

PUNJAB VIDHAN SABHA

BILL NO. 7-PLA-2026

THE SOCIETIES REGISTRATION (PUNJAB AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

A

BILL

further to amend the Societies Registration Act, 1860, in its application to the State of Punjab.

BE it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Punjab in the Seventy-seventh Year of the Republic of India as follows:-

Short title and commencement.

1. (1) This Act may be called the Societies Registration (Punjab Amendment) Act, 2026.

(2) It shall come into force on such date as the Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.

Insertion of sections 1 and 1-A in Act No. XXI of 1860.

2. In the Societies Registration Act, 1860 (hereinafter referred to as the principal Act), in its application to the State of Punjab, the existing section 1 shall be re-numbered as section 1-B, and before section 1-B as so re-numbered, the following sections shall be inserted, namely:-

"1. (1) The provisions of the Societies Registration (Punjab Amendment) Act, 2026, shall apply exclusively to the societies established for the purpose of providing educational or healthcare services, or to any other society whose primary memorandum of association includes the promotion of education or health.

(2) All other registered societies, which do not fall under the categories mentioned in sub-section (1), shall continue to be governed by the provisions of the Societies Registration Act, 1860, as they stood prior to the commencement of the Societies Registration (Punjab Amendment) Act, 2026.

(3) In case of any dispute regarding the categorization of an educational or healthcare society under this section, the decision of the Registrar shall be final, subject to an appeal before the Government within thirty days.

1-A In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, the following expressions shall have the meanings

Definitions.

respectively assigned to them hereunder, in relation to societies established for the purpose of providing educational or healthcare services, as specified in this Act, namely:—

- (i) “bye-laws” means the bye-laws of an Educational or Healthcare society made in accordance with this Act;
- (ii) “document” means any record, register, return, or legal instrument required to be maintained or submitted under this Act or any other law;
- (iii) “due date” means the date on which the term of an executive committee or managing committee expires, by which date elections for the successor body must be completed;
- (iv) “due date of renewal” means the date falling within five years from the date of issue of registration or within one year from the commencement of the Societies Registration (Punjab Amendment) Act, 2026, whichever is later;
- (v) “Educational society” means a society established for the purpose of providing educational services, and includes societies running or managing schools, colleges, universities, and vocational training centres;
- (vi) “elected member” means a member of an Educational or Healthcare society duly elected as an office-bearer of the Governing Body or Executive Committee or Managing Committee;
- (vii) “Financial Year” means the period from the 1st day of April of a year to the 31st day of March of the following year;
- (viii) “General Body” means a collective body of all the members of an Educational or Healthcare society;
- (ix) “Governing Body” means the executive committee or managing committee, by whatever name called, elected or constituted by the General Body to manage the day-to-day affairs of an Educational or Healthcare society;
- (x) “Government” means the Government of the State of Punjab in the Department of Industries and Commerce;
- (xi) “Healthcare society” means a society established for the purpose of providing healthcare services, and includes societies running or

managing hospitals, dispensaries, diagnostic centres, and medical research institutions;

- (xii) “member” means a person who meets the eligibility criteria specified in this Act and the bye-laws and has been admitted as a member of an Educational or Healthcare society;
- (xiii) “Memorandum” means the Memorandum of Association of an Educational or Healthcare society, as originally made or as amended from time to time in accordance with this Act;
- (xiv) “office-bearer” means a member of the Governing Body, including the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, or any other member authorized by the bye-laws to direct the affairs of an Educational or Healthcare society;
- (xv) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act;
- (xvi) “public notice” means a notice published in a manner prescribed, including through newspapers or other print or electronic media widely accessible in the relevant area;
- (xvii) “Registrar” means the Registrar of Firms and Societies, Punjab;
- (xviii) “Resolution” means a formal decision of the General Body, as the case may be, taken at a duly convened meeting and adopted by a majority of the members present and voting, unless otherwise provided in the Societies Registration (Punjab Amendment) Act, 2026;
- (xix) “State” means the State of Punjab; and
- (xx) “State-aided society” means an Educational or Healthcare Society receiving recurring grants or financial aid from the Government or a local authority to manage its facilities or institutions in accordance with its Memorandum or bye-laws.”

