

Date of Hearing: April 7, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Ash Kalra, Chair

AB 2101 (Gipson) – As Introduced February 18, 2026

PROPOSED CONSENT (As Proposed to be Amended)

SUBJECT: HUMAN TRAFFICKING: NOTICE AND TRAINING: DISASTER SITES

KEY ISSUE: SHOULD PRIVATE ENTITIES THAT OPERATE IN DESIGNATED DISASTER SITES AND DESIGNATED MITIGATION SITES THAT ARE INVOLVED IN DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY BE REQUIRED TO POST NOTICES RELATING TO IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO SIGNS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND COMPLETE A TRAINING ON THE SAME TOPIC?

SYNOPSIS

The impacts of human trafficking on victims cannot be overstated. Victims, largely women and children, can suffer immense physical and psychological trauma as a result of being trafficked. According to the author and sponsors, rates of human trafficking appear to increase in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster. This bill proposes to add “designated disaster sites” and “designated mitigation sites” to the list of businesses and entities that must post a specified notice relating to human trafficking on their premises. However, as currently in print the new provisions appear to capture entire areas that may not have a single structure or oversight entity able to comply with the bill’s requirements. Additionally, the bill would require these same “entities” to provide a 20-minute training to their employees specifically addressing human trafficking in these disaster and mitigation sites. The bill also includes various examples of bad behaviors by employers that may be included in the training. While the intent of the new training is evident and the identified behaviors are decidedly abhorrent, they may not always fall under the statutory definition of human trafficking. The author is proposing amendments to address each of these concerns. They are incorporated into the SUMMARY and discussed in the body of this analysis.

This bill is sponsored by the Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative at Loyola Law School. It is supported by workers’ rights advocacy organizations and legal services organizations. There is no known opposition. Should this bill be approved by this Committee, it will be heard next by the Assembly Committee on Emergency Management.

SUMMARY: Expands existing human trafficking-related notice posting and training requirements to capture private entities that participate in recovery and response efforts in designated disaster and mitigation sites. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) States that it is the intent of the Legislature to establish a minimum threshold for human trafficking awareness training and education, and that this bill shall not be construed to discourage or relieve an employer from providing for longer, more frequent, or more elaborate training and education regarding human trafficking awareness.

- 2) States that it is further the intent of the Legislature to encourage employers to take all reasonable steps necessary to lead to the rescue of human trafficking victims and prevent any kind of human trafficking in their establishments.
- 3) Adds privately operated entities that operate in designated disaster sites and designated mitigation sites that are involved in the response, recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, permitting related to recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, or efforts to mitigate or prevent the occurrence of a disaster to the list of businesses and establishments that must post a notice on human trafficking and how to spot and report suspected instances of human trafficking.
- 4) Defines “designated disaster site” as a structure or defined piece of land, or a group of contiguous structures or land, that was physically damaged or destroyed by a disaster as defined by Section 8680.3 of the Government Code.
- 5) Defines “designated mitigation site” as a structure or defined piece of land, or a group of contiguous structures or land, that has been determined to require elimination of materials or fuel pursuant to Section 4291 of the Public Resources Code.
- 6) Requires, on or before June 1, 2027, an entity that operates in an area described as either a “designated disaster site” or “designated mitigation site” to provide at least 20 minutes of training to all employees involved in the recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, permitting related to recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, or efforts to mitigate or prevent the occurrence of a disaster.
- 7) Authorizes the training to be developed or administered by a nonprofit or private entity with professional experience related to human trafficking. Requires the training to be delivered in the language that is the most widely spoken language among the employees that will receive the training. Requires the training to include examples and case scenarios relevant to how trafficking occurs at designated disaster sites and designated mitigation sites.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Makes a person who deprives or violates the personal liberty of another with the intent to obtain forced labor or services guilty of human trafficking. (Penal Code Section 236.1.)
- 2) Requires certain businesses and other establishments to post a notice that complies with specified requirements in a conspicuous place near the public entrance of the establishment or in another conspicuous location in clear view of the public and employees where similar notices are customarily posted. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (a).)
- 3) Requires a business or other establishment that operates an intercity passenger rail or light rail stations, or bus stations to provide at least 20 minutes of training to its new and existing employees who may interact with, or come into contact with, a victim of human trafficking or who are likely to receive, in the course of their employment, a report from another employee about suspected human trafficking, in recognizing the signs of human trafficking and how to report those signs to the appropriate law enforcement agency. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (e).)
- 4) Requires the training to include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

