



## SENATE BILL 9 (SEN. HUFFMAN|WEST)

Requiring public schools to provide instruction relating to the prevention of dating violence, child abuse, and family violence to help prevent human trafficking.

### WHAT PROBLEM DOES THE BILL FIX?

Although common depictions of human trafficking feature an abductor who is a relative stranger to their victim, research shows that the relational distance between victims and their survivors is often quite close.<sup>1</sup> This is especially true of minor sex trafficking, and many child victims are groomed by traffickers who position themselves as romantic partners offering validation and emotional support. These relationships quickly turn into emotionally and/or physically abusive relationships as the trafficker gains power. Other children are trafficked by family members or close friends, and this victimization is only a piece of a larger pattern of abuse. In fact, a history of child abuse, neglect, exposure to violence in the home, and experiences of relationship violence are a few of the most consistent indicators of vulnerability to victimization by traffickers.

### WHAT DOES SB 9 DO?

SB 9 (Huffman|West) requires schools to educate students on dating violence, family violence, and child abuse. This instruction must be given at least once in middle school and again in high school. The bill also adds provisions u-1, u-2, and u-3 that require school districts to notify parents, describe the resources used, and allow parents to file a grievance if these steps are not followed. It also allows parents to opt out of this instruction.

### HOW DOES SB 9 PREVENT HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Traffickers seek out those children who are most vulnerable, and schools are an invaluable support and touch point for those children. This bill is an important first step in providing children with the healthy relationship training they need to recognize grooming, coercion, and abuse. This preventative curriculum would empower children to recognize abusive and unhealthy relationships and make an outcry.

<sup>1</sup> Gonzalez-Pons KM, Gezinski L, Morzenti H, Hendrix E, Graves S. Exploring the relationship between domestic minor sex trafficking myths, victim identification, and service provision. *Child Abuse Negl.* 2020 Feb;100:104093. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2019.104093. Epub 2019 Aug 26. PMID: 31466861.