

Date of Hearing: June 9, 2026  
Chief Counsel: Andrew Ironside

## ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Nick Schultz, Chair

SB 1012 (Smallwood-Cuevas) – As Amended May 14, 2026

**SUMMARY:** Requires the Pre-Release Construction Trades Certificate Program’s joint advisory committee, in consultation with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR), and the fire camp program, to facilitate the post-release admission of program graduates into any relevant state-approved apprenticeship and require state-approved apprenticeship programs to evaluate these individuals for admission with advanced standing. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Amends the joint advisory committee’s responsibility to facilitate the post-release admission of graduates of preapprenticeship programs for incarcerated individuals into state-approved apprenticeship programs to include graduates of the fire camp program.
- 2) Requires the joint advisory committee, in consultation with CDCR, CAL FIRE, DIR, and the fire camp program, to facilitate the admission of graduates of the program, after release, into any relevant state-approved apprenticeship and for state-approved apprenticeship programs, including those in general construction and heavy equipment operations, to evaluate such individuals for admission with advanced standing based on prior coursework and work experience.
- 3) Provides that successful completion of fire camp programs, including, but not limited to, wildland firefighter training, such as environmental remediation and forestry management, emergency response, and hazardous waste cleanup, shall constitute qualifying experience for a state-approved apprenticeship under the Division of Apprenticeship Standards.
- 4) Requires CDCR, in partnership with CAL FIRE and the fire camp program, to ensure that all individuals who complete the program receive a certification acknowledging their fire camp training and work experience to ensure eligibility for state-approved apprenticeship programs.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB), under the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, as the body responsible for assisting the Governor in the development, oversight, and continuous improvement of California’s workforce system, including its alignment to the needs of the economy and the workforce. (Unemp. Ins. Code, § 14010 et seq.)
- 2) Establishes the Prison to Employment program, administered by CWDB, to coordinate reentry and workforce services in each of the state’s 14 workforce regions so that the

formerly incarcerated and other justice-involved individuals in these regions can find and retain employment. (Unemp. Ins. Code, §§ 14040-14042.)

- 3) Requires the Secretary of CDCR to appoint a Superintendent of Correctional Education, who oversees and administers all prison education programs. Requires the Superintendent to set both short- and long-term goals for literacy and testing and career technical education programs, and to establish priorities for prison academic and career technical education programs. (Pen. Code § 2053.4.)
- 4) Requires a career technical education program consider all of the following factors, consistent with the goals and priorities of CDCR:
  - a) Whether the program aligns with the workforce needs of high-demand sectors of the state and regional economies;
  - b) Whether there is an active job market for the skills being developed where the incarcerated person will likely be released;
  - c) Whether the program increases the number of incarcerated individuals who obtain a marketable and industry or apprenticeship board-recognized certification, credential, or degree;
  - d) Whether there are formal or informal networks in the field that support finding employment upon release from prison; and,
  - e) Whether the program will lead to employment in occupations with a livable wage. (Pen. Code § 2053.5.)
- 5) Establishes the Pre-Release Construction Trades Certificate Program (PRCTCP) administered by CDCR to increase employment opportunities in the construction trades for incarcerated individuals upon release. (Pen. Code, § 2716.5, subd. (a).)
- 6) Requires CDCR to establish a joint advisory committee for the purpose of implementation of the PRCTCP. Requires the committee to be composed of representatives from building and construction trades employee organizations, the State Building and Construction Trades Council of California, joint apprenticeship training programs, the California Correctional Training and Rehabilitation Authority, the Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS), the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, and any other representatives the department determines appropriate. (Pen. Code, § 2716.5, subd. (b).)
- 7) Provides that the committee has the following responsibilities:
  - a) Develop guidelines for the participation of inmates in preapprenticeship training programs. Requires the guidelines to provide for the integration, for all preapprenticeship training programs in the building and construction trades, of the multicraft core curriculum (MC3) implemented by the State Department of Education (CDE) for its California Partnership Academies pilot project and by the CWDB and local boards.

