

Date of Hearing: June 30, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Alex Lee, Chair

SB 1190 (Grove) – As Amended June 23, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 33-0

SUBJECT: Child welfare: transport escort services

SUMMARY: Expands and restructures California’s regulation of transport escort services by broadening the definition to cover all compensated prearranged transit of minors involving an overnight stay, regardless of destination. Requires transport escort services to obtain a charter-party carrier (TCP) of passengers permit from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). Establishes training, consent, incident reporting, and operational safety requirements as conditions of operation, and prohibits specified restraint practices and nighttime pickups. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Revises the definition of a “transport escort service” to mean any person, partnership, association, corporation, or private entity that engages in, advertises for, or holds itself out as providing, the transportation of minor passengers for compensation, where the prearranged transit includes or results in an overnight stay away from the minor’s primary residence, instead of only applying to minors who are residents of California being transported to any residential facility or institution located outside of the state.
- 2) Requires transport escort services to obtain a TCP permit from the CPUC designating the permittee as a transport escort service and prohibits operation in California without such a permit.
- 3) Requires transport escort services to enroll all drivers in the pull-notice system used to monitor driver records, ensure all transport personnel complete training in first aid and CPR, mandatory child abuse reporting duties, behavioral de-escalation techniques, safe transportation practices, and obtain written parental consent prior to transport, documenting authorization, destination, and contact information for the service.
- 4) Requires transport escort services to document all incidents occurring during transport, including injuries, medical emergencies, restraint use, and behavioral incidents, and to submit incident reports to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) within 24 hours, and provide copies to parents or guardians within 24 hours.
- 5) Requires transport escort services to maintain written policies governing the safety and welfare of minors during transport, addressing access to food, water, and restroom facilities, lodging during overnight transport, and procedures for delays or itinerary changes.
- 6) Prohibits transport escort services from using blindfolds, hoods, vision-obstructing devices, or behavioral restraints during transport, except that behavioral restraints may be used when necessary to prevent imminent serious physical harm and less restrictive alternatives are not available, subject to the human rights and safety criteria established for behavioral restraints under existing law.

- 7) Prohibits transport escort services from picking up a minor for transport between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.
- 8) Authorizes the Attorney General to bring a civil action in superior court against a transport escort service that engages in repeated or egregious violations of the operational and prohibited-practice standards, and entitles the Attorney General to civil penalties, injunctive relief, specific performance, an order prohibiting operation within the state, and attorney's fees and costs.
- 9) Specifies that a private investigator (PI) license or registration does not constitute or confer a permit to operate as a transport escort service and shall not be construed as authorizing the holder to operate as a transport escort service without a permit issued pursuant to provisions related to charter-party carriers of passengers.
- 10) Clarifies that nothing shall be construed to require a person permitted to operate as a transport escort service to hold a PI license or registration solely by reason of transporting or accompanying a minor. Requires that a transport escort service that performs investigative functions, subject to licensure, obtain a PI license or registration as required.
- 11) Expands legislative intent to protect the well-being of California children by regulating private individuals and companies that transport or accompany them by including all minors, instead of just those being transported to out-of-state residential facilities or institutions.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Defines a "transport escort service" as any person, partnership, association, or corporation accepting financial compensation to accompany or transport California resident minors to any residential facility or institution located outside the state, and requires such services to provide parents with specified information about the TrustLine background check registry, obtain written parental consent prior to transport, and ensure that all transport personnel are TrustLine-registered childcare providers. Provides for civil action by a minor, parent, or guardian, and misdemeanor prosecution, for violations, with fines of \$500 to \$5,000 per person per violation. (Health and Safety Code [HSC] § 1596.653)
- 2) Establishes the TrustLine registry as a system for background checks on in-home childcare providers, administered by CDSS, through which providers are screened by the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. (HSC §§ 1596.60–1596.68)
- 3) Licenses charter-party carriers of passengers which are carriers whose vehicles are chartered for the exclusive use of an individual or group and requires permit holders to meet specified safety, insurance, and operational standards. (Public Utilities Code §§ 5351–5420)
- 4) Licenses PIs and investigation companies through the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services within the Department of Consumer Affairs, and authorizes licensed PIs to conduct investigations, locate persons, and gather information. (Business and Professions Code §§ 7512–1539)
- 5) Requires community care facilities for children, including short-term residential therapeutic programs and private alternative boarding schools, to be licensed by CDSS, and establishes

health and safety, programming, staffing, and restraint standards as conditions of licensure. (HSC § 1502 et seq.)

