

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 58 (Padilla) – As Amended June 15, 2026

Policy Committee: Natural Resources

Vote: 14 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the Air Resources Board (ARB) to develop a response framework to address fugitive and natural sources of hydrogen sulfide (H₂S).

Specifically, this bill, among other things:

- 1) Requires ARB, in consultation with local air districts, the Office of Emergency Services (OES), the State Department of Public Health (CDPH), regional water quality control boards or other local or regional authorities, local environmental and public health agencies, universities and academic institutions, affected tribal governments, and community-based organizations, to develop a response framework that establishes best practices and guidance for addressing fugitive and natural sources of H₂S gas and for community preparation and response to H₂S exposure events originating from these sources, as specified.
- 2) Requires ARB, among other things, to conduct at least three public workshops, with at least one located in the Tijuana River Valley region, at least one in the Salton Sea region, and at least one selected in consultation with a community that has experienced significant H₂S exposure.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) ARB estimates costs of \$1.8 million in fiscal year (FY) 2027-28 for about six new positions, contract dollars, and equipment, followed by ongoing annual costs of \$1.3 million in FY 2028-29 and ongoing (Air Pollution Control Fund).

Specifically, ARB expects to serve as a subject matter expert on H₂S emission sources, health effects from ambient exposures, cross-media releases, exposure mitigation strategies, health-based Reference Exposure Levels (RELs), and health- and nuisance-based standards; draft the required framework and manage subsequent updates; consult and coordinate with a diverse group of stakeholders; lead public workshops and engage in targeted outreach to affected communities; develop region-specific and multilingual educational resources on the response framework in coordination with community-based organizations; serve as the technical lead on developing monitoring plans; serve as the response and outreach lead for incident operations; provide technical support and deliver guidance and training to local air districts and health agencies on monitoring and response planning; and various other tasks.

As part of the costs outlined above, ARB anticipates needing portable field instruments as well as air monitoring equipment to respond to planned and unplanned releases, spikes in air quality, and emergency incidents.

- 2) The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) estimates ongoing annual costs of approximately \$423,000 for two positions, a one-time contracting cost of \$400,000, and ongoing annual contracting costs of \$150,000 (General Fund). While the bill directs ARB to develop a response framework to address sources of H₂S, in practice, ARB is very likely to consult with OEHHA in developing the required framework. OEHHA has previously developed RELs for H₂S, which are used by ARB, local air districts, and others when evaluating emissions from facilities, permitting, and conducting health risk assessments. Accordingly, OEHHA expects to lend its technical expertise to ARB in the development and updating of H₂S thresholds, participate in the required public workshops, and rely on a contractor for some of its technical support needs.
- 3) OES and CDPH anticipate minor and absorbable costs to consult with ARB.
- 4) Costs of an unknown, likely absorbable, amount for the regional water quality control boards to consult with ARB.

COMMENTS:

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

SB 58 advances equity by improving the state's understanding of hydrogen sulfide exposure in disproportionately burdened communities, including the Tijuana River Valley and Salton Sea regions. These communities, often low-income, immigrant, Latino, and Tribal, experience repeated or prolonged exposure alongside other environmental and health stressors.

- 2) **Background.** H₂S, commonly associated with sewage, landfills, geothermal fields, and oil and natural gas extraction, is a toxic gas that produces a foul odor. H₂S is known to cause negative respiratory and neurological impacts at the acute exposure level. While epidemiological information for chronic effects is limited, some studies suggest chronic exposure levels may be associated with ocular, cardiovascular, respiratory, and neurological impacts. ARB regulates H₂S as a nuisance odor with the state standard established at 30 parts per billion averaged over one hour. ARB adopted this standard in 1969 and has not updated it since. Unlike the emissions from entities that ARB and local air districts regulate, there have been incidents of air emissions across the state that do not have a clear responsible party but may far exceed established standards and significantly harm neighboring communities.

Among others in support of this bill, San Diego County writes that the Tijuana River Valley faces an ongoing environmental and public health crisis driven by decades of transboundary sewage flows, which disproportionately affect already overburdened communities. This includes increased H₂S exposure, which is often linked to sewage decomposition and anaerobic activity in impacted areas like the Tijuana River Valley. The county writes, "SB 58's intent to update [H₂S] standards and develop health-based thresholds is critical to closing a decades-long regulatory gap and protecting vulnerable populations."

Similarly, the Tijuana River Coalition writes that overburdened communities surrounding the Salton Sea experience frequent elevated and chronic low-level H₂S concentrations, caused by anaerobic biological activity, decomposition of organic matter, and shoreline emissions, with recorded levels frequently exceeding the state standard. The coalition argues, “Currently, no uniform standard on [H₂S] exists across state and federal agencies. By conducting a review, we can fully understand the risk posed to human health and ensure we are taking appropriate steps to protect Californians.”

There is no opposition registered against this bill.

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