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**SB-224 Personal rights: civil liability and enforcement.** (2017-2018)

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**Senate Bill No. 224**

**CHAPTER 951**

An act to amend Section 51.9 of the Civil Code, and to amend Sections 12930 and 12948 of the Government Code, relating to personal rights.

[ Approved by Governor September 30, 2018. Filed with Secretary of State September 30, 2018. ]

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

SB 224, Jackson. Personal rights: civil liability and enforcement.

Existing law establishes liability for sexual harassment when the plaintiff proves specified elements, including, among other things, that there is a business, service, or professional relationship between the plaintiff and defendant and there is an inability by the plaintiff to easily terminate the relationship. Existing law states that a relationship may exist between a plaintiff and certain persons, including an attorney, holder of a master's degree in social work, real estate agent, and real estate appraiser.

This bill would include within the elements in a cause of action for sexual harassment when the plaintiff proves, among other things, that the defendant holds himself or herself out as being able to help the plaintiff establish a business, service, or professional relationship with the defendant or a 3rd party. The bill would eliminate the element that the plaintiff prove there is an inability by the plaintiff to easily terminate the relationship. The bill would include an investor, elected official, lobbyist, director, and producer among those listed persons who may be liable to a plaintiff for sexual harassment.

The California Fair Employment and Housing Act protects and safeguards the right and opportunity of all persons to seek, obtain, and hold employment without discrimination, abridgment, or harassment on account of various personal characteristics. Under existing law, the Department of Fair Employment and Housing is responsible for receiving, investigating, conciliating, mediating, and prosecuting complaints alleging violations of specified civil rights.

This bill would also make the department responsible for the enforcement of sexual harassment claims.

The California Fair Employment and Housing Act makes it an unlawful practice under its provisions for a person to deny or to aid, incite, or conspire in the denial of certain civil rights.

This bill would also make it an unlawful practice to deny or aid, incite, or conspire in the denial of rights of persons related to sexual harassment actions.

This bill would incorporate additional changes to Section 12930 of the Government Code proposed by SB 1427 to be operative only if this bill and SB 1427 are enacted and this bill is enacted last.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

**THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:**

**SECTION 1.** Section 51.9 of the Civil Code is amended to read:

**51.9.** (a) A person is liable in a cause of action for sexual harassment under this section when the plaintiff proves all of the following elements:

(1) There is a business, service, or professional relationship between the plaintiff and defendant or the defendant holds himself or herself out as being able to help the plaintiff establish a business, service, or professional relationship with the defendant or a third party. Such a relationship may exist between a plaintiff and a person, including, but not limited to, any of the following persons:

(A) Physician, psychotherapist, or dentist. For purposes of this section, "psychotherapist" has the same meaning as set forth in paragraph (1) of subdivision (c) of Section 728 of the Business and Professions Code.

(B) Attorney, holder of a master's degree in social work, real estate agent, real estate appraiser, investor, accountant, banker, trust officer, financial planner loan officer, collection service, building contractor, or escrow loan officer.

(C) Executor, trustee, or administrator.

(D) Landlord or property manager.

(E) Teacher.

(F) Elected official.

(G) Lobbyist.

(H) Director or producer.

(I) A relationship that is substantially similar to any of the above.

(2) The defendant has made sexual advances, solicitations, sexual requests, demands for sexual compliance by the plaintiff, or engaged in other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature or of a hostile nature based on gender, that were unwelcome and pervasive or severe.

(3) The plaintiff has suffered or will suffer economic loss or disadvantage or personal injury, including, but not limited to, emotional distress or the violation of a statutory or constitutional right, as a result of the conduct described in paragraph (2).

(b) In an action pursuant to this section, damages shall be awarded as provided by subdivision (b) of Section 52.

(c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit application of any other remedies or rights provided under the law.

(d) The definition of sexual harassment and the standards for determining liability set forth in this section shall be limited to determining liability only with regard to a cause of action brought under this section.

**SEC. 2.** Section 12930 of the Government Code is amended to read:

**12930.** The department shall have the following functions, powers, and duties:

(a) To establish and maintain a principal office and any other offices within the state as are necessary to carry out the purposes of this part.

(b) To meet and function at any place within the state.

(c) To appoint attorneys, investigators, conciliators, mediators, and other employees as it may deem necessary, fix their compensation within the limitations provided by law, and prescribe their duties.

(d) To obtain upon request and utilize the services of all governmental departments and agencies and, in addition, with respect to housing discrimination, of conciliation councils.

(e) To adopt, promulgate, amend, and rescind suitable procedural rules and regulations to carry out the investigation, prosecution, and dispute resolution functions and duties of the department pursuant to this part.

(f) (1) To receive, investigate, conciliate, mediate, and prosecute complaints alleging practices made unlawful pursuant to Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 12940).

