



INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE

Nevada Assembly Committee on Commerce and Labor Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 225

April 4, 2025

Dear Chair Marzola and Members of the Assembly Committee on Commerce and Labor:

Nevada's licensing burdens for beauty and barbering professionals are some of the most onerous in the country. According to our nationwide study, the licensing burdens for cosmetologists here are the sixth worst and, for barbering, the single worst of any state by far.¹ AB 225 is a series of commonsense reforms that reflect best practices from other industries and the international beauty industry and will increase opportunities for Nevadans to earn an honest living.

AB 225 Overview

Exempting blow-dry styling and making minor tweaks to other safe, niche services

AB 225 would exempt the limited service of blow-dry styling from the state's 1,000-hour hair designer license, which currently requires full-service training in chemicals and cutting before a professional is allowed to use a blow dryer and brush. These services—like a special event updo or blowout—do not involve any chemicals or cutting, and use simple tools like blow dryers, combs and brushes. This is commonly performed after licensed services like coloring are completed, or at blow-dry bars that are dedicated strictly to this service. The tools used in blow-dry styling are simple, everyday tools for millions of Americans. An exempted stylist using a blow dryer on a client is just as safe as an individual blow drying their own hair at home. In addition to exempting this narrow service, Nevada should make some small tweaks to the remaining beauty requirements that are minor but nonetheless can serve as barriers or cause providers to unwittingly work illegally. These include:

- Exempt shampooing from the current training requirement of 50 hours. 20 states currently exempt shampooing entirely from licensure.
- Eliminate the need for natural hair braiders to take exams to work legally. 36 states and D.C. fully exempt braiders from licensure, and the governor of New Mexico currently has a bill on her desk to do the same.
- Eliminate the registration requirement for makeup artists. 17 states fully exempt makeup artists.

Licensed professionals supervising cutting

The bill would also allow licensed cosmetologists and barbers to closely supervise unlicensed individuals cutting hair, similar to an apprenticeship but not as a path to licensure. The licensed supervisor assumes responsibility and liability for this individual. Such a reform will allow aspiring professionals to begin working in a salon or shop before making the decision to either devote thousands of dollars and at least 1,000 hours to formal, costly schooling to offer broader, full-scale services; or to focus their career on cutting and styling without the steep cost of learning how to use chemicals.

¹ Knepper, L., Deyo, D., Sweetland, K., Tiezzi, J., & Mena, A. (2022). *License to work: A national study of burdens from occupational licensing*. Arlington, VA: Institute for Justice. <https://ij.org/report/license-to-work-3/>.

As with apprenticeship programs or cuts provided in beauty and barbering schools, clients would always be informed that their stylist does not have a license to cut hair and is under the supervision of a licensed professional.

Thanks to these types of reforms and those listed above, salon owners can also hire from a wider and more diverse pool of talent and train them as they see fit as licensed practitioners invested in the success of their own businesses. Niche service providers, such as special event hair stylists, can pursue skill-specific classes to improve in their field, instead of being forced to learn entire cosmetology curricula, most of which is irrelevant to the services they offer. Natural creatives and self-taught professionals can contribute to the beauty industry and to local and state economies. And clients retain their ability to choose who they purchase services from, with increased options. All sanitation and customer protections are maintained.

Additional modest but impactful reforms to align with national best practices

- Improving state apprenticeship programs, including removing the rule prohibiting anyone that lives within 60 miles of a school from participating in a cosmetology apprenticeship program.
- Offering a choice between school or apprenticeship for barbers, instead of requiring both.
 - Nevada requires barbers to complete 18 months of mandatory apprenticeship after also completing 1,500 hours in school, and this apprenticeship must be completed at 40 hours per week and is required of barbers but not cosmetologists. Nearly all states have no such requirement.
- Recognizing federally registered, paid Department of Labor apprenticeships.
- Improving recognition for out-of-state barber licenses.
- Allowing barbers and cosmetologists to work together in the same salon or shop, which is currently prohibited.
- Removing arbitrary “good moral character” and outdated, invasive health testing requirements.

Licensing, Safety, and Quality Service

In the more than three decades that the Institute for Justice has worked on this issue, we have often seen opponents of licensing reform present exaggerated horror stories regarding the health and safety risks bills like AB 225 will allegedly create. In state after state that has passed reforms like this, these horror stories have not materialized.

The reason for this is simple. Study after study demonstrates that higher licensing requirements do not meaningfully improve quality of services or health and safety.² Our most recent study analyzed thousands of health inspections across four states for barbershops and nail salons, and results are clear: these businesses were clean and safe, regardless of whether their workers faced burdensome licensing, lighter

