

Proponent Testimony on HB542
By Paul Harris
Before the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Chairman Roegner, Vice Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Craig and members of the Senate Government and Oversight Committee, as a resident of Ohio, a salon owner, and your constituent, I **urge your support for HB542**.

My name is Paul Harris and I moved to Ohio almost two decades ago to start a family business in the salon industry. My wife and I have been active in the business, and we anticipated having our children continue in the business. My son is involved now, and we are committed long term to this industry. We operate salons in Ohio and Florida and have grown our business aggressively, even in the last year, by opening four salons during the pandemic. We are committed and excited about our salons and the opportunities we can provide licensed stylists.

Prior to the salon industry, I was involved in banking and real estate. They are large, often impersonal businesses and we wanted to have more control over our future. We moved often before settling back in my home state of Ohio. We love the business environment in Ohio and have become active in our communities. I have been and continue to be involved in a number of non-profit organizations that focus on education and children who often come from challenging environments. As I have learned about the industry, I am often surprised by the inconsistency from state to state and some of the unnecessary burdens placed on students who have a goal of becoming a licensed stylist. As we have built our business in two states and have stylists moving from adjacent states, it has become clear that there is an opportunity to streamline licensing and create more jobs in the industry.

I have a great appreciation for the incredible skills and the creativity of our stylists. They develop these skills through their education, continual learning, and hands-on experience. Many stylists struggle with the theory, classroom, testing, etc., and that's why I support the pre-graduate testing element of **HB542**. I understand that around 30% of stylists don't complete their program by taking the license exam. This is likely due to transportation issues, test anxiety, fear of failure, etc. I do think additional test locations may help, but I am more interested in the pre-graduate testing. This would allow students to identify their gaps, gain confidence and be successful in completing the most important part of their program. In Ohio, students can start to work on a work permit, but if they fail the test, their work is disrupted, and they often can get discouraged and drop out of the industry. Let's help them succeed in this career by allowing pre-graduate testing.

As I mentioned, my wife and I had moved a half a dozen times before settling in Hudson, Ohio 20 years ago. I had no idea that licensed stylists had such wide-ranging education requirements...from 1,000 hours to 2,100 hours. My haircuts were always the same! That would be like a four-year degree taking eight years in some states! Licensing at 1,000 hours is a proven, long-standing model. New York, Texas, California, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and

Vermont all require 1,000 hours. New York and Texas are two of the most populous states. This seems unfair to stylists...we should be encouraging the least burdensome requirements to assist our students to finish the last step in the process to get licensed and to find gainful employment. Why would we require students to invest 33% more time and money to achieve the same thing that can be completed in 1,000 hours? The same curriculum, the same textbooks, the same tools and resources are used, regardless of the number of hours.

And as I think about our relocations, both my wife and I were able to easily move into other positions in other states. We should make it as easy as possible for licensed stylists, from other states, to move into Ohio. If a stylist is licensed in New York at 1,000 hours and is in good standing, we should make it easier and welcome them into our state. Additional testing, hours, etc., are simply unnecessary if they have a valid license and experience from another state. There are great opportunities for licensed stylists in Ohio, in every part of the industry. Let's allow them to get to work quickly if their path leads them to Ohio.

Over the last 20 years we have grown our business through great relationships with our stylists. We know them. We know their goals. We listen to them. We hear their concerns. We know they have debt. Let's make it easier for those folks who would like to be a part of this industry. There are so many opportunities, not just in my salons, but in all kinds of salons throughout Ohio. Allow pre-graduate testing, reduce the burden and cost of 1,500 hours, and make it easy for stylists in good standing to work in Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration. Please support [HB542](#).

Respectfully,

Paul Harris