

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 998 (Gonzalez, et al.)
As Amended August 19, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Establishes the duties and responsibilities for various discrimination prevention coordinators within the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) at the Government Operations Agency (GovOps), establishes a Disability Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, and requires the OCR to employ various deputy discrimination prevention coordinators.

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires the OCR to provide resources and training on how to properly assist in cases of discrimination that involve the intersectionality of protected characteristics.
- 2) States that the discrimination prevention coordinators may collaborate with one another, within the purview of their roles and responsibilities, on issues of discrimination that involve the intersectionality of protected characteristics, as specified.
- 3) Requires that the Religious Discrimination Prevention Coordinator established under the OCR, in consultation with the California Department of Education (CDE) and under the supervision of GovOps, to conduct specified activities, including tracking and reporting to the Legislature, the executive director of the State Board of Education (SBE), and the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) complaints and resolutions or lack of resolutions of complaints relating to religious discrimination in all LEAs serving pupils in TK-12th grade, as specified. States the intent of the Legislature that this report include disaggregated data for the top religious groups targeted for hate crimes, consistent with the most recent report on hate crimes by the Attorney General, including, but not limited to, anti-Muslim, anti-Jewish, anti-Hindu, anti-Catholic, and anti-Sikh discrimination.
- 4) Requires the Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, in consultation with the CDE, and under the supervision of the GovOps, to conduct specified activities, including tracking and reporting to the Legislature, the executive director of the SBE, and the SPI, complaints and resolutions or lack of resolutions of complaints relating to racial and ethnic discrimination in all LEAs serving pupils in TK-12th grade.
- 5) Requires the OCR to employ Deputy Coordinators on Anti-Black Racism, Anti-Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (Anti-AANHPI) Discrimination, Anti-Latino Discrimination, and anti-Native American Discrimination who shall report directly to the Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, and specifies their responsibilities.
- 6) Requires the Gender Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, in consultation with the CDE, and under the supervision of the GovOps, to conduct specified activities, including tracking and reporting to the Legislature, the executive director of the SBE, and the SPI complaints and resolutions or lack of resolutions of complaints made relating to gender discrimination in all LEAs serving pupils in TK-12th grade.

- 7) Requires the LGBTQ+ Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, in consultation with the CDE, and under the supervision of the GovOps, to conduct specified activities, including tracking and reporting to the Legislature, the executive director of the SBE, and the SPI complaints and resolutions or lack of resolutions of complaints made relating to LGBTQ+ discrimination in all LEAs serving pupils in TK-12th grade.
- 8) Requires the OCR to employ a Disability Discrimination Prevention Coordinator, who shall be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, with specified responsibilities, including tracking and reporting to the Legislature, the executive director of the SBE, and the SPI complaints and resolutions or lack of resolutions of complaints made relating to disability-related discrimination in all LEAs serving pupils in TK-12th grade.
- 9) Repeals a statement of intent to enact the duties and responsibilities of the discrimination prevention coordinators.

COMMENTS

Bill establishes duties of discrimination prevention coordinator positions created last year. Last year, AB 715 (Zbur), Chapter 428, Statutes of 2025, established the OCR under GovOps and an Antisemitism Coordinator position within that office.

SB 48 (Gonzalez), Chapter 429, Statutes of 2025, established disability prevention coordinators for race/ethnicity, religion, LGBTQ+, and gender within the OCR. The duties of those coordinators were not specified, and the statute stated the intent of the Legislature to specify those duties in subsequent legislation. This bill specifies those duties, adds a Disability Discrimination Prevention Coordinator and an Anti-Native American Discrimination Deputy Coordinator, and establishes other deputies under the Race and Ethnicity Discrimination Coordinator. The duties and responsibilities of the Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator are not amended by this bill.

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."

Arguments in Support

Disability Rights California writes, "Students with disabilities and other protected groups continue to experience discrimination, exclusionary discipline, retaliation, and inequitable access

to educational opportunities across California schools. As noted in DRC's support letter, approximately 35% of equity complaints processed by the California Department of Education in 2025 included allegations of disability discrimination or retaliation. Many complaints also involve overlapping forms of discrimination, requiring more coordinated and intersectional responses.

SB 998 emphasizes prevention-oriented strategies, including educator training, technical assistance, restorative practices, conflict resolution, and early intervention support for local educational agencies. By proactively addressing discrimination and strengthening school climate, the bill can help reduce costly investigations, litigation exposure, complaint escalation, student disengagement, and exclusionary disciplinary practices that contribute to long-term educational and social inequities.

Importantly, the bill largely builds upon and expands the existing Office of Civil Rights framework established under prior legislation, rather than creating an entirely new standalone structure. The addition of a Disability Discrimination Prevention Coordinator and intersectional training resources helps ensure that schools receive more specialized and coordinated support in addressing civil rights obligations affecting students with disabilities and other protected groups."

Arguments in Opposition

BUSD Jewish Parents for Collective Liberation writes, "Given the current political climate and the way that accusations of discrimination (particularly antisemitism) are currently being used for political control of educational institutions in K-12 and higher education, we strongly oppose any legislation that would make any civil rights coordinator a political appointment.

These appointments should be qualified civil servants based on competence, qualifications, and competitive examinations.

As Jewish parents, we will continue to oppose any legislation that might allow politicians to use accusations of antisemitism for political gains rather than to support our students."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) One-time General Fund costs of \$2.46 million and \$1.96 million annually ongoing for GovOps to provide for the new Discrimination Prevention Coordinator positions, two additional administrative support staff positions, development of educational and training materials, and acquisition of new office space to support increased staffing.

AB 109 (Gabriel), Chapter 19, Statutes of 2026, includes provisional language authorizing the Director of Finance to appropriate up to \$3.581 million to GovOps to support implementation of this bill.

- 2) Minor and absorbable costs to CDE though CDE contends that its specific role and expectations as a consulting entity to the OCR is unclear

VOTES**SENATE FLOOR: 30-7-3**

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

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

ABS, ABST OR NV: Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Valladares

ASM EDUCATION: 6-0-3

YES: Patel, Ahrens, Bonta, Garcia, Lowenthal, Pellerin

ABS, ABST OR NV: Hoover, Castillo, Zbur

ASM JUDICIARY: 9-3-0

YES: Kalra, Bauer-Kahan, Bryan, Connolly, Harabedian, Pacheco, Papan, Stefani, Zbur

NO: Macedo, Dixon, Sanchez

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-1-3

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache

NO: Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Hoover, Dixon, Ta

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