

Proponent Testimony on SB133 (Written)  
By Missy Blacker  
Before the Senate Small Business and Economic Opportunity Committee  
On Wednesday, May 19, 2021

---

Chairman Rulli, Vice Chair Lang, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Small Business and Economic Opportunity Committee, my name is Missy Blacker. As a resident of Ohio, a licensed cosmetologist, and your constituent, I **urge your support for SB 133**.

I am here as a long-term and experienced, licensed stylist. My career started in 1998 as a licensed stylist. I've had the opportunity to grow in ways I never imagined. I am an advocate for beauty school students and stylists. I have watched the industry evolve and change and I believe cosmetology licensing and education must also change.

The common-sense reforms you are considering in SB133 are necessary to position the Ohio cosmetology industry to thrive. It's also necessary to protect students. It's not fair to students to have significant debt, struggle with test completion and be limited in their ability to move from state to state.

High school programs in Ohio are already at 1,125 hours of cosmetology-based content. The additional 375 hours of the required 1,500 are academic-related courses. Regardless, the license pass/fail rates between high school and private schools have always been comparable. High school students are benefitting from taxpayer funding while most private school students find it necessary to take out student loans. They will likely have significant debt when they become licensed and begin to work.

And as I employ stylists from both public and private schools, I can attest to their comparable skills. I have managed and coached students from public and private schools, students from five different states...and I have not seen any difference in the outcome of their education. They still need hands-on technical training, and they need support. Like many other professions, education provides the foundation. In our case, the primary focus for licensure should be safety, infection control, and sanitation. The success of that student as they begin their career has little to do with the number of hours. It has to do with their work ethic, their willingness to learn, their work habits, their customer service skills, and many other things. Stylists throughout the US with 1,000 to over 2,000 hours have the SAME opportunity in this career.

It's important to note that the 1,000-hours is the floor, not the ceiling. This minimum requirement does not preclude schools, both public and private, from offering programs with higher hours to students. The required hours would be 1,000, but like many education programs, there may be options to complete more education. And it should be noted that funding would also be available up to 1,500 hours. Massachusetts, New York, Texas, and Vermont have curriculum requirement of 1,000 hours.

A comprehensive, independent, third-party research study completed by AIR, concluded that longer hours do not affect graduation rates or improve exam pass rates. Longer programs create more debt and financial risk for students. There isn't any need for students to be in school longer than 1,000 hours. Times have changed and education needs to change. The industry has become broader and there are always changes. Schools should not be expected to meet all the varying needs. They need to provide the detailed safety and sanitation education, along with foundational skills. Stylists, as they

begin their career, will develop a focus area, and gain the specific skills they need for success. Additional education is readily available through salons, manufacturers, online programs...more available than they ever have been!

And we need to ensure that students complete their program and become licensed. Over 30% of students who complete school never get licensed. Pre-graduate testing would help students be better prepared for the exam. And it would not disrupt their career. Students can work in a salon with a work permit, but if they take their test and fail, they can no longer work. This destroys their self-confidence, and they may decide not to move forward. Remember, this is a hands-on career, taking tests can be very stressful. Let's make it easier for them to become a successful, licensed cosmetologist and provide for their family.

As an industry, it should matter to us that our licensees want and need the ability to move between states. Many states make it very difficult for this to happen. I wanted to obtain my license in both West Virginia and Kentucky, but the process was too cumbersome. This is true for most states. SB 133 provides for license-for-license exchange – if you have a valid license in another state, Ohio would accept that license and issue an Ohio license to you promptly so that you can continue earning a living. We should be welcoming licensed stylists into our state to work and grow their careers!

**I urge you to support SB 133.** Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Missy Blacker