



THE BUCKEYE INSTITUTE

Trimming Burdensome Licensing Requirements for Ohio's Cosmetologists

Interested Party Testimony
Ohio House State and Local Government Committee
House Bill 399

Greg R. Lawson, Research Fellow
The Buckeye Institute

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Thank you, Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify regarding House Bill 399.

My name is Greg R. Lawson. I am a research fellow at **The Buckeye Institute**, an independent research and educational institution—a think tank—whose mission is to advance free-market public policy in the states.

House Bill 399 helps address Ohio’s over-licensing problem and will continue the important legislative effort already underway to lower barriers to entry to Ohio’s salon industry by lowering the required hours of education required to obtain a cosmetology license from 1,500 to 1,000 hours. This will bring Ohio into line with a growing trend around the nation. And it aligns with this Committee’s recent—and laudable—review of occupational licenses under the provisions of Senate Bill 255 from the previous General Assembly.

Cosmetology licensing was not reviewed during this cycle of the Senate Bill 255 review process, and the profession remains in need of relief. Ohio cosmetologists must complete 1,500 hours of training under Ohio law—that’s 250 hours more training than their peers in Pennsylvania and 500 more hours than hairdressers in New York, Texas, and Vermont. Such an onerous training requirement proves laughable when compared to the 150 hours of training required to be a state certified emergency medical technician. With Ohio currently requiring cosmetologists to have *10 times* the training of basic EMTs, the case for licensing reform doesn’t get much clearer.

Of course, Ohio’s over-licensing problem extends well beyond the local hair salon. The Buckeye Institute’s report ***Forbidden to Succeed: How Licensure Laws Hold Ohioans Back*** revealed that Ohio’s occupational licensing burdens are well above average. Of Ohio’s 31 moderate-income occupations requiring licensure, 15 require hundreds or thousands of hours of training. Remarkably, nearly every Ohio license that requires training can be earned in less time in another state. The state certainly needs to require appropriate training and licensing for jobs with health and safety concerns, such as physicians and pilots, and no one disputes this. But such concern fades dramatically when applied, for example, to auctioneers, travel guides, and hairdressers.

Onerous licensing burdens—essentially requiring workers to ask the government for a permission slip to earn a living—make Ohio less competitive, less prosperous, and less attractive to entrepreneurs and their employees. Extensive licensing requirements only make finding a job more difficult. Every unnecessary license is a red-taped hurdle that must be cleared. Every hour of unnecessary, unpaid training needed to satisfy bureaucratic requirements is an hour not spent earning tips, impressing a boss, serving a customer, or climbing a corporate ladder. Those are hours of productivity, hours of opportunity that young, low-income workers sorely need, but that the state continues to take away.

Even more concerning are the daunting employment prospects faced by many in Ohio’s minority communities. Nationally, the unemployment rate among African Americans has improved in recent years but remains **higher** than among other demographics. Cosmetology and the salon industry are **projected to grow**, creating new opportunities for work and careers in the

profession. Reforming Ohio's cosmetology licensing regime will make it easier for African Americans to enter this up-and-coming profession and alleviate unemployment in minority communities.

House Bill 399 advances the state's anti-red-tape reform effort and will remove at least some of the occupational licensing obstacles faced by Ohio's working men and women. Of course, much more than House Bill 399 is needed and I look forward to exploring additional solutions with you and continuing our conversation on this important issue.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions that the Committee might have.



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