

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY FEBRUARY 17, 2026

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2025–26 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 1540

Introduced by Assembly Member Mark González

(Principal coauthor: Assembly Member ~~Lee and Ward~~ coauthors: Assembly Members ~~Lee and Ward~~)

(Coauthors: Assembly Members ~~Addis, Boerner, Bonta, Elhawary, Harabedian, Jackson, Pellerin, and Solache~~ *Schiavo, Solache, Wallis, and Zbur*)

(Coauthors: Senators ~~Pérez Gonzalez, Menjivar, Padilla, Pérez, and Wiener~~)

January 5, 2026

An act to add Section 53123.7 to the Government Code, relating to mental health, ~~making an appropriation therefor~~, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1540, as amended, Mark González. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: LGBTQ+ youth.

Existing federal law, the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020, designates the 3-digit telephone number "988" as the universal number within the United States for the purpose of the national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system operating through the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Existing law, the Miles Hall Lifeline and Suicide Prevention Act, requires, among other things, the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to verify that technology that allows for transfers between 988 centers, as well as between 988 centers and 911 public safety answering points, is available to 988 centers and 911 public safety answering points

throughout the state, to appoint a 988 system director, and to verify interoperability between and across 911 and 988. *Existing law establishes the 988 State Suicide and Behavioral Health Crisis Services Fund and provides that 988 surcharge revenue in the fund is available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for purposes of the act.*

This bill would require OES to, no later than July 1, 2027, ensure that technology enabling transfers between 988 centers and a subnetwork of LGBTQ+ specialized youth suicide prevention service providers is available, as specified, and that callers may dial 988 and press “3” to be automatically routed to an LGBTQ+ suicide prevention specialist. The bill would also require OES to, no later than December 1, 2027, ensure that technologies enabling text or chat contacts between a caller and 988 centers or a specified subnetwork are available.

This bill would require the California Health and Human Services Agency to, no later than July 1, 2027, administer a grant program for qualified entities that specialize in suicide prevention services and provide funding for state 988 call centers to implement specified goals. The bill would require the agency to determine the eligibility criteria, as prescribed, grant application process, and methodology for the distribution of grants to a qualified entity. The bill would require a qualified entity to annually file an expenditure and outcomes report, as specified, in a form and manner determined by the agency. The bill would ~~establish the Protecting Suicide Prevention Resources for LGBTQ+ Youth Fund, to be administered by the agency, and would appropriate \$5,000,000 from the General Fund to the Protecting Suicide Prevention Resources for LGBTQ+ Youth Fund~~ *specify that moneys in the 988 State Suicide and Behavioral Health Crisis Services Fund are available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for purposes of these provisions. The bill would provide that a qualified entity selected, contracted, or funded under these provisions is recognized as part of California’s 988 network for all state administrative, operational, and interoperability purposes when receiving or responding to a 988 call, text, or chat routed through 988.*

This bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

Vote: $\frac{2}{3}$. Appropriation: ~~yes~~ *no*. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:

3 (a) All children, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender
4 identity, or gender expression, deserve to live a full and happy life
5 without suffering from bullying and mental health crises.

6 (b) Attacks on the rights, safety, and dignity of LGBTQ+ youth
7 continue to grow across the country, including in California. These
8 efforts have a measurable impact on the health and well-being of
9 LGBTQ+ youth and have led to a rise in bullying, harassment, and
10 discrimination.

11 (c) LGBTQ+ youth have increased reported instances of
12 bullying, hate crimes, and harassment than compared to their
13 heterosexual or cisgender peers.

14 (d) The latest national survey on the mental health of LGBTQ+
15 youth in California found that 56 percent of LGBTQ+ youth in
16 California experienced discrimination based on their sexual
17 orientation or gender identity in the past year.

18 (e) (1) A longitudinal study published in 2025 reported that
19 mental health distress among LGBTQ+ youth has been increasing
20 amid a surge of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, but strong support
21 networks and access to health care were shown to ease symptoms
22 for some.

23 (2) That study found mental health distress increased
24 substantially throughout the study's first year. LGBTQ+ youth
25 reporting recent anxiety symptoms rose from 57 percent to 68
26 percent. Those reporting depressive symptoms climbed from 48
27 percent to 54 percent. Suicidal ideation among LGBTQ+ youth
28 grew from 41 percent to 47 percent.

29 (f) Another 2025 study found that most LGBTQ+ people, and
30 especially transgender and nonbinary respondents, reported
31 anti-LGBTQ+ laws and rhetoric has negatively impacted their
32 mental health and well-being. Additionally, a majority of LGBTQ+
33 people and more than 8 in 10 transgender and nonbinary individuals
34 reported they or their families have faced harassment or
35 discrimination since November 2024.

