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THIRD READING

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Bill No: AB 440  
Author: Ramos (D), et al.  
Amended: 9/3/25 in Senate  
Vote: 21

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SENATE HEALTH COMMITTEE: 11-0, 6/25/25

AYES: Menjivar, Valladares, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grove, Limón, Padilla,  
Richardson, Rubio, Weber Pierson, Wiener

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/29/25

AYES: Caballero, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0, 6/2/25 - See last page for vote

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**SUBJECT:** State bridges and overpasses: suicide prevention

**SOURCE:** Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services

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**DIGEST:** This bill requires the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), by July 1, 2028, to consult with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), behavioral health experts, and other relevant stakeholders to develop best practices for the consideration of suicide countermeasures designed to deter suicide attempts on bridges and overpasses, including evaluating appropriate physical infrastructure and design features.

*Senate Floor Amendments* of 9/3/25 recast provisions of the bill to switch the lead versus consulting roles to require Caltrans, instead of the Office of Suicide Prevention, within CDPH, to develop best practices of suicide prevention strategies and physical countermeasures for possible implementation on bridges and overpasses; and delete the reporting requirement.

**ANALYSIS:**

Existing law:

- 1) Grants Caltrans the full possession and control of all state highways and all property and rights in property acquired for state highway purposes.
- 2) Requires Caltrans to install screening on state freeway overpasses to prevent objects from being dropped or thrown upon vehicles passing underneath, as provided.
- 3) Establishes CDPH to be vested with all the duties, powers, purposes, functions, responsibilities, and jurisdiction as they relate to public health, as specified

This bill:

- 1) Requires Caltrans, by July 1, 2028, to develop best practices for the consideration of suicide countermeasures designed to deter suicide attempts on bridges and overpasses.
- 2) Requires Caltrans to consider feedback from local jurisdictions and other stakeholders when evaluating appropriate physical infrastructure, design features, and related deterrent measures.
- 3) Requires Caltrans to consult with CDPH, behavioral health experts, and other relevant stakeholders in implementing provisions of this bill.
- 4) Declares that any implementation of such countermeasures shall be as determined by Caltrans to be appropriate.
- 5) Declares that provisions of this bill do not impose a mandatory duty pursuant to current public entity liability law.

**Comments:**

- 1) *Purpose of this bill.* According to the author, “AB 440 reflects our state’s continued commitment to protecting vulnerable community members and proactively addressing suicide on our state’s bridges and overpasses. It is essential that suicide prevention remains a top priority in any future highway project. This legislation directs the Department of Transportation, in collaboration with the Department of Public Health, to develop best practices for the planning and design of suicide countermeasures on bridges and

overpasses—ensuring that input from local leaders and behavioral health experts is meaningfully incorporated into those practices.”

- 2) *Suicide and Self-Harm in California*. According to a January 2025 data brief from CDPH, suicide is the leading cause of violent death, and self-harm is the third leading cause of injury-related emergency department (ED) visits. Men consistently have higher rates of suicide than women, and in 2022 men account for more than three-fourths of suicides. Use of firearms was the most common mechanism for suicide in 2021 and 2022. Youth under the age of 10 had a statistically significant increase in self-harm ED visit rates from 1.9 per 100,000 Californians in this age group in 2021 to 2.7 in 2022. Self-harm by poisoning was the most common mechanism of self-harm injury leading to ED visits, followed by cutting/piercing and, when combined, both accounted for approximately 85% of self-harm ED visits. Other mechanisms of self-harm combined, including fall, firearm, and hanging/suffocation, made up 2% of self-harm ED visits.

The brief also highlights opportunities for prevention, such as advancing protective factors as a part of prevention programming to build resilience and foster support at the individual, relationship, and community level to help decrease suicide risk. While the brief notes that prevention efforts should focus on the most common and lethal means of suicide (firearms and intentional drug overdoses), it also highlights the 2024 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, which contains several goals, such as integrating suicide prevention into the culture of the workplace and into other community settings, and implementing research-informed suicide prevention communication activities in diverse populations, using best practices from communication science.

- 3) *Suicide and self-harm on roadways*. Road-related methods of suicide include jumping off or on to road infrastructure, stepping into the path of a moving vehicle, or driving off or into road infrastructure or into another vehicle. A 2023 study entitled *Factors Prompting and Deterring Suicides on the Roads*, by researchers from Middlesex University in London investigated the factors prompting and deterring the decision to attempt suicide on the roads. They conducted interviews with people who had lived experience of suicidal ideation or behavior at a bridge or road location. They found that people perceived a road-related suicide to be quick, lethal, easy and accessible and to have the potential to appear accidental. The proportion of people who described their thoughts and attempts as impulsive appeared to be higher than had been observed with other method choices. The potential impact on other people was a strongly dissuasive factor.

The researchers concluded that “measures designed to prevent access to potentially lethal sites may be particularly important, given that many participants described their thoughts and behavior as impulsive. In addition, fostering a culture of care and consideration for other road users may help to dissuade people from taking action on the roads.”

