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Ahead of Small Business Saturday, State Highlights Latest Members of Pilot Program to Support Safe and Inclusive Businesses

From movie theaters to bakeries, Californians are "Welcome In" at businesses all across the state

SACRAMENTO – Ahead of Small Business Saturday, the California Civil Rights Department (CRD) today highlighted the newest participants in the state's "Welcome In" program, which aims to recognize and support businesses that take steps to foster safe and inclusive environments for customers and staff. From movie theaters to bakeries, Californians are "Welcome In" at businesses all across the state.

"As we begin the holiday season, now is a great time to check out local businesses that are taking steps to support their communities," **said CRD Acting Director Jamie Gillette.** "Our state's businesses and public spaces are a big part of how we make sure people feel welcome in California. We're so excited to celebrate our latest partners who are going above and beyond to ensure customers and staff feel safe and supported."

What Is Welcome In?

Welcome In is a first-of-its-kind pilot program that gives California businesses a chance 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 at public places like grocery stores or restaurants.

According to data from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, roughly a third of Californians who experienced hate were targeted while at a business. The Welcome In 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, businesses are prohibited from discriminating against people because of protected characteristics, like sexual orientation, national origin, race, or disability. But some California businesses have gone above and beyond the law's requirements by participating in Welcome In and completing trainings, adopting policies, and engaging with their communities. The newest businesses to join Welcome In include:

- **Regency Theatres:** With five locations participating, Regency Theatres in Buena Park, Commerce, Laguna Nigel, Moreno Valley, and Westminster are family owned and operated movie theaters offering the latest movies and cinematic experiences.
- **Bakers Bench:** Based in Los Angeles, Bakers Bench strives to make the best pastries baked fresh every morning and made from scratch on site. They also constantly work to cut both food waste and single-use plastics.
- **Le Chat Noir Bookstore & Cat Lounge:** Based in Redlands, Le Chat Noir Bookstore & Cat Lounge is a cat cafe driven by a commitment to securing forever homes for their furry companions and have orchestrated the successful adoption of over 600 animals.
- **South Lake Brewing Company:** With multiple locations in South Lake Tahoe, the South Lake Brewing Company is a small-town, community-focused brewery inspired by the beauty, adventure, and community of their mountain hometown.
- **The Studio Door:** Based in San Diego, The Studio Door is a contemporary art gallery and creative hub connecting artists, exhibitions, and community. The studio brings together diverse artists and regularly spotlights community-based projects.
- **pskaufman:** Based in Los Angeles, pskaufman is a footwear company that seeks to create authentic products, expressing the heritage of shoemaking and a genuine appreciation of the artisans who make the shoes. The shoes are full of unique details and industrial functionality with a modern twist.

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 at businesses.

Businesses across California can still apply to participate and get access to tailored legal trainings and technical assistance. You can learn more about the Welcome In program and other participating businesses by going to https://calcivilrights.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.