LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

California Senate Bill 1190 (2026): Safe Passage for Youth Act

Date: 2026 Legislative Session

Summary of the Issue

Across the country, private youth transportation companies operate in a largely unregulated space, transporting minors from their homes to residential treatment programs, therapeutic boarding schools, wilderness programs, behavioral modification programs, and other residential youth placements. These transports often occur at moments of acute family crisis, when parents are seeking help and children are especially vulnerable. Yet in many states, there are few clear standards governing who may provide these services, what training staff must have, what practices are prohibited, or what recourse exists when a child is harmed.

California licenses and regulates a range of child-serving facilities through the State Department of Social Services, but current law does not provide a dedicated licensing and oversight framework for private youth transportation companies. SB 1190 responds to that gap by creating the **Safe Passage for Youth Act**, a new statewide structure for licensing, regulating, and enforcing minimum safety standards for companies that transport minors to residential youth placements.

The bill is grounded in a simple principle: transporting a child to treatment should never itself become a source of trauma, danger, or abuse. SB 1190 establishes basic guardrails to ensure that when private entities transport minors, they do so under clear rules, meaningful oversight, and enforceable child safety protections.

What Senate Bill 1190 Does

SB 1190 establishes a new Chapter 7 of Division 2 of the Health and Safety Code and creates a licensing and oversight framework for youth transportation companies operating in California. The bill does five primary things:

1. Establishes licensure and oversight of youth transportation companies

2. Requires minimum safety, training, and documentation standards
3. Prohibits dangerous and coercive transport practices
4. Authorizes investigation, suspension, and revocation of licenses
5. Creates a civil enforcement mechanism through the Attorney General

Each component is outlined below.

Licensure and Oversight of Youth Transportation Companies

(New §§ 1696.1, 1696.2, 1696.3)

The bill defines a “youth transportation company” as a business entity that transports a minor to a residential treatment program, therapeutic boarding school, wilderness program, behavioral modification program, or other residential youth placement. It requires the State Department of Social Services to license and regulate these companies operating in California.

To implement that framework, the Department must establish application requirements and licensure criteria sufficient to ensure minimum safety and operational standards, and it must conduct criminal background checks of applicants and other specified individuals consistent with existing background check requirements. The Department may also establish operational standards, investigate complaints, issue administrative citations, impose civil fines and penalties, and refer cases to the Attorney General for civil enforcement. The bill further authorizes the Department to establish a reasonable licensing fee tied to the cost of administering and enforcing the chapter.

With limited exceptions, a youth transportation company may not operate in California without a license under this chapter. The bill exempts county child welfare agencies and their employees, licensed child daycare facilities transporting children in their care, nonemergency medical transportation providers operating lawfully, emergency ambulance providers, law enforcement and juvenile justice entities transporting individuals in custody, and parents, legal guardians, or family members transporting a minor.

This is the central reform in the bill: bringing a currently underregulated private industry under a basic state licensing and accountability system.

Safety, Training, and Documentation Requirements

(New § 1696.5)

SB 1190 requires licensed youth transportation companies to meet clear operational standards intended to protect minors during transport.

First, all drivers must be enrolled in California's pull-notice system so the company can monitor driver records. Second, all individuals involved in transporting minors must complete training in first aid and CPR, mandated reporting duties under California's Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act, behavioral de-escalation techniques, and safe transportation practices.

The bill also requires written parental or guardian consent before transport occurs. That documentation must include authorization for transportation, identification of the destination facility or program, and contact information for the youth transportation company.

In addition, companies must document incidents occurring during transportation, including injuries, medical emergencies, use of physical restraints, and significant behavioral incidents, and must maintain those incident reports and make them available to parents or legal guardians upon request.

Finally, each licensed company must maintain written policies governing the safety and welfare of minors during transport. At a minimum, those policies must address access to food and water, restroom access, lodging during overnight transport, and procedures for delays or itinerary changes.

Together, these provisions establish baseline expectations for preparation, transparency, and child welfare that do not currently exist in a comprehensive way for this sector.

Prohibited Practices and Child Safety Protections

(New § 1696.6)

SB 1190 prohibits several of the most dangerous and coercive transport practices reported by youth and families.

