

Date of Hearing: April 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Rhodesia Ransom, Chair

AB 2101 (Gipson) – As Amended April 9, 2026

SUBJECT: Human trafficking: notice and training: disaster sites

SUMMARY: This bill would expand existing human trafficking-related notice posting and training requirements to capture private entities that participate in recovery and response efforts in designated disaster and mitigation sites. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) States that it is the intent of the Legislature to establish a minimum threshold for human trafficking awareness training and education, and that this bill shall not be construed to discourage or relieve an employer from providing for longer, more frequent, or more elaborate training and education regarding human trafficking awareness.
- 2) States that it is further the intent of the Legislature to encourage employers to take all reasonable steps necessary to lead to the rescue of human trafficking victims and prevent any kind of human trafficking in their establishments.
- 3) Adds, to the list of businesses and establishments that must post a notice on human trafficking and how to spot and report suspected instances of human trafficking, privately operated entities that operate in designated disaster sites or designated mitigation sites that are involved in the response, recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, permitting related to recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, or efforts to mitigate or prevent the occurrence of a disaster
- 4) Defines “designated disaster site” as a structure or defined piece of land, or a group of contiguous structures or land, that was physically damaged or destroyed by a disaster as defined by Section 8680.3 of the Government Code.
- 5) Defines “designated mitigation site” as a structure or defined piece of land, or a group of contiguous structures or land, that has been determined to require elimination of materials or fuel pursuant to Section 4291 of the Public Resources Code.
- 6) Requires, on or before June 1, 2027, an entity that operates in an area described as either a “designated disaster site” or “designated mitigation site” to provide at least 20 minutes of training to all employees involved in the recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, permitting related to recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, or efforts to mitigate or prevent the occurrence of a disaster.
- 7) Authorizes the training to be developed or administered by a nonprofit or private entity with professional experience related to human trafficking.
- 8) Requires the training to be delivered in the language that is the most widely spoken language among the employees that will receive the training and include examples and case scenarios relevant to how trafficking occurs at designated disaster sites and designated mitigation sites.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Makes a person who deprives or violates the personal liberty of another with the intent to obtain forced labor or services guilty of human trafficking. (Penal Code Section 236.1.)
- 2) Requires certain businesses and other establishments to post a notice that complies with specified requirements 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. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (a).)
- 3) Requires a business or other establishment that operates an intercity passenger rail or light rail stations, or bus stations to provide at least 20 minutes of training to its new and existing 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. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (e).)
- 4) Requires the training to include, but not be limited to, all of the following:
 - a) The definition of human trafficking, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking;
 - b) Myths and misconceptions about human trafficking;
 - c) Physical and mental signs to be aware of that may indicate that human trafficking is occurring. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (f).)
- 5) Authorizes the training to include, but does not limit it, to information and material utilized in training Santa Clara County Valley Transportation Authority employees, private nonprofit organizations that represent the interest of human trafficking victims, and the Department of Justice. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (g)(1).)
- 6) Establishes that the failure to report human trafficking by an employee shall not, by itself, result in the liability of the business or other establishment that operates a facility that is required to provide the training or of any other entity. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (h).)
- 7) Imposes liability for a civil penalty of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for a first offense and two thousand dollars (\$2,000) for each subsequent offense on a business entity or establishment that fails to comply with the notice and training requirements of Civil Code Section 52.6, and authorizes a public prosecutor to bring an action to impose the civil penalty if a local or state agency with authority to regulate the business or establishment has 1) provided the business with reasonable notice of noncompliance and informed them that it is subject to a civil penalty if it does not correct the violation within 30 days from the date of notice and 2) verifies that the violation was not corrected within the 30-day period. (Civil Code Section 52.6 (h).)
- 8) For purposes of the California Disaster Assistance Act, defines “disaster” as a fire, flood, storm, tidal wave, earthquake, terrorism, epidemic, or other similar public calamity that the Governor determines presents a threat to public safety.

