

AB 1918: Human Trafficking – Tattoo Artists

SUMMARY

AB 1918 would require tattoo shops to post a human trafficking notice with information on the signs of human trafficking and how to contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline. Additionally, tattoo artists would also be required to complete at least 20 minutes of training to recognize the signs of human trafficking and how to report those signs to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

EXISTING LAW

In California Health & Safety Code, Section 119306(c), there are currently multiple requirements for tattoo practitioner registration including “evidence of completion of OSHA Bloodborne Pathogen Training.”

Additionally, there is precedence in other occupations requiring human trafficking awareness training. For example, in California Government Code, Section 12950.3, hotels and motels are required to provide “interactive training and education regarding human trafficking awareness” to employees. In California Health & Safety Code, Section 1797.170(g), licensed EMT-I’s are required “to complete at least 20 minutes of training on issues relating to human trafficking.”

BACKGROUND

In 2025, the Tennessee legislature passed the “Ink of Hope Act” with unanimous, bipartisan support. The act requires each tattoo operator or artist, before receiving a permit to operate a tattoo establishment or to apply a tattoo, to complete up to one hour of training on how to recognize the signs of human trafficking.

ISSUE

Human traffickers will sometimes tattoo, burn or scar their victims as a way to denote ownership.

Tattoos can have multiple purposes for the trafficker. From a study done by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill – “It is a strategy to dehumanize victims, demonstrating who controls their bodies and communicating “ownership” to other traffickers.” Tattoos can also be demanded as “proof” of loyalty or to indicate the sex acts for sale to buyers.

SOLUTION

AB 1918 would enable tattoo artists to become a critical point of intervention. By recognizing signs of human trafficking, tattoo artists can actively identify victims and significantly contribute to the documentation and gathering of intelligence for law enforcement or other investigators. Not only is it possible that tattoos can be linked back to specific traffickers and communities, but also connections can be made among multiple victims of one trafficker.

SIMILAR LEGISLATION

AB 379 (Schultz & Nguyen, 2025) – Crimes: prostitution - Chaptered

AB 2020 (Bonta, 2024) – Survivors of Human Trafficking Support Act - Chaptered

AB 2034 (Kalra, 2018) – Human trafficking: notice - Chaptered

SB 1104 (Roth, 2018) – Pupil safety: human trafficking prevention resources - Chaptered

SUPPORT

3Strands

Loyola Law School – The Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative

OPPOSITION

None on File.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact: Danley Shimasaki

Phone: 916-319-2969

Email: Danley.Shimasaki@asm.ca.gov