

Date of Hearing: May 14, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
Al Muratsuchi, Chair  
AB 715 (Zbur) – As Amended May 12, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Educational equity: discrimination.

**SUMMARY:** Prohibits the governing board of a school district or a county board of education, or the governing body of a charter school, from allowing the use of any curriculum or instructional materials, as specified, if it would subject a pupil to unlawful discrimination; changes the definitions of nationality and religion for purposes of prohibitions on discrimination in public schools; and states the intent of the Legislature to strengthen protections against discrimination in specified ways. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Prohibits the governing board of a school district or a county board of education, or the governing body of a charter school from allowing (in addition to not adopting or approving) the use of any textbook, instructional material, supplemental instructional material, or curriculum for classroom instruction if it would subject a pupil to unlawful discrimination, as specified in section 220 of the Education Code.
- 2) Changes the definition of “nationality,” for purposes of for purposes of prohibitions on discrimination in public education, to add (in addition to citizenship, country of origin, and national origin) a person’s actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, or residency in a country with a dominant religion or distinct religious identity. States that discrimination against pupils who identify as Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Christian, Tao, Shinto, or Buddhist, or pupils of native religious groups, pupils of indigenous religious groups, or pupils of another religious group, when the discrimination involves racial, ethnic, or ancestral slurs or stereotypes, constitutes discrimination on the basis of nationality.
- 3) Changes the definition of “religion,” for purposes of prohibitions on discrimination in public education, to add (in addition to religious belief, observance, and practice and includes agnosticism and atheism) that “discrimination on the basis of religion” includes, but is not limited to, antisemitism and Islamophobia.
- 4) States the intent of the Legislature to enact subsequent legislation to do the following:
  - a) Strengthen protections against discrimination, including antisemitism, in K-12 education, including protections against instruction and activity that promotes discrimination;
  - b) Strengthen the California Department of Education’s (CDE) Uniform Complaint Procedures (UCP) by ensuring that complaints can be made regarding discrimination, including discrimination by school board members and by third parties who are contracted by a local educational agency (LEA), and by ensuring timely compliance with UCP filings and determinations;
  - c) Increase accountability for LEAs that are found to engage in discrimination;

- d) Create an Antisemitism Coordinator who will further the intent of and compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
- e) Prevent discrimination and ensure a safe and supportive school climate; and
- f) Ensure that educators, including third-party contractors, fully comply with laws preventing discrimination, including through protections in the contract procurement process.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) States that it is the policy of the State of California to afford all persons in public schools, regardless of their disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code, including immigration status, equal rights, and opportunities in the educational institutions of the state. States that the purpose is to prohibit acts that are contrary to that policy and to provide remedies that will eliminate these discriminatory acts, including discrimination not just because of one protected trait, but also because of the combination of two or more protected bases. (Education Code (EC) 200)
- 2) States that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code, including immigration status, in any program or activity conducted by an educational institution that receives, or benefits from, state financial assistance, or enrolls pupils who receive state student financial aid. (EC 220)
- 3) Defines “nationality,” for purposes of prohibitions on discrimination in public education, to include citizenship, country of origin, and national origin. (EC 212)
- 4) Defines “religion,” for purposes of prohibitions on discrimination in public education, to include all aspects of religious belief, observance, and practice, and includes agnosticism and atheism. (EC 212.3)
- 5) Prohibits the governing board of a school district, a county board of education, or the governing body of a charter school from adopting or approving the use of any textbook, instructional material, supplemental instructional material, or curriculum for classroom instruction if it would subject a pupil to unlawful discrimination pursuant to Section 220. Permits a complaint pursuant to this section may be filed with the applicable school district, county office of education (CPE), or charter school under the UCP, or may be filed with the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) directly. Authorizes the SPI to directly intervene without waiting for an investigation by the school district, COE, or charter school. (EC 244)
- 6) Defines “nationality,” or “national identify,” for purposes of prohibitions on discrimination in higher education, to include a person’s actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, citizenship, or residency in a country with a dominant religion or distinct religious identity. States that discrimination against Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Christian, or Buddhist students, or students of another religious group, when the discrimination

involves racial, ethnic, or ancestral slurs or stereotypes, constitutes discrimination on the basis of nationality or national identity. (EC 66261.3)

