

Date of Hearing: June 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Ash Kalra, Chair
SB 998 (Gonzalez) – As Amended June 18, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 30-7

SUBJECT: EDUCATIONAL EQUITY: DISCRIMINATION PREVENTION
COORDINATORS

SYNOPSIS

This bill follows from last year’s AB 715 (Chap. 428, Stats. 2025) and SB 48 (Chap. 429, Stats. 2025). AB 715 established the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) within the Government Operations Agency. It also created an Antisemitism Discrimination Coordinator, appointed by the Governor and tasked with providing guidance and education to public schools on how they might better identify, prevent, and respond to incidents of antisemitism. AB 715 was contingently joined with SB 48, which provided for four additional coordinators, also housed within the OCR, with the following titles: Religious Discrimination Prevention Coordinator; Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator; Gender Discrimination Prevention Coordinator; and LGBTQ Discrimination Prevention Coordinator. SB 48 did not define the roles of the coordinators but rather included intent language calling upon subsequent legislation to flesh out the specific duties of the coordinators.

The bill now before the Committee adds a “Disability Discrimination Prevention Coordinator” to the list of existing coordinators. The bill also, consistent with the intent language in SB 48, sets forth prescribed roles and responsibilities of the coordinators. In brief, the coordinators will provide education, training, and technical assistance to teachers, administrators, and other local educational agency personnel so that they can better identify, prevent, and respond to discrimination in the school setting. The coordinators will also, in consultation with other educational entities, report and track incidents of discrimination and make recommendations to the Legislature. The bill creates new “deputy coordinator” positions that will report to the Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator. All coordinators will be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the California State Senate. Finally, the bill specifies that OCR shall develop educational and training materials that recognize the intersectional nature of discrimination.

The bill is supported by the California Legislative LGBTQ+ Caucus, Disability Rights California, and several other educational, civil rights, and religious organizations. The California Faculty Association and SEIU California only support the bill if it is amended to make the coordinators merit-based civil service positions instead of political appointees. Other groups oppose the bill outright, though largely because they too believe that the appointment process will politicize inherently sensitive situations. This bill previously passed the Committee on Education 6-0.

SUMMARY: Defines the roles and responsibilities of discrimination prevention coordinators created by SB 48 (Chap. 429, Stats. 2025); adds a Disability Discrimination Prevention Coordinator to the existing list of coordinators; establishes “deputy coordinator” positions that

report to the Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator; and requires OCR training materials to address issues of intersectionality. Specifically, **this bill**:

- 1) Requires OCR to provide resources and training materials on how to properly assist schools in cases of discrimination that involve the intersectionality of protected characteristics, as specified.
- 2) Requires OCR to employ a Disability Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, who shall be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.
- 3) Requires the OCR's Religious Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, Gender Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, LGBTQ+ Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, and Disability Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, in consultation with the Department of Education and under the supervision of the Government Operations Agency, to do all of the following:
 - a) Develop, consult on, and provide discrimination education to teachers, staff, governing board and body members, administrators, and other local educational agency (LEA) personnel to identify and proactively prevent discrimination.
 - b) Provide, upon request of the Superintendent of Schools, a school district superintendent, a county superintendent of schools, or the governing board of body of an LEA, technical assistance, training, and resources, as specified.
 - c) Engage with LEAs to ensure administrators are equipped to address conflicts at an early stage with the goal of proactively resolving incidents pertaining to discrimination.
 - d) Provide information on training courses on cultural competency and positive school climate to teachers, administrators, and LEA personnel. Specifies that these courses may include, but are not limited to, nondiscrimination laws, trauma-informed restorative practices, bullying prevention and response, navigating politically charged environments, and implementing inclusive curriculum.
 - e) Track and report, beginning September 1, 2027, information on complaints, and the resolution or non-resolution of complaints, to the Legislature and other named entities.
 - f) Engage with relevant community stakeholders to address high-priority issues in the prevention of unlawful discrimination.
 - g) Make recommendations, as specified, to the Legislature on legislation necessary for the prevention of discrimination in educational settings.
- 4) Requires OCR to employ deputy coordinators on Anti-Black Racism, Anti-Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Discrimination, Anti-Latino Discrimination, and Anti-Native American Discrimination. Specifies that the deputy coordinators shall report to the Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator and shall assist in the development of education and professional development, as specified.
- 5) Makes technical and clarifying amendments to existing law.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Provides that it is the policy of the State of California to afford all people equal rights and opportunities in the public educational institutions of the state, regardless of a person's disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other specified characteristic. (Education Code Section 200. Subsequent citations refer to the Education Code unless otherwise noted.)
- 2) Provides that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of a protected characteristic, as defined, in any program or activity conducted by an educational institution that receives, or benefits from, state financial assistance, or enrolls students who receive state financial assistance. (Section 220.)
- 3) Prohibits the governing board of a school district, county board of education, or the government body of a charter school from adopting or approving any instructional or professional development material that could subject a student to unlawful discrimination. (Section 224.)
- 4) Sets forth Uniform Complaint Procedures for filing a complaint, including a complaint alleging unlawful discrimination, against an educational institution. (Section 262.3; 2 CCR Section 4600 *et seq.*)
- 5) Establishes the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), within the Government Operations Agency, for the purpose of working with LEAs to prevent and address discrimination and bias, and to provide education and educational resources to identify and prevent antisemitism and other forms of discrimination and bias. (Sections 33801 and 33802.)
- 6) Requires OCR to employ an Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, who shall do all of the following:
 - a) Develop, consult on, and provide antisemitism education to teachers, staff, governing board or body members, administrators, and other local educational agency personnel to identify and proactively prevent antisemitism.
 - b) Make recommendations, as provided, to the Legislature on legislation necessary for the prevention of antisemitism in educational settings.
 - c) Engage and advise on the actions taken by the office on issues relating to antisemitism and the Jewish community.
 - d) Engage with local educational agencies on the handling of antisemitism.
 - e) Track and report to the Legislature and other entities information on complaints and the resolution or non-resolution of complaints relating to antisemitism in all local educational agencies, as specified. (Section 33803.1.)
- 7) Requires OCR to employ a Religious Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, a Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, a Gender Discrimination Prevention and Coordinator, and an LGBTQ Discrimination Prevention Coordinator. Specifies that the coordinators shall be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. States

legislative intent to enact future legislation to define the duties and responsibilities of the coordinators. (Sections 33803, 33803.2, 33803.3, 33803.4, and 33803.5.)

FISCAL EFFECT: As currently in print this bill is keyed fiscal.

COMMENTS: According to the author:

Last year, working with my Diversity caucus colleagues- the California Black Legislative Caucus, AAPI Legislative Caucus, and LGBTQ Legislative Caucus- the Legislature passed SB 48 (Gonzalez/Weber/Fong/Ward), which created four discrimination prevention coordinators under the newly established Office of Civil Rights. 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, at the request of the local educational agency, technical assistance so 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.

Last year's AB 715 and SB 48. As noted by the author, this bill seeks to enact commitments made during the negotiations regarding last year's AB 715 (Chap. 428, Stats. 2025) and SB 48 (Chap. 429, Stats. 2025).

AB 715 established the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) within the Government Operations Agency, the purpose of which was to prevent and address discrimination in school settings and to provide education and educational resources to identify and prevent discrimination. The bill also created an Antisemitism Discrimination Coordinator, appointed by the Governor and tasked with providing guidance and education to public schools on how they might better identify, prevent, and respond to incidents of antisemitism. While all stakeholders supported the goal of preventing antisemitism, some groups criticized AB 715 for singling out antisemitism for special protection when California's diverse student body faces several forms of discrimination. AB 715 also generated concern because of its express adoption of the United States National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, a guidance issued by the Biden administration in 2023. That document adopted a definition of "antisemitism" developed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), which was criticized by some academics and legal scholars for equating antisemitism with criticism of Israel. The ACLU, among others, expressed concerns that such a definition would chill speech, by both teachers and educational material writers, on contested matters of foreign affairs in the name of prohibiting material that subjected students to unlawful discrimination.

Although the free speech issues in AB 715 were never resolved – at least not to the satisfaction of the bill's opponents – the Legislature responded to the criticism of singling out antisemitism by adopting SB 48, which required the OCR to also employ a Religious Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, a Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Coordinator, a Gender Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, and an LGBTQ Discrimination Coordinator. As with the Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator, the new coordinators are appointed by the Governor and

confirmed by the California State Senate. However, while SB 48 established these new positions, it left for future legislation the task of fleshing out specific roles and responsibilities.

