

AB 1656: Human Trafficking Continuances

Assemblymember Laurie Davies

IN BRIEF

AB 1656 would expand the list of crimes that may support a finding of good cause for a continuance to specifically include human trafficking.

THE ISSUE

Human Trafficking is one of the fastest growing global enterprises in the entire world. It is estimated to garner around \$150 billion dollars a year. It is also considered modern-day slavery. According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, in 2024, California alone reported 1,733 human trafficking cases and 3,603 victims involved in those cases.

California consistently reports some of the highest human trafficking case numbers in the U.S., making it one of the top destination states due to population size, international borders, major transport hubs, and economic diversity. Unfortunately, data is often limited and likely an underestimate due to underreporting and the hidden nature of the crime.

Survivors of human trafficking frequently experience severe trauma, coercive control, and psychological harm. Some are under debt bondage, immigration coercion, or family threats. It is very hard for survivors to trust person with authority, such as prosecuting attorneys who work overtime to establish trust and communication with the victims.

Continuances preserve continuity of counsel, which is particularly important where victims rely on a single, trusted point of contact. Forcing victims to proceed with a substitute attorney due to scheduling conflicts may undermine victim cooperation. increase anxiety and lead to delayed or incomplete testimony.

CURRENT LAW

Under existing law, California establishes the requirements for a continuance to be granted in a criminal case, including a showing of good cause. Furthermore, existing law defines “good cause” for this purpose to include, but not be limited to, cases involving specified crimes to apply when the prosecuting attorney assigned to the case has another trial, preliminary hearing, or motion to suppress in progress in that court or another court.

THE SOLUTION

The proposed bill would amend Penal Code § 1050 to add specified crimes to the list of existing crimes that constitute good cause for allowance of a continuance in a criminal case.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Staff: Taylor Melody

(916) 319-2074

Email address: Taylor.Melody@asm.ca.gov

Sponsor: San Diego District Attorney Summer Stephan

Contact: Pat Espinoza

Email address: Pat.Espinoza@sdcdca.org