

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

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

Policy Committee: Labor and Employment

Vote: 7 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) to contract with programs at the University of California (UC programs) to conduct a study to evaluate the understaffing and vacancies within the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA).

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires DIR, within 120 days of an appropriation by the Legislature, 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 (UC programs) to conduct a study evaluating Cal/OSHA understaffing and vacancies and make recommendations to DIR, the Department of Human Resources (CalHR), and the Legislature on policies the state must use to inform the consideration and establishment of career pathways to the Compliance Safety and Health Officer (CSHO) classification. The UC programs may subcontract this responsibility to another academic institution.
- 2) Requires the UC programs (or subcontractor), as part of the study, hold at least one meeting to provide an opportunity for public comment on the issues addressed in the study.
- 3) Requires completion of the study within 18 months after entering into the contract with the UC programs and requires DIR to post the study on Cal/OSHA's website and forward the study to the Governor and Legislature.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) One-time cost pressures of an unknown amount, likely in the high hundreds of thousands of dollars, to appropriate funds to DIR to contract with the UC programs for the study (Occupational Safety and Health Fund or General Fund). DIR would also incur costs of approximately \$500,000 to \$700,000 to cooperate with the UC programs to complete the study. The author is requesting a \$1 million appropriation from the Occupational Safety and Health Fund in the 2026-27 state budget to require DIR to contract with the UC programs.
- 2) Costs of an unknown amount to DIR and CalHR to use the recommendations from the study to inform the establishment of career pathways to the CSHO classification (Occupational Safety and Health Fund or General Fund).

The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** The author cites Cal/OSHA's 32% vacancy rate in 2023-24, with even higher rates for certain district offices and inspectors positions, to contend that "Understaffing of this magnitude compromises [Cal/OSHA's] ability to conduct necessary inspections, respond to safety concerns, and ensure compliance with safety regulations." According to the author, this bill "will help California better protect workers by conducting a study to identify the root causes of vacancies within [Cal/OSHA] and create a roadmap to help the state recruit, train, and retain a more effective enforcement workforce." This bill is supported by a coalition of labor organizations.
- 2) **Cal/OSHA Vacancies.** Cal/OSHA continues to suffer from significant understaffing and high turnover, particularly in Cal/OSHA's enforcement division. The CSHO position, which conducts field investigations of worker complaints about health and safety violations, has one of the highest vacancy rates across Cal/OSHA. According to DIR 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 and the San Francisco office had a 66% vacancy rate. As a result, the ratio of active CSHOs to workers in California is 7.7 CSHOs per one million workers. This bill requires DIR to contract with two UC labor programs to conduct a study evaluating Cal/OSHA understaffing and vacancies and make recommendations to inform the consideration and establishment of CSHO career pathways.
- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 694 (McKinnor) is similar to this bill, except AB 694 also requires the UC to convene an advisory committee to make recommendations regarding the scope of the study. AB 694 was held on the Senate Appropriations Committee's suspense file.

SB 1227 (Durazo) requires DIR and CalHR to partner with bargaining units representing DIR employees to design and develop an apprenticeship pilot program that addresses DIR staffing challenges. SB 1227 is pending hearing by the Senate Appropriations Committee.

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