This bill represents that future legislation. For the most part, the duties of the new coordinators mirror those of the Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator. That is, they will provide education to teachers, staff, and local administrators; develop professional development materials; and provide technical assistance to schools so that they may better identify, prevent, and respond to acts and forms of discrimination. The bill also requires the coordinators to track and report (to the Legislature, among others) on complaints of discrimination and how the school districts resolved (or failed to resolve) those complaints.

In addition to defining the roles and responsibilities of the existing OCR coordinators, this bill requires OCR to employ a Disability Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, also appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The bill also requires OCR to employ several “deputy” coordinators that will report to the Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator. The deputies will address issues of discrimination based on particular forms of racial and ethnic discrimination against Black, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American persons. (It is not entirely clear whether the deputy coordinators will also be appointed by the Governor or selected in some other manner).

Finally, this bill makes other technical and clarifying changes to existing law. For example, it requires OCR to consider that discrimination is often “intersectional” (involving multiple, interacting protected characteristics) and to develop educational and professional development material accordingly. The bill also changes the name of the LGBTQ Discrimination Prevention Coordinator to the LGBTQ+ Discrimination Prevention Coordinator.

Should the coordinators be political appointees or civil service employees? As noted, the bill expressly provides that coordinators will be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. While most stakeholders who have weighed in on the bill applaud its intent, some groups have expressed concerns about political appointment. For example, the California Faculty Association (CFA) and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) support this bill *only* if the coordinators are selected through the state’s existing merit-based civil service process rather than being appointed by the Governor. As the language of the bill appears to concede, such conversations are inherently challenging to navigate and politically charged. CFA and SEIU, therefore, believe the coordinators should be selected on the basis of merit and qualifications, and their ability to work with parents, students, teachers, and school administrators. Having the coordinators selected by politicians may invite criticism that the coordinators serve partisan interests rather than the agreed upon goal of rooting out all forms of discrimination in a politically disinterested manner. Of course, given the inherently political nature of the topic, it may well be that the coordinators, no matter how selected, will approach their task with the usual biases inherent in the human condition. One hopes that a coordinator will have the character and capacity to recognize their biases, but this character and capacity is no more assured by a civil service exam than by a thoughtful appointment and confirmation process. *Nonetheless, the author may wish to consider whether gubernatorial appointment is the best means of selecting coordinators, if only to prevent the appearance of political bias.*

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: The California Legislative LGBTQ+ Caucus writes in support:

While California law currently prohibits discrimination in educational settings on the basis of disability, gender, gender identity or expression, nationality, race, religion,

sexual orientation, and other protected characteristics, enforcement through the Uniform Complaint Procedure (UCP) has at times been delayed or inconsistent. The COVID-19 pandemic and other systemic challenges have exacerbated these gaps, and recent federal rollbacks have heightened risks to vulnerable students, including LGBTQ+ and immigrant youth.

According to the California Department of Justice's 2025 State of Pride Report, overall anti-LGBTQ+ bias hate incidents rose 13.9% in one year alone, while anti-transgender bias hate incidents rose by 12.3%. These are not just statistics – this is a call to action. Hate and harassment targeting youth is increasing, and it is showing up in our schools. FBI data shows that schools are now the third most common location for reported hate crimes nationwide, and the California Civil Rights Department found that 80% of youth aged 12-17 who experienced hate did so at school.

SB 998 ensures that schools have clear guidance and designated staff to prevent discrimination and respond promptly when incidents occur. By defining the responsibilities of the centralized role focused on LGBTQ+ student protections, the bill empowers educators, parents, and students with the tools they need to maintain safe, equitable, and supportive learning environments. This measure is a critical step toward reducing harassment, bullying, and discrimination in California's schools and ensuring that all students can thrive without fear of bias or harm.

According to Disability Rights California (DRC), "SB 998 is an important and timely expansion upon last year's SB 48 that not only clarifies the roles of the Discrimination Prevention Coordinators for Religion, Race and Ethnicity, Gender, and LGBTQ+ students under the newly established Office of Civil Rights but also adds a Disability Discrimination Prevention Coordinator to this new structure. Despite longstanding state and federal civil rights laws, students with disabilities continue to face discrimination in schools in the form of disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline, failure to provide reasonable accommodations and disability-related supports and services, and retaliation for self-advocacy."

