

## Written Testimony for HB399

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, and Ranking Member Kelly:

Thank you for hearing and considering my testimony as it relates to HB399. I support the passage of HB 399 for a number of reasons. By reducing the number of hours required to obtain a hair stylist's/barber's license, you will make it possible for adults in difficult circumstances to achieve their dreams while still maintaining a ridiculously high level of required hours as well as control and oversight over this industry. (i.e., you are not sacrificing much since 1,000 hours is still a substantial minimal amount of time required to obtain a license.)

I also believe that by reducing the number of hours you will also cut down on corruption. Let me explain. I have seen that many barber schools take advantage of the high number of hours requirement and harness it to their own gain. They require free labor of students, forcing them to cut hair in their shops - charging regular rates and profiting off their free labor. Not only are these students paying thousands of dollars to their "employer," but they are required to work long hours without any pay while the owners of these schools rake in the money. Incredibly, when students have to miss time due to personal matters, they are often required to pay a fine of \$15 an hour for each hour missed, in addition to the thousands they are already paying!

I would like to offer my brother as a case study for why this bill matters. My brother learned to cut hair in his dormitory at a Florida college. He cut his own hair, and then friends' hair, and then everyone on his floor wanted him to give them a cut because he was so good. He was able to pay a good portion of his tuition through the donations of guys whose hair he cut in the dorm. He has literally put in thousands of hours already and become a very talented barber. But he currently can't use his talents other than on friends and family. He was recently offered the opportunity to own a barber shop. However, he would, of course, have to become licensed. As a man who is early on in his career, married with a newborn child, the costs and time of this endeavor are virtually insurmountable. By reducing the required hours, this endeavor to become a licensed barber and achieve this dream, would become much more realistic.

Finally, I would like to refute some of the arguments I've heard against HB 399. I have heard detractors compare reducing the hours to obtain a barber's license to reducing the number of hours required for a neuro surgeon or heart surgeon. I would hope that common sense clearly prevails over such silly and nonsensical comparisons. Obviously, we should respect and value the hair stylist / barber industry, but to make such comparisons is lunacy. If you were to give credence to such remarks, you would then need to consider significantly extending the hours to obtain a driver's license and especially to drive a school bus! Both don't even come close to matching what is required for this licensure and both carry the potential to put lives at risk.

I've also heard objections that if this bill is passed that there will be a drop in the quality of hair stylists and barbers. To that I would again point out the incongruencies in common sense. This is an industry that relies on the individual's talent and ability. Those who do not have the talent and ability do not last. With the current required hours, there are plenty of hair stylists who are not good at what they do. They don't last because no one wants to go to them. However, those who are good and have the talent and ability did not gain that on the 1,700<sup>th</sup> hour. They had it perfected long before then.

In closing, I would simply ask that you look at this matter clearly and realize that it falls under the category of what is reasonable and common sense. There will always be objections to what you are doing. People who resist change or object that since they had to put in the full 1,800 hours

everyone else should, too...but that's not a reason to shrink back. Progress must always prevail. A bill that will do good is worth passing. I ask that you please push forward with passing this bill, knowing that it will do good.

Thank you for hearing me out.

Sincerely,

Timothy J. Kardamis