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Civil Rights Department Announces Launch of Welcome In, A New Statewide Program to Support Safe and Inclusive Businesses

Businesses across California can [apply now to participate](#) and get direct access to tailored legal trainings and technical assistance

SACRAMENTO – During National Small Business Week, the California Civil Rights Department (CRD) today announced the launch of “Welcome In,” a first-of-its-kind statewide pilot program to recognize and support businesses that take steps to foster safe and inclusive environments for customers and staff. Businesses across California can [apply now to participate](#) in the pilot program and get direct access to tailored legal trainings and technical assistance.

“In California, we’re proud to be home to nearly 40 million people from all walks of life and a top destination for tourists and business from across the globe,” **said CRD Director Kevin Kish**. “Welcome In is a chance to work in partnership with local business and community leaders to help keep the places where we shop, eat, and take care of other basic tasks a safe environment free from hate and discrimination. This is good for local economies and for the public. We are all entitled to full and equal access to businesses in our state.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic showed us that we all have a role in combatting hate crimes and incidents,” **said Assemblymember Mike Fong, Chair of the Asian American and Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus**. “As Chair of the Asian American and Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus, I am thrilled to see the launch of the ‘Welcome In’ program to support businesses with fostering environments free of discrimination. By creating safe and inclusive spaces for all Californians to shop, dine, and take care of business, we strengthen our economy and our communities.”

“Everyone has the right to feel safe in our communities — and that right extends to the places where we stop for coffee, pick up medicine, and do our grocery shopping,” **said Annie Lee, a Managing Director of Policy at Chinese for Affirmative Action who co-leads policy at Stop AAPI Hate**. “But we also recognize that for women and people of color, hate and harassment can make it that much harder to feel welcome. That’s why Stop AAPI Hate sponsored AB 2448 with then-Assemblymember Phil Ting and helped bring to life California’s new Welcome In program. Welcome In is a ground-breaking example of how local businesses and state agencies can work together to stop hate before it starts and make our communities safer and more welcoming for all.”

What Is Welcome In?

Welcome In is a chance for California businesses and CRD to work together to cultivate safe and inclusive environments. It is one of several initiatives created in direct response to reported increases in hate and discrimination in California and across the country in recent years, including reports of verbal harassment and intimidation at public places like grocery stores or restaurants. These acts of hate don't just affect individuals, they can impact entire communities. According to new data from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, [roughly a third of Californians who experienced hate were targeted while at a business](#). The new pilot program — launched as a result of the passage of [Assembly Bill 2448](#) — aims to give businesses and their staff the tools they need to better respond to hate and discrimination and help ensure all customers and staff feel welcome.

How Does It Work?

Businesses in California can sign up to participate at any time. Participating businesses get direct access to technical support and publicly available civil rights trainings, as well as receive public recognition for successfully completing the program. The program requires just a few key steps:

- **Code of Conduct:** Adopt a policy to ensure all Californians are able to enjoy full and equal access to your business and staff are equipped to provide support.
- **Trainings:** Ensure participating staff take required trainings on state civil rights protections at businesses, bystander intervention, and sexual harassment prevention.
- **Technical Assistance:** Complete a handful of technical assistance calls and program evaluation surveys.
- **Community Engagement:** Host or participate in three community engagement activities.
- **Spread the Word:** Post Welcome In materials and resources, which include information on how to report hate and get support through [CA vs Hate](#).

If you or someone you know has experienced discrimination, CRD may be able to assist you through its [complaint process](#). The department also [provides general information and factsheets online](#) about civil rights protections, including with respect to [civil rights at businesses](#).

To report an act of hate and get support, you can go to [CAvsHate.org](#) or call 833-8-NO-HATE, i.e., (833) 866-4283. CA vs Hate is a non-emergency, multilingual hate reporting hotline and online portal. For individuals who want to report a hate crime to law enforcement immediately or who are in imminent danger, please call 911.

You can learn more about the Welcome In program by going to <https://civildrights.ca.gov/welcome-in/>.

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The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) is the state agency charged with enforcing California's civil rights laws. CRD's mission is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state-funded programs and activities, and from hate violence and human trafficking. For more information, visit calcivilrights.ca.gov.

