

**Proponent Testimony**  
**Am. Sub. HB 542**  
**Submitted By Missy Blacker**

**Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee**

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig, and Members Hoagland, Lang, Schaffer, and Thomas:

Thank you for taking the time to listen to me today. As a resident of Ohio and a licensed cosmetology professional, **I urge your support for House Bill 542, as amended.**

My name is Melissa Blacker. My career in cosmetology started in 1998. In the last 24 years, I have had the opportunity to grow in ways I never could have imagined - both professionally and personally. I have always been a strong advocate for both cosmetology students and for licensed stylists.

I have watched the industry evolve and change over the years, but the education and licensing processes have not changed. There are a lot of opportunities to make Ohio more friendly to the people - students and licensees by making changes that remove barriers and make entering the industry more attractive. Amended House Bill 542 provides for the very change that is needed so that others can enjoy the same success and career opportunities that I have had the pleasure of enjoying for the last 24 years.

I support **House Bill 542, as amended** because I believe it is necessary to position the Ohio cosmetology industry for it to thrive. It's also necessary to protect students. It's not fair for students to have significant debt, struggle with test completion, and be limited in their ability to move from state to state.

As a lifelong resident of Ohio, I also encourage you to look at the mobility elements as well, to encourage licensed professionals to come to Ohio and work. Let's make it as easy as we can for them to transfer their license into Ohio.

I share the following support:

Reduction in hours to 1,000:

- Career tech/public schools throughout the country and several states are successful at 1,000 hours. This is a floor, not a ceiling.
- Students should have a choice to attend private or public schools at 1,000 hours. Every hour over 1,000 has extra cost and time.
- Longer cosmetology programs impose a significant barrier to entry for disenfranchised populations (minorities and women) who seek a career in cosmetology, especially working moms. Forty-seven percent of salon businesses are owned by minorities and 77% are owned by women.

Pre-graduate testing:

- Pre-graduate testing and other testing support allows students to successfully complete their education.
- Over 30% of students that complete school do not successfully take the test and pass. Pre-graduate testing would allow them to get the additional training they need to become fully licensed.
- The license has meaning...but fear and lack of confidence creates this gap. Pre-graduate testing could prevent this.

Mobility/ Reciprocity:

- Experienced, well-trained stylists can struggle with the reciprocity process. License-for-license exchange or endorsement takes away the extra steps and potential barriers.
- Ohio has great opportunities for licensed stylists. Let's encourage their careers by getting them licensed immediately.

I have great respect for both public and private schools and my business is successful because of public school graduates and private school graduates. Please reduce the barriers for all students by passing **HB 542 as amended**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Melissa Blacker