Insertion of section 2-A in Act XXI of 1860.

3. In the principal Act, after section 2, the following section shall be inserted, namely:-

“2-A. (1) No society established for the purpose of providing educational or healthcare services shall use, as part of its name, any word,-

- (a) which may imply, suggest or be calculated to suggest the sanction, approval, patronage of, or connection with, the Government of

India, the State Government, Union Territory Administration, any local authority, corporation, or Government instrumentality constituted by or under any law, unless specifically approved or otherwise permitted by the competent authority;

- (b) which contravenes the provisions of the Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950 (Central Act No. 12 of 1950); or
- (c) which includes words such as “Union”, “State”, “Land Mortgage”, “Land Development”, “Co-operative”, “Reserve Bank”, “University”, “Board of Education”, “Indian Institute”, “Gandhi”, “Vigilance”, “Anti-Corruption”, “Anti-Terrorism”, “Trust”, “Company”, “National”, “International”, “Universal” “Ministry”, “Government” or such other words as the State Government may, by notification, prohibit:

Provided that the State Government may, in exceptional circumstances and for reasons to be recorded in writing, allow an Educational or Healthcare society to use the word “Union” or the word “Gandhi” or such other words in its name, and thereupon the use of that word shall not be a ground for refusal to issue or renew registration.

- (2) No name shall be proposed in the memorandum of association that is identical to the name of an Educational or Healthcare society previously registered in the State of Punjab in the concerned jurisdiction.
- (3) The persons submitting the memorandum of association, or on whose behalf it is submitted, shall provide such additional information regarding the Educational or Healthcare society, as the Registrar may require."

4. In the principal Act, after section 3, the following sections shall be inserted, namely:-

"3-A. (1) After receipt of payment of the prescribed registration fee, and upon the memorandum and a certified copy thereof being filed with the Registrar, the Registrar shall certify under his hand that the Educational or Healthcare society is registered under this Act. The prescribed registration fee shall be paid to the Registrar for every such

registration. All such fees shall be duly accounted for to the State Government:

Provided that a reduced fee of one-half of the fee prescribed above, shall be payable for specified categories of societies only if, at the time of registration, the majority of members of the Educational or Healthcare society are women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes or specially abled persons.

(2) If the Registrar considers it necessary in the public interest, or upon receipt of a complaint, the Registrar may, at the expense of the applicant, issue a public notice inviting objections to the proposed name of the Educational or Healthcare society prior to registration.

3-B. (1) The Registrar shall refuse to register an Educational or Healthcare society, after providing an opportunity of being heard and providing an opportunity to rectify the defects or objections to the applicants, if,-

Refusal of
Registration
for Educational
or Healthcare
society.

- (a) the proposed name of the Educational or Healthcare society contravenes the provisions of section 2-A;
- (b) the objects of the Educational or Healthcare society are not in accordance with the provisions of section 20; or
- (c) the objects of the Educational or Healthcare society are contrary to any law for the time being in force.

(2) Where the Registrar refuses registration under sub-section (1), he shall record the reasons in writing and communicate the same to the applicants, within thirty days in such manner, as may be prescribed.

3-C. (1) Subject to the provisions of section 3, every certificate

Validity and Renewal
of Certificate of
Registration for
Educational or
Healthcare society.

of registration issued under this Act shall remain valid for a period of five years from the date of issue.

(2) An Educational or Healthcare society registered under section 3, whether before or after commencement of the Societies Registration (Punjab Amendment) Act, 2026, may apply to the Registrar for renewal of registration within three months after the due date of renewal, along

with the payment of the fee specified in sub-section (3). On such application, the Educational or Healthcare society shall be entitled to renewal of its certificate of registration for a period of five years at a time.

