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HB322 (Glass)  
Proponent Testimony

I am Leslie Roste representing the Future of the Beauty Industry Coalition, a collective of companies that provide beauty services in multiple states such as Ulta, Sport Clips, Great Clips, and other national brands. One of our coalition pillars is true, bi-directional license mobility. I have worked as the industry sponsor with the CSG under a DOD grant to develop compact legislation in the cosmetology industry. License mobility is a significant issue that affects licensees, businesses in your state and the military families that come into and leave your state. Virginia's current reciprocity (endorsement) policy requires that licensees wishing to work in the state show proof that they have completed 1500 hours of education or substantially equivalent (1200) hours and passed both a written and practical exam. You must also obtain a letter of certification from any state where you hold a current license – these can take weeks and even months depending on the state. For military members this process is expedited, but they still must get certification letters from current state of licensure and have been actively using their license for the 2 years preceding entering Virginia. Finally, Virginia also offers Universal licensing, which also requires a letter of certification, having held a license for 3 years and the same training and testing requirements for reciprocity. All these steps take time which can last weeks and even months and money, but can also require re-testing or additional school hours. If a military spouse comes to Virginia either as a newer licensee or as a licensee that was unable to obtain licensure in the immediately preceding state, they would not qualify for expedited military license recognition. A compact is the only form of reciprocity that is bi-directional and benefits your actual constituents should they need to leave the state temporarily and be able to work. I know no one wants their residents to leave, even temporarily, but this often cannot be avoided and there is no reason your residents should not share the same benefit as someone coming into Virginia to work.

One of the concerns I often hear is about people working in Virginia whose state of original licensure requires fewer training hours than your state. Virginia currently requires 1500 hours of education to become a licensed cosmetologist. However, there are currently 5 states (NY, MA, VT, TX and CA) that only require 1000 hours and there are multiple states at 1200. The trend in the industry has been to reduce hours and barriers to entry so this list of lower hour states will likely grow. That said, the state's responsibility is to license people to be safe, not necessarily "good" – that comes with time and practice and in all states, the Health & Public Safety principles that protect your consumers is covered in the first 500 hours of education as it is necessary to pass licensure exams.

The compact includes a comprehensive national database that would be significant in reducing the all-too-common license fraud and other criminal activity in this industry.

Beyond licensees, where the benefits of an interstate compact are clear, businesses in your state benefit as well. These businesses are often unable to use licensees from nearby states to fill schedules and maintain their open hours, reducing the revenue to both the business and the state. With legislation passed in Kentucky in 2023, it has been introduced in PA & MD this session and will likely be introduced in DE and WV yet this session. The ability for employers to draw from neighboring states and for licensees to work across state lines is crucial.

Across the country we have had support for this compact from salon groups (chain & independent), licensees, the military and even schools – their national association supports this and many states have offered their schools lobbyists to support these measures. There is no doubt that it will take some time for everyone to understand how this works, but it has been done in healthcare successfully for over 20 years so I am confident it can work in this industry.