- b) Develop and implement a prerelease construction trades certification that validates that an incarcerated person completed instruction, skills, and competencies required by and recognized by the participating building and construction trades.
  - c) Ensure compliance with any applicable requirements and regulations DAS.
  - d) Evaluate prerelease on-the-job training opportunities to compare and match competencies with those of registered apprentices in the building and construction trades.
  - e) Explore the feasibility of the electronic tracking of each participating person's relevant activities to efficiently capture competencies related to the certification.
  - f) Explore the prerelease awarding of formal credit for apprenticeship hours recognized by joint apprenticeship training programs and the DAS.
  - g) Facilitate the admission of graduates of preapprenticeship programs for incarcerated individuals, after release, into state-approved apprenticeship programs and for apprenticeship programs to evaluate such individuals for admission with advanced standing based on prior coursework and work experience. (Pen. Code, § 2716.5, subd. (b).)
- 8) Requires CWDB and each local workforce development board to ensure, to the maximum extent feasible, that federal respectively awarded by them for purposes of preapprenticeship training in the building and construction trades fund programs and services follow the MC3 implemented by CDE for its pilot project with California Partnership Academies. (Umemp. Ins. Code, § 14230, subd. (e)(2).)
- 9) Establishes the California Correctional Training and Rehabilitation Authority (CALCTRA), formally known as the Prison Industry Authority (Cal PIA), within CDCR, and describes Cal PIA's purposes as:
- a) Developing and operating industrial, agricultural, and service enterprises employing individuals incarcerated in the state's prisons.
  - b) Creating and maintaining working conditions within the enterprises as much like those which prevail in private industry as possible, to ensure incarcerated individuals the opportunity to work productively, to earn funds, and to acquire or improve effective work habits and occupational skills.
  - c) Operating a work program for incarcerated individuals that will be self-supporting by generating sufficient funds from the sale of products and services to pay all the expenses of the program, and one that will provide goods and services that are or will be used by CDCR. (Pen. Code, §§ 2800, 2801.)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown.

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) **Sponsors:** NextGen California and the California State Council of Laborers.
- 2) **Author's Statement:** According to the author, “SB 1012 recognizes the tremendous skill and sacrifice of incarcerated individuals who serve in the California Conservation Fire Camp program by ensuring they have access to equitable pathways that lead to real opportunities upon release. For too long, the state has relied on incarcerated fire camp participants while offering limited opportunities for stable employment once they return home.

“SB 1012 expands the state’s commitment to fire camp participants by ensuring they receive the support needed to continue serving California after their time has been served. In doing so, this bill helps address critical public safety workforce needs, reduces recidivism, and creates pathways to meaningful careers.”

- 3) **Pre-Apprenticeships:** The Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS) within the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) administers the state’s apprenticeship laws and enforces apprenticeship standards for wages, hours, working conditions, and the specific skills required for state certification as a journey person in an apprenticeable occupation. In general, apprenticeship programs provide instruction that combines a formal course of in-class instruction with practical “on-the-job” training.

Pre-apprenticeship programs are designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in registered apprenticeship programs. These programs have a documented partnership with at least one registered apprenticeship program sponsor and together, they expand the participant’s career pathway opportunities with industry-based training coupled with classroom instruction.

MC3 is a pre-apprenticeship training program that was developed in 2007 by North America’s Building Trades Union. It was designed to identify common elements in all building and construction trades’ apprenticeship programs and combine them into one curriculum encompassing 120 hours of training. Among other things, the curriculum includes general orientation to apprenticeships, an introduction to the construction industry, cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid, an Occupational Safety and Health Administration 10-hour certification course, applied mathematics for construction, and blueprint reading.

- 4) **In-Prison Job Training Programs:** Many studies have examined the relationship between employment and recidivism. Although formerly incarcerated individuals face many barriers to obtaining employment, good quality employment is correlated with lower rates of recidivism.<sup>1</sup> Given this correlation, California has invested in various types of in-prison job training programs in order to improve job prospects for the incarcerated population upon release.

In 2018, the Legislature established the Pre-Release Construction Trades Certification

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<sup>1</sup> Connell, C., et al. *Effectiveness of interventions to improve employment for people released from prison: systematic review and meta-analysis*, Health Justice 11, 17 (2023) <<https://www.healthandjusticejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40352-023-00217-w#:~:text=Employment%20is%20associated%20with%20a,Sampson%20%26%20Laub%2C%201993>> [as of May 28, 2026].

