

BE A VOICE FOR CALIFORNIA

Advocacy Month

AB 315 (Bauer-Kahan, D-Orinda)

Frivolous Lawsuits Against Pregnancy Centers – Oppose

AB 315 would create a private right of action, allowing lawsuits against a pregnancy center for undefined speech that is “considered false or misleading advertising” about the provision of abortion.

Background

California’s 170 pregnancy centers serve hundreds of thousands of women and families in California, providing over \$14.2 million in free services annually.

Of those, 98 pregnancy centers are community clinics licensed by the CA Department of Public Health. Their board-certified medical personnel provide free critical healthcare to low-income women, including pregnancy verification so they can access state benefits, limited obstetric ultrasound, STI testing, and early prenatal care. These state-licensed facilities follow all laws regarding healthcare provision and medical privacy.

The remaining clinics are pregnancy resource centers. Families visit these community-based organizations to receive peer support, parenting classes, prenatal education, and free maternity and baby items like diapers, clothes, strollers, and car seats that public assistance does not cover. As trusted nonprofits in their local communities, women turn to pregnancy centers for referral to prenatal care, housing, nutrition, and resources they cannot receive anywhere else.

Proponents of the bill have called pregnancy centers “fake clinics” that spread “misinformation” and try to trick women into continuing their pregnancies – but that misunderstands the two types of centers that exist to support mothers who choose to parent. The Catholic community has strongly supported the work of pregnancy centers to assist mothers and fathers who need resources to nurture their children in safe and sustainable communities.

Talking Points

- We agree with the intent of the bill that advertising regarding abortion should be clear and transparent, void of false or misleading information.
- However, this solution is overly broad. The private right of action will lead to unfounded lawsuits against transparent, good actors – shuttering exemplary nonprofit community clinics and community-based organizations.
- Hundreds of thousands of the most vulnerable women and families across the state will be left without critical resources.

SB 2 (Portantino, D-La Cañada Flintridge) Gun Control in Sensitive Spaces - Support

This bill would prohibit concealed carry in sensitive spaces, including schools, houses of worship, parks, and stadiums. It would also update licensing criteria for concealed carry, raise an applicant's age to 21, and impose new training and gun storage regulations.

Background

Our Catholic communities have been deeply affected by our state's mass shootings and gun violence. Guns are the second leading cause of death for children and teenagers, and gun homicides continue to rise in the state.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has long supported reasonable gun control measures including universal background checks, the 1994 assault weapons ban, controls on the sale and use of firearms, limiting high-capacity weapons and magazines, banning bump stocks, and improving gun safety.

In the wake of the devastating mass shooting in Uvalde, Texas, Pope Francis expressed his profound grief and ongoing prayers for the children and adults killed and for their families. He echoed a call the Church has long expressed: "It is time to say 'no more' to the indiscriminate trafficking of weapons."

Talking Points

- Reducing gun usage in sensitive spaces is a step toward reducing gun violence through homicide, suicide, accidents, or injury.
- Data shows that fewer guns on the streets will result in fewer people escalating to gun violence to solve conflicts.
- SB 2 will help build a more sustainable community rooted in justice and peace.
- Peace at home and in our communities requires a comprehensive approach, including preventing domestic violence, improving mental health treatment, stabilizing family environments, promoting peaceful solutions to conflict, and reasonably controlling firearms.

SB 4 (Wiener, D-San Francisco)

Affordable Housing on Faith Lands Act – Support

SB 4 will make building affordable housing easier, faster, and cheaper on land owned by faith-based institutions and nonprofit colleges.

Background

Faith-based organizations have a long history of partnering with nonprofit developers to build affordable housing. Often, religious organizations have excess land that they make available for affordable housing developments. The Terner Center estimates that roughly 38,800 acres of land currently owned by religious institutions has potential for development. Affordable housing development is limited both by available funding as well as land-use restrictions that prohibit all residential uses at densities adequate for affordable housing development.

Across California, Catholic organizations are seeking to partner with affordable housing developers to build critically needed affordable homes on their own land. Unfortunately, the land we hold can often be locked into complicated and cost-prohibitive local zoning rules and regulations preventing organizations from supporting those most in need and helping address our homelessness crisis.

Talking Points

- This bill will allow places of worship to build 100% affordable housing projects, creating a valuable option amid the state's housing and homelessness crisis.
- SB 4 will streamline the building process and offer new tools for neighborhood leaders to build safe, stable, affordable homes for residents and families.
- California has an insufficient housing, and increased demand and rising costs has created severe challenges to find affordable housing for hundreds of thousands of residents.
- Pope Francis, after addressing Congress, left the capitol to have lunch with 300 homeless people at St. Patrick's Church in DC, where he declared "Let me be clear. There is no social or moral justification, no justification whatsoever, for the lack of housing."

AB 238 (Muratsuchi - Torrance)

CA Student Teacher Support Grant Program - Support

This bill would support teacher retention and recruitment in California's public school system. It would establish a grant program to compensate student teachers to help alleviate financial stress at a critical time in the teacher preparation process. This bill would require an appropriation of one-time funding, established by the California Student Support Grant Program under the administration on Teacher Credentialing, to award grants to teacher credential candidates to compensate the candidates while they perform their required student teaching. In administering the California Student Teacher Support Grant Program, this bill would require the commission to issue a request for proposals to all school districts, charter schools, and county offices of education in the state to solicit funding applications.

Background

School leaders throughout California report that the teacher workforce is in crisis. Education agencies report challenges in retaining and hiring teachers stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), the most recent data during the 2021-2022 school year shows 10,523 teacher vacancies existed across California out of the 1,403,061 teaching assignments.

The California Catholic Conference of Bishops supports opportunities for the best preparation and support of teachers to help them achieve careers as professional educators. The CCC also believes that educational reform, resources, partnerships, and policy decisions must be implemented at the level closest to the actual teaching and learning practices.

Talking Points

- AB 238 will help address the critical teacher shortage in California and support the recruitment and retention of qualified and dynamic educators.
- Paying student teachers while they complete their 600 clinical hours of practice will allow them to earn funds to support themselves and their families.
- Student teachers participating in this grant program would be able to use their credential in both public and private school settings.