

Date of Hearing: April 29, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2599 (Bryan) – As Amended April 16, 2026

Policy Committee: Judiciary

Vote: 9 - 3

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: No

**SUMMARY:**

This bill requires every in-state business entity with annual worldwide gross receipts exceeding \$100 million to complete an affidavit, under penalty of perjury, verifying that it has searched its records and those of any related entity for evidence of historical participation in chattel slavery. The bill requires a state department, to be identified, to receive affidavits, report annually to the Legislature, and build and maintain a public digital platform containing the affidavits and related data indefinitely.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires covered entities to submit affidavits by July 1, 2027, or within 60 days of commencing business in the state, and to submit updated affidavits upon discovery of new reportable information.
- 2) Requires the affidavit to include names of enslaved persons and slaveholders identified in records, evidence of transactions benefiting from slavery, and records from 1849 onward relating to insurance policies, purchase or lease of enslaved persons, use of enslaved persons as collateral, related loan transactions, and other records evidencing participation in slaveholding or the slave trade.
- 3) Requires the designated department to create, by January 3, 2028, a public digital platform containing all affidavits and reports, disaggregated by company type, multi-year review of data, company value, and estimated value or revenue from slavery-related transactions, with affidavits posted within 30 days of receipt and retained indefinitely.
- 4) Authorizes the Attorney General to bring an action for injunctive relief for a violation.
- 5) Requires bidders for state contracts of \$100,000 or more, if they meet the bill's revenue threshold, to certify compliance with the bill's affidavit requirement.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) Possible costs (General Fund, special funds) to the Department of Justice (DOJ) of an unknown amount. Actual costs will depend on whether the Attorney General pursues enforcement actions, and, if so, the level of additional staffing DOJ needs to handle the related workload. If DOJ hires staff to handle enforcement actions authorized by this bill, the department would incur significant costs, likely in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars

annually at a minimum. If DOJ does not pursue enforcement as authorized by this bill, the department would likely not incur any costs.

- 2) Cost pressures (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund) of an unknown but potentially significant amount to the courts to adjudicate civil enforcement actions authorized by this bill. Actual costs will depend on the number of cases filed and the amount of court time needed to resolve each case. It generally costs approximately \$1,000 to operate a courtroom for one hour. Although courts are not funded on the basis of workload, increased pressure on the Trial Court Trust Fund may create a demand for increased funding for courts from the General Fund. The state budget provides annual General Fund backfills to the Trial Court Trust Fund to offset revenue reductions, totaling approximately \$117.3 million in 2025-26.
- 3) Costs (General Fund) of an unknown but potentially significant amount to the state agency designated to administer the program to receive, review, and process affidavits from thousands of covered entities; maintain compliance tracking; produce annual legislative reports; and respond to public information requests. The bill as currently drafted does not identify the administering agency.

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

#### COMMENTS:

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

California does not currently require standardized disclosure of verified historical ties to slavery or related economic activity. As a result, information remains fragmented, inconsistent, or inaccessible to the public. Transparency regarding historical practices is essential to responsible governance and ethical business standards. . . AB 2599 focuses on transparency and accountability. If corporations benefited from slavery, the public deserves to know. This bill ensures we uncover those truths and make that information accessible to all Californians.

- 2) **Background.** This is not the first time the Legislature has required corporate disclosure of connections to slavery. SB 2199 (Hayden, Chapter 934, Statutes 2000) required the Insurance Commissioner to request and obtain records from insurers operating in the state indicating that the company, or any predecessor entity, provided coverage to slaveholders for damage to enslaved persons. That bill produced the Slavery Era Insurance Registry, which remains accessible on the Department of Insurance website, which received 690 records of policies sold to slaveholders to insure enslaved persons. Existing law requires retail sellers and manufacturers with worldwide gross receipts over \$100 million to disclose their efforts to eradicate present-day slavery and human trafficking from their direct supply chains. This bill extends the concept in two ways: it applies across industries (not just retail and manufacturing), and it requires research into historical records documenting pre-Civil War participation in slaveholding or the slave trade, rather than present-day practices. The "due diligence" standard in the bill is not a fixed research requirement but a context-dependent measure of reasonable effort. As the policy committee has noted, the standard reflects the two-year compliance timeline, the fact that businesses are not historians, and the practical

limits of conducting archival research alongside ordinary business operations. The bill as drafted does not identify which state agency will administer the program.

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