- 6) Defines “behavioral restraints” and establishes human rights and safety criteria governing their use in licensed residential care settings, including requirements that restraints be used only to prevent imminent serious physical harm and not as punishment, for staff convenience, or as a substitute for supervision. (HSC §§ 1180.1, 1180.4)

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations on a prior version of the bill:

- Unknown ongoing General Fund costs, likely hundreds of thousands, for the CDSS for state administration.
- The Department of Justice indicates no significant fiscal impact for enforcement activities.
- Unknown, potential cost pressures to the courts related to additional enforcement mechanisms provided in this measure (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund). While the courts are not funded on a workload basis, an increase in workload could result in delayed court services and would put pressure on the General Fund to fund additional staff and resources.

COMMENTS: This analysis only discusses policy issues germane to the Assembly Committee on Human Services.

Background: *The Troubled Teen Industry (TTI)*. Each year, tens of thousands of adolescents in the United States are sent to private residential facilities variously called wilderness programs, therapeutic boarding schools, behavioral modification programs, boot camps, and faith-based treatment centers that promise to address a broad range of unwanted behaviors, from substance use and depression to defiance, sexual identity, and poor academic performance. These facilities exist in a largely unregulated space that advocates and researchers refer to as the TTI. The United States (U.S.) Government Accountability Office found in 2007 that in the prior 17 years there had been thousands of allegations of abuse in these settings and warned that it could identify no single federal agency or other entity collecting comprehensive nationwide data on the industry.¹ Versions of federal legislation to create national safety standards have been introduced in Congress nine times since 2008, and none have passed the Senate.

These facilities do not fit neatly into a single regulatory category. In California, residential programs for youth that provide care and treatment in conjunction with academic instruction may be licensed by CDSS as private alternative boarding schools or private alternative outdoor programs under the California Community Care Facilities Act. Licensed facilities must meet health and safety, staffing, and programming requirements and are subject to ongoing oversight by the CDSS’ Community Care Licensing division. But many facilities operating under the TTI umbrella are not licensed by the state. Some operate as private schools claiming religious or educational exemptions from state licensing requirements; some are structured as nonprofits with religious affiliations that allow them to operate outside the licensing framework; and some carry accreditation from voluntary industry bodies that carry no legal weight under California law.

¹ <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-08-146t>

Teen Challenge, a faith-based network with more than a thousand centers nationally, has facilities that serve youth sent by courts, parents, and probation departments, have received tens of millions of dollars in state and federal grants, and have been praised by multiple U.S. presidents, yet they operate without state residential care licensure in most jurisdictions and under a religious exemption framework that effectively removes them from government oversight.

Over the past two decades, many of these facilities have been eliminated from the state. In 2016, licensing requirements for private alternative boarding schools were enacted, imposing nonprofit status, voluntary admission, and restraint prohibition requirements that TTI-type operators were unwilling or unable to meet. The result is that facilities commonly associated with the TTI are now concentrated in states with less regulatory oversight, primarily Utah, Idaho, Montana, and other western states with land suitable for wilderness programming. California youth are still being sent to these programs and are being transported across state lines to get there.

Transport Escort Companies: How They Operate and Why They Are Unregulated. For a parent who has either decided, or has been persuaded, that their child needs immediate placement in a residential program, the logistics of getting the child can present a problem. Adolescents who are aware of where they are being sent frequently resist. Many of these facilities respond to this problem by using a transport escort company, which is a private business hired by the parent to physically retrieve the minor from the home, often without prior notice to the child, and transport them to the destination facility. These companies charge fees ranging from \$2,000 to \$4,000 per transport, are contracted directly with parents, and describe their services as an extension of parental authority.