- 7) Defines “religion,” purposes of prohibitions on discrimination in higher education, to include all aspects of religious belief, observance, and practice and to include agnosticism and atheism. States that “discrimination on the basis of religion” includes, but is not limited to, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. (EC 66262)
- 8) Prohibits a governing board from adopting any instructional materials for use in the schools that, in its determination, contain any matter reflecting adversely upon persons on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, nationality, or sexual orientation, occupation, as specified, and any sectarian or denominational doctrine or propaganda contrary to law. (EC 60044)
- 9) Prohibits the State Board of Education (SBE) and any governing board from adopting any textbooks or other instructional materials for use in the public schools that contain any matter reflecting adversely upon persons on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, nationality, or sexual orientation, as specified. (EC 51501)
- 10) Requires, when adopting instructional materials for use in the schools, governing boards to only include instructional materials that:
  - a) Accurately portray the cultural and racial diversity of our society, including: the contributions of both men and women in all types of roles, including professional, vocational, and executive roles; the role and contributions of Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, European Americans, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans, persons with disabilities, and members of other ethnic and cultural groups to the total development of California and the United States.; the role and contributions of the entrepreneur and labor in the total development of California and the United States;
  - b) Accurately portray humanity’s place in ecological systems and the necessity for the protection of our environment;
  - c) Accurately portray the effects on the human system of the use of tobacco, alcohol, narcotics, and restricted dangerous drugs;
  - d) Encourage thrift, fire prevention, and the humane treatment of animals and people;
  - e) Contain the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States;
  - f) Do not contain, in its determination: any matter reflecting adversely upon persons on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, nationality, sexual orientation, occupation, or any sectarian or denominational doctrine or propaganda contrary to law;
  - g) Are accurate, objective, current, and suited to the needs and comprehension of pupils at their respective grade levels.

- h) With the exception of literature and tradebooks, use proper grammar and spelling. (EC 60040-60045)
- 11) Establishes the Safe Place to Learn Act, which requires the CDE to assess whether LEAs have adopted a policy prohibiting discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying based on specified characteristics, and established a process for receiving and investigating complaints of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying based on those characteristics. (EC 234.1)
- 12) Includes, in the course of study in social studies for grades 7-12, the study of human rights issues, including genocide, slavery, and the Holocaust. (EC 51220)
- 13) Requires the CDE to incorporate into publications that provide examples of curriculum resources for teacher use those materials developed by publishers of nonfiction, trade books, and primary sources, or other public or private organizations, that are age appropriate and consistent with the subject frameworks on history and social science that deal with civil rights, human rights violations, genocide, slavery, and the Holocaust. (EC 51226.3)
- 14) Establishes the California Teachers Collaborative for Holocaust and Genocide Education, to establish a statewide teacher professional development program on genocide, including the Holocaust, for school district, COE, and charter school teachers. (EC 51221.1)
- 15) Requires the SPI to establish a system for processing complaints, known as the UCP, for specified educational programs, and requires the CDE to review those procedures for specified types of complaints, including allegations of unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying against any protected group. (EC 33315.)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** This bill has been keyed as a possible state mandated local program by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

**COMMENTS:**

***Need for the bill.*** The author states, “AB 715 is the product of collaboration between California Legislative Diversity Caucuses. This bill sets the intent of the Legislature to strengthen protections against discrimination, including antisemitism, in K–12 education. AB 715 lays the framework to address increased incidents of antisemitism in K-12 education and foster safe and supportive schools for all students. The bill also strengthens the Uniform Complaint Process (UCP), increases accountability for local educational agencies, creates a state-level Antisemitism Coordinator, and ensures full K-12 compliance with laws preventing discrimination. Lastly, this bill strengthens anti-discrimination protections related to nationality and religion. Together, these changes will provide enhanced protections and better recourse for not only the Jewish community, but all students facing discrimination.”

