

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
Senator Thomas Umberg, Chair
2025-2026 Regular Session

AB 1845 (Krell)
Version: June 18, 2026
Hearing Date: June 30, 2026
Fiscal: Yes
Urgency: No
ME

SUBJECT

Student safety: human trafficking

DIGEST

This bill establishes the Student Safety and Anti-Exploitation Act.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Section 52.6 of the Civil Code (Section 52.6) requires certain establishments to post notices regarding resources for witnesses to, and victims of, human trafficking and slavery. That section also requires rail and bus stations to train their employees in identifying and reporting incidents of human trafficking. The Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) also requires hotel and motel employers to provide at least 20 minutes of training and education regarding human trafficking awareness to their employees, as provided. Both federal and state law authorize civil actions by victims of human trafficking, and sex trafficking in particular.

The author brings this bill because college students are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and sex trafficking. The bill ensures that employees are annually trained regarding human trafficking identification and prevention. The bill also requires that postsecondary institutions post and display the slavery and human trafficking model notice developed pursuant to Civil Code Section 52.6 on the institution's website and in a prominent location on campus. The bill is sponsored by the California Survivor Coalition and the American Association of University Women of California, and is supported by the Student Senate for California Community Colleges and Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis. The Committee received no timely opposition. AB 1845 passed the Senate Education Committee with a 7 to 0 vote. Should the bill pass out of this Committee it will then be referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE LAW

Existing law:

- 1) Provides that any person who deprives or violates the personal liberty of another with the intent to obtain forced labor or services is guilty of the crime of human trafficking. (Pen. Code § 236.1 (a).)
- 2) Requires specified businesses and establishments to post notices in a conspicuous place near the public entrance of the establishment or in another conspicuous location in clear view of the public and employees where similar notices are customarily posted. (Civ. Code § 52.6 (a).)
- 3) Requires the notices to include specific language regarding a textline and various hotlines to contact if one is aware of or is a victim of human trafficking. The Department of Justice is required to create a model notice that may be used by these businesses. (Civ. Code § 52.6 (b)-(d).)
- 4) Provides that a business or other establishment that operates intercity passenger rail, light rail, or bus stations shall provide at least 20 minutes of training to employees who may interact with, or come into contact with, a victim of human trafficking or who are likely to receive, in the course of their employment, a report from another employee about suspected human trafficking, in recognizing the signs of human trafficking and how to report those signs to the appropriate law enforcement agency. A list of topics that must be covered in such training is further provided. (Civ. Code § 52.6 (e)-(g).)
- 5) Subjects businesses that fail to comply with the notice and training requirements of Section 52.6 of the Civil Code to specified civil penalties. (Civ. Code § 52.6 (h).)
- 6) Provides that nothing in Civil Code Section 52.6 prevents local governing bodies from adopting and enforcing a local ordinance, rule, or regulation to prevent slavery or human trafficking. (Civ. Code § 52.6 (i).)

This bill:

- 1) Establishes the Student Safety and Anti-Exploitation Act.
- 2) Requires postsecondary institutions to include the following information as part of annual training it provides for employees: the definition of human trafficking, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking; myths and misconceptions about human trafficking; physical and mental signs to be aware of that may indicate that human trafficking is occurring; guidance on how to identify individuals who are

most at risk of human trafficking; and, protocols on how to report human trafficking.

- 3) Provides that failing to report human trafficking to a postsecondary institution or to local law enforcement agencies by an employee of the postsecondary institution shall not, by itself, result in the liability of a postsecondary institution.
- 4) Requires postsecondary institutions to post and display the human trafficking model notice developed pursuant to Civil Code Section 52.6 (d) on the institution's website and in a prominent location on campus.
- 5) Requires the appropriate officials at each campus to compile records of crimes on campus that are reported and involve human trafficking.
- 6) Requires the written agreements with local law enforcement agencies to clarify operational responsibilities for investigations of human trafficking occurring on campus and requires these written agreements to be reviewed and updated, if necessary, on or before July 1, 2027, and every 5 years thereafter.
- 7) Requires postsecondary educational institutions to adopt a policy concerning incidents of human trafficking that involve students, faculty, or staff. Requires the policy to include, among other things, a statement that human trafficking is a state and federal crime, and the physical and mental signs that may indicate that human trafficking is occurring.
- 8) Requires postsecondary educational institutions, on or before July 1, 2027, to adopt and implement revised written policies and procedures that include human trafficking in reporting requirements.

