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**Proponent Testimony on SB 129**

**from**

**Rowena Yeager**

**Before the**

**Senate Government Accountability and Reform Committee**

**December 12, 2017**

Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Uecker, Ranking Member Schiavoni and members of the Senate Government Accountability and Reform Committeethank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on the cosmetology reforms contained in SB 129, jointly sponsored by Sen. Kris Jordan (R-Ostrander) and Sen. Charleta Tavares (D-Columbus).

My name is Rowena Yeager. I have over 30 years of experience as a stylist in the beauty industry. During this time, I have been recognized nationally as a professional guest artist, business owner, and Artistic Director. In 2001, I opened Studio Wish Salon now located in Twinsburg, Ohio. I have won several awards in my career, including “2001 Best Educational Presentation” by the State Board of Cosmetology in Indiana for my stage work with Graham, “Small Business Person of the Year” by the Streetsboro Chamber of Commerce in 2005, as well as the PBA Spirit Award in 2007. My salon has been named one of the #1 color salons in the Akron-Canton area for 4 years, was pictured in Salon Today Magazine during the “Salon of the Year 2001” contest, and we recently received notification for the 10th time that my salon will be honored as a “Top 200 Salon” in the January 2018 edition of Salon Today Magazine. I have also served as the President of the Salon/Spa Section of the Professional Beauty Association (PBA) from 2008-2017 and retired after completing the maximum term of 9 years. I am also currently serving my first appointment as a Board member on the Ohio State Board of Cosmetology.

My biggest concern in the cosmetology industry today is helping create reciprocity (also known frequently as license endorsement) between states. For proper reciprocity to take hold, we need to ensure that hours are appropriate, a national exam is used and that no additional governmental barriers to licensure exist.

I believe SB 129 has the means to create that unity in my industry. State-to-state license reciprocity is something I hope to see happen as soon as possible. I believe Ohio can lead the way and bring my industry together for a larger purpose. That purpose ultimately is to develop skilled cosmetologists, which takes on-the-job education, and that education never ends—especially as a Cosmetologist where styles change so quickly. I do believe that a new Cosmetologist coming into the industry will always have a lot to learn regardless of the education they receive in school. Research tells us that the appropriate number of educational hours is 1,000. My job as an employer is to make sure I provide on-the-job, extended education to my employees to help further their skill sets as they progress in their careers.  This serves to set them up to work successfully in any salon.

It takes many years to develop customer service skills as well as technical skills. These skills cannot be properly learned on the clinic floor. Many of these skills are taught in the work environment on a daily basis, as is customary with any professional service industry. On-the-job training is essential. Continuing education in my salon is of utmost importance. I do hire out of school and train using my experience as a guide in order to maintain the service excellence for which my salon is known. My goal for each of my stylists is to set them up for success.

I currently have an intern, Andrea Martin, who drives from Youngstown (approximately an hour and twenty minutes) where she attends the Aveda Casell Cosmetology School to gain work experience in my salon. She has attested to the vast amount of knowledge she has learned at my salon training with me in the few months we have had together. The salon training solidifies and amplifies her cosmetology schoolwork. I firmly believe if you ask any student coming out of school, or after a year of work experience, you will find their knowledge of how to be a successful stylist has come from working in an environment that cultivates consistent education. I believe the knowledge I have gained in 30 years is more valuable when I share it.

We need to get students into the workforce faster to help them develop the necessary skills for success in the industry. I believe that 1,000 hours for initial schooling is what is needed to acquire a license for a cosmetologist in Ohio and throughout the country. Interesting fact: There are only 2 cosmetology training manuals used across the United States. Milady and Pivot Point. These books are not adjusted for each state and the information in them is what is required to pass any cosmetology state board test in the United States. They all base their information off 1,000 hours.

The most important education in school is safety and sanitation. Consumers need to be in a sanitary environment and their safety always needs to come first. Once the basic education is completed, a licensee should be able to work anywhere. State lines do not change the way hair is treated—other than perhaps styles that are different. Ohio could lead the way in reciprocity by moving to a national exam.

My daughter Mahlaina Yeager decided early on she wanted to attend cosmetology school. She also wanted to have the college experience many of her friends were having by moving away from home to another state. She knew I had connections with many schools and salons across the US, so we researched and visited several locations. When we visited my friend Larry Curtis’ Taylor Andrews Academy of Beauty in Utah, she fell in love with the area. Utah has a dual licensing with Barber and Cosmetology, which was also desirable. When she began school in the fall of 2011, Utah’s hours were 2,200. She did her testing in Utah in November 2012 and passed with flying colors.

When she returned to Ohio she had to again go to school to prepare for the Ohio State Board of Cosmetology test because there is no reciprocity. Our local Paul Mitchell School was gracious enough to allow her to join their mock training for testing. Others who do not have my connections may not have been so fortunate to find an acceptable and affordable program to re-take the licensure exam for Ohio. If there was national standardized testing and reciprocity between states this process could have been more seamless. It was 2 months after she returned that she was finally able to take her test in Ohio and obtain her Ohio license in January of 2013. Since her graduation Utah has decreased their hours to 1,600.

SB 129 calls for the use of a national exam. This is an essential part of national reciprocity. This would have helped my daughter in that she would not have had to take additional Ohio-specific coursework once already licensed in another state and take another test to get a license here. We need to reduce governmental burdens on those who seek cosmetology licensure in Ohio.

In 1985-1987 I attended Maplewood Joint Vocational School’s Cosmetology program. Another interesting fact regarding vocational schools that provide cosmetology for high school students is that ONLY 1,000 hours are spent in the Cosmetology program. The other 500 are spent in science, math, and health classes that are already taken by every high school student to graduate. There is logic already behind the support of 1,000 hours because we already do it in Ohio.

I am also excited to see there are provisions in this bill for apprenticeship. I will be pursuing becoming an apprentice salon sponsor as soon as it passes to provide an opportunity for individuals, many of whom are women, desiring to enter the profession. I believe my knowledge is valuable and can be passed on to individuals coming into this industry and setting them up for success. I plan on having a working educational environment that will open up job opportunities for anyone seeking the professionalism and training of a successful hairdresser and salon owner. I do what I love and love what I do every single day. Sharing this with others helps create so many opportunities.

All in all, it is about unity, and our industry prevailing as professionals with professionally licensed Cosmetologists. Safety and sanitation must be kept in the highest regard to ensure public safety. This will only happen within a licensed facility. Deregulation is a threat—and costly additional educational hours that cannot be substantiated are a major concern. Over the course of my career, I have been in make-shift salons in a basement, in a kitchen, and in other unsanitary environments that should never be allowed.  Appropriate educational hours and the opportunity for apprenticeship are necessary to allow as many individuals as possible to enter the cosmetology profession.

The knowledge behind the chemicals we use is far beyond elementary sciences. The understanding of what we use and how to use it safely for a client can only come through education.  The 1,000-hour requirement proscribed in this legislation for a full cosmetology license is plenty of time to provide the initial education for individuals to become licensed and begin their careers in the professional beauty industry.

I am proud to live in Ohio and look forward to leading a necessary change for my industry that will pave the way for other states to join us in unity.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony. I urge your support and expedient passage of SB 129

Sincerely In Gratitude,

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