

Written Opposition Testimony re: HB 399
Before the
House State and Local Government Committee

By
Ladosha Wright
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Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the House State and Local Government Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide opposition testimony on HB 399.

To start, I quote Marian Wright Edelman, "Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it." My name is Ladosha Wright, I would like to point out three pertinent reasons why you should vote against this bill.

The first reason is because compromised education does not improve the economy of the communities where stylists and barbers live and work. More than 177,000 people enrolled in for profit beauty schools across the United States in 2018, which on average charged about \$17,00.00. 40% of them graduated. I am a proud 1800-hour graduate and salon owner living and working in my community.

14.56 million people enrolled in college in 2018. In state, out of state and private cost of education ranges between \$10,000 and \$39,000. 33% of them graduate. I am also proud college graduate. Yet, there is no bill being introduced to lower the standards of higher education. Indeed, both took a long time; both were hard and both cost me money.

The bogus inequities, rigors and cost of education that are being used to justify HB 399 are preposterous. They are a recipe for disaster. Companies who fast track high numbers of undereducated and low paid employees hurt communities. They yield a vicious cycle of poverty, social unrest, and ultimately costs society half-a-trillion dollars in sacrificed productivity and ancillary costs each year. HB 399 unfortunately gridlocks and compromises local economies with high turnover rates from unsatisfied and low paid employees.

The argument that paramedics who save lives require less education is a play on our lack of not knowing about what lies beneath. The only reason their educational requirements are so low is because more education will require paramedics to receive almost as much pay as their cohorts; doctors! Thus, soaring the cost of medical care. So, to offset that, their pay starts at \$47,000.00. And for the record, their educational

bodies are seeking to require a two-year degree. So, that argument is nugatory to say the least.

The second reason is diversity. The world of cosmetology and barbering are no longer straight hair, fades, blondes and bald heads. A push to accept this diversity, is via the Crown Act; it is being introduced in Ohio this year. This act ends 400 years of hair shaming, oppression and outright discrimination against people of color with textured hair. Technology is equally important. With increased use of technology, consumers in our industry are demanding we grow with technology. How can we assure these changes will be addressed and taught? How can we assure black, brown, yellow and white people with textured hair will receive the exact same levels of education and expertise as those who are white with no texture at all? HB 399 does not delineate these educational and training processes.

Last is legacy. Cosmetologists and barbers have created a legacy which represents cultural and artistic expression from just about every nook and cranny of this vast planet. The legacy of both industries has produced the likes of Madame CJ Walker and the original Paul Mitchell. They embraced and pioneered diversity. Let us not omit Ohio's late great cosmetologist extraordinaire, Arnie Miller and his wife, Sydell. Today, you can see their names atop the Cleveland Clinic main campus, "J Building, Sydell and Arnie Miller Family Pavilion." Cookie cut salon apprenticeship programs are sure to compromise such a legacy in hairstyling and not bring about such talent.

In closing, I stand before you as a licensed cosmetologist who wrote the very first cosmetology curriculum for the Gambia and Senegal in October of 2019 to say HB 399 is not befitting for the infinite potential of our industry.

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