COMMENTS

1. The troubling prevalence of human trafficking

According to the author:

California colleges are in a unique position to reach students who may be vulnerable to exploitation and sex trafficking due to environmental risk factors such as housing instability, lack of social or familial support, or naivety to exploitive situations. AB 1845 ensures that sexual harassment policies are updated to include human trafficking identification and prevention. Expanding existing strategies to prevent human trafficking recruitment is vital to protecting the safety of college students.

Human trafficking is the world's fastest growing criminal enterprise, bringing in annual profits in the tens of billions of dollars. Human trafficking is generally defined as the use of force, coercion, or fraud to obtain labor or personal services. Existing law provides that any person who deprives or violates the personal liberty of another with the intent to obtain forced labor or services is guilty of the crime of human trafficking.

The International Labour Organization estimates that approximately 40 million people were victims of some form of human slavery worldwide in 2016.¹ This includes 24.9 million people in forced labor, meaning they were being "forced to work under threat or coercion as domestic workers, on construction sites, in clandestine factories, on farms and fishing boats, in other sectors, and in the sex industry." Over 70 percent of these victims were women and girls and one in four victims were children. In their 2019 Data Report, the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline identified over 22,000 victims and survivors and over 4,300 traffickers.²

Traffickers look for people who are susceptible for a variety of reasons, including psychological or emotional vulnerability, economic hardship, lack of a social safety net, membership in a marginalized group, natural disasters, or political instability. Human trafficking is often described as a hidden crime as victims rarely come forward to seek help due to a variety of factors, including language barriers, the severe trauma resulting from these crimes, fear of the traffickers, and fear of law enforcement. The author brings this bill because college students are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and sex trafficking. The bill ensures that employees are annually trained regarding human trafficking identification and prevention. The bill also requires that postsecondary institutions post and display the slavery and human trafficking model notice developed pursuant to Civil Code Section 52.6 on the institution's website and in a prominent location on campus.

2. California's human trafficking awareness and training law

To increase awareness of human trafficking and provide support to victims, Civil Code Section 52.6 requires certain businesses and establishments, including truck stops, health facilities, massage parlors, and transit centers, to post notices encouraging victims of human trafficking and those who suspect human trafficking to contact a textline or one of several hotlines to access help and services. The law requires the notice to state specified content and requires the Department of Justice to post a model notice.

¹ *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery* (2017) International Labour Organization, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575479.pdf. All internet citations are current as of May 30, 2026.

² *2019 Data Report*, U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Polaris-2019-US-National-Human-Trafficking-Hotline-Data-Report.pdf>.

In addition, several laws, SB 970 (Atkins, Ch. 842, Stats. 2018) and AB 2034 (Kalra, Ch. 812, Stats. 2018), established training requirements for specified employees. AB 2034 amended Section 52.6, requiring businesses that operate intercity passenger rail or light rail stations or bus stations to train certain employees in recognizing the signs of human trafficking and how to report those signs.

SB 970 added Section 12950.3 to the Government Code, which required such employee trainings at hotels and motels. SB 970 also explicitly stated that it was the intent of the Legislature in enacting the bill “to establish a minimum threshold for human trafficking awareness training and education.”

SB 630 (Stern, Ch. 57, Stats. 2019) made clear that Section 52.6, and the requirements set out therein, do not prevent local governing bodies from adopting and enforcing a local ordinance, rule, or regulation to prevent slavery or human trafficking. It further provided that Section 52.6 does not supersede or preempt a local ordinance, rule, or regulation that duplicates or supplements the requirements Section 52.6 imposes upon businesses and other establishments. The addition of this clause paved the way for local jurisdictions to take more aggressive approaches to combatting the scourge of human trafficking in California.

AB 1661 (Davies, Ch. 106, Stats. 2022) required businesses that provide hair, nail, electrolysis, and skin care services, and other related businesses or establishments subject to regulation under the Barbering and Cosmetology Act to post the required notice above in a conspicuous place near the public entrance of the establishment or in another conspicuous location in clear view of the public and employees where similar notices are customarily posted. AB 1740 (Sanchez, Ch. 104, Stats. 2023) added facilities that provide pediatric care to the list of establishments that must post the human trafficking notice.

3. Another expansion of Section 52.6

This bill takes another step forward by requiring postsecondary institutions to post and display the slavery and human trafficking model notice developed pursuant to Civil Code Section 52.6 on the institution’s website and in a prominent location on campus. Additionally, the bill requires postsecondary institutions to include the following information as part of annual training it provides for employees: the definition of human trafficking, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking; myths and misconceptions about human trafficking; physical and mental signs to be aware of that may indicate that human trafficking is occurring; guidance on how to identify individuals who are most at risk of human trafficking; and, protocols on how to report human trafficking.