***UCP complaints alleging discrimination in curriculum and instructional materials.*** State law and regulations establish the UCP process for the filing, investigation, and resolution of complaints regarding alleged violations by an LEA or a charter school of federal or state law or regulations governing educational programs. Generally, a complaint is first filed with an LEA, which is required to conduct an investigation resolve complaints in accordance with the policies and procedures of the governing board.

If a complainant believes that the LEA's investigation report is incorrect as a matter of law, they have the right to appeal to the CDE. The appeal must be filed within 30 days and must specify the basis for the appeal.

SB 153 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 38, Statutes of 2024, added requirements to the complaint procedures used for complaints alleging the use of curriculum or instructional materials which would subject students to unlawful discrimination. That measure prohibits the governing board of a school district, a county board of education, or the governing body of a charter school from adopting or approving the use of any textbook, instructional material, supplemental instructional material, or curriculum for classroom instruction if it would subject a pupil to unlawful discrimination. This provision also permits UCP complaints to be filed with an LEA or with the SPI directly, and permits the SPI to directly intervene without waiting for an investigation by the LEA.

This bill would additionally prohibit the governing boards and bodies from allowing the use of discriminatory curriculum and materials, thereby permitting complaints alleging that they have allowed the use of discriminatory curriculum and materials to be filed directly with the SPI, and permitting the SPI to intervene directly without waiting for a local investigation. As the amendment proposed by the bill applies to curriculum and materials which are neither adopted nor approved by an LEA, it appears to apply to curriculum and materials which schools or teachers have chosen to use in their instruction.

This bill also states the intent of the Legislature to strengthen the UCP by ensuring that complaints can be made regarding discrimination, including discrimination by school board members and by third parties who are contracted by an LEA, and to ensure timely compliance with UCP filings and determinations.

***Changes to definitions of nationality and religion consistent with recently enacted legislation for higher education.*** Current law states that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code, including immigration status, in any program or activity conducted by an educational institution that receives, or benefits from, state financial assistance, or enrolls pupils who receive state student financial aid. Current law defines many of the terms used in this section, including the terms nationality and religion.

AB 2925 (Friedman), Chapter 844, Statutes of 2024, added to the definition of the terms nationality and religion for purposes of defining what constitutes discrimination in higher education.

This bill would amend the definitions of nationality and religion in the chapter of the Education Code which governs issues of discrimination in the K-12 system. It would add, for purposes of the definition of religion, that discrimination on the basis of religion includes, but is not limited to, antisemitism and Islamophobia. It would also add, for purposes of the definition of nationality, a person's actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, or residency in a country with a dominant religion or distinct religious identity. It also states that discrimination against pupils who identify as Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Christian, Tao, Shinto, or Buddhist, pupils of native religious groups, pupils of indigenous religious groups, or

pupils of another religious group, when the discrimination involves racial, ethnic, or ancestral slurs or stereotypes, constitutes discrimination on the basis of nationality.

These proposed changes to the definitions of nationality and religion are consistent with the recently enacted changes to these definitions made by AB 2925 for the purpose of preventing discrimination in higher education.

***Intent to enact additional measures related to the prevention of discrimination.*** This bill states the intent of the Legislature to enact subsequent legislation do the following:

- Strengthen protections against discrimination, including antisemitism, in K-12 education, including protections against instruction and activity that promotes discrimination;
- Strengthen the CDE's UCP by ensuring that complaints can be made regarding discrimination, including discrimination by school board members and by third parties who are contracted by a LEA, and by ensuring timely compliance with UCP filings and determinations;
- Increase accountability for LEAs that are found to engage in discrimination;
- Create an Antisemitism Coordinator who will further the intent of and compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
- Prevent discrimination and ensure a safe and supportive school climate; and
- Ensure that educators, including third party contractors, fully comply with laws preventing discrimination, including through protections in the contract procurement process.