Companies routinely arrive at a minor's home between 2:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. when the minor is disoriented, resistance is reduced, and neighbors are unlikely to intervene. Paris Hilton, whose 11:11 Media is the sponsor of *this bill*, has described being removed from her home at 16 years of age by two large men who handcuffed her in the middle of the night, refused to answer her questions, and drove her to a program in Utah. Emma Burris, a Florida teenager whose story was documented in a 2023 investigation by *The New Yorker*², was woken at 3:00 a.m. by a transport agent who was six and a half feet tall, wearing a shirt reading "Juvenile Transport Agent" while her parents stood silently in the doorway. The agent drove her away from her home, merged onto the highway, and transported her to a residential faith-based program where she would remain for over a year. In the agent's notes, he recorded that Emma "voiced that she was confused as to why her mom was sending her away."

Parents who hire these companies frequently believe the escorts are employees or agents of the destination facility. In reality, transport escort companies are independent businesses operating under contracts with parents that temporarily transfer specified parental decision-making authority, including authority to physically restrain the minor and authorize medical attention, to the transport company. Once transport is underway, the minor has no access to the destination facility's staff, no ability to call anyone without the escort's permission, and no independent adult to whom they can report concerning conduct.

² https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/10/18/the-shadow-penal-system-for-struggling-kids?_sp=40e9039c-e874-44b7-9158-a6fbb15db9a5.1780442706904

One of California's transport escort companies is West Shield Adolescent Services, Inc., headquartered in Huntington Beach. West Shield describes itself as having transported more than 14,000 adolescents over 30 years of operation and markets its services in Los Angeles, Sacramento, and San Francisco. Its founder holds a California PI license issued by the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services. By characterizing their work as private investigation, locating individuals and executing transfers pursuant to parental authority, these companies have argued they fall outside the DMV's commercial driver licensing framework and outside the CPUC's TCP requirements that normally apply to for-hire passenger carriers. The transport of the minor is treated as incidental to the investigative and custodial function, not as an independent commercial transportation service that would make them subject to CPUC regulation. This means that companies are moving minors across California and across state lines, sometimes under physical restraint, with just a PI license that confers no authority over transportation safety, training standards for the drivers, or child welfare obligations during the ride.

Since 2000, state law has required that transport escort services transporting California minors to out-of-state facilities register their personnel through the TrustLine background check system administered by CDSS and obtain written parental consent prior to transport. This statute only covers only out-of-state transport, and does not impose operational standards or training requirements, and does not provide any agency with enforcement authority. ***In its 25 years on the books, there is no documented history of enforcement.*** A company transporting a minor from Los Angeles to a residential program in Humboldt County faces no requirements under existing law. A company transporting a minor from Sacramento to a Utah wilderness camp faces only the TrustLine background check requirement, with enforcement left to private civil action by the minor or parent.

In October 2022, two children in Santa Cruz County were physically removed from their home by a private transport company under a family court order for placement at a reunification therapy camp.³ Video of the encounter prompted outrage and a subsequent bill, AB 1019 (Pellerin of 2023), to address the regulatory gap for transport companies in court-ordered custody cases.

Documented Harms Inflicted by Transport Escort Companies. Transport escort companies routinely use physical restraints when minors resist. A 2015 peer-reviewed study published in the American University Law Review characterized the youth transport sector as "unregulated" and documented the use of handcuffs, zip ties, physical holds, and other restraints as standard practice when adolescents physically resist transport. The study noted that such use of force is legally permitted only through a loophole created by parents delegating their authority to third-party corporations via power-of-attorney instruments, with no independent regulatory check on the manner or proportionality of force used. Research published in the Journal of Adolescent Health identified "forced transport" as a distinct category of adverse experience associated with increased psychological harm at program admission, separate from the subsequent treatment program experience.⁴

