

RE: Support for ND HB 1126

Dear North Dakota Legislators,

My name is Jesse Skittrall, and I am the program director for the Atarashii Apprenticeship Program. I am writing to urge your support for ND HB 1126. Thank you for taking the time to review this critical legislation and consider the positive impact it will have on North Dakota's beauty industry and workforce development.

I am a sixth-generation cosmetologist, holding licenses in cosmetology, hair design, barbering, manicuring, and esthetics. I have written curriculum for the beauty trades and have successfully led programs in private, for-profit higher education institutions. Our company operates a U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)-approved Beauty Trades Apprenticeship Program, which is already in place in over sixteen (16) states.

ND HB 1126 represents a forward-thinking approach to workforce development in the beauty industry. The current licensure system places excessive barriers to entry, requiring future practitioners to complete extensive hours and commit to high financial obligations before earning an income. These challenges disproportionately impact lower-income individuals and those in rural communities who cannot relocate for training.

The Problem with the Current System

Traditional beauty schools often focus solely on preparing students for licensure exams rather than equipping them with the practical skills needed for long-term career success. Many graduates enter the workforce unprepared, frequently hearing statements like, *"Everything you need to learn, you'll learn once you're out there."*

This results in:

- **High attrition rates** – 83% of licensed professionals leave the industry within 3-5 years.
- **Financial burden** – The average beauty school student incurs \$9,000 in debt for a program that costs approximately \$18,000, yet earns an average annual wage of only \$26,000.
- **Inefficiencies in workforce development** – Schools profit from student enrollment, but they fail to provide a sustainable pipeline of skilled professionals.

Apprenticeship as the Solution

Apprenticeship provides an **"Earn While You Learn"** model that allows individuals to gain real-world experience in a structured environment while being overseen by the Federal DOL and the North Dakota State Board of Cosmetology. This model enhances education by combining hands-on training with regulatory oversight, ensuring apprentices learn both industry skills and essential sanitation and safety protocols.

Key Benefits of Apprenticeship:

- Apprentices start with a job instead of debt.
- 93% of apprentices stay with their Training Agent employer after licensure.
- The average journeyman salary is **\$77,000**—nearly three times the industry average for traditional graduates.
- Apprentices contribute to the tax base while learning, unlike students who rely on federal loans and grants.

Impact on North Dakota's Economy

ND HB 1126 will be particularly beneficial for **rural communities** by allowing local salons and beauty businesses to train talent from their own areas. Under the current model, aspiring professionals often have to leave their hometowns for schooling and may never return. With apprenticeships, these individuals can **stay, train, and contribute** to their local economies.

Proven Success

Atarashii Apprentice Program has demonstrated the effectiveness of this model:

- **86% completion rate** (compared to traditional beauty school graduation rates).
- **97% first-time pass rate on licensure exams.**
- **92% of apprentices remain in the industry 3-5 years post-licensure.**
- Apprentices achieve **75% productivity rates** by program completion.
- We currently have a **waiting list of 10 salons in North Dakota** eager to participate in the program for esthetics, manicuring, and hair design.

A Blueprint for the Nation

ND HB 1126 has the potential to set a national precedent by addressing long-standing issues in beauty industry education and workforce retention. By supporting this bill, North Dakota can lead the way in creating a **more accessible, equitable, and effective** pathway into the beauty trades.

I urge you to support ND HB 1126 to empower future beauty professionals, strengthen local economies, and modernize beauty education in North Dakota.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any opportunity to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Jessee Skittrall

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