² See, e.g., Sweetland, K., & Carpenter, D. M. (2022). *Raising barriers, not quality: Occupational licensing fails to improve services*. Institute for Justice. <https://ij.org/report/raising-barriers-not-quality/>; Deyo, D. (2022). Testing licensing and consumer satisfaction for beauty services in the United States. In M. M. Kleiner & M. Koumenta (Eds.), *Grease or grit? International case studies of occupational licensing and its effects on efficiency and quality* (pp. 123–142). W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. <https://doi.org/10.17848/9780880996877>; Carpenter, D. M. (2012). Testing the utility of licensing: Evidence from a field experiment on occupational regulation. *Journal of Applied Business and Economics*, 13(2), 28–41. http://www.na-businesspress.com/jabe/carpenterdm_web13_2_.pdf; Bowlblis, J. R., & Smith, A. C. (2021). Occupational licensing of social services and nursing home quality: A regression discontinuity approach. *ILR Review*, 74(1), 199–223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019793919858332>; Kleiner, M. M., & Kudrle, R. T. (2000). Does regulation affect economic outcomes? The case of dentistry. *The Journal of Law and Economics*, 43(2), 547–582. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/epdf/10.1086/467465>; Timmons and Mills, 2018; Alvarez et al., 2023. Exceptions are few and usually study licensing of health occupations in the early 20th century. See Anderson, D. M., Brown, R., Charles, K. K., & Rees, D. I. (2020). Occupational licensing and maternal health: Evidence from early midwifery laws. *Journal of Political Economy*, 128(11), 4337–4383. <https://doi.org/10.1086/710555>.

licensing, or no licensing at all.³ Any narrative that passing this bill will unleash a torrent of health and safety risks is simply not supported by the facts.

Nevada law requires that only *three percent* of the total hours of mandatory training for cosmetologists and hair designers be dedicated to infection control and prevention. Yet the code allows for up to *five percent* of training hours to be earned through modeling or “field trips”—which include going to the capitol to lobby against bills (such as this) that schools may feel will hurt their bottom lines.⁴

This minimal safety training does not justify the steep hours and costs of licensure. We examined federal data on cosmetology schools nationwide, and we found that for many aspiring beauty professionals, cosmetology school is a raw deal. It’s expensive, time-consuming, and it rarely pays off in terms of earnings. In Nevada, cosmetology schools cost an average of \$20,443, leading students to take on thousands of dollars in debt (and on average as of 2017, \$8,363 in federal student loans). Worse still, schools are graduating only 12% of students on time.⁵

Research has also shown that when states reduce required hours, schools reduce the lengths of their programs to match—and quickly.⁶ After Nevada lowered hours required for licensure in May 2015, one-third of the schools in our sample lowered their curriculum hours to match for the 2015–2016 school year. The remaining schools lowered hours for the next school year.⁷ This suggests that these laws are far in excess of what employers, consumers, and individual professionals themselves judge to be necessary. Rather, these requirements appear to be driven by state mandates, and state mandates often reflect lobbying efforts of those who stand to profit the most.

AB 225 does not eliminate licensing, nor does it prevent students from going to school. It simply creates alternatives.

Apprenticeships have long been a tradition in this industry, especially for barbering. Department of Labor registered apprenticeships for barbers and cosmetologists provide a robust, structured, and supervised model that many states, including Arizona⁸, have embraced as a more flexible alternative to school. Apprentices still must be supervised for approximately 2,000 hours and work through a set curriculum, but they are also paid for their work and even have access to need-based financial aid.^{9,10}

In addition, many states as noted above, including neighbors Utah, Arizona, and Idaho, have exempted safe, niche beauty services such as hair braiding or shampooing, without issue. These services are done without chemicals and do not require a cosmetology license to do safely.

The tremendous economic growth this bill will create is sure to outweigh any potential revenue loss due to lower licensing fee revenues. By helping more providers—many of whom currently work in the informal economy—establish legitimate, tax-paying businesses, this bill fuels entrepreneurship and expansion. As these businesses grow, they can open physical locations, create jobs, and boost the

³ West, M. (2025). *Clean cut: How clipping unnecessary licensing can grow opportunities for barbers and manicurists and keep consumers safe*. Arlington, VA: Institute for Justice. <https://ij.org/report/clean-cut/>

⁴ NAC 644A.630, NAC 644A.632

⁵ Menjou, et al. (2021). p. 13

⁶ Menjou, et al. (2021). p. 25.

⁷ Menjou, M., Bednarczuk, M., & Hunter, A. (2021). *Beauty school debt and drop-outs: How state cosmetology licensing fails aspiring beauty workers*. Arlington, VA: Institute for Justice. <https://ij.org/report/beauty-school-debt-and-drop-outs/>

⁸ ARS 32-512.02. Barbers; applications; qualifications.

<https://www.azleg.gov/viewdocument/?docName=https://www.azleg.gov/ars/32/00512-02.htm>

⁹ U.S. Department of Labor. (Apr. 2024). *Explore Registered Apprenticeship*.

<https://www.apprenticeship.gov/sites/default/files/DOLIndFSApprent101-043024-508.pdf>

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Labor. (Apr. 2016). *ApprenticeshipUSA FactSheet*.

https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/advisories/TEN/2016/TEN_20-15_Attachment_I.pdf

economy through multiple revenue streams, more than making up for any initial costs; and existing salons and barber shops will also be able to grow.

We are proud to be standing here today alongside Nevada cosmetologists and barbers who recognize it's time for the industry to change. But it is crucial to recognize the countless Nevadans who aren't here today, whose lives will improve because of this bill. They are countless because we can't count them. They are not organized like the schools, students, and industry incumbents you will hear from. They have forgone opportunities in the industry altogether; they are working informally and are afraid to come forward; they are licensed but don't want to go up against the establishment or the Boards; they are immigrants and those without strong English skills.

We urge you to pass AB 225 for those who bravely stand up here today in support, and for the many more who are locked out of this process and this industry.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer McDonald
Assistant Director of Activism
Institute for Justice
Phone: (703) 559-0262
Email: JMcDonald@ij.org