**Proponent Testimony on SB 129**

**By Clara Osterhage**

**Before the Senate Government Oversight & Reform Committee**

**On Tuesday, December 12, 2017**

Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Uecker, Ranking Member Schiavoni and distinguished members of the Senate Government Accountability & Reform Committee, my name is Clara Osterhage, and I am the owner of R.L.O., Inc., a franchise of Great Clips, Inc. My salons are located throughout Ohio and into Kentucky, Indiana, and West Virginia. Sixty-three of my seventy-two salons are located in Ohio, so I have a vested interested here. I want to express my support for the cosmetology reforms contained in SB 129.

I have been in this business for twenty-two years, and I am certainly proud of what I have accomplished. I am currently providing jobs for nearly 750 licensed cosmetologists, many of whom are single parents. I am likely personally responsible for daily needs of over 2500 individuals when dependent family members are factored in. This is not a responsibility that I take lightly.

While some would have you believe that I am part of some huge corporate structure, I can assure you that cannot be further from the truth. Twenty-two years ago, I used all of the funds in my 403B from my work in hospital administration to open my first salon in Springfield, Ohio. I learned the hard way how to build a business from the ground up, and it hasn’t been easy. I am fortunate to be associated with a great brand – Great Clips, but that affiliation doesn’t change my responsibility as a local business owner. I visit my salons regularly and am focused on providing living incomes for my 98% female employee base. They deserve the same opportunity to work, live, and retire as you and me. Furthermore, I would say that you and I have an obligation to remove as many barriers to success as we can for them.

I am well-connected to my employees, and over the years they have brought their opinions about their educational preparation for working in this industry to me. We never understood or supported the manager license and its associated burdensome requirements which were thoughtfully removed from the law last year through SB 213, legislation which passed unanimously in both the House and the Senate. It served no logical purpose, just as the high hours requirement at the heart of SB 129 serves no purpose today. While there are many important and positive components of this bill, I want to focus on the three that are important to me as a job-provider in Ohio.

**HOURS REQUIREMENTS**

Approximately half of my employees are graduates of public school programs (high school/career tech programs funded by taxpayers at 1,000 hours of cosmetology education) and half are graduates of private schools (programs costing up to $28,000 at 1,500 hours of cosmetology education). At the end of the day, there is no discernible difference in the quality of the graduates from a technical aspect. The comparable value of the two school venues is further reinforced by the similar passage rates experienced on the cosmetology board exam. Both are prepared for the State Board examination, but neither are prepared to stand behind a chair and service the paying consumer. That readiness comes only from experience in a work environment that is capable of building technical skills and resulting levels of confidence. The school clinic floor is not a viable substitute. Equalizing the playing field by allowing both public and private students to achieve 1,000 hours of education prior to obtaining a license serves to permit both groups to begin their careers without additional costly educational barriers.

For your reference, I have provided the Ohio State Board of Cosmetology’s 1500-hour curriculum for cosmetology, as well as an example of a testing application for the public schools. The public schools in Ohio are using 125 hours of anatomy, and 375 hours towards “cosmetology-related” coursework that is also required for high school graduation – math, chemistry, and English – subjects that do not directly prepare them for working in a salon. While there is an argument that more education is better, there is no defense for the additional 375 hours provided (at a cost) by the private schools.

So, knowing that our public schools are already providing less cosmetology instruction with comparable success, the additional hours cannot be defended. Given the success that 1000-hour states are having, such as New York—arguably the epicenter of style, there is no logical reason to not decrease the Ohio hours requirement to 1000.

**LICENSE MOBILITY ACROSS STATE LINES**

Having salons that are located across state lines in Kentucky, Indiana, and West Virginia, I can say with confidence that we do not make it easy for the licensed cosmetologist to come to work in Ohio. I believe that all licenses should be treated with respect and should be endorsed across state lines without issue. Hair is Hair. When it takes several weeks and a lot of effort to establish oneself and beginning working in Ohio, there is something wrong. Exceptions are made for military personnel, so we know that it can be done. We should respect licenses obtained in other states and should welcome the licensee to work and pay taxes here.

**SHRINKING PIPELINE FOR LICENSEES**

Seventeen private cosmetology schools closed during the Board’s FY 2017, most of which were in the Dayton and Cincinnati area constituting 20% of the existing schools. It has been suggested that most are a result of financial challenges. The Executive Director of the Ohio State Board of Cosmetology submitted a very information annual report for the FY 2017 that provides a great deal of information, including school closure information (included). The bottom line is that the pool of newly graduated candidates is shrinking for the nearly 10,000 licensed salons in Ohio. It will not be surprising if the trend in closures continues, and as a business owner, it is my obligation to be involved in finding options and solutions. SB 129 creates an apprenticeship program as another option available to us. And while it will not be my desire to incorporate this concept into my own business unless the candidate pool dries up considerably more than it has, I think it is a necessary safety net that will allow salon owners to keep their doors open.

Thank you kindly for allowing me to provide proponent testimony on SB 129. When the opportunity presents itself, I urge your favorable action on this legislation.