

**Proponent Testimony on HB 238**  
**Before the House State and Local Government Committee**  
**Clara Osterhage, Salon Owner**  
**December 12, 2023**

Chairwoman John, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee. My name is Clara Osterhage, and I am honored to be here to provide proponent testimony for HB 238. I am a longtime proponent of the reduction in the number of hours required for cosmetology education. My commitment to being a proponent of removing barriers and challenges to entry into the cosmetology industry is never-ending.

I franchise several Great Clips hair salons, predominantly in Ohio. Our walk-in, no-appointment business model has indeed changed the cosmetology and barbering landscape a bit over the past 20 to 30 years. Don't let anyone tell you that our model is bad, that what we do is bad, or that our model is wrong. I am proud of the difference we have made for the hundreds of thousands of consumers we serve each year and the career opportunities we have created for licensed professionals.

I have been in this business for nearly 30 years. I opened my first salon in Springfield in January of 1995 and committed to being the best employer I could be. Although not affordable early on, staffing was a challenge, and I knew we would need to offer health insurance, 401k, paid time off, bonuses, and highly competitive wages. Ironically, in this very building, over time, opponents have referred to me as a "slave driver," asserting that I pay minimum wage to my employees. The assertion has been that "chains" are big, bad businesses on a mission to put everyone else out of business, to underpay stylists to line pockets, and contributions to the industry are not good. That could not be further from the truth. Franchised salons represent around 19% of the industry's 1.2 million cosmetology salons in the United States, so we are actually a small player. 79% of the industry is comprised

of a growing number of independently owned salons. There is plenty of room for all salons and concepts. We should be celebrating that and lifting each other up. The opponents have made it sound like we seek to put the independent salons out of business.

{There are 1.2 million salon industry establishments: 66% beauty salons and spas, 24% nail salons, and 10% barber shops. 79% are independently owned, 19% are franchisee-owned, and 2% are franchisor-owned.}

During last Tuesday's hearing on HB 238, Rep. Brennan described the subject of cosmetology hours reduction as "cringe." Of course, this topic is cringeworthy. Just think about the opponent's messaging, which has been consistently negative and has painted a picture of doom and gloom that ANY change would cause harm. Some of the assertions made have not been factual and/or have been a misrepresentation of information. I am grateful that you all have been asking legitimate questions of the witnesses. Taking the time to dig for and understand the truth is important.

Key points:

- The cosmetology and barbering industries are two of the best professions in the world. The licensees find themselves amongst a unique group of professionals who are licensed to touch other people.
- The combined cosmetology and barbering board is the second-largest licensing board in Ohio. Tens of thousands of people enjoy successful careers in Ohio as they sport board-issued licenses to work in a variety of venues performing a variety of services. Those of us with salon, barbershop, and school facility licenses are also license holders.
- In the United States, cosmetology and barbering are growing at an impressive rate. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the overall employment of barbers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists is projected to grow at 8% from 2022 to 2032, faster than the average for all occupations. About 89,400 openings for these professions are projected each year, on average, over the decade.
- Hair salons struggled to staff their businesses after COVID-19, just like all other businesses, and many are now finding that staffing is

improving, as we knew it would. Many of us are fully staffed. Some of us have waiting lists to work at some locations. The assertion that lowering the hours to a proper level will directly benefit people like me is hogwash. I would like someone to explain the foundation for that line of thinking. The benefit here goes to the future cosmetology students- those I have been fighting on behalf of for a long time - in the hope that costs would be reduced and garnishments diminished.

- According to the FY2023 Annual Report of the Ohio Cosmetology and Barbering Board (distributed), Ohio enjoys an incredible school presence for cosmetology education. As of the Board's November meeting, 91 career tech schools (public high schools), 68 private schools, 18 adult education programs, and 1 correctional program are currently in operation. (There are also 27 barber schools.) Ohio is fortunate to have a total of 178 places for people to begin their journey in cosmetology. Many states have a fraction of that number, like Minnesota, which has 45 schools.
- Both the private and public school cosmetology students get 1125 hours of cosmetology instruction, including 300 theory hours, 750 clinic hours, and 375 flexible hours. The public school students use their 375 flexible hours for high school "related" courses needed to graduate with a high school diploma. AC 4713-05-03 discusses the program requirements:
  - (B) All career technical schools and proprietary schools offering programs in cosmetology, or a branch of cosmetology, may schedule either clock hours, credit hours, or competency-based credit hours in accordance with the rules of the board and in an amount equivalent to the total clock hours required for each program offered. Competency-based credit shall only be offered for academic courses allowed under paragraphs (B)(1), (B)(2), and (B)(3) of this rule. Career technical schools shall meet the program requirements as follows:
    - (1) The total time scheduled for the cosmetology program shall be at least fifteen hundred hours and sufficient to complete and pass the approved course curriculum. Cosmetology students shall successfully complete and pass the cosmetology program course curriculum which may include up to a maximum of four academic

courses that meet state curriculum minimum graduation requirements and are taken during the time the student is enrolled in the cosmetology program. The academic courses to be taken during the time the student is enrolled in the cosmetology program can include any of the courses in paragraph (B)(4) of this rule, or if a student is on an IEP, as required by the IEP.

- (4) The four academic courses from the following list shall be the only courses counted in paragraph (A)(1) or (A)(2) of this rule: **anatomy; physiology; chemistry; advanced chemistry; any mathematics; finance; business marketing; integrated English III and IV; applied communications; English language and composition; speech; physics, and advanced biology courses accepted as meeting graduation requirements** of twenty-one carnegie units or as required by the IEP. The four academic courses that shall be counted as part of the total time scheduled for the approved program shall constitute no more than twenty-five per cent of the hours required to complete the program.
- There is no discernible difference between the public and private license exam pass/fail rates, suggesting they are equally prepared for the exam.
- Private school graduates do not have higher incomes than those who graduate from public schools. Once in a position, incomes become dependent on many variables that have nothing to do with where they went to school. Level of talent, confidence, and personality are likely the key variables that make a difference in earnings. My degrees are from Ohio State and Ashland University. Does anyone think degrees from those institutions would have limited my earning potential versus having my degree from Harvard?
- There is no correlation between lower hours and safety/sanitation violations in lower-hour states. While that is a popular assertion to make, the data supporting it needs to be made available. I have connected with respected professionals in 1000-hour states who are unaware of increased safety or sanitation issues with hours reduction.
  - Texas was given as an example, stating that, according to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation Enforcement

Division, the number of complaints has more than tripled since hours were reduced from 1500 to 1000. Since not all complaints are created equal, we should want to know how the complaints were categorized. How many of the FY2023 complaints could be directly correlated with the reduction in hours?

- For comparison, Ohio had 1,512 violations in FY2023. Of those complaints, 8 of the top 10 categories were related to operating without a license and/or aiding and abetting. Ninety-nine complaints were for reusing porous implements and 62 for disinfectant management in the dispensary.
- The hours reduction would not impact safety and sanitation or laws and rules education - in theory and practice.

I am a good person who is addicted to the mostly female workforce that I am so blessed to have responsibility for as an employer. I am a good employer. I am committed to creating a positive working environment where people can earn more than a living wage. Our 72% retention rate seems to support that we are doing the right things for our people. And, I am an advocate for those without a voice. Some people are proponents who are not interested in giving testimony out of fear. They know what can happen. Some people do not yet know that they will be entering the field of cosmetology. They, too, are silent.

In my mind, this is the first step to making the cosmetology industry stronger than ever.

Thank you for your time today, and I will gladly answer any questions.