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Testimony from:  
Marc Hyden, Director of State Government Affairs, the R Street Institute

In SUPPORT of SB 214, “Barbers and Cosmetologists; the number of apprenticeship hours required; change”

March 13, 2019

House Regulated Industries Committee

Chairman and members of the committee:

Thank you for considering my testimony today. My name is Marc Hyden, and I am a Georgia resident and the Director of State Government Affairs for the R Street Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research organization. Our mission is to engage in policy research and outreach to promote free markets and limited, effective government in many areas, including occupational licensing reform. That is why SB 214 is of special interest to us.

The State of Georgia has the 14<sup>th</sup> most burdensome occupational licensing laws in the country, which forces prospective workers to clear costly and time-consuming hurdles in order to make a living. However, oftentimes, these hurdles are wholly unnecessary and do little to benefit the public.<sup>1</sup> For example, in many cases, current law requires would-be barbers, cosmetologists and beauty technicians to obtain thousands of hours of education or complete an even longer apprenticeship, in addition to being a person of “good moral character.”<sup>2</sup> This goes far beyond what is needed, and thankfully, SB 214 works toward easing these restrictions.

“Good moral character” clauses give licensing boards overbroad power to reject licensing applications based on ambiguous guidelines, including petty mistakes made by the applicant. This can prevent the formerly incarcerated from entering the workforce, which helps keep them out of work and in poverty, thus encouraging them to return to crime to make a living.

Requiring barbers, cosmetologists and various beauty technicians to either complete extensive schooling or serve double the amount of time as an apprentice – sometimes for upwards of 3,000 hours – is also problematic. Knowing that they may be bogged down in an underpaid apprenticeship can discourage individuals from pursuing a career in this field. In short, the apprenticeship lengths are simply far too long and should, at the very most, match the acceptable educational requirements.



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The result of the current policies is negative. They can prevent those with marks on their criminal record from finding gainful employment, and the time and costs associated with such apprenticeships can dissuade others from entering the field. This effects consumers as well as workers. After all, fewer barbers, cosmetologists and beauty technicians means fewer consumer choices and less competition, which can in turn keep customers' prices higher.

We at the R Street Institute believe that Georgia must do better than this, and that is why it is critical that the Legislature pass SB 214.

Thank you for your time,

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<sup>1</sup> Carpenter, Dick M., et al., "License to Work" 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Institute for Justice, November 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 10 of Title 43 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated.