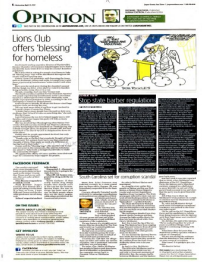


Title: **Stop state barber regulations**
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OTHER VIEW

Stop state barber regulations

BY ELISABETH ALLEN

Smith's Barber Shop in Landrum, South Carolina, was founded in 1909 and still operates as a family-run store. Snazzy's Barber & Beauty in Aiken recently celebrated its 40th anniversary as one of the oldest African American-owned businesses in the area.

These shops have served their clients faithfully for decades, but are now subject to an increasing amount of state regulations placed on barbers and cosmetologists.

When entering into the barber or cosmetology fields, workers are faced with 51 or 26 regulations, respectively. Barber rules vary from the application for a barber school and the dimensions of that school, to clean paper covering each headrest for each new client and the prohibition of torn upholstery.

They even require individuals applying for a barber license to complete a chest X-ray. All of these regulations are enforced by the Board of Barber Examiners, which is a public body. Not included here are regulations for braiding hair or using chemical relaxers, each of which require separate licenses.

Cosmetology rules are even more onerous. The state mandates that

cosmetology schools maintain a certain number of hair dryers, manicure

tables and even dry erase boards. Their entire curriculum is mapped out, down to how many hours spent tweezing, with no room for deviation. All salons must have an EPA-registered hospital-level disinfectant to clean their tools. They must also launder used towels by immersing them in 140-degree water for at least 15 minutes.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), South Carolina barbers are some of the lowest paid in the country by annual mean wage. With the extensive training required, annual fee that accompanies licensure, registering to be a barbershop, and the multitude of regulations in the shop, there is little incentive for people to become barbers or to open their own business.

In the previous legislative session, a law was passed that required barber schools and instructors to obtain a license from the Board of Barber Examiners. In the session before that, the legislature passed what are now the regulations on cosmetology educational requirements and salon licensure.

Despite the staggering amount of rules to follow to pursue a profession

or open a business in these fields, the General Assembly continues to propose further regulations.

Lawmakers also want to regulate offshoot industries like the hair-removal process known as electrology. The most recent proposal was the Electrology Practice Act, which would create an Electrology Licensure Committee and require electrologists to become licensed. Becoming an electrologist would mean completing 600 hours of instruction and practice, fees and inspection of the facilities where one is practicing.

All of these regulations are supposed to promote public safety.

But a client isn't likely to be harmed by torn upholstery or a cosmetologist who hasn't completed the requisite number of tweezing hours. Whatever the intent, the outcome is the same: unnecessary hindrances and higher prices for everyone. People of limited means simply cannot afford to meet all these requirements, which means fewer people will enter these fields and those who remain have every reason to keep prices high.

A more reasonable policy is to remove as many of these state-pro-mulgated burdens as possible, and let the private sector figure out how to regulate manicures and haircuts.

Elisabeth Allen is a policy analyst at the South Carolina Policy Council.