



Testimony on SB 217
Senate Education Committee
January 26, 2023

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the Committee. My name is Kyle Thomas and I am the Director of Legislative and Policy Affairs for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). Thank you for hearing this HECC-sponsored bill today.

In addition to the important role of coordinating higher education policy, institutional funding, and student financial aid, HECC plays an active role in the authorization and oversight of private degree granting institutions and private career schools seeking to do business in Oregon, and this bill addresses an organizational challenge related to this responsibility.

While there are dozens of subjects taught at higher education institutions and private career schools in this state, HECC is currently responsible for setting curriculum standards in only one: the field of cosmetology. This responsibility exists within HECC in sharp contrast to where the responsibility for the development of curriculum standards in licensed fields typically lies, which is with the licensing board responsible for the establishment of professional standards and the issuance of professional licenses.

This means, in Oregon, the Oregon Board of Massage Therapists sets curriculum standards for the training of massage therapists, the Oregon Board of Tax Practitioners sets curriculum standards for the training of tax preparers, the Oregon Real Estate Agency curriculum determines appropriate training for brokers, and so on and so forth, except, despite there being a Board of Cosmetology, it is HECC that is responsible for the development of cosmetology curriculum standards.

SB 217 transfers the responsibility of oversight of curriculum in the field of cosmetology from HECC to the Health Licensing Office, and adds a licensed practitioner of cosmetology who is a representative of a cosmetology school to the Board of Cosmetology. It was developed in collaboration with the Health Licensing Office, and incorporates the feedback of the cosmetology community.

If passed, HECC will continue to do for cosmetology schools what it does for all schools in the private career school space. We will license instructors, we will review academic policies, and we will ensure financial stability—all functions designed to ensure that students are protected and able to benefit from a quality educational experience. However, we will shed the responsibility for determining hours of instruction and required educational activities for the one subject area for which HECC determines those standards, and transfer them to a body far more knowledgeable and equipped to do so.

I hope you will support this bill. Thank you for your time today.