The Student Senate for California Community College writes the following in support of the bill:

In 1972, Title IX was federally enacted to prohibit sex-based discrimination, like sexual harassment or sexual violence, in any education program receiving federal funds. While human trafficking and sexual exploitation through online platforms, social networks, recruitment or coercive relationships constitute severe forms of gender-based violations under Title IX, existing law does not require the inclusion of human trafficking in campus training and protocols.

Victims of human trafficking can be of any age, sex, race, ethnicity, immigration status or socioeconomic class. College students can be vulnerable to environmental risk factors such as housing instability, lack of social or familial support, or naivety to exploitative situations. Traffickers may recruit students on campus, at off campus parties, online or at local bars. A study conducted among college students on 12 Southern California campuses found that 42% of students reported having known someone who sold sex or was trafficked as a college student.

It is critical for higher education institutions, students, faculty and staff to recognize the potential risks, behavior, response measures, and indicators for human trafficking. Expanding existing strategies to prevent human trafficking recruitment is vital to protecting the safety of college students.

AB 1845 requires post-secondary institutions to update their sexual harassment training for employees to include human trafficking and require employees to receive training annually, and ensure campus officials include human trafficking related crimes when compiling records of crimes on campus. The bill also requires the institution to construct written agreements with law enforcement clarifying human trafficking investigation responsibilities, adopt a policy concerning incidents of human trafficking, and draft a statement that trafficking is a state and federal crime and physical signs that may indicate trafficking is occurring.

Bill sponsor, the California Survivor Coalition, explains the following in support of the bill:

Human trafficking is already present on and around college campuses. Yet still, it has remained invisible within campus safety structures.

AB 1845 changes that by streamlining existing protocols across all higher education systems.

[. . .]

From lived experience, we know this:

Trafficking often hides in plain sight, misidentified as “choice,” dismissed as “behavior,” or overlooked entirely. Many victims are students. Many are targeted because of vulnerabilities tied to housing insecurity, financial need, or prior abuse. Without proper training and systems in place, opportunities for early identification and intervention are missed.

AB 1845 equips campuses to respond differently.

It ensures that the adults responsible for student safety are trained to recognize exploitation, that institutions are accountable for tracking it, and that clear pathways exist for reporting and response.

SUPPORT

American Association of University Women of California (sponsor)
California Survivor Coalition (sponsor)
Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis
Student Senate for California Community Colleges

OPPOSITION

None known

RELATED LEGISLATION

Pending legislation:

AB 1918 (Dixon, 2026) requires body art facilities to post a specified notice regarding human trafficking and to provide specified human trafficking training to their employees and registered practitioners. AB 1918 is pending in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 2101 (Gipson, 2026) requires a privately operated entity that operates in a designated disaster site or mitigation site, as defined, to post a specified notice regarding human trafficking and to provide specified human trafficking training to their employees, as provided. AB 2101 is pending in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Prior legislation:

AB 1740 (Sanchez, Ch. 104, Stats. 2023) *See* Comment 2.

AB 1661 (Davies, Ch. 106, Stats. 2022) *See* Comment 2.

AB 1788 (Cunningham, Ch. 760, Stats. 2022) established a cause of action against hotels for failing to report known sexual trafficking within the hotel, as specified, or where an employee benefits from sexual trafficking activity within the hotel, as specified.

SB 630 (Stern, Ch. 57, Stats. 2019) *See* Comment 2.

SB 970 (Atkins, Ch. 842, Stats. 2018) *See* Comment 2.

AB 2034 (Kalra, Ch. 812, Stats. 2018) *See* Comment 2.

SB 225 (Stern, Ch. 565, Stats. 2017) updated language that is required to be included in notices certain businesses must post. It included a special textline that can be texted for services and support.

SB 597 (Leyva, Ch. 570, Stats. 2017) allowed victims of human trafficking to participate in the Secretary of State's Safe at Home program.

AB 260 (Santiago, Ch. 547, Stats. 2017) included hotels, motels, and other lodging establishments among the businesses that must post signage regarding reporting human trafficking.

AB 1227 (Bonta, Ch. 558, Stats. 2017) required human trafficking prevention education in schools.

SB 1193 (Steinberg, Ch. 515, Stats. 2012) added Section 52.6 to the Civil Code.

PRIOR VOTES:

Senate Education Committee (Ayes 7, Noes 0)

Assembly Floor (Ayes 74, Noes 0)

Assembly Appropriations Committee (Ayes 15, Noes 0)

Assembly Judiciary Committee (Ayes 12, Noes 0)

Assembly Higher Education Committee (Ayes 10, Noes 0)
