

Date of Hearing: April 8, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

Liz Ortega, Chair

AB 2488 (Schiavo) – As Introduced February 20, 2026

SUBJECT: Department of Industrial Relations: occupational safety and health

SUMMARY: Requires the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) to contract with the University of California, Berkeley Labor Occupational Health Program and the University of California, Los Angeles Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program to conduct a study, within 18 months, to evaluate the understaffing and vacancies within the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA), and make recommendations to specified departments and the Legislature on policies the state shall use for the consideration and establishment of career pathways to the Compliance Safety and Health Officer (CSHO) classification. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Makes findings and declarations regarding the high vacancy rate among enforcement positions at Cal/OSHA.
- 2) Requires the DIR to contract with the University of California, Berkeley Labor Occupational Health Program and the University of California, Los Angeles Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program, within 120 days of an appropriation by the Legislature, to conduct a study to evaluate the understaffing and vacancies within Cal/OSHA and make recommendations to the DIR, the Department of Human Resources, and the Legislature on policies the state shall use for the consideration and establishment of career pathways to the CSHO classification.
- 3) Authorizes the University of California to subcontract, in whole or in part, the responsibility for conducting the study to another academic institution.
- 4) Requires the University of California and its subcontractors, if any, to issue a report that includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:
 - a) Literature review compiling research related to Cal/OSHA's understaffing and vacancy problem, impacts of these problems at statewide, regional, or industry levels, and models for workforce development programs that could increase the career pathways for CSHOs.
 - b) An analysis to identify primary causes of Cal/OSHA's CSHO vacancies.
 - c) Recommendations to address Cal/OSHA's CSHO understaffing and vacancies, including recommended timeline and strategies to implement a workforce training program. In making these recommendations, the study shall consider all of the following:
 - i) How to improve the effectiveness of hiring and retention and decrease the hiring time for Cal/OSHA's CSHO positions.

- ii) A summary of all relevant Cal/OSHA CSHO position responsibilities, skills, and tasks, as provided by Cal/OSHA or through interviews with certified safety and health officials.
 - iii) An analysis of different workforce development and training models including third-party certification and apprenticeship.
 - iv) Identification of current programs, institutions, or organizations in the field that could partner in a new workforce development training program and what role they could play.
 - v) An analysis of external workforce populations who may have matching skill sets and experience that would make them effective candidates for a CSHO workforce training program, including linguistic and cultural competencies that match the diverse California workforce. This may include an analysis of the level of fit between these candidates and current minimum qualifications.
 - vi) Recommendations on CSHO qualities and skills that would encourage worker engagement with Cal/OSHA based on data collected from low-wage and immigrant workers.
 - vii) Identification of core curriculum components for the eventual development of a workforce training program for CSHOs.
- 5) Requires the DIR to cooperate and collaborate with the University of California and its subcontractors, if any, in conducting the study.
 - 6) Requires, as part of the study, the University of California and its subcontractors, if any, to hold at least one well-publicized and conveniently located meeting to provide an opportunity for comment by stakeholders and the public on the issues addressed in the study.
 - 7) Requires, eighteen months after entering into the contract with the University of California pursuant to 2) above, the report to be completed and the DIR to post the completed report on Cal/OSHA's internet website and forward the completed report to the Governor and the Chairs of the Assembly Committee on Labor and Employment and the Senate Committee on Labor, Public Employment and Retirement.
 - 8) States that the efforts described in 2) above are part of a multipronged strategy that should complement, and in no way delay, current and ongoing efforts to address staffing issues at Cal/OSHA.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes Cal/OSHA within the DIR to, among other things, propose, administer, and enforce occupational safety and health standards. Labor Code §6300 et seq.
- 2) Requires, under the California Occupational Safety and Health Act, an employer to:

- a) Furnish employment and a place of employment that is safe and healthful for its employees.
 - b) Furnish and use safety devices and safeguards, and to adopt and use practices, means, methods, operations, and processes, which are reasonably adequate to render employment and the place of employment safe and healthful.
 - c) Do everything reasonably necessary to protect the life, safety, and health of employees. Lab. Code, § 6300 et seq.
- 3) Requires the DIR to contract with the University of California, Los Angeles Labor Center to conduct a study evaluating opportunities to improve worker safety and safeguard employment rights in the janitorial industry. Authorizes the university to subcontract the responsibility for conducting the study to other specified entities. Labor Code §1429.69(a).
 - 4) Requires the University of California, Los Angeles Labor Center and its subcontractors, if any, to issue a report no later than May 1, 2026, that includes information on the janitorial workforce such as data on injuries, demographics, workers' compensation, and production rates based on cleaning frequency. Labor Code §1429.69(b).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS: Cal/OSHA continues to suffer from significant understaffing and high turnover, particularly in its enforcement division. A July 2025 state audit of the division confirms this finding.¹ The CSHO position—critical for conducting field investigations of worker complaints of health and safety violations-- has one of the highest vacancy rates across the division. According to DIR's internal data, as of August 2024, Cal/OSHA had 124 vacant CSHO positions, constituting a 46% vacancy rate. The vacancy rate is even higher in certain geographic areas. For example, the Santa Ana office had a 73% vacancy rate while the San Francisco office had a 66% vacancy rate. Even more troubling is the ratio of CSHO to worker in California—1 inspector to every 130,000 workers. This ratio is much higher than in the neighboring states of Washington and Oregon, which have ratios of 1 to 26,000 workers and 1 to 24,000 workers, respectively. To put it another way, perhaps more starkly, California employs 7.7 CSHOs *per million workers*.