A licensed youth transportation company may not use blindfolds, hoods, or any device that obstructs a minor's vision during transport. The bill also prohibits mechanical restraints, including handcuffs, chains, irons, and straight jackets, as well as physical restraints, except in the narrow circumstance where restraint is necessary to prevent imminent, serious physical

harm and less restrictive alternatives are not available. Even then, restraints may not be used as punishment, for staff convenience, or as a substitute for supervision.

The bill also prohibits companies from picking up a minor for transport between 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

These prohibitions are among the most important protections in the bill. They directly address practices that can be deeply frightening and traumatic for children and make clear that transport to treatment must not rely on intimidation, sensory obstruction, or unnecessary force.

Investigations, License Review, Suspension, and Revocation

(New § 1696.4)

SB 1190 gives the Department authority to review, suspend, or revoke a license when a company poses safety concerns or fails to comply with program requirements.

That authority may be exercised when the licensee is the subject of a criminal investigation related to the transportation of minors; when law enforcement reports indicate conduct that may endanger minors' safety or welfare; when the Department receives credible complaints of abuse, neglect, or unlawful conduct during transportation; or when the licensee fails to comply with program requirements established by the Department. The bill also authorizes coordination with law enforcement and other state or local authorities during investigations of potential legal or operational violations.

This provision is critical because standards alone are not enough. The state must also have authority to intervene when those standards are violated.

Civil Enforcement Through the Attorney General

(New § 1696.7)

In addition to administrative enforcement, SB 1190 authorizes the Attorney General to bring an action in superior court when a youth transportation company operates without a required license or engages in repeated or egregious violations of the Act. The Attorney General may seek civil penalties, specific performance, injunctive relief, attorney's fees, costs, and other equitable remedies, including an order prohibiting a company from operating in California.

This ensures that the law has meaningful enforcement teeth, particularly in serious or repeated cases where administrative remedies alone may be insufficient.

Why This Bill Matters

SB 1190 addresses a longstanding gap in child welfare oversight. Families may assume that when they hire or are referred to a private youth transport service, that service is already subject to robust state safety standards. In practice, that assumption is often wrong. The result is that minors can be transported by private actors without clear licensing requirements, without standardized training, without consistent incident documentation, and without explicit statutory limits on coercive practices.

The Safe Passage for Youth Act creates a framework where none currently exists: licensure, background checks, minimum training, written consent, incident reporting, basic care standards, prohibited practices, administrative oversight, and civil enforcement.

Like the Idaho oversight bill used as a model for this brief, SB 1190 is structured around a straightforward principle: when vulnerable youth are in the care or control of private actors, the law must establish clear standards, transparency, and accountability. The Idaho brief similarly frames reform as a response to fragmented oversight and emphasizes the importance of clear statutory standards, inspection and review authority, and meaningful accountability mechanisms.

Fiscal and Implementation Considerations

The bill requires the Department of Social Services to stand up a new licensing and regulatory structure for youth transportation companies, including application criteria, background check procedures, complaint investigation capacity, and possible administrative enforcement processes. It authorizes the Department to establish a reasonable licensing fee capped at the amount necessary to administer and enforce the chapter, which may help offset implementation costs.

Implementation will likely require administrative development of operational standards, licensure procedures, and enforcement protocols, but the bill is designed to create a practical and enforceable baseline for a private industry transporting children in high-stakes circumstances.

Conclusion

Senate Bill 1190 fills a significant gap in California law by establishing the first dedicated state licensing and oversight framework for private youth transportation companies. By requiring licensure, background checks, staff training, written consent, incident documentation, safety policies, and enforceable restrictions on coercive practices, the bill creates basic protections for minors during transport. It also gives the State Department of Social Services and the Attorney General meaningful enforcement authority when companies fail to comply.

As organizational sponsor, 11:11 Media Impact supports SB 1190 because children should not be exposed to fear, force, or harm on the way to care. Safe transport is not a peripheral issue. It is a child safety issue, a transparency issue, and an accountability issue. SB 1190 establishes the clear, enforceable guardrails California needs to ensure that transport to treatment is conducted safely, lawfully, and with dignity.