***Related legislation.*** SB 153 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 38, Statutes of 2024, prohibits the governing board of a school district, a county board of education, or the governing body of a charter school from adopting or approving the use of any textbook, instructional material, supplemental instructional material, or curriculum for classroom instruction if it would subject a pupil to unlawful discrimination pursuant to Section 220. Permits a complaint to be filed with the applicable school district, COE, or charter school under the UCP, or to be filed with the SPI directly. Authorizes the SPI to directly intervene without waiting for an investigation by the school district, COE, or charter school.

AB 2925 (Friedman), Chapter 844, Statutes of 2024, changed the definition of the terms nationality and religion for purposes of defining what constitutes discrimination in higher education, and established a requirement for specific antidiscrimination training or diversity, equity, and inclusion training offered by postsecondary education institutions to include training on how to combat and address discrimination against the five most targeted groups in the state, as defined.

SB 472 (Stern) of the 2025-26 Session would require the SPI to establish the Holocaust and Genocide Education Grant Program and would require the CDE to issue a notice to all LEAs serving students in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, clarifying that specified social science instruction is

designed to provide a foundation for the understanding of human rights issues with particular attention to the study of the inhumanity of genocide, slavery, and the Holocaust.

AB 1468 (Zbur and Addis) would require the SBE, to develop and adopt academic content standards for ethnic studies instruction in high school; require the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) to recommend, and the SBE to adopt, reject, or modify, curriculum frameworks and instructional materials for instruction in ethnic studies; require the SBE to issue guidance to LEAs on instruction in ethnic studies; establish new anti-discrimination requirements for the content of ethnic studies; and require an LEA or a charter school to provide the CDE with a copy of all curricula, instruction, and instructional materials used in teaching ethnic studies.

AB 2918 (Zbur and Addis) of the 2023-24 Session would have required, before adopting a course in ethnic studies or any instructional materials for a course in ethnic studies, or revising any existing ethnic studies course or instructional materials for a course in ethnic studies, an LEA to ensure that the course and instructional materials are developed in conjunction with specified stakeholders, including certificated teachers, classified public school staff, and parents and guardians of pupils. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

SB 1277 (Stern), Chapter 890, Statutes of 2024, establishes the California Teachers Collaborative for Holocaust and Genocide Education (Collaborative), to establish a statewide professional development program on genocide for school district, COE, and charter school teachers.

SB 693 (Stern) of the 2021-22 Session would have 1) established the Governor's Council on Genocide and Holocaust Education and required the council to develop best practices to facilitate the instruction on genocide and the Holocaust, identify available resources that are aligned to the best practices, and identify programs and resources to train teachers to provide education on genocide and the Holocaust; and 2) required the CDE to make available the best practices and approved lessons, resources, and materials to support the integration of instruction on genocide and the Holocaust, and to conduct a voluntary study to assess the impact of the instruction based on the best practices. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

SB 141 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 194, Statutes of 2023, appropriated \$1.5 million to the SPI for allocation to the California Teachers Collaborative for Holocaust and Genocide Education to continue work developing and providing curriculum resources related to genocide and Holocaust education; and providing professional development, including educator trainings, on genocide and Holocaust education.

AB 1078 (Jackson), Chapter 229, Statutes of 2023, makes various changes to the adoption of instructional materials for use in schools, including a provision that would prohibit a governing board from disallowing the use of an existing textbook, other instructional material, or curriculum that contains inclusive and diverse perspectives, as specified.

AB 130 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 44, Statutes of 2021, appropriated \$2 million to the SPI for allocation to the Marin County Office of Education to contract with nonprofit organizations with subject matter expertise in genocide and Holocaust education to develop and provide curriculum resources related to genocide and Holocaust education; and provide professional development, including educator trainings, on genocide and Holocaust education.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

None on file for this version of the bill

**Opposition**

None on file for this version of the bill

**Analysis Prepared by:** Tanya Lieberman / ED. / (916) 319-2087