Cal/OSHA's staffing crisis has affected its ability to conduct inspections and effectively enforce the health and safety laws designed to protect workers. A 2022 annual evaluation of Cal/OSHA's programs, conducted by federal OSHA, found that the division is failing to proactively inspect workplaces and prevent work-related accidents. According to the evaluation, "Cal/OSHA cannot conduct planned inspections of high hazard employers at the national average²" due to short staffing. Only 18.5 percent of Cal/OSHA's inspections are programmed compared to a national average of 40 percent.³ The lack of proactive inspections can contribute to dire outcomes for

¹ The state audit is accessible here: [2024-115 The Division of Occupational Safety and Health - California State Auditor](#).

² Miller, Maya. "Overworked and Underprotected: Cal/OSHA is experiencing a staffing crisis. Here's how that endangers California workers." Sacramento Bee, February 22, 2024, updated January 7, 2025.

³ *Ibid.*

workers—from preventable injuries to death. In fact, over 500 workers in California were killed on the job in 2022.⁴

According to the author, “California workers rely on Cal/OSHA inspectors to find and enforce workplace safety laws meant to keep workers safe from injury or worse. However, the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) had a 32 percent vacancy rate in 2023-24 with even higher rates for certain district offices and inspector positions. Understaffing of this magnitude compromises DOSH’s ability to conduct necessary inspections, respond to safety concerns, and ensure compliance with safety regulations. AB 2488 will help California better protect workers by conducting a study to identify the root causes of vacancies within DOSH and create a roadmap to help the state recruit, train, and retain a more effective enforcement workforce.”

The author also believes AB 2488 will promote equity solutions because it “explicitly requires the analysis of workforce populations that would match the skill sets and experience, including linguistic and cultural competencies as an important component to match California’s diverse workforce.”

Arguments in Support

A coalition of worker advocates, including California Labor for Climate Jobs, is in support and states, “To address this entrenched crisis, California must go beyond traditional recruitment strategies and confront the structural barriers driving persistent vacancies. The absence of diverse and target recruitment in addition to accessible workforce pathways exclude many experienced, skilled, and multilingual workers from entering the Compliance Safety and Health Officer (CSHO) workforce.

AB 2488 establishes a critical, partnership-based approach to solving this problem. The bill supports a comprehensive study that will develop actionable recommendations for a recruitment and training pipeline program. This study will include a skills gap analysis; define the core responsibilities, competencies, and training needs of CSHOs; and provide critical data for the implementation of workforce models, including apprenticeships.

Importantly, the study will identify and assess new and diverse candidate pools—particularly workers with relevant industry experience, as well as linguistic and cultural competencies that reflect California’s workforce. It will also map potential partnerships with labor unions, worker advocacy organizations, community colleges, and academic institutions to build a sustainable and inclusive pipeline into Cal/OSHA enforcement careers.”

Arguments in Opposition

None on File.

Related and Prior Legislation

SB 1227 (Durazo) of 2026 would require the DIR and the Department of Human Resources to partner with the bargaining units representing employees of DIR to design and develop an apprenticeship pilot program that addresses DIR’s staffing challenges. The bill would require the

⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Fatal Work Injuries in California- 2022.

design, development, and administration of the program to meet specified requirements, including being consistent with the constitutional merit principle applicable to civil service employment. This bill is pending a hearing in the Senate Committee on Labor, Public Employment and Retirement.

AB 694 (McKinnor) of 2025 was substantially similar to this measure but also required the University of California to convene an advisory committee consisting of members from specified state agencies, worker advocacy organizations, other academic institutions, and other entities, as specified, to make recommendations regarding the scope of the study, and provide specified findings and recommendations to the Cal/OSHA. The bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Labor for Climate Jobs (Sponsor)
350 Bay Area Action
Action Asian Pacific Environmental Network
California Federation of Teachers
California Nurses Association
Caps, UAW Local 1115
Inland Empire Labor Council, AFL-CIO
National Cosh
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility
Southern California Coalition for Occupational Health and Safety
Southern California Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health
Sunflower Alliance
United Steelworkers District 12
United Steelworkers Local 675
Worksafe

Opposition

None on File.

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