Program, administered by CDCR to increase employment opportunities in the construction trades for incarcerated individuals after release. The program is overseen by a joint advisory committee composed of representatives from building and construction trades employee organizations, the State Building and Construction Trades Council of California, joint apprenticeship training programs, CALCTRA, DAS, the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, and any other representatives CDCR determines appropriate. The joint advisory committee's responsibilities include:

- Developing guidelines for the participation of incarcerated individuals in preapprenticeship training programs.
- Developing and implementing a pre-release construction trades certification that validates that an incarcerated person completed instruction, skills, and competencies required by and recognized by the participating building and construction trades.
- Ensuring compliance with any applicable requirements and regulations of the DAS.
- Evaluating pre-release on-the-job training opportunities to compare and match competencies with those of registered apprentices in the building and construction trades.
- Exploring the feasibility of the electronic tracking of each participating incarcerated individual's relevant activities to efficiently capture competencies related to the certification.
- Exploring the pre-release awarding of formal credit for apprenticeship hours recognized by joint apprenticeship training programs and the DAS.
- Facilitating the admission of graduates of preapprenticeship programs for incarcerated individuals, after release, into state-approved apprenticeship programs and for apprenticeship programs to evaluate such individuals for admission with advanced standing based on prior coursework and work experience.

**5) Conservation (Fire) Camp Program:** According to CDCR:

CDCR initiated the Conservation (Fire) Camp Program to provide able-bodied incarcerated people the opportunity to work on meaningful projects throughout the state. The CDCR road camps were established in 1915. During World War II, much of the work force that was used by the Division of Forestry (now known as CAL FIRE), was depleted.

CDCR provided the needed work force by having incarcerated people occupy "temporary camps" to augment the regular firefighting forces. During WWII, were 41 "interim camps," which would become the foundation for the network of camps in operation today. In 1946, the Rainbow Conservation Camp opened as the first permanent male conservation camp. Rainbow made history again when it converted to a female

camp in 1983. The Los Angeles County Fire Department (LAC), in contract with the CDCR, opened five camps in Los Angeles County in the 1980's.<sup>2</sup>

Today, CDCR, in cooperation with CAL FIRE and the Los Angeles County Fire Department, jointly operate 35 conservation camps in 25 counties across the state. Fire camp participants support state, local, and federal government agencies as they respond to emergencies such as fires, floods, and other natural or manmade disasters, and complete community service projects when not assigned to an emergency. All fire camps are minimum-security facilities which are overseen by CDCR employees.<sup>3</sup>

When responding to a wildfire or working on conservation projects, a CAL FIRE captain is responsible for the incarcerated inmates' custody. The fire captain acts as the supervisor for the hand crew, which can include up to 17 people. Custody transfers back to correctional staff when the hand crews end their shift and return to either the fire location camp or a base camp. CAL FIRE assigns conservation projects for the crews. Prior to the start of a project, CDCR and CAL FIRE staff members evaluate the project site to ensure there are no security issues.<sup>4</sup>

Incarcerated individuals participating in fire camps receive the same entry-level training as CAL FIRE's seasonal firefighters as well as ongoing training from CAL FIRE throughout their time in the program. An incarcerated person must volunteer for the fire camp program, and some individuals are ineligible for fire camp assignment based on their convictions, including convictions for sex offenses, arson, and escape with force or violence.<sup>5</sup> Individuals who volunteer for fire camp must complete CAL FIRE's Firefighting Training Program, and program participants become certified wildland firefighters after completing this training.<sup>6</sup>

California Conservation Camp participants make up 27% of the state's firefighting force. The demographics are similar to the demographics of California's general incarcerated population: while most people involved are adult males, women and juveniles may also participate in fire camps.

- 6) **Ventura Training Center (VTC):** The VTC began training participants in October 2018.<sup>7</sup> It accepts trainees who have recently been part of a trained firefighting workforce housed in fire camps or institutional firehouses operated by CAL FIRE and CDCR.<sup>8</sup> To offer formerly-incarcerated firefighters an opportunity to continue using the skills and knowledge they worked to achieve while participating in the Conservation Camp Program, CALFIRE, CCC, and CDCR, in partnership with the Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC), developed an

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/facility-locator/conservation-camps/faq-conservation-fire-camp-program/>, last visited March 14, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/facility-locator/conservation-camps/faq-conservation-fire-camp-program/> [as of May 29, 2026].

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ventura Training Center*, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) <<https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/facility-locator/conservation-camps/ventura/>> [as of May 29, 2026].

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

enhanced firefighter training and certification program at the VTC in Ventura County.<sup>9</sup> Participants in the 18-month certification program are provided with additional rehabilitation and job training skills to help them be more successful after completion of the program.<sup>10</sup> Cadets who complete the program will be qualified to apply for entry-level firefighting jobs with local, state, and federal firefighting agencies.<sup>11</sup>

CDCR parole agents are on duty at VTC on a daily basis. Through a contract with CDCR's Division of Rehabilitative Programs (DRP), ARC provides life skills training and resources, including education and employment assistance, and community service referrals. VTC has enrolled 432 cadets to date, and only 272 currently have jobs – 78 of which are not employed in a fire related role.<sup>12</sup> That results in a 63% employment rate. Requiring an evaluation of VTC could identify obstacles that prevent more VTC graduates from securing full-time employment, which could facilitate the reintegration of trained individuals into the workforce and augment the state's firefighting capacity.

