



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

SEP 30 2023

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am returning Senate Bill 686 without my signature.

This bill, among other provisions, would require all household domestic service employers to comply with and adhere to all applicable occupational safety and health regulations by January 1, 2025, and remove the exemption of domestic workers from safety and health laws, with the exception of services that are publicly funded.

While I commend the author for the commitment to the wellbeing of workers in our state and share the spirit behind the legislation, new laws in this area must recognize that private households and families cannot be regulated in the exact same manner as traditional businesses.

SB 686 as written would make private household employers immediately subject to the full set of existing workplace safety and health regulations governing businesses in the state, starting January 1, 2025. These obligations range from the requirement to establish an effective Injury and Illness Prevention Program to providing an eyewash station if household workers use chemicals like bleach, to implementing a Hazard Communication Program. Additionally, the current penalty scheme was meant for businesses and not private individuals. For a domestic employer covered by SB 686, these penalties could be up to \$15,000 per violation depending on the circumstances.

That said, my Administration is committed to the wellbeing of domestic workers. I just signed a budget that includes \$35 million in funding for grants to community-based organizations for domestic worker education and outreach. And two

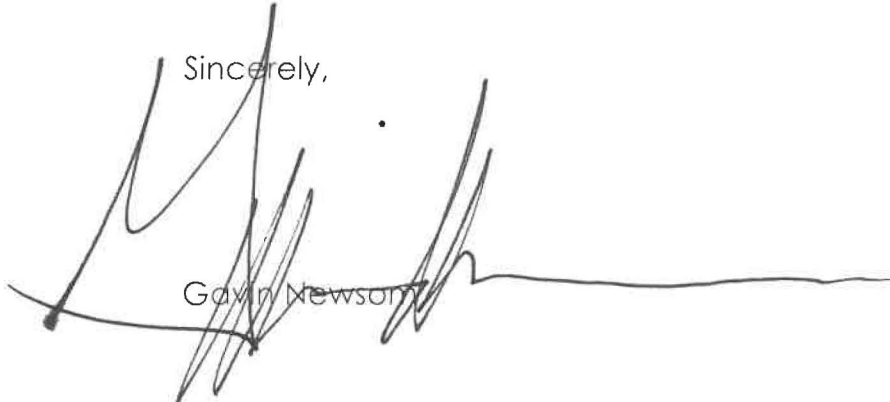


years ago, I signed SB 321, which established an advisory committee to make recommendations on how to protect the health and safety of domestic service employees. The committee discussed the importance of allowing employers the opportunity to learn about their obligations and correct any violations voluntarily before formal enforcement occurs. Unfortunately, SB 686 does not identify which specific standards domestic employers would be required to follow, nor does it outline an industry-specific system for investigation or enforcement as discussed and recommended by the Advisory Committee.

The households that employ domestic workers include middle- and low-income families and older Californians who require daily assistance, ranging from personal care to home cleaning to childcare. I am particularly concerned given that approximately 44% of the households that employ domestic workers are low-income themselves, that this bill creates severe cost burdens and penalties for many people who cannot afford them.

For these reasons, I cannot sign this bill.

Sincerely,



Gavin Newsom