



Civil Rights Department

651 Bannan Street, Suite 200 | Sacramento | CA | 95811
800-884-1684 (voice) | 800-700-2320 (TTY) | California's Relay Service at 711
www.calcivilrights.ca.gov | contact.center@calcivilrights.ca.gov

May 6, 2026

For Immediate Release

publicaffairs@calcivilrights.ca.gov

916-938-4113

During Small Business Week, State Highlights Inaugural Class in Pilot Program to Support Safe and Inclusive Businesses

Businesses across California can still [apply to participate in Welcome In](#) and get access to tailored legal trainings and technical assistance

SACRAMENTO – During National Small Business Week, the California Civil Rights Department (CRD) today highlighted the inaugural class of businesses that have successfully completed “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 still [apply to participate](#) and get access to tailored legal trainings and technical assistance.

“California is one of the largest economies in the world,” said **CRD Director Kevin Kish**. “And we’re proud of the businesses all across our state that are doing their part to help people feel welcome in their stores. We all benefit when customers and staff are treated with respect. This Small Business Week, you can celebrate by checking out local businesses that are going above and beyond through the Welcome In program. Congratulations to our first class of Welcome In businesses.”

What Is Welcome In?

Welcome In is a chance for California businesses to work with the state 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 recent data from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, [roughly a third of Californians who experienced hate were targeted while at a business](#). The 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.

Where Are You Welcome In?

Under the Unruh Civil Rights Act, everyone is welcome at business open to the public in California regardless of who they are or where they come from. But some California business have gone above and beyond by participating in Welcome In and completing trainings, adopting policies, and engaging with their communities. The businesses in the inaugural class of Welcome In include:

- **The Onyx Theatre:** Based in Nevada City in Nevada County, The Onyx Theatre brings film lovers together in a welcoming, inclusive space that celebrates diverse voices, sparks community dialogue, and offers an inviting alternative to watching movies at home. They strive to showcase bold independent cinema — from international documentaries to underrepresented voices — alongside select studio releases that reflect exceptional storytelling and craft.
- **Vita Cane in Alhambra:** Part of a chain of stores, Vita Cane in Alhambra in Los Angeles County is passionate about nourishing body, mind, and soul while fostering a welcome and inclusive space for everyone in the community. Inspired by the Latin word Vita, meaning life, they offer refreshing sugarcane juices and super food acai bowls that people can personalize to their own unique taste.
- **Gustine Traveling Library:** Based in Gustine in Merced County, the Gustine Traveling Library has been dedicated to supporting children across the Central Valley for almost 10 years, from distributing over 300,000 free books and school supplies to leading food distribution for families in need. Their staff is passionate about helping youth succeed, offering tutoring services, and guidance to find the perfect book.
- **Bee the Change Foundation:** Based in San Diego in San Diego County, the Bee the Change Foundation strives to create positive social impact by using art to empower communities, amplify underrepresented voices, and inspire meaningful change. Through creativity, collaboration, and support for diverse artists and initiatives, they promote inclusivity, celebrate individuality, and foster a welcoming environment for all.

Additional businesses in the inaugural class of Welcome In are Underdog Bookstore in Monrovia, Morris & Morris in Arcadia, and Sanctions Barbershop in Arcadia.

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://calcivilrights.ca.gov/welcome-in/>.

###

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.

