
THIRD READING

Bill No: SB 1015
Author: Strickland (R)
Amended: 4/9/26
Vote: 21

SENATE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE: 6-0, 4/7/26
AYES: Arreguín, Seyarto, Caballero, Cortese, Pérez, Wiener

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 5/14/26
AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

SUBJECT: Crimes: minors

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill makes it a wobbler for any adult to recruit, induce, coerce or persuade a minor to commit an illegal act against another minor, or to solicit physical harm, sexual conduct, or images of an intimate body part, from another minor, as specified, and expands the crime of extortion to apply to minors in cases where the minor has knowingly threatened, intimidated or coerced another minor to engage in any sexual conduct or obtain an image of an intimate body part from another minor, as specified.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Provides that a person a person who causes, induces, or persuades, or attempts to cause, induce, or persuade, a person who is a minor at the time of commission of the offense to engage in a commercial sex act, with the intent to effect or maintain a violation of several specified crimes related to sexual misconduct and extortion is guilty of human trafficking, as specified. (Penal (Pen.) Code, § 236.1, subd. (c).)

- 2) Provides that any person who intentionally gives, transports, provides, or makes available, or who offers to give, transport, provide, or make available to another person, a child under the age of 16 for the purpose of any lewd or lascivious act, as defined, or who causes, induces, or persuades a child under the age of 16 to engage in such an act with another person, is guilty of a felony and shall be imprisoned in the state prison for a term of three, six, or eight years, and by a fine not to exceed fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000). (Pen. Code, § 266j.)
- 3) Provides that every person who knows, should have known, or believes that another person is a minor, and who knowingly distributes, sends, causes to be sent, exhibits, or offers to distribute or exhibit by any means, including by physical delivery, telephone, electronic communication, or in person, any harmful matter that depicts a minor or minors engaging in sexual conduct, to the other person with the intent of arousing, appealing to, or gratifying the lust or passions or sexual desires of that person or of the minor, and with the intent or for the purposes of engaging in sexual intercourse, sodomy, or oral copulation with the other person, or with the intent that either person touch an intimate body part of the other, is guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year, or is guilty of a felony, punishable by imprisonment in the state prison for two, three, or five years. (Pen. Code, § 288.2, subd. (a).)
- 4) Provides that for the purposes of the above provision, an intimate body part includes the sexual organ, anus, groin, or buttocks of any person, or the breasts of a female. (Pen. Code, § 288.2, subd. (d).)
- 5) Provides that every person who contacts or communicates with a minor, or attempts to contact or communicate with a minor, who knows or reasonably should know that the person is a minor, with intent to commit specified sexual or violent offenses involving the minor shall be punished by imprisonment in the state prison for the term prescribed for an attempt to commit the intended offense. (Pen. Code, § 288.3, subd. (a).)
- 6) Provides that a person is guilty of sexual exploitation of a child if that person knowingly develops, duplicates, prints, or exchanges any representation of information, data, or image, including, but not limited to, any film, filmstrip, photograph, negative, slide, photocopy, videotape, video laser disc, computer hardware, computer software, computer floppy disc, data storage media, CD-ROM, or computer-generated equipment or any other computer-generated image that contains or incorporates in any manner, any film, filmstrip, or any digitally altered or artificial-intelligence-generated matter that depicts a person

under 18 years of age engaged in an act of sexual conduct, and sets forth a definition of “sexual conduct,” as provided. (Pen. Code, § 311.3, subds. (a), (c).)

- 7) Provides that every person who, with knowledge that a person is a minor, or who, while in possession of any facts on the basis of which they should reasonably know that the person is a minor, hires, employs, or uses the minor to do or assist in specified acts relating to the creation and dissemination of child sexual abuse material (CSAM), shall be punished by imprisonment in the county jail for up to one year, or by a fine not exceeding two thousand dollars (\$2,000), or by both that fine and imprisonment, or by imprisonment in the state prison. (Pen. Code, § 311.4, subd. (a).)
- 8) Makes it a crime for an individual to solicit, or agree to engage in, or engage in, an act of prostitution with another person who is a minor in exchange for the individual providing compensation, money, or anything of value to the minor. An individual agrees to engage in an act of prostitution when, with specific intent to so engage, the individual manifests an acceptance of an offer or solicitation by someone who is a minor to so engage, regardless of whether the offer or solicitation was made by a minor who also possessed the specific intent to engage in an act of prostitution. (Pen. Code, § 647, subd. (b)(3).)
- 9) Provides that if the crime of solicitation or agreeing to engage in prostitution is committed by a defendant who is 18 years of age or older, the person who was solicited was a minor at the time of the offense, and the defendant knew or should have known that the person who was solicited was a minor at the time of the offense, the violation is punishable by imprisonment in a county jail for not less than two days and not more than one year, or by a fine not exceeding \$10,000, or by both that fine and imprisonment, except as provided. (Pen. Code, § 647, subd. (1)(1).)
- 10) Makes it a crime for a person to annoy or molest a child under 18 years of age, punishable as a misdemeanor by up to 1 year in county jail, a fine of \$5,000, or both, or as a wobbler if the defendant enters a home without consent. (Pen. Code, § 647.6, subds. (a), (b).)
- 11) Provides that every person 18 years of age or older who, in any voluntary manner, solicits, induces, encourages, or intimidates any minor with the intent that the minor shall commit a specified felony, shall be punished by imprisonment in county jail for a period of 3, 5, or 7 years, but if the minor is 16 years of age or older at the time of the offense, this penalty only applies