- 9) Requires a person who owns, leases, controls, operates, or maintains a building or structure in the state responsibility area to comply with specified fire mitigation efforts. (Public Resources Code Section 4291.)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This bill has not been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

COMMENTS:

Author Statement: “AB 2101 affirms that California will not allow disaster sites to become breeding grounds for labor abuse. The workers who step in during times of crisis—utility crews, debris removal teams, construction workers, electricians, roofers, and day laborers—are essential to rebuilding communities and restoring normalcy after climate emergencies. When unscrupulous employers exploit these workers by threatening them with ICE or exploitation to silence or coerce them, it is not only unethical—it constitutes trafficking. By expanding “Know Your Rights” protections and strengthening safeguards at disaster recovery worksites, AB 2101 ensures that those on the front lines of rebuilding are protected, informed, and treated with dignity and respect. As climate-related disasters grow more frequently and immigration enforcement actions intensify, the need for proactive worker protection becomes increasingly urgent. This bill is a critical first step toward closing a dangerous gap in California’s anti-trafficking framework.”

Equity Statement: “This bill will have a positive impact on the ability of underserved and marginalized communities to access the justice system. Laws only protect when workers know their rights. By requiring Know Your Rights (KYR) postings and standardized training for disaster restoration employees, California can empower workers to understand and assert their rights when they are violated. In the absence of such empowerment tools, workers are coerced into silence and bad actors’ profit from their illegal threats and actions. This legislation provides an important first step for marginalized workers in the disaster restoration sector to seek support and protection through legal mechanisms. Through opening the door to protective services and the justice system for these community members, AB 2101 seeks to address and prevent the trafficking and exploitation that consistently emerge in rebuilding efforts after natural disasters.”

Human Trafficking: According to the California Attorney General’s Office, “Human trafficking is among the world’s fastest growing criminal enterprises and is estimated to be a \$150 billion-a-year global industry. It is a form of modern-day slavery that profits from the exploitation of our most vulnerable populations. One common misperception is that human trafficking requires movement across borders. In reality, it involves controlling a person or group through force, fraud, or coercion to exploit the victims for forced labor, sexual exploitation, or both. This can occur entirely within a single country, or it can cross borders. Human trafficking strips victims of their freedom and violates our nation’s promise that every person in the United States is guaranteed basic human rights. It is also a crime. The Attorney General’s Office is focused on combating the pervasive issue of human trafficking in California and has made it one of his top priorities.”

California has one of the largest anti-trafficking and response footprints in the country, with at least 35 Human Trafficking Task Forces or Collaborative Efforts working to address the issue. Since 2006, the number of arrests and cases has steadily increased. According to the State Threat Assessment Center (STAC), human trafficking has been discovered and prosecuted in

approximately half of the 58 counties in California, indicating a present and statewide threat. With its extensive international border, major international ports of entry, powerful industrial base and common natural disasters, California will continue to be seen as opportune ground for traffickers to employ their trade.

Cal OES applies a multi-pronged approach in its fight of trafficking. Cal OES facilitates programs that support the identification of trafficking victims, helping to hold traffickers accountable for their crimes, and providing financial assistance to victim service organizations charged with helping victims recover. With the collective focus and expertise contained in the California State Threat Assessment System, Human Trafficking Grant Programs Division, and the California Specialized Training Institute (CSTI), Cal OES has reach and effect to support anti-trafficking efforts in every county in California, in addition to cross-state and international partners. Cal OES, through CSTI, delivers specialized training on how to identify and report human trafficking. This includes instruction for law enforcement agencies, emergency management personnel and victim service professionals. CSTI develops practical, informed training programs that strengthen community efforts to combat human trafficking as a contemporary form of exploitation. Currently there are three courses being offered by CSTI: The State of Human Trafficking in California (HTCA); Human Trafficking: Modern Day Slavery (HT); and Convergence of Human Trafficking, Terrorism, and the Signs of Radicalization (HTR).¹