- 7) **Reentry Programs:** The State has also invested in reentry work training programs. As part of California's efforts to increase rehabilitative opportunities and reduce recidivism, CWDB, CDCR, CALCTRA, and California Workforce Association created the Corrections-Workforce Partnership in 2017. This partnership links education, job training, and work experience in prison to post-release jobs by fostering a system of coordinated service delivery to a population that faces a variety of barriers.

In 2018, the Legislature appropriated \$37 million for the Prison to Employment Initiative (P2E), which is administered by the CWDB. The mission of P2E is to create a pathway toward employment and away from recidivism for formerly incarcerated and justice-involved individuals.<sup>13</sup> P2E funds the integration of workforce and reentry services through grants to workforce service providers across California, including both "direct services" and "supportive services," paving a pathway towards employment and away from recidivism for the formerly incarcerated and justice-involved population.<sup>14</sup>

CDWB's interim report evaluating the P2E program outlines the types of direct services participants receive such as interview coaching and tuition for MC3 training in the construction trades.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, supportive services help participants meet their basic needs, including stipends to cover participants' transportation, clothing, and food costs.<sup>16</sup> As of June 2021, P2E funds have been used to serve over 3,190 formerly-incarcerated and

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ventura Training Center, Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC)* <<https://antirecidivism.org/our-programs/vtc/>> [as of May 29, 2026].

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> CWDB, *Interim Report for Evaluation of Workforce Development Programs submitted pursuant to Supplemental Report of the 2018-19 Budget Act, Item 7120-101-000* (Oct. 2021), p. 1 <[https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2021/10/P2E-Interim-Report\\_ACCESSIBLE.pdf#:~:text=P2E%20funds%20the%20integration%20of%20workforce%20and%20reentry,recidivism%20for%20the%20formerly%20incarcerated%20and%20justice-involved%20population](https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2021/10/P2E-Interim-Report_ACCESSIBLE.pdf#:~:text=P2E%20funds%20the%20integration%20of%20workforce%20and%20reentry,recidivism%20for%20the%20formerly%20incarcerated%20and%20justice-involved%20population)> [as of May 29, 2026].

<sup>14</sup> *Id.* at p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.* at p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

justice-involved individuals statewide.<sup>17</sup> In January 2023, CWDB announced \$19 million in awards to new projects (P2E 2.0).<sup>18</sup> The grant term for P2E 2.0 runs from January 2023 through December 2025.

- 8) **Effect of This Bill:** This bill seeks to build upon prior efforts to provide career options to fire camp participants following their release from incarceration. Specifically, this bill amends the joint advisory committee’s responsibility to facilitate the post-release admission of graduates of pre-apprenticeship programs for incarcerated individuals into state-approved apprenticeship programs so that graduates of the fire camp program are included.

This bill also requires the joint advisory committee to facilitate the admission of graduates of the existing Pre-Release Construction Trades Certificate Program into any relevant state-approved apprenticeship after they are released from prison. In addition, this bill requires state-approved apprenticeship programs to consider these individuals for admission with advanced standing based on their prior coursework and work experience.

This bill additionally requires that successful completion of the fire camp program, including, but not limited to, wildland firefighter training, such as environmental remediation and forestry management, emergency response, and hazardous waste cleanup, constitute qualifying experience for a state-approved apprenticeship under the DAS.

Finally, this bill requires CDCR, in partnership with CAL FIRE and the fire camp program, to ensure that all individuals who complete the fire camp program receive a certification acknowledging their fire camp training and work experience to ensure eligibility for state-approved apprenticeship programs.

- 9) **Argument in Support:** According to the *NextGen California*, one of the bill’s sponsors, “Successful reentry into society after incarceration remains a significant challenge for far too many justice-involved individuals facing systemic barriers to sustainable, long-term careers. Despite past investments in programs that support successful reentry for those formerly incarcerated, the state has taken advantage of incarcerated fire camp participants – training them and then placing them in dangerous conditions fighting fires only to provide them with little in the way of employment opportunities upon release.

