



NORTH CAROLINA • LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

## 2025–2026 Session Cosmetology & Barbering Bills

NC General Assembly • 127th Session • Updated October 1, 2026

NC 127TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY — 2025–2026 SESSION • [NCLEG.GOV](https://www.ncleg.gov)

### What ACSP Members Need to Know

The North Carolina General Assembly's 2025–2026 session has produced significant proposed changes to the laws governing cosmetology, esthetics, nail technology, and barbering in our state. The most consequential bill — **S 808** — passed the Senate 29–15 on May 5, 2026 after substantial revision, and would cut training hours, create a new hair designer license, and eliminate the natural hair care specialist license in favor of a low-cost certification. As of October 1, 2026, **S 808 has not yet passed the House** and has been re-referred to the House Rules Committee on June 30, 2026. A competing deregulation bill, **S 656**, would go further — exempting natural hair care, blow-dry styling, and makeup artistry from all licensing requirements — but has not advanced beyond its initial Senate committee referral. ACSP is monitoring both bills closely. **Nothing has been signed into law.**

Cosmetology Bill

Barbering Bill

Joint / Crossover Bill

Passed Senate

## Active Legislation — October 1, 2026

### S 808 **WATCH CLOSELY — Board of Cosmetic Art Examiners Amendments: New License Categories, Reduced Hours & Natural Hair Overhaul**

Passed Senate 29–15 • May 5, 2026 • Awaiting House Floor Vote

 Filed April 21, 2026 • Re-referred House Rules Committee June 30, 2026

 Sens. Galey, Moffitt, Sanderson + Bradley, Mayfield, Mohammed, Waddell

The most sweeping proposed change to NC cosmetic art law in years. After six versions and multiple committee substitutes, the Senate passed S 808 with broad bipartisan support. The bill is now in the House, where it received a favorable committee substitute on June 30, 2026 but has not yet received a House floor vote. Key provisions of the Senate-passed version:

- ① **New "Hair Designer" license** — 900-hour curriculum + exam + fee; a new category separate from full cosmetology
- ② **New "Hair Design Teacher" license** — 500-hour curriculum requirement
- ③ **Cosmetology hours reduced** from 1,500 to 1,200 hours
- ④ **Cosmetology teacher hours reduced** from 800 to 500 hours
- ⑤ **Continuing education cut** from 8 to 4 hours annually for license renewal
- ⑥ **Natural hair care specialist license eliminated** — replaced by a voluntary infection-control certificate (10-hour course); existing licensees auto-convert to certificate holders free of charge
- ⑦ **Natural hair care teacher license eliminated**
- ⑧ **Apprentice license category removed** — existing holders converted to full cosmetologist status
- ⑨ **Reduced-hour cross-licensing** — licensed hair designers may add esthetician credentials at 300 hours and manicurist credentials at 100 hours

 **NOT YET LAW — Passed the NC Senate but has NOT passed the House. The House Rules Committee received a favorable substitute on June 30, 2026, but no floor vote has been scheduled as of October 1, 2026. The House version may differ from the Senate version.**

 [View Bill History & Text](#) ↗

## S 656 **Cosmetic Art Deregulation — Natural Hair, Blow-Dry & Makeup Licensing Exemptions**

Stalled — Referred to Senate Rules Committee · No Further Action

 Introduced March 26, 2025 · No Action Since Introduction

 Sens. Moffitt, Grafstein, Bradley + Chitlik, Murdock, Salvador, Waddell

A competing deregulation bill that would go further than S 808. S 656 would fully **exempt natural hair care, blow-dry styling, and makeup artistry from NC licensing requirements**. Practitioners of these services would only need to complete a one-time, four-hour sanitation and safety course approved by the Board — no school enrollment, no exam, no license. Key provisions:

- Natural hair care specialist license converts to **voluntary certification only** — practitioners may work without it but may not advertise as "certified"
- Shops offering only these three exempt services would **no longer need a cosmetology shop license**
- Exempt practitioners could work in traditional salons, private residences, and event locations
- Barbering regulations updated to allow cosmetic art board licensees to operate in barbershops

Introduced March 26, 2025 and immediately referred to the Senate Rules Committee — it has received no committee hearing, vote, or further action. With S 808 advancing as the Legislature's preferred vehicle, S 656 is unlikely to move independently in this session.

 **Stalled in committee. S 808 has absorbed the Legislature's attention on this topic. S 656 may serve as a fallback or leverage position.**

 [View Bill History & Text ↗](#)

## H 269 **Workforce Freedom & Protection Act — Occupational Licensing Reform**

In House Committee — Commerce & Economic Development / Judiciary 2

 Introduced March 5, 2025 · Referred to Commerce & Economic Development Committee

 Reps. Cohn, Crawford, K. Brown, Logan + 28 bipartisan co-sponsors

A broad occupational licensing reform bill that amends NC General Statutes Chapter 93B (Occupational Licensing Boards) and Chapter 95 related to workforce protections. While not exclusively a cosmetology bill, its scope touches professional licensing standards that govern cosmetic art boards. The bill carries significant bipartisan support with 28+ co-sponsors. Referred to Commerce & Economic Development with subsequent referral to Judiciary 2 and House Rules if favorably reported. No further action has been documented since the March 2025 referral.

 **Broad scope — ACSP should monitor for any amendments that specifically address cosmetology or barbering board structures or licensing pathways.**

 [View Bill History & Text ↗](#)

## Resources for NC Beauty Professionals



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Track all bills in real time, read full bill text, follow committee calendars, and find your legislators at the official NC legislature website.

[Visit ncleg.gov ↗](https://www.ncleg.gov)



### NC Board of Cosmetic Art

Licensing, renewals, school approvals, infection control courses, and official guidance on any regulatory changes from the NC Board of Cosmetic Art Examiners.

[Visit nccosmeticarts.com ↗](https://www.nccosmeticarts.com)



### NC Barber Examiners

The NC State Board of Barber Examiners oversees barber licensing, school inspections, and disciplinary matters for NC barbering professionals.

[Visit ncbarber.com ↗](https://www.ncbarber.com)



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### **Association of Cosmetology Salon Professionals (ACSP)**

Legislative tracking for NC beauty industry professionals • Updated October 1, 2026

Source: [ncleg.gov](https://ncleg.gov) • [nccosmeticarts.com](https://nccosmeticarts.com) • [ncbarber.com](https://ncbarber.com)

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