³ <https://www.ksbw.com/article/santa-cruz-county-wants-the-state-to-regulate-youth-transport-companies-after-viral-video-raised-concerns/42725465>

⁴ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285150380_Kidnapping_incorporated_The_unregulated_youth-transportation_industry_and_the_potential_for_abuse

A published California case involving a transport escort company directly involves West Shield. *In West Shield Investigations & Security Consultants v. Superior Court (Eymil)*, 82 Cal.App.4th 935 (2000)⁵, the Court of Appeal considered claims arising from West Shield’s transport of Charleen Eymil, 16 years of age, to a wilderness program in New Mexico. According to Eymil, West Shield employees removed her from her high school by misrepresenting themselves to school personnel as detectives working for Santa Clara County Child Protective Services, displaying handcuffs and suggesting they were carrying firearms. She was not told where she was being taken as she was escorted to the airport. En route to the facility, she alleged she was forced to strip, remove her acrylic nails, change into program clothing, and sleep in a cold sleeping bag.

Research involving 105 adolescents transported to outdoor behavioral health programs found that youth who were transported using threat, intimidation, or physical force reported significantly higher levels of perceived coercion and angry emotion at program admission compared to youth who were transported voluntarily, and that these factors were associated with worse short-term therapeutic outcomes. A 2022 KUER 90.1, NPR Utah report on Utah-based transport companies described the experience as feeling “like being kidnapped,” based on interviews with families and adolescents, and documented the use of physical restraint by two-person escort teams arriving at homes before dawn.⁶

Other States. Oregon enacted SB 710 (Gelser, et al.) Chapter 672, Statutes of 2021, which brought “secure transportation services providers,” defined as companies transporting children on Oregon highways along routes beginning or ending in the state to or from schools, agencies, or programs within the licensing jurisdiction of the Oregon Department of Human Services as child-caring agencies. The Oregon approach was destination-tied, and incorporated the transport function into the existing residential care licensing framework. Maryland enacted HB 497 (Stewart, et al.), Chapter 343, Statutes of 2025, titled the Preventing Abduction in Youth Transport Act and signed by Governor Wes Moore, which prohibits transport companies serving residential behavioral treatment programs from using restraints except to prevent imminent serious physical harm, and prohibits nighttime pickups between 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Maryland’s law focuses on the conduct-of-transport standards but did not establish a permitting structure. Utah enacted registration requirements for transport escort companies as part of its Office of Licensing rules in 2022, requiring TrustLine-equivalent background checks and proof of insurance as conditions of registration, but did not impose operational standards on the transport itself.

This Bill. Recent amendments taken by the Author address the absence of regulation by establishing a framework applicable to the transport function itself. Rather than attempting to regulate these companies through the residential care licensing system, which is facility-based, *this bill* routes company-level permitting through the CPUC, which already licenses for-hire passenger carriers, while using the child-specific conduct standards in the Health and Safety Code alongside existing TrustLine requirements. *The bill* expands the definition of “transport escort service” to cover all prearranged compensated transit of minors involving an overnight stay, to include in-state transports, and clarifies that a PI license does not confer the right to

⁵ <https://law.justia.com/cases/california/court-of-appeal/4th/82/935.html>

⁶ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285150380_Kidnapping_incorporated_The_unregulated_youth-transportation_industry_and_the_potential_for_abuse

operate as a transport escort service which addresses companies like West Shield that have evaded carrier regulation.

The prohibition on nighttime pickups addresses the practice of forcibly removing kids in the middle of the night. The prohibition on behavioral restraints cross-references the existing statutory definition of behavioral restraints and the human rights criteria applicable in licensed residential care settings, and applies the same standards to the transit phase that existing law already applies inside licensed facilities. The training requirements ensure that anyone performing a transport has baseline competencies in child safety and mandatory reporting obligations. The incident reporting requirements create a paper trail, making it possible for regulatory agencies and the Attorney General to identify patterns of conduct that would require enforcement action.

