

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 2274 (Bains)

As Amended April 15, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Prohibits, in any prosecution for sex trafficking, pimping or pandering, where the victim is a minor, any plea agreement from granting immunity, leniency, anonymity, or nonprosecution to any person other than the defendant, except as provided.

Major Provisions

- 1) States that in any prosecution for sex trafficking, pimping or pandering, where the victim is a minor, no plea agreement, nonprosecution agreement, immunity agreement, or other disposition shall grant 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 victims are given notice and an opportunity to be heard.
- 2) Declares this bill to be called the "Epstein Loophole Act."
- 3) Contain Legislative findings and declarations regarding the 2008 Jeffrey Epstein prosecution.

COMMENTS**According to the Author**

"My 'Lords of Bakersfield' legislative package addresses the systemic failures in our criminal justice system highlighted by cases like those involving Jeffrey Epstein and former Kern County Supervisor Zachary Scrivner. 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."

Arguments in Support

According to the *California Police Chiefs Association*, "AB 2274 addresses a critical gap in current law by prohibiting plea agreements or related dispositions that grant immunity or leniency to unnamed co-conspirators in cases involving the sexual exploitation of minors. By requiring that any such agreements explicitly identify individuals and be subject to court approval following a hearing with victim input, the bill enhances transparency and prevents the type of sweeping, undisclosed immunity that has undermined public confidence in past high-profile cases."

Arguments in Opposition

According to the *California Public Defenders Association*, "While the protection of minors and accountability for those who exploit them are critically important goals, this bill adopts rigid measures that undermine fundamental principles of fairness, due process, and individualized

justice. By limiting the ability of prosecutors and courts to resolve cases through negotiated dispositions, AB 2274 removes essential tools that are routinely used to secure cooperation, hold higher-level offenders accountable, and reach appropriate case-specific outcomes. These restrictions may have the unintended consequence of making it more difficult—not easier—to effectively prosecute complex, multi-defendant cases."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 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.

VOTES

ASM PUBLIC SAFETY: 9-0-0

YES: Schultz, Alanis, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Lackey, Nguyen, Ramos, Sharp-Collins

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 14-0-1

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Arambula

UPDATED

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