“SB 1012 tackles this issue by requiring the existing joint advisory committee under the Prerelease Construction Trades Certificate Program, in consultation with relevant state agencies, to help facilitate admission of fire camp graduates into relevant state-approved apprenticeship programs, including evaluation for advanced standing based on prior coursework and work experience. The bill also specifies that successful completion of conservation camp programs constitutes qualifying experience for state-approved apprenticeships in the building and construction trades and requires that participants receive a certification acknowledging their training and work experience.

“California continues to face growing wildfire risk and an urgent need for a trained

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<sup>17</sup> *Id.* at p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> CWDB, *Prison to Employment (P2E 2.0) Award Announcements* available at <[https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2023/01/P2E-2.0-Award-Announcement-Jan-2023\\_ACCESSIBLE.pdf](https://cwdb.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2023/01/P2E-2.0-Award-Announcement-Jan-2023_ACCESSIBLE.pdf)>.

workforce capable of supporting vegetation management, fuel reduction, and defensible space efforts. SB 1012 aligns workforce development, public safety, and successful reentry in a way that benefits workers, communities, and the state as a whole.”

10) **Argument in Opposition:** None submitted.

11) **Related Legislation:** AB 2483 (Elhawary) would require the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to implement a standardized process to ensure any individual who successfully completes training in a CAL FIRE firefighting training camp while incarcerated receives official written certification before their release from prison and requires CAL FIRE to award hiring preferences to certain qualified formerly incarcerated individuals. AB 2483 has been referred to the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee.

12) **Prior Legislation:**

- a) AB 1380 (Elhawary), of the 2025-2026 Legislative Session, would have required the CAL FIRE, in partnership with CDCR and the California Conservation Camp program (CCC), to provide for official certification for all individuals who complete CAL FIRE’s firefighting training (FFT) program while incarcerated. AB 1380 was held in suspense in the Senate Appropriations Committee.
- b) SB 245 (Reyes), Chapter 746, Statutes of 2025, required CDCR or a county authority, upon the release of a defendant, to certify to the court in the county where the defendant was sentenced, if the individual successfully participated in an inmate fire crew, as specified, and to provide a copy of that certification to the defendant
- c) SB 75 (Smallwood-Cuevas), would have required, no later than January 1, 2028, the CDCR, in partnership with DIR and recognized building and construction trades councils, to establish the Preapprenticeship Pathways to Employment Pilot Program (program) to provide incarcerated individuals nearing release with access to high-quality preapprenticeship training aligned with state-registered apprenticeships in the building and construction trades. The Governor vetoed SB 75.
- d) AB 409 (Weber), of the 2023-2024 Legislative Session, would have required CDCR to modify its training program for inmate firefighters serving as hand crew members through the CC Camp Program to provide participants the opportunity to earn a specified list of certifications related to firefighting, among other provisions. AB 409 did not receive a hearing in the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources.
- e) AB 1908 (Maienschein), of the 2021-2022 Legislative Session, would have allowed an incarcerated individual who successfully participated and completed training in a program, as specified, as an incarcerated hand crewmember, to be eligible for a firefighter certificate provided by the CDCR, among other provisions. The hearing on AB 1908 in the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources was canceled at the request of the author.
- f) AB 2147 (Reyes), Chapter 60, Statutes of 2020, provides an expedited expungement pathway for formerly incarcerated people who have successfully participated as

incarcerated firefighters in the state's Conservation Camp Program. Many former incarcerated firefighters from fire camps go on to gain employment with CAL FIRE, the USFS and interagency hotshot crews.

- g) SB 866 (Com. on Budget & Fiscal Review), Chapter 53, Statutes of 2018, among other things, established the Pre-Release Construction Trades Certificate Program in CDCR to increase employment opportunities in the construction trades for incarcerated persons upon release.
- h) SB 825 (Beall), of the 2017-2018 Legislative Session, would have required CDCR to develop guidelines for inmate preapprenticeship training programs. SB 825 failed passage in this committee.
- i) AB 2129 (Jones-Sawyer), of the 2013-2014 Legislative Session, would have required CDCR to implement a voluntary prerelease reentry program for all inmates to begin no later than six months prior to release from prison. AB 2129 was held in suspense in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.
- j) AB 2060 (V. Manuel Perez), Chapter 383, Statutes of 2014, established the Supervised Population Workforce Training Grant Program.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

Nextgen California (Sponsor)  
ACLU California Action  
Associated General Contractors, California Chapters  
California Federation of Labor Unions, Afl-cio  
California Forestry Association  
California Public Defenders Association  
California State Council of Laborers  
Grip Training Institute  
San Quentin Skunkworks

### **Opposition**

None submitted.

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