

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 1015 (Strickland) – As Amended June 24, 2026

Policy Committee: Public Safety

Vote: 9 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill, the Protecting Our Children from Online Extortion Act, makes it an alternate felony-misdemeanor for an adult, via any method of communication, 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, or to utilize a minor as a conduit of communication to facilitate any of those acts.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Potential court cost pressures of an unknown, but potentially significant amount, to adjudicate the new crime created by this bill (Trial Court Trust Fund (TCTF), General Fund). Criminal proceedings carry the right to a jury trial and to counsel at public expense for defendants who cannot afford representation, and felony charges can lead to lengthier and more complex proceedings. Actual cost pressures will depend on the number of violations alleged and the factors unique to each case. An eight-hour court day costs approximately \$10,500; twelve or more court days statewide would place trial court costs in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Although courts are not funded on a workload basis, an increase in workload could create a demand for increased court funding. The proposed 2026–27 budget includes \$70 million General Fund to backfill declining TCTF revenues.
- 2) Costs of an unknown amount to counties to incarcerate and supervise persons convicted of the new offense (local funds). Felony terms for the new offense are served in county jail pursuant to subdivision (h) of Penal Code Section 1170. Actual costs will depend on the number of convictions and the length of each sentence. Where a minor is involved, county probation departments, county health agencies, and local educational agencies could also incur costs. The average annual cost to incarcerate one person in county jail is approximately \$29,000, though costs are higher in larger counties. County incarceration costs are not subject to reimbursement by the state. However, overcrowding in county jails creates cost pressure on the General Fund because the state has historically granted new funding to counties to offset overcrowding resulting from public safety realignment.

COMMENTS:

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

Senate Bill 1015 closes a dangerous loophole in California law and gives law enforcement the tools they need to protect vulnerable

children... Existing law does not provide a clear pathway to hold someone accountable for recruiting or coercing a child to act as a conduit for threats, sexual exploitation, or self-harm of another child.

- 2) **Background.** Existing law criminalizes a range of related conduct, including contacting a minor with intent to commit specified sexual or violent offenses, causing a child under 16 to engage in lewd or lascivious acts, using a minor to produce or distribute child sexual abuse material, and soliciting, inducing, or intimidating a minor with the intent that the minor commit a specified felony. Prosecutors can also pursue aiding-and-abetting or conspiracy liability where a minor is used as an instrument of a crime. The Assembly Public Safety Committee analysis questions whether a new statute is necessary to reach conduct already covered by these provisions, and notes open questions about whether the bill's terms would reach conduct where the recruited minor never commits the underlying act. The bill is sponsored by the Orange County Sheriff's Department and supported by law enforcement associations and district attorneys' offices; opponents, including public defender offices and civil liberties organizations, argue the bill is duplicative of existing law and that harsher sentences do not deter crime.
- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 2683 (Ransom), of this legislative session, which makes an adult who solicits or recruits a minor to commit a felony guilty of child endangerment, was held on this committee's suspense file.

AB 355 (Sanchez) of this legislative session, expands the definition of fear for extortion to include threats involving AI-generated images, was held on this committee's suspense file.

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