

2/5/2026

Testimony in support of bill SB 1546

Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioural Health

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sam Guthman, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of APANO, a culturally-specific organization that unites Asians and the communities who stand with us to build power, develop leaders and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development and cultural work. We write today in strong support of Senate Bill 1546.

SB 1546 establishes clear, common-sense consumer protections as artificial intelligence tools become increasingly integrated into daily life. As AI-driven platforms are used for companionship, conversation, and emotional support, it is critical that users understand when they are interacting with artificial systems and that safeguards exist to prevent harm.

Asian, BIPOC, immigrant, and refugee communities are often early adopters of digital communication tools due to language access needs, social isolation, and barriers to traditional services. These same factors can also increase vulnerability to harm when AI systems present themselves as human or fail to respond appropriately to signs of distress. Transparency and safety standards are therefore essential equity protections.

SB 1546's requirement that users be clearly informed when they are interacting with artificial output respects user autonomy and prevents deception. This disclosure is especially important for youth, elders, and individuals experiencing loneliness or mental health challenges. Knowing the nature of the interaction allows people to make informed choices about how they engage with technology.

The bill's focus on preventing AI outputs that could contribute to suicidal or self-harm ideation is particularly important. AI systems should never replace human care, nor should they escalate risk during moments of vulnerability. Requiring operators to establish protocols to detect and mitigate harmful responses sets an important baseline for responsible technology deployment.

SB 1546 does not prohibit innovation or restrict beneficial uses of AI. Instead, it establishes reasonable guardrails to ensure that new technologies do not undermine public health, consumer trust, or community well-being. These protections are especially important for communities that already face barriers to accessing culturally responsive mental health care.

For these reasons, APANO respectfully urges the committee to support SB 1546.



Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sam Guthman
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