Disasters as Grounds for Human Trafficking: Natural disasters can create emergency conditions that traffickers exploit when core response systems are strained and populations are displaced. Evacuations, sheltering operations, communications outages, and the sudden loss of housing or income can increase vulnerability to coercion and exploitation. Following disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the 2010 Haiti earthquake, governmental and international organizations documented elevated risks of trafficking among displaced persons, women, and children. These conditions underscore the need for emergency planners to treat human trafficking as a secondary threat that can emerge during disaster response and recovery operations.^{2,3}

Traffickers often take advantage of the operational chaos that follows disasters by posing as transportation providers, contractors, employers, or even relief personnel. During mass sheltering, debris removal, temporary housing placement, and post-disaster labor surges, individuals in urgent need of assistance may be targeted through fraudulent offers that lead to forced labor or sexual exploitation. Emergency managers coordinating shelters, disaster service centers, volunteer operations, and contractor access points are in a key position to reduce these risks through credential verification, situational awareness, and referral pathways for suspected victims. International organizations including IOM and UNICEF have emphasized that displaced populations and unaccompanied minors require heightened protection measures during humanitarian emergencies.^{4,5}

¹ What is Human Trafficking? Raising awareness during January, <https://www.news.caloes.ca.gov/january-human-trafficking-awareness-month/>

² IS-1151: Blue Campaign Disaster Responder Training, <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-1151&lang=en>

³ Blue Campaign, <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign>

⁴ Counter-trafficking in emergencies, <https://www.iom.int/counter-trafficking-emergencies>

Recognizing human trafficking during disasters is critical as exploitation can occur alongside other life-safety threats while remaining hidden within chaotic response environments. FEMA's National Disaster Recovery Framework emphasizes protecting vulnerable populations during recovery, and DHS Blue Campaign materials provide operational awareness tools.^{3, 6} During evacuations, shelter operations, mass care, and recovery efforts, victims may be overlooked if responders are not trained to identify warning signs such as restricted movement, inconsistent personal information, fearfulness, or control by another individual. Early recognition allows emergency personnel, law enforcement, and service providers to intervene quickly, connect victims with protective resources, and prevent further harm.

Existing law requires numerous businesses and workplaces to post a notice in their establishments informing the employees and the general public of the risk of human trafficking and the hotlines one may call to report suspected instances of trafficking (Civil Code Section 52.6). As currently constructed, the bill language narrows the scope of the entities who would be required to provide training to employees involved in the "recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, permitting related to recovery, rebuilding, or cleanup of a disaster site, or efforts to mitigate or prevent the occurrence of a disaster".

As noted in the Assembly Judiciary Committee's analysis:

These changes certainly help narrow the scope of who may be captured by the bill's language. However, it is still broad and would apply to *any* private business that "is involved" in response, recovery, rebuilding, or clean-up efforts following a declared disaster, or permitting related to those efforts. It is worth considering whether such an expansive notice requirement is advisable, given that over-noticing risks people ignoring the contents of the notice completely. *Accordingly, the author may wish to consider further narrowing the scope of the bill.*

Arguments in Support: Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative at Loyola Law School, sponsors of this bill, write in support: "In the wake of wildfires, floods, earthquakes, and other climate-driven disasters, California relies heavily on a workforce of construction laborers, debris removal crews, roofers, and other restoration workers to help families and communities recover and return to normalcy. With dispersed worksites, long subcontracting chains, minimal oversight, and a workforce that is predominately immigrant, temporary, and/or marginalized and isolated, disaster restoration sites create fertile ground for abuse and labor trafficking - defined as the deprivation of personal liberty by use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel labor or services.

