
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

SB 1237 (Blakespear) - Civil Rights Department

Version: February 19, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: April 20, 2026

Policy Vote: JUD. 10 - 1

Mandate: No

Consultant: Bob Franzoia

Bill Summary: SB 1237 would require the Department of Civil Rights (DCR) to annually publish a report of the aggregate budget and enforcement information for the Civil Rights Enforcement and Litigation Fund. This bill would increase the penalty on certain private employers for failure to submit pay data reports, as specified,

Fiscal Impact: This bill would require DCR to comply with new reporting requirements. DCR estimates a cost of 150,000 (General Fund) annually for one full time position to develop accounting methods to trace these funds and to comply with the reporting requirements. In addition, the new reporting requirements may result in an increase in inquiries to DCR's Contact Center and an increase in Public Record Act requests. If the newly reported information results in a significant increase in inquiries and requests, DCR may require additional resources and program staff to handle the increased workload.

The Civil Rights Enforcement and Litigation Fund is administered by DCR and is designed to support the department's efforts in enforcing civil rights laws. The fund consists of any attorney's fees and costs awarded by a court to DCR when it is the prevailing party in a civil action brought under the California Fair Employment and Housing Act. Upon appropriation by the Legislature in the annual Budget Act, moneys in the fund may be used to offset DCR costs.

Background: The Department of Civil Rights, formerly the Department of Fair Employment and Housing (renamed July 1, 2022) enforces various civil rights laws, including the Fair Employment and Housing Act.

The DCR Contact Center handles inquiries regarding employment, housing, and public discrimination, with staff available to assist in filing complaints.

Proposed Law: This bill adds Government Code 12907 (d) (1) to read:

(d) (1) The department shall annually publish a report of the aggregate budgetary and enforcement information for the fund, including, but not limited to, all of the following:

(A) The total amount of civil penalties assessed.

(B) The total amount of civil penalties collected.

(C) The total amount of civil penalties outstanding to be collected.

(D) The allocation or use of collected penalty revenues.

Staff Comments: The collection of budgetary and enforcement information relating to civil penalties would result in new DCR costs. For example, since courts have jurisdiction over the assessment of civil penalties and their collection, DCR would continually monitor court actions to secure this information, particularly where DCR must track civil penalties outstanding to be collected. The tracking and use of collected penalty revenues may present unique, and perhaps unintended consequences. If those revenues must be tracked by type of violation, for example, pay equity, and only used to support future pay equity actions, that restriction could limit DCR's ability to conduct its work.