
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

SB 998 (Gonzalez) - Educational equity: discrimination prevention coordinators

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Urgency: No

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Policy Vote: ED. 5 - 1, JUD. 11 - 1

Mandate: No

Consultant: Lenin Del Castillo

Bill Summary: This bill establishes the following positions under the Office of Civil Rights (OCR): Disability Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, Deputy Coordinator on Anti-Black Racism, Deputy Coordinator on Anti-Asian American and Pacific Islander (Anti-AAPI) Discrimination, and Deputy Coordinator on Anti-Latino Discrimination. This bill also establishes roles and responsibilities for the OCR's existing Religious Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, the Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, the Gender Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, and the LGBTQ+ Discrimination Prevention Coordinator.

Fiscal Impact:

- The Government Operations Agency (GovOps) estimates General Fund costs of \$2.25 million in the 2027-28 fiscal year and \$1.75 million thereafter. This estimate assumes a cost of \$1.25 million for the four new coordinator positions and two additional support positions that GovOps indicates it would need for the added workload requirements. Additionally, GovOps estimates \$250,000 in General Fund costs to develop educational materials to accommodate the expanded responsibilities of the discrimination prevention coordinators and \$750,000 to acquire new office space to accommodate a larger office (\$500,000 would be one-time).
- This bill could expand the number of complaints filed under the Uniform Complaints Procedures (UCP) process, thereby increasing Proposition 98 General Fund costs associated with the existing UCP mandate. The extent of these costs is unknown and would depend on the number of complaints filed each year. The UCP mandate has an adopted statewide cost estimate of \$209,613 and a prospective cost of \$34,751 each year.

Background: Existing law establishes the OCR under the administration of GovOps to work directly with local educational agencies (LEAs) to prevent and address discrimination and bias, as specified. The law requires the OCR to engage with and seek advice from coordinators within the OCR on actions implemented by the OCR. Existing law establishes the position of the Director of the OCR and subjects it to appointment from the Governor and confirmation by the Senate.

Existing law requires the OCR, in consultation with the CDE, and under the supervision of GovOps, to carry out several tasks including providing education and educational resources to identify and prevent antisemitism and other forms of discrimination and bias, and sharing relevant laws and regulations with educational state agencies, LEAs,

and community stakeholders; annually submitting a report to GovOps, the SPI, the executive director of the State Board of Education (SBE), and the Legislature on the state of discrimination and bias in all LEAs, as specified; recommending strategies to combat discrimination or bias to CDE and LEAs, including proactive strategies using a restorative justice approach with a focus on repairing harm, fostering empathy, and healing relationships; reviewing reports from the CDE that include summaries of all complaints of discrimination filed pursuant to the UCP and advise on subsequent actions; providing assistance to the office of the Attorney General and the CDE on proper protocols to respond to discrimination complaints filed pursuant to the UCP.

Existing law establishes the position of the Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator, subject to appointment by the Governor and confirmation by the Senate. The law requires the Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator, in consultation with the CDE, and under the supervision of GovOps to carry out several tasks, including developing, consulting on, and providing antisemitism prevention education to teachers, staff, governing board or body members, administrators, and other LEA personnel to identify and proactively prevent antisemitism; 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; engaging and advising on actions taken by the OCR on issues related to antisemitism and the Jewish community; tracking and reporting to the Legislature, the executive director of the SBE, and the SPI, complaints and resolutions or lack of resolutions on complaints made pursuant to the UCP, as specified; and engaging with relevant community stakeholders in the execution of their duties.

Existing law prohibits any person from being subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code, including immigration status, in any program or activity conducted by an educational institution that receives, or benefits from, state financial assistance, or enrolls pupils who receive state student financial aid.

Existing law prohibits a teacher from giving instruction and a school district from sponsoring any activity that promotes a discriminatory bias on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, nationality, or sexual orientation, or because of a characteristic listed in Section 220.

Existing law prohibits the SBE and any governing board from adopting any textbooks or other instructional materials for use in the public schools that contain any matter reflecting adversely upon persons on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, nationality, or sexual orientation, or because of a characteristic listed in Section 220. It also prohibits a governing board from prohibiting the continued use of an appropriately adopted textbook, instructional material, or curriculum on the basis that it contains inclusive and diverse perspectives.

