

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2274 (Bains) – As Amended April 15, 2026

Policy Committee: Public Safety

Vote: 9 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: Yes

**SUMMARY:**

This bill prohibits, in any prosecution for sex trafficking, pimping, or pandering where the victim is a minor, any plea agreement, nonprosecution agreement, immunity agreement, or other disposition from granting immunity, leniency, anonymity, or nonprosecution to any person other than the defendant, unless that person is specifically named in the written agreement and the agreement is approved by the court after a hearing in which the victim is given notice and an opportunity to be heard.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) Minor and absorbable workload costs to the trial courts (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund) to conduct hearings on plea agreements covered by this bill and to provide victim notice. The Public Safety Committee analysis indicates it is unaware of any instances in California where a defendant in these cases was offered a plea deal granting immunity or nonprosecution to third parties, suggesting the hearing requirement would be triggered rarely, if ever. Any costs to the judicial branch are likely absorbable within existing resources.
- 2) Minor and absorbable workload costs to the Department of Justice (General Fund) and county district attorneys to ensure that any plea agreements in covered cases comply with the bill's naming, written-agreement, and victim-notice requirements. To the extent the bill imposes new duties on local prosecuting agencies — for example, drafting written agreements that specifically name covered persons or coordinating victim notice for required hearings — the Commission on State Mandates would determine whether those duties constitute a reimbursable state-mandated local program. Given the narrow scope of the bill and the apparent rarity of the underlying conduct in California, any reimbursable costs are expected to be minor.

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

For too long, the wealthy, the politically connected, and the powerful have played by a completely different set of rules in our justice system. We have watched mental health diversion be weaponized to shield abusers and keep victims in the dark, while loopholes protect monsters like Jeffrey Epstein and his accomplices. All defendants must

be held to the same standard regardless of their wealth, their political connections, or their influence.

- 2) **Background.** The bill responds to the 2008 federal nonprosecution agreement entered into by Jeffrey Epstein in the Southern District of Florida, which granted immunity to unnamed “potential co-conspirators” and was negotiated and finalized without notice to victims. A subsequent U.S. Department of Justice Office of Professional Responsibility review concluded that the agreement reflected poor judgment and that the government’s handling of victim notification left victims feeling ignored, but did not constitute professional misconduct. The Public Safety Committee analysis indicates the committee is unaware of any California prosecution in which a comparable third-party immunity or anonymous co-conspirator provision was included in a plea agreement. This bill would foreclose that possibility prospectively in covered cases by statute.
- 3) **Support and Opposition.** The California Police Chiefs Association, in support, writes that the bill addresses a gap in current law by prohibiting plea agreements that grant immunity or leniency to unnamed co-conspirators in cases involving the sexual exploitation of minors, and that requiring agreements to specifically name individuals and be subject to court approval following a hearing with victim input enhances transparency and prevents the type of sweeping, undisclosed immunity that has undermined public confidence in past high-profile cases. The opposition, including ACLU California Action and the California Public Defenders Association, state that the bill adopts rigid measures that undermine principles of fairness, due process, and individualized justice, and that by limiting the ability of prosecutors and courts to resolve cases through negotiated dispositions, the bill removes tools routinely used to secure cooperation, hold higher-level offenders accountable, and reach case-specific outcomes.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Shiran Zohar / APPR. / (916) 319-2081