers a starting median wage of approximately \$55,000 annually, representing a powerful pathway to economic mobility and family-sustaining careers.

Yet, between January and August 2025 alone, more than 450,000 women exited the workforce. Without targeted, sustained intervention, this talent pool will remain underutilized, at a time when California urgently needs a skilled workforce to meet infrastructure and housing demands.

Current funding mechanisms are insufficient. Existing federal and state programs are limited, inconsistent, and not designed to address the specific barriers women face in entering nontraditional careers. AB 1980 provides the structure, scale, and permanence needed to close this gap.”

The California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, a co-sponsor of the measure, argues:

“AB 1980 deeply aligns with the Commission’s commitment to supporting the workforce development and advancement of women in industries where they are underrepresented. The bill supports this goal through the program’s aim to award competitive grants to preapprenticeship training programs to offset lost wages and enable full participation in these programs. This program will provide resources, support, and tools that prepare women to enter these pathways that can lead to long-term economic security and fulfillment.”

4. Opponent Arguments:

None received.

5. Prior Legislation:

AB 2550 (Caloza, 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. This bill is pending in the Senate Labor, Public Employment and Retirement 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 DIR.

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

SB 154 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 43, Statutes of 2022) among other provisions, appropriated \$60 million to DAS and required it to be used, in part, to support the Women in Construction Priority Unit within 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 DIR to establish a Women in Construction Priority Unit to coordinate and help ensure collaboration across DIR's divisions, and maximize state and federal funding to support women and nonbinary individuals in the construction workforce.

SB 1115 (Skinner, 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. This bill was held 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.

SUPPORT

California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (Co-sponsor)
Women in Non Traditional Employment Roles (Co-sponsor)
California Edge Coalition
Career Launch Path

Contractors State License Board
Equal Rights Advocates
Grid Alternatives
Rising Sun Center for Opportunity
Strategy Workplace Communications
Tradeswomen INC.

OPPOSITION

None received

-- END --