The TrustLine Registry is a background check system for in-home childcare providers administered by CDSS. Established by statute in 1992 and expanded over subsequent years, TrustLine allows parents to verify that a childcare provider has been screened by both the California Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation through Live Scan fingerprinting. A TrustLine-registered provider has passed a criminal history check covering both California records and national criminal databases, and has been cleared of any disqualifying offenses under the childcare provider eligibility standards.

When the Legislature first addressed transport escort services in 2000, it chose TrustLine as the background check provider, requiring that all individuals transporting California minors to out-of-state residential facilities be TrustLine-registered childcare providers. At the time, TrustLine was the only CDSS-administered background check registry available. West Shield Adolescent Services, Inc., cites TrustLine registration among its credentials alongside its PI license, even as its PI license is the actual legal basis on which it operates.

This bill retains and expands the TrustLine requirement, extending it from out-of-state transport only to all transport escort service operations and requiring that all individuals employed or contracted by the service be TrustLine-registered, not only those assigned to a specific transport. *The bill* also links TrustLine compliance to the new PUC charter-party carrier permit by requiring proof of TrustLine registration as a permit condition, creating agency enforcement for noncompliance with the background check requirement.

Author’s Statement: According to the Author, “[This bill] addresses a gap in California law by establishing oversight for private companies that transport minors to residential treatment and behavioral programs. These companies often serve vulnerable youth but currently operate with little to no statewide regulation, leading to reports of traumatic and, in some cases, cruel practice during transport. [This bill] creates a commonsense framework requiring licensing, background checks, training, and clear safety standards. This bill ensures that when a child is being transported to receive care, that process is safe, accountable, and not a source of further harm.”

Equity Implications: The provisions of *this bill* seek to create a licensing and regulation scheme that will protect the health and safety of youth being transported without the benefit of a known and trusted adult. Young people transported by escort companies are among the most vulnerable in any interaction with a private service provider. They are minors traveling without a parent, guardian, or other trusted adult, they have not consented to the transport and frequently do not know their destination, and they have no independent means of reporting mistreatment or

seeking help during transit. The absence of any licensing or operational standards for the companies conducting these transports has harmed thousands of youth, which falls disproportionately on youth who are already in crisis and whose families are often in distress and therefore susceptible to trusting unvetted providers. Establishing a licensing and conduct framework for transport escort services can bring the transit of these minors into alignment with California's broader commitment to the safety and dignity of vulnerable youth, ensuring that a youth does not experience additional harm.

Double referral: Should this bill pass out of this Committee, it will be referred to the Assembly Committee on Communications and Conveyance.

Arguments in Support: 11:11 Media, the sponsor of this bill states, “[This bill] is a practical and long overdue response to this problem. It creates a licensing and oversight framework for private youth transportation companies in California, including minimum safety standards, background checks, training requirements, parental consent, and complaint investigations. Just as importantly, it prohibits some of the most harmful transport practices, including blindfolds, hoods, nighttime pickups, and the use of restraints except in the narrow circumstance of imminent, serious physical harm when no less restrictive alternative is available.”

Arguments in Opposition: None on file.

RELATED AND PRIOR LEGISLATION:

AB 1019 (Pellerin) of 2023, see comments above.

SB 523 (Lara), Chapter 612, Statutes of 2016, created two new licensed facility categories within the California Community Care Facilities Act: “private alternative boarding schools,” defined as licensed group homes providing residential care in combination with academic instruction and therapeutic services, and “private alternative outdoor programs,” defined as licensed programs providing behavioral-based services in an outdoor living setting. Both categories are required to be nonprofit, may admit youth only with voluntary parental consent, and are prohibited from using restraints.

AB 705 (Aroner), Chapter 354, Statutes of 2000, established licensing and bonding requirements for transport escort services. Required that all transport personnel register with the TrustLine registry maintained at CDSS.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

11:11 Media Impact (Sponsor)
City of Artesia
City of Beverly Hills

Opposition

None on file.

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