

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 48 (Gonzalez, et al.)
As Amended September 9, 2025
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires, contingent upon the enactment of AB 715 of this Session, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), as created by that measure within the Government Operations Agency (GovOps), to employ a Religious Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, a Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, a Gender Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, and an LGBTQ Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, all to be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires that the OCR, as proposed to be established by AB 715 of the 2025-26 Session, employ the following individuals:
 - a) A Religious Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, to be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate;
 - b) A Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, to be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate;
 - c) A Gender Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, to be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate; and
 - d) A LGBTQ Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, to be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.
- 2) Makes the act operative only if Assembly Bill 715 of the 2025–26 Regular Session is enacted and becomes effective on or before January 1, 2026.

COMMENTS

New bill. When this bill was heard in this Committee on July 2, 2025, it pertained to immigration enforcement at schools. It has recently been amended to remove those provisions and instead require the establishment of discrimination prevention coordinators, contingent upon the enactment of AB 715 (Zbur and Addis) of the 2025-26 Session.

Office of Civil Rights. California has the responsibility under state and federal law to enforce state and federal civil rights protections in public education.

Federal law vests responsibility for monitoring and enforcing multiple education statutes to state education agencies (SEAs). In California, the CDE is the state agency responsible for ensuring compliance with state and federal civil rights laws and regulations. To do so, the CDE maintains an Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO), which conducts compliance activities related to numerous state and federal laws.

State law and regulations also require the CDE to administer the Uniform Complaint Procedures (UCP) which generally allow individuals to file complaints regarding alleged violations of law with LEAs and appeal their decisions to the CDE if desired. This includes violations of civil rights statutes.

Historically, the federal government has also enforced civil rights laws. However, the Trump administration has virtually eliminated the federal role in civil rights enforcement in education, closing numerous field offices and leaving the fate of hundreds of cases pending with the United States Department of Education unclear.

In light of this diminished federal role, it is reasonable for California to strengthen its compliance monitoring and enforcement of civil rights protections in public education.

This bill proposes to create several discrimination prevention coordinators, to be housed within the OCR proposed to be created by AB 715 within the Government Operations Agency (GovOps). The purpose of this office would be to work directly with LEAs to prevent and address discrimination and bias. It would do so by providing education and educational resources to identify and prevent antisemitism and other forms of discrimination and bias, reporting on the state of discrimination and bias in public schools, recommending strategies to combat discrimination or bias, advising on subsequent action regarding complaints that involve discrimination, and providing protocols to respond to discrimination complaints, among other responsibilities.

The establishment of a new OCR raises a number of governance issues. While the missions of the CDE's compliance functions and the proposed OCR have differences, there appears to be significant duplication in reporting, advising, and implementing correction plans related to complaints. Even with distinct responsibilities, having two state agencies working with LEAs on issues of discrimination may cause confusion and disruption. It is also unclear how these functions would be carried out by GovOps, an agency with no expertise in educational civil rights compliance, unclear authority to engage in compliance activities, and no direct relationship with schools. *The Assembly may wish to consider* that the appropriate entity in which to vest these responsibilities is the CDE, consistent with its expertise and its longstanding mandate under state and federal law. Renaming the existing OEO the OCR, and increasing its resources, could accomplish this goal without creating duplication and disruption at the local level.

Duties of coordinators not identified. Unlike the Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator position proposed to be established by AB 715, this bill does not specify the duties and authority of the discrimination prevention coordinators it would establish. *The Committee may wish to consider that* if the duties of the coordinators, when and if they are established, vary by coordinator position, this would likely exacerbate the governance issues identified above.

Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator. AB 715 also creates an Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator, and requires that this position:

- 1) Develop, consult on, and provide antisemitism education to teachers, staff, governing board or body members, administrators, and other LEA personnel to identify and proactively prevent antisemitism;

- 2) Make recommendations, in coordination with the executive director of the SBE, to the Legislature, on legislation necessary for the prevention of antisemitism in educational settings;
- 3) Engage and advise on the actions taken by the office on issues relating to antisemitism and the Jewish community; and
- 4) Engage with local educational agencies on the handling of antisemitism.

AB 715 also requires that the United States National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, published by the Biden Administration on May 25, 2023, be a basis to inform the Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator on how to identify, respond to, prevent, and counter antisemitism.

According to the Author

“Discrimination in our schools is unacceptable. We must ensure that students, families, educators, and schools that are navigating the state’s existing Uniform Complaint Procedure (UCP) for discrimination-related complaints have a clear understanding of the process, laws, and timeline. SB 48 intends to establish four coordinators under the Office of Civil Rights that will provide additional support to educators, LEAs, and parents to navigate the Uniform Complaint Procedure process and ensure that complaints are processed in a timely manner.”

Arguments in Support

None on this version of the bill

Arguments in Opposition

None on this version of the bill

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, ongoing General Fund costs of an unknown amount, but likely at least \$1,000,000, for the Office of Civil Rights, within the Government Operations Agency, to employ four separate Discrimination Prevention Coordinators. However, Senate Bill 105 (Wiener), of the current legislative session, requires the Director of Finance to provide additional General Fund or any other available source of funding for personnel and other resources necessary to implement this bill, if enacted into law.

VOTES

SENATE FLOOR: 29-7-4

YES: Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Cortese, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Umberg, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

NO: Alvarado-Gil, Choi, Dahle, Grove, Niello, Seyarto, Strickland

ABS, ABST OR NV: Hurtado, Jones, Reyes, Valladares

ASM EDUCATION: 7-2-0

YES: Muratsuchi, Addis, Alvarez, Bonta, Garcia, Lowenthal, Patel

NO: Hoover, Castillo

UPDATED

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