(3) A renewal fee as may be prescribed, shall be payable to the Registrar for every such renewal. All such fees shall be duly accounted for to the State Government:

Provided that a reduced fee of one-half of the fee prescribed above, shall be payable for specified categories of societies only if, at the time of renewal, the majority of members of the Educational or Healthcare society are women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes or specially abled persons.

(4) Renewal may be allowed after the due date, on sufficient cause and reasons recorded in writing, and on payment of an additional penalty per month, as may be prescribed for a period not exceeding one year from the expiry of the due date for renewal.

(5) If an Educational or Healthcare Society fails to apply for renewal even after expiry of the period specified in sub-section (4), the Registrar after giving opportunity to be heard to the Educational or Healthcare Society, may initiate the process of cancellation of registration of such society in accordance with the prescribed procedure.

(6) Effect of renewal: Where a certificate of registration is renewed in accordance with sub-section (2) or sub-section (4), such renewal shall operate from the date of expiration of the period for which the certificate was previously operative."

Amendment in
section 4 of Act
No. XXI of 1860.

5. In the principal Act, in section 4,-

- (i) for the words "managing body", the words "managing body or governing body" shall be substituted; and
- (ii) at the end, for the sign "." the sign ":" shall be substituted and thereafter, the following proviso shall be added, namely:-

"Provided that if the governing body an educational or healthcare society is elected after the last submission of the list, the list of members of the governing body shall be approved by a resolution passed at the annual general meeting by a simple majority of all the members of the registered educational or healthcare society."

Insertion of section 4-A of Act No. XXI of 1860.

6. In the principal Act, after section 4, the following section shall be inserted, namely:-

"4-A. (1) Every change made in the memorandum of association, bye-laws, or rules of the an Educational or Healthcare Society shall be affected by a resolution passed by a two-thirds majority of the total members at the annual general meeting. Intimation of such change shall be sent to the Registrar along with the annual list filing as required under Section 4.

Changes in Memorandum of Association, Bye-laws or rules to be intimated to Registrar of an Educational or Healthcare society.

(2) every change of registered address of the Educational or Healthcare society shall be intimated, certified by not less than three of the members of the governing body shall be sent to the Registrar along with the annual list filing as required under Section 4."

Insertion of section 5-A of Act No. XXI of 1860.

7. In the principal Act, after section 5, the following section shall be inserted, namely:-

"5-A. (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in any law, contract or other instrument to the contrary, it shall not be lawful for the governing body of an Educational or Healthcare society registered under this Act or any of its members to transfer, without the previous approval of the Registrar, any immovable property belonging to any such society.

Restriction on transfer of property of an Educational or Healthcare society.

(2) Every transfer made in contravention of sub-section (1) shall be void.

Explanation - The expression 'transfer' shall for the purposes of this section mean-

- (a) sale, gift, or exchange;
- (b) lease for a term exceeding five years;
- (c) Transfer of title; or
- (d) irrevocable licence."

8. In the principal Act, after section 12, the following sections shall be inserted, namely:-

"12-A. (1) Where a proposition or resolution for change of name has been passed by simple majority of total members in its Annual General Meeting a copy of such resolution, shall be forwarded to the Registrar of Societies signed by the Secretary and at least two other Governing members of the Educational or Healthcare society within thirty days of passing such resolution

(2) The Registrar shall refuse to register the new name if the proposed name of the an Educational or Healthcare society contravenes the provision of section 2 A and shall direct the Educational or Healthcare Society to Register a new name consistent with the provisions of this act within 3 months of issuing such order.

(3) If the Registrar is satisfied that the requirements have been met, the new name shall be registered, and an updated certificate of registration shall be issued effective from the date of such registration, upon payment of a fee as the State Government may, by notification, specify from time to time.

12-B. (1) Any change in the name, purposes, or amalgamation of an Educational or Healthcare Society shall not affect the rights, liabilities, or obligations of the Educational or Healthcare society or the validity of any legal proceedings commenced under the former name or for former purposes.

(2) Such legal proceedings may be continued or initiated in the name of the direct the Educational or Healthcare Society as altered.