(2) To receive, investigate, conciliate, mediate, and prosecute complaints alleging a violation of Section 51, 51.5, 51.7, 51.9, 54, 54.1, or 54.2 of the Civil Code. The remedies and procedures of this part shall be independent of any other remedy or procedure that might apply.

(3) To receive, investigate, conciliate, mediate, and prosecute complaints alleging, and to bring civil actions pursuant to Section 52.5 of the Civil Code for, a violation of Section 236.1 of the Penal Code. Damages awarded in any action brought by the department pursuant to Section 52.5 of the Civil Code shall be awarded to the person harmed by the violation of Section 236.1 of the Penal Code. Costs and attorney's fees awarded in any action brought by the department pursuant to Section 52.5 of the Civil Code shall be awarded to the department. The remedies and procedures of this part shall be independent of any other remedy or procedure that might apply.

(4) To receive, investigate, conciliate, mediate, and prosecute complaints alleging practices made unlawful pursuant to Article 9.5 (commencing with Section 11135) of Chapter 1 of Part 1, except for complaints relating to educational equity brought under Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 200) of Part 1 of Division 1 of Title 1 of the Education Code and investigated pursuant to the procedures set forth in Subchapter 5.1 of Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, and not otherwise within the jurisdiction of the department.

(A) Nothing in this part prevents the director or the director's authorized representative, in that person's discretion, from making, signing, and filing a complaint pursuant to Section 12960 or 12961 alleging practices made unlawful under Section 11135.

(B) Remedies available to the department in conciliating, mediating, and prosecuting complaints alleging these practices are the same as those available to the department in conciliating, mediating, and prosecuting complaints alleging violations of Article 1 (commencing with Section 12940) of Chapter 6.

(g) In connection with any matter under investigation or in question before the department pursuant to a complaint filed under Section 12960, 12961, or 12980:

(1) To issue subpoenas to require the attendance and testimony of witnesses and the production of books, records, documents, and physical materials.

(2) To administer oaths, examine witnesses under oath and take evidence, and take depositions and affidavits.

(3) To issue written interrogatories.

(4) To request the production for inspection and copying of books, records, documents, and physical materials.

(5) To petition the superior courts to compel the appearance and testimony of witnesses, the production of books, records, documents, and physical materials, and the answering of interrogatories.

(h) To bring civil actions pursuant to Section 12965 or 12981 and to prosecute those civil actions before state and federal trial courts.

(i) To issue those publications and those results of investigations and research as in its judgment will tend to promote goodwill and minimize or eliminate discrimination in employment on the basis enumerated in this part and discrimination in housing because of race, religious creed, color, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, national origin, ancestry, familial status, disability, genetic information, or sexual orientation.

(j) To investigate, approve, certify, decertify, monitor, and enforce nondiscrimination programs proposed by a contractor to be engaged in pursuant to Section 12990.

(k) To render annually to the Governor and to the Legislature a written report of its activities and of its recommendations.

(l) To conduct mediations at any time after a complaint is filed pursuant to Section 12960, 12961, or 12980. The department may end mediation at any time.

(m) The following shall apply with respect to any accusation pending before the former Fair Employment and Housing Commission on or after January 1, 2013:

(1) If an accusation issued under former Section 12965 includes a prayer either for damages for emotional injuries as a component of actual damages, or for administrative fines, or both, or if an accusation is amended for the purpose of adding a prayer either for damages for emotional injuries as a component of actual damages, or for administrative fines, or both, with the consent of the party accused of engaging in unlawful practices, the department may withdraw an accusation and bring a civil action in superior court.

(2) If an accusation was issued under former Section 12981, with the consent of the aggrieved party filing the complaint an aggrieved person on whose behalf a complaint is filed, or the party accused of engaging in unlawful practices, the department may withdraw the accusation and bring a civil action in superior court.

(3) Where removal to court is not feasible, the department shall retain the services of the Office of Administrative Hearings to adjudicate the administrative action pursuant to Sections 11370.3 and 11502.

(n) On any Section 1094.5 Code of Civil Procedure challenge to a decision of the former Fair Employment and Housing Commission pending on or after January 1, 2013, the director or the director's designee shall consult with the Attorney General regarding the defense of that writ petition.

**SEC. 2.5.** Section 12930 of the Government Code is amended to read:

**12930.** The department shall have the following functions, powers, and duties:

(a) To establish and maintain a principal office and any other offices within the state as are necessary to carry out the purposes of this part.

(b) To meet and function at any place within the state.

(c) To appoint attorneys, investigators, conciliators, mediators, and other employees as it may deem necessary, fix their compensation within the limitations provided by law, and prescribe their duties.

(d) To obtain upon request and utilize the services of all governmental departments and agencies and, in addition, with respect to housing discrimination, of conciliation councils.

(e) To adopt, promulgate, amend, and rescind suitable procedural rules and regulations to carry out the investigation, prosecution, and dispute resolution functions and duties of the department pursuant to this part.

(f) (1) To receive, investigate, conciliate, mediate, and prosecute complaints alleging practices made unlawful pursuant to Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 12940).