- a) The definition of human trafficking, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking;
 - b) Myths and misconceptions about human trafficking;
 - c) Physical and mental signs to be aware of that may indicate that human trafficking is occurring. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (f).)
- 5) Authorizes the training to include, but does not limit it, to information and material utilized in training Santa Clara County Valley Transportation Authority employees, private nonprofit organizations that represent the interest of human trafficking victims, and the Department of Justice. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (g)(1).)
 - 6) Establishes that the failure to report human trafficking by an employee shall not, by itself, result in the liability of the business or other establishment that operates a facility that is required to provide the training or of any other entity. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (h).)
 - 7) Imposes liability for a civil penalty of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for a first offense and two thousand dollars (\$2,000) for each subsequent offense on a business entity or establishment that fails to comply with the notice and training requirements of Civil Code Section 52.6, and authorizes a public prosecutor to bring an action to impose the civil penalty if a local or state agency with authority to regulate the business or establishment has 1) provided the business with reasonable notice of noncompliance and informed them that it is subject to a civil penalty if it does not correct the violation within 30 days from the date of notice and 2) verifies that the violation was not corrected within the 30-day period. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (h).)
 - 8) For purposes of the California Disaster Assistance Act, defines “disaster” as a fire, flood, storm, tidal wave, earthquake, terrorism, epidemic, or other similar public calamity that the Governor determines presents a threat to public safety.
 - 9) Requires a person who owns, leases, controls, operates, or maintains a building or structure in the state responsibility area to comply with specified fire mitigation efforts. (Public Resources Code Section 4291.)

FISCAL EFFECT: As currently in print this bill is keyed fiscal.

COMMENTS: In an era of bipartisan bickering, one of the issues that the entire Legislature can rally around is the campaign against human trafficking. The Penal Code defines human trafficking as the act of depriving or violating the personal liberty of another with the intent to obtain forced labor or services. Someone convicted of human trafficking in California can face up to life in prison, depending on the alleged type of trafficking. The impacts of human trafficking on victims cannot be overstated. Victims, largely women and children, can suffer immense physical and psychological trauma as a result of being trafficked. According to the author:

AB 2101 affirms that California will not allow disaster sites to become breeding grounds for labor abuse. The workers who step in during times of crisis—utility crews, debris removal teams, construction workers, electricians, roofers, and day laborers—are essential to rebuilding communities and restoring normalcy after climate emergencies. When unscrupulous employers exploit these workers by threatening them with ICE or exploitation

to silence or coerce them, it is not only unethical— it constitutes trafficking. By expanding “Know Your Rights” protections and strengthening safeguards at disaster recovery worksites, AB 2101 ensures that those on the front lines of rebuilding are protected, informed, and treated with dignity and respect. As climate-related disasters grow more frequently and immigration enforcement actions intensify, the need for proactive worker protection becomes increasingly urgent. This bill is a critical first step toward closing a dangerous gap in California’s anti-trafficking framework.

Civil Code Section 52.6 requires numerous businesses and workplaces to post a notice in their establishments informing the employees and the general public of the risk of human trafficking and the hotlines one may call to report suspected instances of trafficking. The full list currently captures fifteen different types of businesses, including hotels and short-term stay establishments; hair, nail, electrolysis, and other similar beauty treatment facilities; emergency rooms and urgent care centers; bus stations; adult or sexually oriented businesses; pediatric facilities; and airports. Additionally, existing law requires two of those existing businesses (bus stations and intercity passenger rail or light rail stations) to ensure their employees who may interact with a victim of human trafficking or who are likely to receive a report from another employee about suspected human trafficking complete a 20-minute training about how to recognize the signs of human trafficking and how to appropriately report those signs. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (e).)

A business’ failure to comply with either the notice provision or the training requirements exposes the business to a civil penalty of \$1,000 for the first violation and \$2,000 for each subsequent violation. Public prosecutors are authorized to bring a claim in court against the misbehaving business but must give the business notice that they are out of compliance and give them a 30-day window to come into compliance before initiating an action.

Importantly, Section 52.6 explicitly states that no liability attaches simply because an employee did not make a report to law enforcement about suspected human trafficking. This provision acknowledges the complexity of human trafficking, and the potential risk to both the victim and the employee that may result from engaging with potential human traffickers.

As currently in print *this bill* would further expand the list of businesses and entities that are required to comply with existing law’s notice-posting provision to include “designated disaster sites,” and “designated mitigation sites.” The bill defines “designated disaster site” to mean “a structure or defined piece of land, or a group of contiguous structures or land, that was physically damaged or destroyed by a disaster as defined by Section 8680.3 of the Government Code.” Government Code Section 8680.3 defines a “disaster” as “a fire, flood, storm, tidal wave, earthquake, terrorism, epidemic, or other similar public calamity that the Governor determines presents a threat to public safety.”

The bill defines “designated mitigation site” as “a structure or defined piece of land, or a group of contiguous structures or land, that has been determined to require elimination or fuel pursuant to Section 4291 of the Public Resources Code.” Public Resources Code Section 4291 imposes various maintenance obligations on individuals who have some form of control over buildings or structures in “the state responsibility area,” aimed at mitigating fire risk.

As currently constructed, this bill arguably imposes a new notice obligation on the disaster and mitigation sites *themselves*. Given a generous interpretation, in conjunction with the directive to “businesses and other establishments” found in 52.6(a), these provisions would seem to require

every business and establishment in a designated disaster and mitigation site to comply with the section's notice requirement. This could theoretically require a business whose store front has just burned down to post the required notice and provide their employees a new 20-minute training or risk liability for a civil penalty. Acknowledging that businesses and homeowners in places designated as a disaster zone are already likely to be facing devastating circumstances, it does not seem reasonable to impose a new notice obligation simply because their "structure" happened to be dealt an unlucky hand and land in a disaster area. Additionally, although not strictly within the purview of this Committee, it seems that "designated mitigation site" may capture what could generally be considered wildland, so long as there is a structure there.

