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April 9, 2026

The Honorable Rebecca Bauer-Kahan
Chair, Assembly Committee on Privacy and Consumer Protection
1020 N Street, Room 162
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1898 (Schultz), Workplace AI tools – OPPOSE

Dear Assembly Member Bauer-Kahan,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors, in lockstep with CSAC, Cal Cities, and many other public agencies, to express our strong opposition to AB 1898 (Schultz). This bill would vastly complicate the routine work of local governments, endanger our ability to perform essential public services, impede our ability to manage and respond to workplace violence threats, and make local governments vulnerable to waste, fraud, and abuse of public resources.

Kern is fundamentally concerned with this bill, and others like it, that aim to restrict how public agencies can use technology that is essential and routinely used in day-to-day government operations. Specifically, AB 1898 would impose several rules on how public agencies may implement surveillance tools that use artificial intelligence. Although recent amendments narrow some of the bill's applications, Kern has significant concerns that it could compromise the security and operations of public agencies.

We understand concerns about the slow creep of surveillance tools into every aspect of daily life, particularly as new technologies emerge. However, this bill and others aimed at limiting employers' use of critical technology are too broad, too expensive, and too dangerous for public agencies and those we serve.

Workplace surveillance tools that use artificial intelligence

Recent amendments narrow the bill's applications from a broad definition of a "workplace surveillance tool," to a "workplace surveillance tool that uses artificial intelligence." Counties, schools, and other public agencies already use routine security tools that incorporate artificial intelligence, including ID badge systems and security cameras. Work cell phones, public fleets, mobile applications, and GPS trackers already incorporate AI. These tools are not used by public agencies to undermine bargaining or intrude on the lives of public employees. They are an

increasingly ubiquitous aspect of tools used to provide essential public services, to keep public facilities safe, and to make government more efficient in addressing the needs of our communities.

Burdensome and unclear notice requirements

The March 20, 2026, amendments create a confusing and onerous requirement for employee notices. Section 1601(c) mandates employers to “...require a worker to sign and confirm they received and understand...” the notice regarding use of workplace AI tools. While the amendments include deletion of language that would have provided a clear single worker veto of these tools, it is unclear what is intended by the remaining language. It is unclear if employers are compelled to discipline employees that do not sign the notice or if the employer allowed to use the tool without signatures from all affected workers.

Kern remains concerned about any pre-use notice standard. AB 1898 requires employers to provide at least 90 days of notice before introducing a workplace AI tool. If agencies are prevented from deploying a tool used for security or operations by an arbitrary deadline, they would be faced with the choice of either operating without those benefits or delaying services. As an example, under this proposed law, the opening of a new homeless shelter could be significantly delayed because the city or county would have to meet the bill’s three month notice timeframe.

Undermines tools used to investigate fraud and abuse

The notice required by this bill must contain, among other things, a description of the general locations and the categories of activities, communications, and job roles that will be surveilled and the technologies that will be used. Many of these requirements will frustrate routine uses of technology and undercut public agencies’ efforts to secure their facilities, public data, finances, and protect employees and the public alike.

Public agencies are responsible for delivering essential public services and protecting against fraud, waste, and abuse of public resources. Imagine a public agency is concerned that an employee is committing fraud by creating a shell company and signing false invoices used to pay for lavish gifts and cash. Under section 1601(f)(6), the agency would be required to inform the employee about what tools they are using to investigate them, inform them about job roles they are monitoring, which technologies will be used, and why they are using them. Put simply, AB 1898 could make the fraudster aware that they are being investigated, how they are being investigated, and why they are being investigated.

These same concerns apply to necessary efforts by public agencies to investigate claims of abuse of minors, excessive force, workplace violence, stalking, harassment, threats to public officials, or corruption.

Exposes government agencies to physical and cybersecurity risks

Section 1601(f)(7) would require public agencies to include the specific make and model of each AI/ADS and workplace surveillance tool. Disclosure of this information, along with the requirements to report the locations, could provide a material advantage to bad actors seeking to exploit vulnerabilities or gaps in security coverage.

Due to the unique aspects of public sector service delivery, public employers may use a variety of surveillance tools to protect employees, students, or the public at large, including emergency alarms for teachers, body cameras for law enforcement, or tools used for public vehicle fleets, including dash cameras, speed monitors, or GPS tracking. Local governments are responsible for securing and

operating critical infrastructure, jails, hospitals, police and fire departments, and providing behavioral health services and shelters for the unhoused.

Further, we have seen rising hostility and threats against government entities and their workforces. That includes violence and threats of violence against government employees whose job requires them to serve the public like library staff, teachers, firefighters, and benefits officers, among myriad other examples. Reporting and publication of the detailed information required by AB 1898 could set back public employers' efforts to protect employees and the public.

Inappropriately applies to public agencies

The sponsors are advancing this bill, in part, to address activities by employers that undermine efforts to organize a union, influence union elections, or retaliate against union leaders. Existing law already provides significant protections for public employee union organizing and bargaining activities. For example, Government Code § 3550 provides that a public employer shall not deter or discourage public employees, or applicants to be public employees, from becoming or remaining members of an employee organization. Section 3551.5 imposes significant penalties for violations of § 3550 and grants employee organizations standing to bring the claims.

Exposes public agencies to severe litigation risk and steep penalties

AB 1898 would allow employees or employee representatives to bring civil actions against public agencies for violating a law that is vague, sweeping, and littered with unintended consequences. While we acknowledge the amendments reduce the statutory fine in § 1602(e), the bill would subject public agencies to civil actions, making them liable for punitive damages and attorney fees.

Put simply, public agencies use the tools restricted by this bill to protect public resources, not to influence employee organization activities. We urge the author to amend the bill to remove public agencies entirely from its provisions.

For these reasons, and unless amended, the Kern County Board of Supervisors strongly opposes this measure and respectfully urges you to **vote NO on AB 1898**.

Sincerely,



Phillip Peters, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Assembly Committee on Privacy and Consumer Protection
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
Kern County Human Resources Division
Kern County Counsel
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange