



INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE

Institute for Justice's Testimony in Support of HB 1498

January 19, 2023

Dear Chairman Fowler and Members of the House General Laws Committee:

My name is Meagan Forbes, and I am an attorney at the Institute for Justice. The Institute for Justice is a national nonprofit public interest law firm that works to protect civil liberties, including economic liberty. For 30 years, we have helped reform beauty industry licensing laws in over 24 states through litigation and legislative efforts.

The Institute for Justice supports HB 1498 for three reasons. First, threading is safe. Threading does not use any chemicals or dangerous mechanical devices. Threaders simply use a piece of cotton thread and their hands to form loops around hairs to remove them from the follicle. Nationwide, there have been very few complaints filed with state cosmetology boards about health and safety issues related to threading. Licensing threaders does not provide more protection for consumers.

Second, esthetician program curricula rarely teach threading skills. Threading is a traditional grooming technique that comes from South Asia and the Middle East. It is a cultural practice that is passed down from generation to generation through family and friends. Threaders train and practice their skills outside of traditional classroom settings. Yet Virginia law requires threaders to attend esthetician school to become licensed. Threaders are required to spend thousands of dollars and complete at least 600 training hours in esthetician programs that do not relate to their services. This leaves threaders in Virginia with two options: to incur substantial debt for irrelevant training or to work in underground economies where they face exploitation and the threat of undue enforcement actions, including criminal prosecution.

Third, HB 1498 is a jobs bill. It is an opportunity bill. Threading has become a popular hair removal technique across the country. In 2020, data from Yelp showed that threading was one of the most searched beauty trends.¹ Today, 20 states completely exempt threaders from licensure. In these states, threaders freely and safely open and work in legitimate salons that are easily accessible to consumers. By removing the license requirement for threaders, HB 1498 will reduce barriers to entrepreneurship and help consumers find threaders to provide this in-demand service. Finally, HB 1498 would allow threaders to exercise their right to earn a living and grow their businesses.

¹ Yelp Blog (2020), *Yelp Reveals New Beauty Data: What People Are Searching for Now and What Trends Are on the Rise*, <https://blog.yelp.com/news/yelp-reveals-new-beauty-data/>.



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In conclusion, I encourage you to support HB 1498 to ensure that threaders have every opportunity to thrive in Virginia. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,

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