Acknowledging neither the author nor the sponsor intends to impose what could be considered highly unreasonable requirements of people facing challenging times, the author is proposing to amend subparagraphs 16 and 17 of the bill to specify that the notice requirement applies to privately owned entities that may operate in these designated disaster and mitigation areas for the purpose of rebuilding after a disaster has hit. The amendments would read as follows:

(16) **A privately operated entity that operates in a designated disaster sites that is involved in the response, recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, permitting related to recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, or efforts to mitigate or prevent the occurrence of a disaster.** For purposes of this section, "designated disaster site" means a structure or defined piece of land, or a group of contiguous structures or land, that was physically damaged or destroyed by a disaster as defined by Section 8680.3 of the Government Code.

(17) **A privately operated entity that operates in a designated mitigation sites that is involved in the response, recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, permitting related to recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, or efforts to mitigate or prevent the occurrence of a disaster.** For purposes of this section, "designated mitigation site" means a structure or defined piece of land, or a group of contiguous structures or land, that has been determined to require elimination of materials or fuel pursuant to Section 4291 of the Public Resources Code.

These changes certainly help narrow the scope of who may be captured by the bill's language. However, it is still broad and would apply to *any* private business that "is involved" in response, recovery, rebuilding, or clean-up efforts following a declared disaster, or permitting related to those efforts. It is worth considering whether such an expansive notice requirement is advisable, given that over-noticing risks people ignoring the contents of the notice completely. *Accordingly, the author may wish to consider further narrowing the scope of the bill.*

Civil Code Section 52.6 also requires certain employees of intercity passenger rail or light rail stations and bus stations to complete a 20-minute training on how to recognize the signs of human trafficking and their reporting options. AB 2101 would also require entities that operate in designated disaster and mitigation sites to provide a 20-minute training "to all employees involved in the recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, permitting related to recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, or efforts to mitigate or prevent the occurrence of a disaster." The entity would be required to deliver the training in the language that is most common among the employees and include examples and case scenarios relevant to how human trafficking occurs at designated disaster and mitigation sites. The bill also includes specific examples. While the examples provided are indisputably abhorrent practices and largely

unlawful, they may not all fall under the statutory definition of human trafficking pursuant to Penal Code Section 236.1. Additionally, for the purposes of statutory construction they are unnecessary and potentially overly proscriptive. To avoid inadvertently excluding otherwise relevant examples, the author proposes to strike the examples from the bill:

(h) On or before June 1, 2027, an entity that operates in an area described in paragraph (16) or (17) of subdivision (a) shall provide at least 20 minutes of training to all employees involved in the recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, permitting related to recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, or efforts to mitigate or prevent the occurrence of a disaster. The training may be developed or administered by a nonprofit or private entity with professional experience related to human trafficking. The training shall be delivered in the language that is the most widely spoken language among the employees that will receive the training. The training shall include examples and case scenarios relevant to how trafficking occurs at designated disaster sites and designated mitigation sites. ~~The training may include the following examples:~~

~~(1) A subcontractor who uses undocumented workers and threatens workers with deportation or immigration enforcement.~~

~~(2) A worker whose pay is withheld for several days as a tactic to compel labor.~~

~~(3) A worker who is recruited through a local home improvement store or street corner through false promises for a job that is remote and dangerous.~~

~~(4) A worker who is moved across locations or worksites without proper documentation.~~

~~(5) A worker who is forced to work in unsafe or unethically housed in substandard accommodations.~~

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: This bill is sponsored by the Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative at Loyola Law School. It is supported by workers' rights advocacy organizations and legal services organizations. In support of the bill the sponsor submits:

In the wake of wildfires, floods, earthquakes, and other climate-driven disasters, California relies heavily on a workforce of construction laborers, debris removal crews, roofers, and other restoration workers to help families and communities recover and return to normalcy. With dispersed worksites, long subcontracting chains, minimal oversight, and a workforce that is predominately immigrant, temporary, and/or marginalized and isolated, disaster restoration sites create fertile ground for abuse and labor trafficking - defined as the deprivation of personal liberty by use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel labor or services.

AB 2101 directly addresses these issues. In increasing education, awareness and training around this issue within this high-risk industry, California will take necessary and important first steps towards safeguarding the workers who rebuild natural disasters and by extension, take important first steps towards safeguarding the State's ability to rebuild effectively after a climate catastrophe.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Sunita Jain Anti-trafficking Initiative (sponsor)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California
California Domestic Workers Coalition
Children's Law Center of California
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto
Justice At Last
Pilipino Workers Center
Thai Community Development Center
Wage Justice Center
Worksafe

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Manuela Boucher-de la Cadena / JUD. / (916) 319-2334