

# **BEWARE THE “D” WORD: COSMETOLOGY LICENSING UNDER ATTACK**

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Deregulation has become a “four-lettered word” in the beauty industry. Major media outlets, such as National Public Radio (NPR), The Wall Street Journal, the Atlantic, multiple local newspapers, and online blogs, have printed articles attacking occupational licensing - and cosmetology licensing has been the main target to drive the point home with law makers.

These misinformed perceptions of the need for occupational licensing are shared by conservative groups like The Goldwater Institute and The Institute for Justice. Though apparent to us in the beauty industry, these groups do not see cosmetology as what it truly is - a PROFESSION that, without proper oversight and regulation, stands to put consumers and professionals at risk of injury, infection, and the spread of disease.

## **WHAT’S BEING SAID**

Law makers across the U.S. are looking for any and all ways to create less government and do away with what they deem as “unnecessary regulations.” According to those opposed, cosmetology practices just don’t require the amount of skill that merits any formal education or training; In a nutshell, the requirement of an education, an exam, and a license denies would-be cosmetologists the right to earn a living by wasting valuable time in school when they could be out in the world making money right now.

In this uneducated view, occupational licensing, including cosmetology licensing, is a regulatory scheme in place as a roadblock for individuals wishing to enter into the cosmetology industry; a barrier and means to prevent market competition.

## **WHAT IT MEANS**

The field of cosmetology is not being valued as a legitimate and professional career choice. In the opinion of licensing proponents, cosmetology is not a profession requiring skill, thought or training - And education and licensing is not viewed as necessary.

The practices of the beauty industry are hands on, physical, and personal. Infections can begin and be transferred in many ways, including through contact with clippers, headrests, pedicure bowls, manicure tables, files, razors, and unwashed hands. Formal education and industry regulation is necessary for a professional to learn the techniques, principles, sanitation, and chemical procedures to safeguard consumers, and themselves, against injury and illness.

If deregulation of cosmetology were to become a reality, any person without any formal education would be able to practice cosmetology, putting consumers at risk of injuries, burns, infections, and the spread of diseases, such as hepatitis and Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus (MRSA), due to unsanitary practices.

## THE TRUTH

There are 1,098,000 professionals in the beauty industry and, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Outlook Handbook, overall employment is expected to grow 14 percent from 2010 to 2020, as fast as the average for all occupations. Further, this report also states that 85 percent of licensed individuals employed in the beauty industry are women. The professional beauty industry, under current rules and regulation, is not an industry with roadblocks and barriers to success, it is strong and growing.

However, like any industry, beauty is not an industry without room for improvement. Occupational licensing and government regulations should be reviewed and there are ways to streamline processes and reduce bureaucratic red tape. There are also industry groups looking at issues like license mobility, consistency among states in the number of school hours required, continuing education, a national exam, and other issues.

Members of the professional beauty industry have invested in a serious and legitimate career field. Safety standards and professionalism in the beauty industry should never be weakened or compromised. Licensing of all beauty professionals is essential to the integrity and continued professionalism of the beauty industry.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

Stand up for your profession! You have the knowledge and power to speak out against licensing proponents and educate legislators in your state about the importance of education and the true risks consumers face without oversight of this hands-on industry.

Visit [probeauty.org/advocacy](http://probeauty.org/advocacy) to learn more about how you can get involved and make your voice heard on behalf of all hard-working beauty professionals.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Myra Irizarry is the Director of Government Affairs for the Professional Beauty Association (PBA). PBA advocates for the rights of every member and is dedicated to tracking, introducing and responding to legislation at both the state and federal levels with potential to affect the beauty industry. Along with our Government Advocacy program, PBA provides our members with Education, Signature Events, Charitable Outreach, Research and Business Resources. Visit [probeauty.org](http://probeauty.org) for more information. Contact Myra directly at [myra@probeauty.org](mailto:myra@probeauty.org).