The Association of California School Administrators write in support:

Every student and educator deserves to learn and work in an environment free from discrimination. SB 998 builds on the foundation established by last year's SB 48 by not only defining the responsibilities of existing coordinators across religious, race and ethnicity, gender, and LGBTQ+ categories, but also establishing a new Disability Discrimination Prevention Coordinator. Equally important, the bill takes a proactive rather than punitive approach, emphasizing education, training, and early intervention to prevent discrimination before it escalates.

By equipping teachers, administrators, staff, and governing board members with the tools to identify and address discrimination early, and by providing technical assistance and restorative justice resources to local educational agencies, this bill gives districts a meaningful framework for building inclusive school communities. The addition of deputy coordinators focused on Anti-Black Racism, Anti-AANHPI Discrimination, and Anti-Latino Discrimination, along with resources addressing the intersectionality of protected characteristics, further ensures that support is targeted, relevant, and responsive to the diverse communities California schools serve.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT, IF AMENDED: The California Faculty Association (CFA) and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) strongly support this bill, but only if amended to require that coordinators be hired through the state’s existing merit-based civil service process rather than being appointed by the Governor. As CFA writes, the “appointment of these positions politicizes them and can have unintended consequences.” CFA is also urging “the removal of the appointment of the Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator created through AB 715.”

SEIU similarly argues that coordinators should be hired through the civil service process, pointing out that the “coordinators interact with K-12 students, families, and staff involved in highly sensitive situations where emotional support, professionalism, and an understanding of child development are critical to the position’s success. Positions appointed by a Governor are subject to political influence, whereas the civil service system ensures candidates are hired based on merits and qualifications.”

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) of California supports this bill only if amended to include a dedicated “Deputy Coordinator on Anti-Muslim discrimination. This deputy would report directly to the Religious Discrimination Prevention Coordinator.” Like the other coordinators, the Anti-Muslim Prevention Coordinator would be tasked with collecting and providing statistics on anti-Muslim discrimination in educational settings. CAIR objects to making the coordinators – including the previously created Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator – political appointments.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: Several other organizations, including several chapters of Jewish Voice for Peace, oppose the bill largely because coordinators will be political appointments. They point out that coordinators will interact “with students, teachers, and parents in highly sensitive situations.” As such, appointments should “be based on competence, qualifications, or competitive examinations. In it’s current form SB 998 could subject the state and education entities to lawsuits contesting actions of political appointees without appropriate qualifications and training.”

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Agudath Israel of California
 AJC - Los Angeles
 AJC - San Diego
 AJC Northern California
 Association of California School Administrators
 Beverly Hills Synagogue
 California Legislative LGBTQ+ Caucus
 California State PTA
 Democrats for Israel Los Angeles
 Disability Rights California
 Equality California
 Hadassah, the Women's Zionist of America, INC.
 Hillel of San Diego
 Holocaust Museum LA
 JCC Federation of San Luis Obispo
 JCRC Bay Area

JCRC Santa Barbara County
JCRC Long Beach
Jewish California
Jewish Center for Justice
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Democratic Club of Marin
Jewish Family Service LA
Jewish Family Service of San Diego
Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley
Jewish Federation Bay Area
Jewish Federation of Greater Santa Barbara
Jewish Federation of Orange County
Jewish Federation of the Desert
Jewish Federation of the Greater San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys
Jewish Federation of the Sacramento Region
Jewish Free Loan Association
Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation
JFCS Long Beach and Orange County
National Council of Jewish Women -sf
Northern California Jewish Labor Committee
Public Counsel
Valley Beth Shalom
Youth Justice Education Clinic, Center for Juvenile Law and Policy, Loyola Law School

Support if Amended

CAIR California
California Faculty Association
Jewish Voice for Peace Bay Area
SEIU California

Opposition

1021 Jewish Workers for Justice
1021 Members for Palestine
Beyt Tikkun: a Synagogue Without Walls
Jewish Parents for Collective Liberation
Jewish Voice for Peace Santa Barbara
Jewish Voice for Peace, Los Angeles
National Campus Jewish Alliance California Chapter
Workers Circle/Arbeter Ring of Northern California

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