36 (g) A 2023 study by the federal Centers for Disease Control and
37 Prevention found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual students were
38 more than three times more likely to have attempted suicide than

1 their heterosexual peers: that number jumps to almost four times
2 as likely for transgender high school students. In other words, 20
3 percent of surveyed students who identified as lesbian, gay, or
4 bisexual reported having attempted suicide compared to 6 percent
5 of their heterosexual peers. This figure jumps to nearly 26 percent
6 for transgender high school students.

7 (h) Research by The Trevor Project also indicates that LGBTQ+
8 students often struggle to access competent mental health services
9 tailored to their unique experiences.

10 (i) The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reported that
11 schools were the third most commonly known location for hate
12 crimes against LGBTQ+ youth and community members, and that
13 hate crimes more than doubled at elementary and secondary schools
14 and universities from 2018 to 2022, inclusive. The FBI also noted
15 that participation in the collection of the aforementioned data
16 regarding hate crime reports in schools is voluntary for most
17 agencies and is only mandatory for federal agencies; therefore, the
18 figures provided in the FBI's report are likely incomplete and
19 underreported.

20 (j) Since 2022, 988, the nation's official hotline for suicide
21 prevention and crisis counseling, has collaborated with several
22 nonprofit organizations that offer specialized services designed to
23 prevent LGBTQ+ youth suicide. The 988 Suicide & Crisis
24 Lifeline's LGBTQ+ Youth Specialized Services program allowed
25 youth who called "988" to press "3" and automatically be routed
26 to a subnetwork of providers.

27 (k) Since 2022, 1,500,000 contacts were routed to the LGBTQ+
28 service provider subnetwork.

29 (l) By order of President Donald Trump on June 17, 2025, all
30 funding for LGBTQ+ youth services Press 3 option was halted.
31 This service officially ended on July 17, 2025. The ending of this
32 service has resulted in chaos, with youth in crisis lacking a
33 centralized suicide prevention resource.

34 SEC. 2. Section 53123.7 is added to the Government Code, to
35 read:

36 53123.7. (a) It is the intent of the State of California to
37 continue its long history of advancing policies that support suicide
38 prevention efforts and further the initiative to address our youth
39 mental health crisis. Young LGBTQ+ Californians have benefited
40 from the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline's LGBTQ+ Youth

1 Specialized Services program since 2022. It is the intent of the
2 Legislature to reinstate this program in California.

3 (b) The Office of Emergency Services shall ensure both of the
4 following:

5 (1) No later than July 1, 2027, that technology enabling transfers
6 between 988 centers and a subnetwork of LGBTQ+ specialized
7 youth suicide prevention service providers is available to 988
8 centers and 911 public safety answering points in California. The
9 office shall ensure that callers may dial 988 and press “3” to be
10 automatically routed to an LGBTQ+ suicide prevention specialist.

11 (2) No later than December 1, 2027, that technologies enabling
12 contact through text or chat features between a caller and 988
13 centers or a subnetwork for LGBTQ+ specialized youth suicide
14 prevention service providers are available.

15 ~~(e) (1) There is hereby created in the State Treasury the~~
16 ~~Protecting Suicide Prevention Resources for LGBTQ+ Youth~~
17 ~~Fund, to be administered by the California Health and Human~~
18 ~~Services Agency. The sum of five million dollars (\$5,000,000) is~~
19 ~~hereby appropriated from the General Fund to be deposited into~~
20 ~~the Protecting Suicide Prevention Resources for LGBTQ+ Youth~~
21 ~~Fund for purposes of this section.~~

22 *(c) (1) Pursuant to paragraph (4) of subdivision (b) of Section*
23 *53123.4, moneys in the 988 State Suicide and Behavioral Health*
24 *Crisis Services Fund are available, upon appropriation by the*
25 *Legislature, for the costs of this section.*

26 (2) No later than July 1, 2027, the agency shall do both of the
27 following:

28 (A) Administer a grant program for qualified entities, as set
29 forth in subdivision (d), that specialize in suicide prevention
30 services.

31 (B) Provide funding for state 988 call centers to implement the
32 goals of this section, including, but not limited to, the
33 administrative cost of implementation and staffing of statewide
34 and regional 988 centers and the effective routing of contacts,
35 including, but not limited to, calls, texts, and chats.

36 (d) For purposes of subparagraph (A) of paragraph (2) of
37 subdivision (c), a qualified entity for the grant program shall be
38 determined by the agency pursuant to the following:

39 (1) The agency shall determine the eligibility criteria, grant
40 application process, and methodology for the distribution of grants

1 to a qualified entity. The agency's eligibility requirements shall
2 include, but are not limited to:

3 (A) The applicant shall be capable of complying with current
4 minimum application requirements maintained and set forth by
5 the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
6 Administration (SAMHSA) or the entity contracted by SAMHSA
7 to administer the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

8 (B) The applicant maintains policies that include:

9 (i) No requirement for a caller to provide name, age or date of
10 birth, gender, race or ethnicity, citizenship status, or any other
11 identifying information to receive crisis intervention services.

12 (ii) A prohibition against sharing identifying information outside
13 of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, including with private donors
14 and the federal government, except as required by law.

15 (iii) Strict user tenets that comply with Section 56.109 of the
16 Civil Code and Section 819 of the Penal Code.

17 (C) The applicant's primary objective is to reduce suicide rates
18 or address mental health crises. The agency shall prioritize
19 applicants that primarily service LGBTQ+ populations.

20 (D) The applicant demonstrates that its mission includes serving
21 the LGBTQ+ population or that it employs staff or volunteers who
22 have completed extensive training in responding to LGBTQ+ crisis
23 contacts in a culturally competent manner. The applicant ensures
24 that dedicated trained staff or volunteers are available to respond
25 to those contacts through an established routing system.

26 (E) The applicant has the capability to report metrics, including
27 information about the number of contacts, length of contacts, and
28 any other metric the agency deems appropriate.

29 (2) The agency shall also take into consideration whether the
30 applicant is or was previously a part of the 988 Suicide & Crisis
31 Lifeline network.

32 (3) A qualified entity that is eligible to receive grants pursuant
33 to this section shall include *community-based organizations,*
34 *nonprofits, behavioral health providers,* counties, city mental
35 health authorities, tribal entities, local educational agencies, *and*
36 ~~institutions of higher education, community-based organizations,~~
37 ~~nonprofits, and behavioral health providers.~~ *education.* The agency
38 shall prioritize applicants that are based in California and have
39 established connections to law ~~enforcement,~~ *enforcement or*
40 *California mobile crisis response units, or the agency. units.*

1 (e) (1) The agency shall require a qualified entity to annually
2 file an expenditure and outcomes report in a form and manner
3 determined by the agency.

4 (2) The expenditure and outcomes report shall include, but is
5 not limited to, the following information:

6 (A) The total budget.

7 (B) Number and job classification of personnel.

8 (C) The number of contacts served.

9 (D) The outcome for individuals served, if known.

10 (E) Beginning July 1, 2027, to the extent feasible, measures of
11 system performance, including capacity, wait times, and the ability
12 to meet demand for services.

13 (f) For purposes of implementing this article, the agency may
14 enter into exclusive or nonexclusive contracts, or amend existing
15 contracts, on a bid or negotiated basis, and may implement changes
16 to existing information technology systems. Notwithstanding any
17 other law, contracts entered into or amended, or changes to existing
18 information technology systems, pursuant to this section shall be
19 exempt from Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 14825) of Part
20 5.5 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code, Section 19130
21 of the Government Code, and Part 2 (commencing with Section
22 10100) of Division 2 of the Public Contract Code, and shall be
23 exempt from the review or approval of any division of the
24 Department of General Services.

25 (g) *For the purposes of 988 system integration, a contact routed*
26 *to the qualified entity pursuant to this section constitutes a 988*
27 *contact for purposes of California’s comprehensive 988 system,*
28 *as described in Section 53123.3. A qualified entity selected,*
29 *contracted, or funded pursuant to this section to receive 988*
30 *contacts through the LGBTQ+ youth specialized services routing*
31 *described in subdivision (b) shall be recognized as part of*
32 *California’s 988 network for all state administrative, operational,*
33 *and interoperability purposes when receiving or responding to a*
34 *988 call, text, or chat routed through 988. The qualified entity may*
35 *initiate and receive transfers and warm handoffs with 988 centers*
36 *and county crisis continuum entry points on the same technical*
37 *and operational basis as other 988 centers, consistent with*
38 *applicable confidentiality and consent requirements.*

39 SEC. 3. This act is an urgency statute necessary for the
40 immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within

1 the meaning of Article IV of the California Constitution and shall
2 go into immediate effect. The facts constituting the necessity are:
3 In order to address the urgent LGBTQ+ youth suicide crisis we
4 face in California, it is necessary for this act to take effect
5 immediately.

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