

Greetings Chairman Stein, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and distinguished members of the Ohio House Commerce and Labor Committee.

My name is Melinda Williams. I am a licensed Advanced Cosmetologist Adult Education Cosmetology Instructor, salon and barber shop owner in Mansfield Richland County. I also serve as President of OCCTA (Ohio Career Cosmetology Teachers Association), we represent the Career Tech and Adult Education Instructors in the state. I listed everything that I do because I feel that I bring a unique perspective to the arguments given for both support and opposition to house bill 277.

I feel that reducing hours would be a mistake. I work with adults in the evening. We are housed in a high school. Some of our student population are individuals who have worked jobs like factories and retail for example. They have not been in school for many years. The subject matter takes a bit longer to sink in with those students. On the other hand I do understand why programs with a younger demographic favor a reduction. I am a proud product of a career tech program who obtained my license at age 17. I do acknowledge that it is sometimes difficult to get students to the finish line in the high school setting. They also absorb and retain information at a faster pace. I am sure this rings true for the Barber industry as well. Therefore, it would not serve our industry to treat us all the same. So what is the answer? I think we may have a solution.

On September 9, 2021 the OCCTA made a proposal to the Ohio State Cosmetology and Barber Board. The proposal requested to increase the amount of interning hours allowed from 150 to 300 hours. This will allow students the opportunity to receive an additional 150 clinic hours in a structured internship setting. Because it is a rule change not law, it is customizable. 300 hours is a cap. Each program would have the ability to use whatever amount of those hours they deem necessary for their curriculum. To date this proposal has been approved by the Board in addition to the rules and curriculum committees. It is my understanding that it is now being evaluated by the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) and the Common Sense Initiative (CSI). In addition the Ohio Department of Education now requires High school CTE students to accumulate 250 hours of work-based learning aligned to their programs of study or their student success or graduation plans, with evidence of positive evaluations. Internship meets this requirement. It is my personal belief that this model can be applied to the barber industry as well.

There has been a reference to student debt as a reason to reduce hours. Our Cosmetology program cost \$13,875.00 median student loan, \$6500.00 Advanced Cosmetology \$16,515.00 median student loan, \$4500.00. Our fees include uniforms, tool kit, state board, certification testing tool kit & fees, hair shows, books, lab fees and limited free make-up hours. 15 minutes from our location is another school that charges \$21,400.00 for Advanced Cosmetology. The fee includes "books and materials". It is every citizen's right to choose their post-secondary education. So there are lower cost options. Our school has never, since program creation in 2006 had one single student take the board exam and not become licensed. We also have a 4% loan default rate.

I do agree that regional testing is a great idea as long as it is not conducted by school staff members. All proctors should be employed by the state for integrity purposes.

In conclusion I encourage you to make these proposed changes to HB277.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Melinda Williams