12-C. (1) The governing body of every registered Educational or Healthcare society shall maintain proper and regular financial accounts in the form prescribed by the Registrar.

(2) Accounts shall be balanced annually on the 31st of March and shall be audited by a Chartered Accountant (as defined under the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949).

(3) The auditor shall prepare a balance sheet and an income and expenditure statement and submit copies of the accounts and audit report to the Registrar annually by the 30th of September. The audit report shall highlight any irregular, illegal, or improper expenditure, loss, or misuse of society funds or property.

12-D. (1) The Registrar, upon receipt of a written complaint

Power of Registrar to inquire into accounts of an Educational or Healthcare society.

supported by affidavit or prima facie evidence,

or for reasons of non-furnishing of annual

accounts under section 12 C, and after providing

the Educational or Healthcare society an opportunity of being heard, considers it necessary, he may, by order in writing, require society to furnish its accounts or a copy of a statement of receipts and expenditure for any particular year, duly audited by a Chartered Accountant.

(2) If an Educational or Healthcare Society fails to furnish the documents referred to in sub-section (1) within the period specified in the order, or within such extended period as the Registrar may, from time to time, allow, the Registrar may cause the accounts of such Educational or Healthcare society to be audited for the said year and recover the cost of such audit from the society:

Provided that the Registrar shall not order any such audit unless the Educational or Healthcare society has failed to respond even after being served a notice to comply within a further period of thirty days.

(3) If an Educational or Healthcare Society neglects or refuses to make its accounts or other documents available for audit under sub-section (2), or, in the opinion of the Registrar, otherwise fails to provide the requisite facilities for the audit to be completed with due expedition, the Registrar may, after granting the Educational or Healthcare society and its officers

an opportunity of being heard, proceed to take action against the Educational or Healthcare society and the persons responsible in accordance with the provisions of this Act and the rules made thereunder.

(4) Any Educational or Healthcare society which fails to comply with an order under this section, or any officer of the Educational or Healthcare Society who is in default, shall be liable to a penalty, as the State Government may, by notification, specify from time to time.

12E. (1) The Registrar may, by order in writing, require an Educational or Healthcare society to furnish such information or documents, within such time as may be specified in the order, being ordinarily not less than two weeks from the date of receipt of such order by the society, or within such other prescribed timeline, in connection with the affairs of the Educational or Healthcare society or any documents filed by the Educational or Healthcare society under this Act.

Power of
Registrar to call
for information
from an
Educational or
Healthcare
society.

(2) On receipt of an order under sub-section (1), it shall be the duty of the President, the Secretary or any other person authorised in this behalf to furnish such information or documents to the Registrar within the prescribed timeline.

(3) If any Educational or Healthcare society fails to comply with an order made under sub-section (1) within the prescribed timeline, the Educational or Healthcare society shall be liable to such penalty as prescribed, in sub-section (4) of section 12-D.

(4) If after the imposition of penalty, and upon completion of an inquiry and giving the Governing Body an opportunity of being heard, the information is still not furnished or penalty not paid without reasonable cause, Registrar may after issuing notice, proceed to suspend Governing Body as prescribed:

Provided that any such order of suspension shall be appealable to the State Government within sixty days from the date of issue of the order.

12-F. (1) Where, upon receipt of a written complaint supported

Power of Registrar
to inquire into affairs
of an Educational or
Healthcare society.

by affidavit, prima facie evidence, or
documentary evidence, and after providing the

Educational or Healthcare Society an opportunity of being heard, the Registrar is of the opinion that there exists reasonable apprehension that the affairs of an Educational or Healthcare society registered under this Act are being conducted so as to defeat its objects, or that the Educational or Healthcare Society or its governing body or any officer in actual and effective control of the Educational or Healthcare society is guilty of mismanagement of its affairs or of any breach of fiduciary or other similar obligations, the Registrar may, through any person appointed by the District Magistrate of the concerned district, not below the rank of Tehsildar, inquire into the affairs of the society, including any institution managed by the Educational or Healthcare Society.