when the adult is at least five years older than the minor at the time the offense is committed. (Pen. Code § 653j, subd. (a).

- 12) Provides that every person who, with intent to place another person in reasonable fear for his or her safety, or the safety of the other person's immediate family, by means of an electronic communication device, and without consent of the other person, and for the purpose of imminently causing that other person unwanted physical contact, injury, or harassment, by a third party, electronically distributes, publishes, e-mails, hyperlinks, or makes available for downloading, personal identifying information, including, but not limited to, a digital image of another person, or an electronic message of a harassing nature about another person, which would be likely to incite or produce that unlawful action, is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in a county jail, by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000), or by both that fine and imprisonment. (Pen. Code, § 653.2, subd. (a).)
- 13) Provides that extortion is the obtaining of property or other consideration from another, with his or her consent, or the obtaining of an official act of a public officer, induced by a wrongful use of force or fear, or under color of official right. (Pen. Code, § 518, subd. (a).)
- 14) Specifies that "fear," as such will constitute extortion, may be induced by a threat of any of the following:
 - a) To do an unlawful injury to the person or property of the individual threatened or of a third person.
 - b) To accuse the individual threatened, or a relative of his or her, or a member of his or her family, of a crime.
 - c) To expose, or to impute to him, her, or them a deformity, disgrace, or crime.
 - d) To expose a secret affecting him, her, or them.
 - e) To report his, her, or their immigration status or suspected immigration status. (Pen. Code, § 519.)
- 15) Provides that every person who attempts, by means of any threat, such as is specified in the above provision, to extort property or other consideration from another is punishable by imprisonment in the county jail not longer than one

year or in the state prison or by fine not exceeding ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), or by both such fine and imprisonment. (Pen. Code, § 524.)

- 16) Defines “consideration,” for the purposes of the crime of extortion, to mean anything of value, including the sexual exploitation of a child or an image of an intimate body part, as defined. (Pen. Code, § 518, subd. (b).)
- 17) Provides that the crime of extortion does not apply to a person under 18 years of age who has obtained consideration consisting of sexual conduct or an image of an intimate body part. (Pen. Code, § 518, subd. (c).)

This bill:

- 1) Provides that any adult who, via any method of communication, recruits, induces, coerces, or persuades a minor to commit an illegal act against another minor, or solicits physical harm, sexual conduct, or images of an intimate body part, from another minor, or who utilizes a minor as a conduit of communication to facilitate any of the foregoing, is guilty of a wobbler.
- 2) Defines “conduit of communication,” for the purposes of the crime above, as “a minor whose digital identity or physical presence is used as a medium to transmit, relay, or facilitate the delivery of communications to another minor for the purposes of engaging in the conduct described” above.
- 3) Defines “intimate body part” and “sexual conduct” in accordance with existing laws defining those terms.
- 4) Provides that the existing provision exempting minors from the crime of extortion does not apply in cases where the minor has knowingly threatened, intimidated, or coerced another minor to engage in any sexual conduct or obtain an image of an intimate body part from another minor, including an image of an intimate body part that is produced by artificial intelligence and depicts the identity of another minor.
- 5) Provides that when the provision above applies, a person who commits extortion, if eligible, shall be referred to specified community-based services in lieu of punishment, but if they are ineligible, the offense shall be punished as a misdemeanor.
- 6) Defines “artificial intelligence” (A.I.) in accordance with existing law defining that term.

