Deregulation is currently one of the most dangerous threats to the professional beauty industry. State legislators make the decision whether or not to keep state boards of cosmetology intact. In just a few months, legislation that would deregulate your state board of cosmetology could be introduced, pass through the proper legislative committees, pass your State House and State Senate, and be signed into law by your Governor. Standards for safety and sanitation would no longer exist. There would be no inspectors to examine salons, no schooling required, no exams, no licenses, and no consumer complaint resolution processes. Harmful to both our entire industry and the general public, these threats must be stopped.

With the potential hygienic risks associated with cosmetology, states traditionally put licensing systems in place to give cosmetology boards the authority to regulate cosmetology in their respective states. However, multiple state legislatures, facing pressures from peers and private conservative think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for Justice and Goldwater Institute, to reduce the role of the government are now opting to deregulate licensed occupations – and cosmetology licensing has been the main target. The Professional Beauty Association (PBA) supports licensing and regulation in the beauty industry and tracks legislation in all fifty states, ensuring bills do not get introduced without an opportunity to fight to uphold the professionalism of our industry.
WHAT'S BEING SAID
State lawmakers are looking for any and all ways to create less government and do away with what is in their minds, “unnecessary regulations.” According to these elected officials, cosmetology practices just don’t require the amount of skill that merits any formal education or training; In a nutshell, the requirements of an education, an exam, and a license are all “barriers to employment” and deny 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 uninformed view, occupational licensing is a regulatory scheme in place as a roadblock for individuals wishing to enter into the beauty industry as estheticians, stylists, barbers and nails technicians. Although Federal officials do not have the power to do away with occupational licensing, they increasingly are becoming a part of the conversation. Most recently, Former House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) spoke out against occupational licensing at an American Enterprise Institute (AEI) Conference, stating “It can take more than 10 times as long for someone to acquire a cosmetology license as opposed to a license to become a medical technician.” Reported on by The Hill in May, 2014, Cantor said at the conference that he would reach out to governors around the country to reform the licensing system.

THE TRUTH
Beauty industry professionals are not being valued as legitimate and professional, which is dangerous not only for our industry but for clients and the general public. We know the truth: 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.

WHAT COULD HAPPEN
The negative effects of deregulation would be sweeping, from stylists all the way up to manufacturers of “Professional-Use Only” products. For licensed beauty professionals, this would mean your education and your license would no longer mean anything, as anyone could wake up one day and decide they are going to cut hair out of their home for a profit – no experience or knowledge needed. For the general public, this could be incredibly dangerous. 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. There would not be a state board for consumers to submit health violations to, and according to the Institute for Justice, consumers would just receive services “at their own risk.”
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 13 percent from 2012 to 2022, 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, and we need to work with state legislators rather than against them to make commonsense, practical changes. PBA Executive Director Steve Sleeper recently sent an open letter to our industry regarding these attacks. He stressed the dangers of ignoring the discrepancies in license requirements state by state. For instance, cosmetology license applicants in New York must complete a 1,000 hour state-approved course of study to get a license to operate. In contrast, applicants in Iowa must complete 2,100 hours. “In the long run, the vast disparity among state licensing requirements will leave our industry vulnerable to legislative attacks and the risk of deregulation,” Sleeper wrote.

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.

GETTING TO WORK, GETTING INVOLVED, FIGHTING BACK
To proactively address these issues, PBA has organized a professional beauty industry working group with representation from key associations and sectors of our industry, including schools, independent salon owners, multi-unit salon owners, state cosmetology boards and other stakeholders.

“We are crafting a united message of reform by creating a documented and well researched reform platform for our industry to broadly endorse,” said Steve Sleeper. “The platform will address issues like common education hours for scope of practice, license mobility, health and safety, infection control, national testing, continuing education and other standardized licensing criteria.” PBA will provide more information on the industry working group as it becomes available.

You can advocate for your profession and the industry you love by taking part in PBA’s advocacy programs.
Stay informed and get involved:

- **Sign up for Action Alerts** at probeauty.org/takeaction. Input your contact information and we will keep you informed on all legislative matters affecting the industry. Alerts are targeted to your state and your line of work.

- **Sign up for the “I Am a Professional. I Am Licensed.™ Movement** at probeauty.org/iam. This awareness campaign is bringing together a stronger, more united front of licensed professionals. We will arm you with information to share with your clients on why licensing is important to protect the public from potential harm and the spread of communicable diseases.

- **Become a PBA State Captain** by contacting Government Affairs Manager Bridget Sharpe at bridget@probeauty.org. PBA State Captains are the eyes and ears on the ground when it comes to legislative matters that directly affect your industry, your business and your employees. State Captains advocate on behalf of the industry by forwarding action alerts to their colleagues in the industry, sharing important updates on their social media networks, and contacting their legislators when necessary. No legislative experience is needed to become a PBA State Captain. PBA’s Government Affairs Department will help you become the best advocate for yourself and the industry you love and will guide you along the way.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**
Bridget Sharpe is the Manager 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 for more information. Contact Bridget directly at bridget@probeauty.org.