(2) It shall be the duty of every officer of the society, when so required by the Registrar or by the person appointed under sub-section (1), to produce any books of account or other records of, or relating to, the Educational or Healthcare Society which are in his custody, and to render all assistance in connection with such inquiry.

(3) The Registrar or the person or authority referred to in sub-section (1) may, for the purposes of inspection or investigation

- (a) summon and examine on oath any officer, member, or employee of the Educational or Healthcare Society in relation to its affairs, and it shall be the duty of every such officer, member, or employee, when so called upon, to appear and answer truthfully; and
- (b) if, in his opinion, it is necessary, seize any or all records, including account books, of the society:

Provided that the person from whose custody such records are seized shall be entitled to make copies thereof in the presence of the person having such custody.

(4) On the conclusion of the inquiry, the Inquiry Officer shall submit a report to the Registrar.

(5) The Registrar may, after consideration of such report, provide a copy thereof to the Educational or Healthcare Society and invite representations or objections within a prescribed period before issuing any directions for rectification. After careful consideration of the report and any representations or objections received, and for reasons to be recorded in writing, the Registrar may issue such directions to the society, its governing body, or any officer thereof as he may deem fit, for the rectification of any defects or irregularities within such time as may be specified. In the event of default in compliance with such directions, the Registrar may proceed to take action under section 12G, as the case may be.

12-G. (1) If a society, or any officer thereof, fails to comply with any directions issued by the Registrar within the specified time, the Registrar may request the District Magistrate or any officer appointed by him, not below the rank of Sub-Divisional Magistrate, to assume the administration of the Educational or Healthcare society for such period as may be necessary to ensure proper management of its affairs and compliance with this Act.

(2) The administrator so appointed shall have all powers necessary for the management and control of the society, including-

- (a) taking possession of the property, funds, books of accounts, records, and other documents of the society;
- (b) making payments, receipts, and other administrative decisions necessary for the proper functioning of the society; and

Appointment of
Administrator in
case of default
of the
Educational or
Healthcare
society.

(c) exercising such other powers as may be necessary to ensure compliance with this Act or any directions issued under it.

(3) The period of administration shall be six months from the date of appointment of the Administrator, during which the Administrator shall ensure the conduct of fresh elections of the Educational or Healthcare Society in accordance with its bye-laws, rules, and regulations, and shall facilitate the constitution of a new Governing Body within that period, subject to satisfaction that the Educational or Healthcare Society is functioning in compliance with this Act.

(4) If for reasons to be recorded in writing, the new Governing Body cannot be constituted within the said period of six months, the District Magistrate of the concerned district may extend the period of administration for a further period not exceeding six months.

(5) Nothing in this section shall affect any other action or penalty under this Act against the Educational or Healthcare Society or its officers for the default."

Insertion of section 13-A in Act No. XXI of 1860.

9. In the principal Act, after section 13, the following section shall be inserted, namely:-

"13-A. (1) Without prejudice to, and in addition to, the Registrar's Power to Direct or Cancel Registration or Initiate Dissolution for the Educational or Healthcare Society. provisions contained in Section 13 of the principal Act, the Registrar of Societies may, by order in writing, may Direct or cancel the registration or Initiate Dissolution of any Educational or Healthcare Society on any of the following grounds, namely:-

- (a) the proposed name of the society contravenes the provision of section 2A;
- (b) the Educational or Healthcare Society is found to violate this Act or any other law;
- (c) the registration was obtained by fraud or misrepresentation;

- (d) The Educational or Healthcare Society has ceased to function for more than three years;
- (e) The Educational or Healthcare Society is unable to pay its debts or meet its liabilities for a period exceeding three years; or
- (f) if, upon a complaint and after an investigation conducted by an officer appointed by the Deputy Commissioner of the concerned district not below the rank of Tehsildar, the Registrar is satisfied that the Educational or Healthcare Society has been proved to have indulged in fraud (financial or otherwise), criminal activities, or embezzlement, or has engaged in acts subversive to law and public order.