AB 2101 directly addresses these issues. In increasing education, awareness and training around this issue within this high-risk industry, California will take necessary and important first steps towards safeguarding the workers who rebuild natural disasters and by extension, take important

⁵ Guidance Note for Reviewing Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE), https://alliancecpha.org/sites/default/files/technical/attachments/child_protection_in_emergencies_guidance_note_for_donors_alliance_30june_final.pdf

⁶ National Disaster Recovery Framework, <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/recovery>

first steps towards safeguarding the State’s ability to rebuild effectively after a climate catastrophe.”

Arguments in Opposition: CalBroadband and CalCom write, “[a]s currently drafted, AB 2101 may inadvertently apply to telecommunications providers and broadband infrastructure, even though these entities should not be the intended target of the bill. Telecommunications networks are fundamentally different from the types of facilities contemplated under Civil Code Section 52.6. Providers operate highly complex, distributed systems that must remain flexible and rapidly deployable during emergencies. Imposing additional or duplicative requirements on these networks—particularly without clear statutory boundaries—could create regulatory uncertainty and operational challenges. Moreover, broadband providers already operate under extensive federal and state regulatory frameworks governing reliability, emergency response, and service continuity. Layering additional, potentially conflicting requirements onto these systems risks diverting resources away from core functions—namely, maintaining and restoring service when Californians need it most.”

Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) and the League of California Cities (Cal Cities), in opposition unless amended, write “while we appreciate the intent behind AB 2101, and support increased visibility of human trafficking information and resources at worksites, the bill as currently drafted would impose new compliance obligations and enforcement risks that will significantly impact local jurisdictions’ ability to deliver these services efficiently and cost-effectively. As written, AB 2101 requires private entities to post specified notices on human trafficking resources in disaster sites and designated mitigation sites “...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.” However, unlike a business establishment, these areas will likely not have a “public entrance” or other area that clearly meets this location requirement. For instance, recovery efforts continue in the Caldor Fire (2021) burn area, a 220,000 acre “disaster site” under the definition of this bill, that has no defined entrance or location in clear view of the public. Further, “mitigation site” as defined in the bill, includes everything from a large vegetation management project with thousands of acres of treatment to a homeowner maintaining ten feet of defensible space around their home. Both situations lack a clear pathway for compliance with the requirements of the bill and create enforcement exposure for contractors. Most importantly, the lack of clarity prevents the bill from being successful in ensuring needed information is available to those at risk of human trafficking.”

Double Referral: This bill was first heard in Assembly Judiciary Committee on April 7th, 2026. It passed on a 12-0 vote with amendments that revised and clarified privately entities operating on designated mitigation and disaster sites.

Related Legislation:

AB 1661 (Davies), Chapter 106, Statutes of 2022. This bill includes hair, nail, electrolysis, and skin care businesses, and other related businesses or establishments subject to regulation pursuant to the Barbering and Cosmetology Act among the establishments required to post a notice regarding slavery and human trafficking.

AB 2034 (Kalra), Chapter 812, Statutes of 2018. Requires businesses and establishments that operate in transportation or handle high volumes of traffic to train their employees in recognizing the signs of human trafficking and reporting suspected human trafficking.

AB 260 (Santiago), Chapter 547, Statutes of 2017. This bill increases the number of businesses and other establishments to include hotels, motels, bed and breakfast inns, that are required to post a notice on their premises related to slavery and human trafficking, including information related to specified nonprofit organizations that provide services in support of the elimination of slavery and human trafficking.

SB 225 (Stern), Chapter 565, Statutes of 2017. Requires the notice, provided for in Civil Code Section 52.6, to include language indicating that victims, or those who witness trafficking, can text a special hotline to access help and services, and requires the Department of Justice to update the model notice accordingly.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-southern California
California Domestic Workers Coalition
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto
Justice At Last
Pilipino Workers Center
Resilience Force
Sunita Jain Anti-trafficking Initiative
Thai Community Development Center
Wage Justice Center
Worksafe

Opposition

CalBroadband
Calcom Association
League of California Cities
Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)

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