



*BEFORE THE HOUSE STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE
PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 238*

Good afternoon, Chairwoman John, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Brennan, and Members of the House State & Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 238. My name is Justin Barnes, and I am the Director of Workforce, Small Business, and Technology Policy for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

As you may know, for 129 years, the Ohio Chamber has served as the state's leading business advocate, and we represent over 8,000 companies that do business in Ohio. Our mission is to aggressively champion free enterprise, economic competitiveness, and growth for the benefit of all Ohioans. As part of our mission, we seek to make Ohio the best place in the country for businesses to operate and grow.

In the Chamber's recently published economic competitiveness study, the *Blueprint for Ohio's Economic Future*, one of the recommendations made is to address the occupational licensing landscape in Ohio. Our study has a section titled "Business Friendliness" which focuses on the policy choices Ohio can make that will make our state a more attractive place to own or operate a business.

Per a statistical analysis conducted in partnership with Accenture, we identified that occupational licensure affects more than 20% of Ohio's workforce. Among peer states in the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic, only Indiana has more licensing restrictions than Ohio. Therefore, we are grateful for your efforts under this and similar legislation to conduct reviews of occupational licenses from those boards and commissions or other licensing entities that impact Ohio's workforce landscape.

We believe that efforts to conduct these regular cost/benefit analyses of occupational licenses are both a textbook example of good governance, responding to the economic landscape and course correcting where necessary to reflect updated standards and practices, and a key to assisting those who may be looking to enter the workforce in a new or different industry by removing or reducing the barriers to entry for employment and economic success.

We would like to encourage the committee to adopt amendments under consideration that would modify the hours requirements for cosmetology school licensure exams as part of this review process. The Ohio Chamber has consistently believed that such a change brings about common-sense reform that will translate into individuals achieving licensure more expeditiously, without compromising safety or hygiene. Shortened cosmetology programs may translate into lower tuition costs and, in many cases, lower student loan debt. Reducing barriers to entry, such as cost and a lengthy licensure process, can prevent Ohioans from forgoing cosmetology as a viable career path.

We want to thank the sponsors of this legislation, Representatives Klopfenstein and Fowler Arthur, for their work on this legislation, as well as all of you as members of the State and Local Government Committee, for your dedication and attention to these important issues.

Conducting a review of Ohio's occupational licensing landscape is an important process to ensure Ohio remains economically competitive, and we are again grateful for the opportunity to testify in support of this legislation.