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Orinda Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan bills signed by Governor

By Sora O'Doherty

After the conclusion of the 2023 Legislative session, California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed many bills passed by the Assembly into law, including 13 authored by Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, an Orinda resident who represents the 16th Assembly District that includes Lamorinda.

Bauer-Kahan bills signed into law include AB 352, which addresses basic reproductive rights which are being criminalized across the country and patients seeking abortion who are increasingly coming to California seeking care. When these patients return home, they may be at risk when information on abortion is shared through their digital health charts. AB 352 puts up guardrails on cross-state sharing of medical records to protect abortion patients and providers across the country. In addition, AB 254 protects sensitive data collected by fertility tracking and sexual health digital services by adding this data to the Confidentiality of Medical Information Act. Bauer-Kahan said that this new law is a precedent-setting measure to prevent abortion information from being automatically shared via health information exchanges. AB 254 prevents period apps from selling menstrual health data.

"I'm thrilled the Governor has signed my reproductive privacy bills. Patients seeking care in California will be safer when they return home," commented Bauer-Kahan. "Currently, information sharing through digital charts and period tracking, including abortions, can be seen, reported, and criminalized once patients leave California. AB 352 and AB 254 will secure this data to keep abortion seekers, providers, and helpers from being arrested."

AB 1369 addresses another medical issue affecting terminally ill patients with rare diseases who have to go to great lengths to see out-of-state specialists. AB 1369 creates a limited licensure exemption to allow terminally ill patients access to care via telehealth from out-of-state providers and AB 1720 requires that ultrasound procedures occur in licensed clinics or settings supervised by licensed providers.

AB 267 protects children and campers by updating outdated fire suppression standards to remove ineffective additions of toxic chemicals to small camping and play tents. AB 363 protects pollinators and human health by ensuring agency regulation of unnecessary non-agricultural uses of toxic neonicotinoid pesticides. The law bans over-the-counter sales of lawn and garden neonicotinoid (Neonic) pesticides by 2025, limiting their use to trained professionals. The bill also directs the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) to complete a timely, thorough, and long overdue review of non-agricultural neonic uses. "California is taking the sting out of an increasingly toxic environment for bees," said Laura Deehan, State Director for Environment California. "Taking these pesticides off the shelves is a critical step to saving the bees."

AB 1643 increases the accessibility of probation for youth by broadening the threshold for eligibility and AB 301 safeguards the security of communities by allowing judges to consider the acquisition of body armor as an important piece of evidence when deciding whether or not to grant a gun violence restraining order. AB 618 reforms the camping reservation system to reduce no-shows and improve public information about availability of campsites to encourage equitable access to campsites, while AB 1150 increases access to parks by authorizing State Parks to enter into community access agreements with nonprofits and tribes that provide programming for underserved park users.

The bill most recently signed by the governor is AB 1076, which protects workers by prohibiting non-compete agreements in an employee's contract. Restroom equity on job sites is addressed by AB 521, which makes construction jobs more accessible for women by requiring OSHA to revisit regulations to ensure there are adequate numbers of restrooms for women on job sites. "No employee should be tricked into thinking they don't have mobility," said the Assemblymember. "Non-compete agreements undermine an employee's ability to build a better life. AB 1076 empowers workers by prohibiting the inclusion of exploitative clauses in their contracts." Non-compete agreements have been unenforceable in California since 2008. In spite of this, about 45% of California business still include non-compete agreements into employee contracts.

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