Comments

Although the digital age has conferred numerous benefits upon society, it has also been attended by the emergence of much darker elements, among which is a distinct subset of domestic terrorism known as nihilistic violence groups. These groups eschew the traditional ideological goals of many other extremist groups and instead leverage digital networks to advocate for societal collapse and violence for its own sake. According to a recent report published by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue:

While occupying parallel digital spaces and producing similar types of harm, online subcultures of nihilistic violence are distinct from ideologically motivated extremism. [...] Nihilistic violence ecosystems are decentralized, cross platform and highly agile, leveraging mainstream and fringe platforms for grooming, propaganda and operational coordination. [...] Nihilistic violent communities produce a much broader range of harms than ideologically motivated extremist networks, spanning sexual exploitation, cybercrime and various forms of real world targeted violence, including self harm, animal abuse, interpersonal violence and mass casualty attacks such as school shootings. [...] Some elements of nihilistic violence subcultures are more formally organized. 764 is an organized network of online groups that engage in sextortion and violence glorification. Emerging from the Com network in 2021, it comprises a constantly shifting set of chats, groups and forums across multiple platforms. Some groups remain focused on coercing minors to produce child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and self harm content, [though] prominent 764 affiliates are increasingly mobilizing users towards real world violence, with four recent mass violence plots and attacks across the US.

As referenced in the foregoing citation, these groups are engaged in a range of sadistic online exploitation schemes, among which are so-called “sextortion” schemes, which involve children and teens being threatened and coerced into sending sexually explicit digital images, or paying the individual to not release explicit images already in their possession. According to the FBI, in 2022, law enforcement agencies received over 7,000 reports related to online sextortion, resulting in at least 3,000 victims, some of took their own lives. With the rise of artificial intelligence and so-called “deepfake” technology, the threat of sextortion has become even more acute, allowing individuals to fall prey to such schemes even when they have not engaged in any sexual conduct or produced illicit images themselves. In one recent case, a Texas teen committed suicide after receiving a

threatening text with an A.I.-generated nude photo of himself demanding he pay \$3,000 to keep it from being sent to family and friends.

The author asserts that “under current law, there is no statute authorizes prosecution in cases when an adult predator uses one minor to threaten, coerce, groom, or extort another minor, especially online,” and therefore proposes this bill to address the harms being caused by nihilistic violence groups and “sextortionists” in specific instances where individuals associated with these groups recruit or coerce one minor to harm or engage in sexual conduct with another minor. The bill has two major components: a new wobbler seeking to prevent predators from using one minor to harm another, and an expansion to California’s existing extortion statute to apply to minors when the minor has knowingly coerced another minor engage in sexual conduct or obtain an image of an intimate body part from a third minor.

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

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

The fiscal impact of this bill to the courts will depend on many unknown factors, including the numbers of violations alleged to have occurred and the factors unique to each case. An eight-hour court day costs approximately \$10,500. If the bill results in only 12 or more days spent in court, trial court costs could be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. While the courts are not funded on a workload basis, an increase in workload could result in delayed court services and would put pressure on the General Fund to fund additional staff and resources and to increase the amount appropriated to backfill for trial court operations. The proposed 2026-27 Budget Act proposes \$70 million from the General Fund to backfill the Trial Court Trust Fund to address the continued decline in civil fee and criminal fine and penalty revenues.

Costs (local funds, General Fund) to the counties and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to incarcerate people convicted of this new offense. Actual incarceration costs will depend on the number of convictions, the length of each sentence, and whether each sentence must be served in county jail or state prison. Where a minor was involved, county probation, county health agencies, community based organizations or local educational agency could incur costs.

SUPPORT: (Verified 5/14/26)

Arcadia Police Officers' Association
Brea Police Association
Burbank Police Officers' Association
California Association of School Police Chiefs
California Coalition of School Safety Professionals
California District Attorneys Association
California Narcotic Officers' Association
California Police Chiefs Association
California Reserve Peace Officers Association
California State Sheriffs' Association
Claremont Police Officers Association
Corona Police Officers Association
Culver City Police Officers' Association
Fullerton Police Officers' Association
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
Los Angeles School Police Management Association
Los Angeles School Police Officers Association
Murrieta Police Officers' Association
Newport Beach Police Association
Orange County Business Council
Orange County Department of Education
Orange County Sheriff's Department
Palos Verdes Police Officers Association
Peace Officers Research Association of California
Placer County Deputy Sheriffs' Association
Pomona Police Officers' Association
Protection of the Educational Rights of Kids
Riverside County District Attorney
Riverside Police Officers Association
Riverside Sheriffs' Association
San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department
San Diego County District Attorney's Office
San Diego County Sheriff's Office

OPPOSITION: (Verified 5/14/26)

ACLU California Action
California Civil Liberties Advocacy
California Coalition for Women Prisoners

California Public Defenders Association
Californians United for a Responsible Budget
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
Initiate Justice
Justice2jobs Coalition
LA Defensa
Local 148 Los Angeles County Public Defender's Union
San Francisco Public Defender
Smart Justice California

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