

I thank the House State and Local Government Committee for the opportunity to testify today in favor of HB 399.

I live in Minneapolis MN. I am the senior legislative counsel for the Institute for Justice, a public interest law firm headquartered in Arlington VA. I support Ohio's enactment of HB 399 for two reasons.

1. The bill moves Ohio's regulation of cosmetologists and barbers in the right direction. Specifically, it is consistent with Ohio's landmark enactment, SB 255, that became effective on April 5, 2109. Under SB 255, Ohio adopted as state policy that Ohio will use the least restrictive regulation to protect consumers. In this regard, legislators can compare these licenses to how Columbus, Cincinnati, Cleveland and other cities protect consumers from a far more dangerous action--eating food at restaurants. Cities rightly employ the least restrictive regulation--they do inspections of restaurants. And cities leave the responsibility for training employees to the salon and shop owners. This comparison shows that HB 399 is quite modest and balanced. It does not go as far as to use only inspections of cosmetology salons and barber shops. The bill continues Ohio's existing licensing regimes but just at reduced number of required hours of training.
2. The bill also moves Ohio's regulation of braiders in the right direction. Ohio can look to other states. In total, 28 states have freed braiders of occupational licensing requirements including the border states of Indiana, Kentucky and West Virginia as well as BIG TEN states Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota and Nebraska. Repealing unnecessary licensing requirements in these states has promoted economic opportunities for thousands of braiders and benefited consumers by creating more choices.

In conclusion, I urge the committee to go further. Through the amendment process, the committee should reconcile the excellent provisions for braiders in Senator Williams SB 235 with Representative Jena Powell's constructive changes to Ohio's regulation of braiders in HB 399.

Specifically, I offer my assistance to work with the author and the committee to create greater opportunities for braiders (1) by repealing the 450-hour specialty license for "natural hair stylists" and (2) by expanding the scope of practice under which braiders may work as providers of boutique services.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Lee U. McGrath  
Senior Legislative Counsel  
Institute for Justice