(2) Before cancellation or initiating dissolution, the Registrar shall provide the Educational or Healthcare Society an opportunity to show cause and rectify the issue within a specified period.

(3) If the Educational or Healthcare Society fails to respond, or if the response is deemed unsatisfactory, the Registrar by an order cancel registration and dissolve the Educational or Healthcare Society and may refer the Court specified in section 13, for adjustment of its affairs.

(4) The Educational or Healthcare Society may appeal cancellation to an authority designated by the State Government within sixty days, whose decision shall be final.

(5) When an order for the dissolution of an Educational or Healthcare Society is made under sub-section (1), all necessary steps for the disposal and the settlement of the property of the society, its claims and liabilities and any other adjustment of its affairs shall take place in manner as the Court may direct."

Amendment
in section
17 of Act No.
XXI of 1860.

11. In the principal Act, in section 17, at the end, for the sign ".", the sign ":" shall be substituted and thereafter the following proviso shall be added, namely:-

"Provided that where any provision of Section 17 is inconsistent with or contrary to the provisions of Section 3A, the provisions of Section 3A shall prevail and have overriding effect."

Insertion of
section 19-A in
Act No. XXI
of 1860.

12. In the Principal Act, after section 19, the following section shall be inserted:-

"19-A. Any person may, subject to the provisions of the
Inspection of documents-
Certified Copies
of the
Educational or
Healthcare
Society.
Right to Information Act, 2005, as amended
from time to time, inspect all documents and
records filed with the Registrar under the
Societies Registration (Punjab Amendment)
Act, 2026 on payment of such fee as may be prescribed, and
may obtain a certified copy or extract of any such document
or part thereof on payment of the prescribed fee in the said
act; and every such certified copy shall be prima facie
evidence of the matters contained therein in all legal
proceedings whatsoever."

Addition of
new sections
21 and 22 in
Act No. XXI
of 1860.

13. In the principal Act, after section 20, the following sections shall be added, namely:-

"21. If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the
Powers to
remove
difficulties of
the Educational
or Healthcare
society.
provisions of the Societies Registration
(Punjab Amendment) Act, 2026, the State
Government may, by an order, not inconsistent
with the provisions of the Societies Registration (Punjab
Amendment) Act, 2026, remove the difficulty;

22. (1) The State Government may, by notification in the
Powers to make
rules for the
Educational or
Healthcare
Society.
Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out
the purposes of the Societies Registration
(Punjab Amendment) Act, 2026.

(2) All rules made under the Societies Registration
(Punjab Amendment) Act, 2026 shall, as soon as may be,
after they are made, be laid before House of the State

Legislature while it is in session, for a total period of thirty days extending in its one session or more than one successive sessions and shall unless some later date is appointed, take effect from the date of their publication in the Official Gazette, subject to such modifications or annulments as the Houses of the Legislature may, during the said period agree to make, so however, that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to validity of anything previously done thereunder."

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS & REASONS

The Societies Registration (Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2026 is aimed to amend the Societies Registration Act, 1860 for societies providing educational and healthcare services to strengthen transparency, accountability, and governance of societies established for providing educational and healthcare services in Punjab. The amended Bill seeks to introduce clear definitions, mandates periodic renewal of registration and empowers the Registrar with enhanced oversight, inquiry, and enforcement powers. It provides for mandatory audits and annual submission of financial statements and regulates the use of names to prevent misuse or misleading affiliations. Provisions have also been included for inquiry into society affairs, appointment of administrators in cases of mismanagement, and dissolution of non-compliant societies, thereby establishing a modern, transparent, and robust regulatory framework for societies in the State.

SANJEEV ARORA,
Industries & Commerce
Minister, Punjab.

CHANDIGARH:
THE 1ST MAY, 2026

R. L. KHATANA,
SECRETARY.

N.B. – The above Bill published in the Punjab Government Gazette (Extraordinary), dated the 1st May, 2026 under the proviso to rule 121 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha (Punjab Legislative Assembly).