Proposed Law: This bill requires the OCR to employ a Disability Discrimination Prevention Coordinator to be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, and outlines its roles and responsibilities, as specified.

This bill establishes roles and responsibilities for the Religious Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, the Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, the Gender Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, and the LGBTQ+ Discrimination Prevention Coordinator under the OCR, as specified. Notable responsibilities include:

1. Develop, consult on, and provide discrimination related education to teachers, staff, governing board and body members, administrators, and other LEA personnel to identify and proactively prevent discrimination.
2. Provide technical assistance to LEAs to access restorative justice resources, training, and practitioners, as specified.
3. Engage with LEAs, upon the request of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), district superintendent, county superintendent of schools, or the governing board or body of an LEA, to ensure administrators are equipped to address conflicts at an early stage with the goal of proactively resolving incidents pertaining to the discrimination.
4. Beginning September 1, 2027, track and report to the Legislature, the executive director of the SBE, the SPI, complaints and resolutions or lack of resolutions of complaints made pursuant to the UCP relating to the discrimination in all local LEAs serving pupils in transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive.

This bill requires the OCR to employ a Deputy Coordinator on Anti-Black Racism, who shall report directly to the Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator. The bill specifies the coordinator's responsibilities, including making recommendations to the Legislature on legislation necessary for the prevention of anti-Blackness-related incidents or educational disparities, working with the leadership of the OCR to develop a dedicated internet web page with resources and information accessible to support Black pupils and LEA personnel, and reporting statistics on anti-Black racism against pupils and LEA personnel with suggestions on how to prevent anti-Black racism at the root of the problem.

This bill requires the OCR to employ a Deputy Coordinator on Anti-AAPI Discrimination, who shall report directly to the Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator. The bill specifies the coordinator's responsibilities, including making recommendations to the Legislature on legislation necessary for the prevention of anti-AAPI-related incidents or educational disparities and working with the leadership of the OCR to develop a dedicated internet web page with resources and information accessible to support AAPI pupils and LEA personnel.

This bill requires the OCR to employ a Deputy Coordinator on Anti-Latino Discrimination, who shall report directly to the Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator. The bill specifies the coordinator's responsibilities, including making recommendations to the Legislature on legislation necessary for the prevention of anti-Latino-related incidents or educational disparities and working with the leadership of the OCR to develop a dedicated internet web page with resources and information accessible to support Latino pupils and LEA personnel.

This bill renames the position of the LGBTQ Discrimination Prevention Coordinator to the LGBTQ+ Discrimination Prevention Coordinator and specifies its responsibilities.

Related Legislation: AB 715 (Zbur, Chapter 428, Statutes of 2025) establishes the OCR under the administration of GovOps and the position of Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator within OCR. The bill also requires LEAs that know or have reason to know that instructional or professional development materials were used that violate existing anti-discrimination laws to investigate and remediate the action.

SB 48 (Gonzalez, Chapter 429, Statutes of 2025) requires the OCR 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.

Staff Comments: AB 715 (Zbur, Chapter 428, Statutes of 2025) was enacted last year and established the OCR within GovOps as well as an Anti-Semitism Discrimination Prevention Coordinator. AB 715 also defined the roles and responsibilities of the Anti-Semitism Discrimination Prevention Coordinator. Additionally, SB 48 (Gonzalez, Chapter 429, Statutes of 2025) was signed into law and created four discrimination prevention coordinators. However, the bill did not define the roles and responsibilities of those positions. This bill follows up on AB 715 and SB 48 and proposes to establish guidelines and responsibilities for the four discrimination prevention positions. The bill also requires the OCR to employ a Deputy Coordinator on Anti-Black Racism, a Deputy Coordinator on Anti-Asian American and Pacific Islander Discrimination, and a Deputy Coordinator on Anti-Latino Discrimination. According to the author, "My colleagues and I committed to working on subsequent legislation to clarify the role of each coordinator and create a Disability Discrimination Prevention coordinator based on stakeholder feedback. SB 998 builds on that commitment by establishing clear guidelines and expectations for the service coordinators to provide upon the request of the local educational agency to ensure that all student populations receive equal protection, proactive support services, and timely responses to discriminatory incidents. With the dismantling of the Federal Department of Education, the state must step up to foster a positive campus climate, deliver targeted support services for our student population, and address discrimination against any student in California schools."

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