(2) To receive, investigate, conciliate, mediate, and prosecute complaints alleging a violation of Section 51, 51.5, 51.7, 51.9, 54, 54.1, or 54.2 of the Civil Code. The remedies and procedures of this part shall be independent of any other remedy or procedure that might apply.

(3) To receive, investigate, conciliate, mediate, and prosecute complaints alleging, and to bring civil actions pursuant to Section 52.5 of the Civil Code for, a violation of Section 236.1 of the Penal Code. Damages awarded in any action brought by the department pursuant to Section 52.5 of the Civil Code shall be awarded to the person harmed by the violation of Section 236.1 of the Penal Code. Costs and attorney's fees awarded in any action brought by the department pursuant to Section 52.5 of the Civil Code shall be awarded to the department. The remedies and procedures of this part shall be independent of any other remedy or procedure that might apply.

(4) To receive, investigate, conciliate, mediate, and prosecute complaints alleging practices made unlawful pursuant to Article 9.5 (commencing with Section 11135) of Chapter 1 of Part 1, except for complaints relating to educational equity brought under Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 200) of Part 1 of Division 1 of Title 1 of the Education Code and investigated pursuant to the procedures set forth in Subchapter 5.1 of Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, and not otherwise within the jurisdiction of the department.

(A) Nothing in this part prevents the director or the director's authorized representative, in that person's discretion, from making, signing, and filing a complaint pursuant to Section 12960 or 12961 alleging practices made unlawful under Section 11135.

(B) Remedies available to the department in conciliating, mediating, and prosecuting complaints alleging these practices are the same as those available to the department in conciliating, mediating, and prosecuting complaints alleging violations of Article 1 (commencing with Section 12940) of Chapter 6.

(g) In connection with any matter under investigation or in question before the department pursuant to a complaint filed under Section 12960, 12961, or 12980:

(1) To issue subpoenas to require the attendance and testimony of witnesses and the production of books, records, documents, and physical materials.

(2) To administer oaths, examine witnesses under oath and take evidence, and take depositions and affidavits.

(3) To issue written interrogatories.

(4) To request the production for inspection and copying of books, records, documents, and physical materials.

(5) To petition the superior courts to compel the appearance and testimony of witnesses, the production of books, records, documents, and physical materials, and the answering of interrogatories.

(h) To bring civil actions pursuant to Section 12965 or 12981 and to prosecute those civil actions before state and federal trial courts.

(i) To issue those publications and those results of investigations and research as in its judgment will tend to promote goodwill and minimize or eliminate discrimination in employment on the basis enumerated in this part and discrimination in housing because of race, religious creed, color, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, national origin, ancestry, familial status, disability, veteran or military status, genetic information, or sexual orientation.

(j) To investigate, approve, certify, decertify, monitor, and enforce nondiscrimination programs proposed by a contractor to be engaged in pursuant to Section 12990.

(k) To render annually to the Governor and to the Legislature a written report of its activities and of its recommendations.

(l) To conduct mediations at any time after a complaint is filed pursuant to Section 12960, 12961, or 12980. The department may end mediation at any time.

(m) The following shall apply with respect to any accusation pending before the former Fair Employment and Housing Commission on or after January 1, 2013:

(1) If an accusation issued under former Section 12965 includes a prayer either for damages for emotional injuries as a component of actual damages, or for administrative fines, or both, or if an accusation is amended for the purpose of adding a prayer either for damages for emotional injuries as a component of actual damages, or for administrative fines, or both, with the consent of the party accused of engaging in unlawful practices, the department may withdraw an accusation and bring a civil action in superior court.

(2) If an accusation was issued under former Section 12981, with the consent of the aggrieved party filing the complaint an aggrieved person on whose behalf a complaint is filed, or the party accused of engaging in unlawful practices, the department may withdraw the accusation and bring a civil action in superior court.

(3) Where removal to court is not feasible, the department shall retain the services of the Office of Administrative Hearings to adjudicate the administrative action pursuant to Sections 11370.3 and 11502.

(n) On any Section 1094.5 Code of Civil Procedure challenge to a decision of the former Fair Employment and Housing Commission pending on or after January 1, 2013, the director or the director's designee shall consult with the Attorney General regarding the defense of that writ petition.

**SEC. 3.** Section 12948 of the Government Code is amended to read:

**12948.** It is an unlawful practice under this part for a person to deny or to aid, incite, or conspire in the denial of the rights created by Section 51, 51.5, 51.7, 51.9, 54, 54.1, or 54.2 of the Civil Code.

**SEC. 4.** Section 2.5 of this bill incorporates amendments to Section 12930 of the Government Code proposed by both this bill and Senate Bill 1427. That section of this bill shall only become operative if (1) both bills are enacted and become effective on or before January 1, 2019, (2) each bill amends Section 12930 of the Government Code, and (3) this bill is enacted after Senate Bill 1427, in which case Section 2 of this bill shall not become operative.