- 4) *Tragedy in San Bernardino County.* Over a few weeks last fall, two high-school students took their own lives on the Haven Avenue overpass on State Route (SR) 210, in the City of Rancho Cucamonga. According to the city, “The rising number of suicide incidents from freeway overpasses is not only a profound tragedy for individuals and families but also a serious public safety concern for motorists, first responders, and the broader community. In the past six months alone, multiple suicides and attempts have occurred along the 210 Freeway overpasses, including the heartbreaking loss of two high school students at the same location – 1.5 weeks apart from one another. In December, another individual from outside the area also died by suicide at a Rancho Cucamonga overpass. While some attempts have been prevented, each represents a crisis that could have ended in another devastating loss. These incidents underscore the urgent need for intervention. No family, school, or community should have to endure such unimaginable grief. It is imperative that we take immediate action to implement preventive measures that provide hope, support, and protection for those in distress.”
- 5) *Statewide prevention efforts – 988.* As of July 16, 2022, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number transitioned to 988, providing an easy to remember number that anyone can call, text, or chat to receive support when experiencing a suicidal, mental health and/or substance use related crisis. When Californians dial 988, they are directed to one of twelve Lifeline crisis call centers. California’s call centers are part of the broader 988 Lifeline crisis center network. If a local crisis center is unable to take the call, the caller is automatically routed to a national backup crisis center. According to the 988 California Crisis Center Consortium, 988 routed 342,394 calls with an average answer speed of 34 seconds, answer rate of 85%, and call length of 12 minutes in 2023.
- 6) *Rancho Cucamonga is also working on prevention.* The City of Rancho Cucamonga has been committed to mental health services and suicide prevention for many years. In 2008, the City Council launched the Healthy RC initiative, which connects “planning, program, policy, and partnership efforts

that work across sectors and priority areas to promote community health and wellness.”

Mental health is a major part of the initiative with the city noting its high priority in the community. Since the start of Healthy RC, suicide and self-inflicted injury hospitalization rates have decreased by 19%.

Additionally, last year the city launched Community Outreach and Support Team (COAST), which is a multi-disciplinary mobile mental health crisis response team. The team consists of a social worker from the Department of Behavioral Health, a law enforcement officer, and a fire safety employee with a service dog trained in crisis response. The purpose of the team is to engage with those experiencing a mental health crisis in order to provide alternative services including the ability to follow-up with individuals for continuum of care, provide a better treatment option for those in crisis, provide community outreach and education, and prevent further crises through follow-up. COAST can respond in lieu of, or relieve, police and fire resources to keep those units available for emergency response.

The city has also been working directly with Caltrans to help prevent future deaths at the SR 210 location and others throughout the area. According to Caltrans, they are working with the city to assess the bridge overpass area and work on erecting fencing to block access. Currently, the overpass in question has fencing on the bridge deck but people have still been able to climb up the side to access the bridge. The city would like to add four additional fences to close off the access points. Additionally, for added prevention, Caltrans and the city have erected signage at the overpass location that state, “there is hope, we can help,” and lists the 988 lifeline number.

- 7) *AB 440 focuses on identifying best practices for suicide countermeasures on state highways.* Currently, Caltrans is required to install screening on state freeway overpasses where pedestrians are allowed to prevent objects from being dropped or thrown upon vehicles passing underneath. The locations are up to Caltrans’ discretion, but first consideration must be given to overpasses in urban areas. The Caltrans Highway Design Manual contains requirements for bridge barriers and railings. The railings are spirited into four classes based on their preventative function, vehicle barrier railings, combination vehicle barrier and pedestrian railings, pedestrian railings, and bicycle railings. According to Caltrans, overpasses with pedestrian access include fencing. As noted above, the overpass on the SR 210 does have pedestrian fencing on the bridge deck.

AB 440 requires Caltrans, by July 1, 2028, to work with CDPH, behavioral health experts, and other relevant stakeholders, to develop best practices for the consideration of suicide countermeasures on bridges and overpasses. The bill also requires Caltrans to evaluate appropriate physical infrastructure, and design features to help deter suicides and suicide attempts. Recent amendments recast provisions of AB 440 to work in conjunction with SB 800 (Reyes), which requires Caltrans and CDPH to incorporate suicide deterrent considerations in the updates of applicable guidance documents, such as the Highway Design Manual.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

**SUPPORT:** (Verified 9/3/25)

Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services (source)  
 California Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
 California Alliance of Child and Family Services  
 California Behavioral Health Association  
 California Hospital Association  
 California Police Chiefs Association  
 Children Now  
 City of Rancho Cucamonga  
 County Behavioral Health Directors Association  
 Helpline Youth Counseling, INC.  
 Hillsides Pasadena  
 National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI-CA)  
 Office of Los Angeles County Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath

**OPPOSITION:** (Verified 9/3/25)

None received

**ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:** Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, as the sponsor, and other supporters cite that Caltrans does not have a statewide suicide prevention policy in place for their bridges and roadways, and strongly believe that the state should not have to wait for a tragedy to strike to begin the process of developing safety measures in areas that possess a clear and present danger to any at-risk individual that may be considering taking their own life.

**ASSEMBLY FLOOR:** 79-0, 6/2/25

**AYES:** Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Fariás, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon,

Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

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