

STATE OF NEW YORK

5438

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

February 21, 2025

Introduced by Sen. CLEARE -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Consumer Protection

AN ACT to amend the general business law, in relation to the license requirements for natural hair styling

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Legislative findings. The legislature hereby finds that
2 natural hair styling is a practice that is rich in cultural history. The
3 legislature further finds that natural hair styling is distinct and
4 separate from other practices of cosmetology. Therefore, the legislature
5 finds that natural hair styling shall have its own licensing plan that
6 is culturally sensitive and takes into account the history of natural
7 hair stylists.

8 § 2. Subdivision 5 of section 400 of the general business law, as
9 amended by chapter 343 of the laws of 1998, is amended to read as
10 follows:

11 5. The practice of "natural hair styling" means providing for a fee,
12 or any consideration or exchange, whether direct or indirect, any of the
13 following services to the hair of a human being: shampooing, arranging,
14 dressing, twisting, wrapping, weaving, extending, locking or braiding
15 the hair or beard by either hand or mechanical appliances. Such practice
16 shall not include cutting, shaving or trimming hair except that such
17 activities are permissible to the extent that such activities are inci-
18 dental to the practice of natural hair styling. Such practice shall not
19 include the application of dyes, reactive chemicals, or other prepara-
20 tions to alter the color or to straighten, curl, or alter the structure
21 of the hair. Techniques which result in tension on hair roots such as
22 certain types of braiding, weaving, wrapping, locking and extending of
23 the hair may only be performed by a [~~natural hair styling~~] person
24 licensed to practice natural hair styling pursuant to section four
25 hundred six-a of this article, or a cosmetology licensee who has

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 successfully completed an approved course of study in such techniques.
2 Natural hair styling is distinct from the practice of cosmetology and
3 does not include the application of dyes, reactive chemicals, or other
4 preparations to alter the color of the hair or to straighten, curl, or
5 alter the structure of the hair; or the use of chemical hair joining
6 agents such as synthetic tape, keratin bonds, or fusion bonds.

7 § 3. The general business law is amended by adding a new section 406-a
8 to read as follows:

9 § 406-a. Natural hair styling license application; educational
10 requirements; procedures. 1. a. Any person intending to practice natural
11 hair styling, or to own and operate an appearance enhancement business
12 solely offering natural hair styling services, shall first make applica-
13 tion to the secretary for a license therefor.

14 b. Such application shall be in a form and manner prescribed by the
15 secretary, and provided to the applicant in their natural language or in
16 a language in which the applicant is proficient.

17 c. Each application shall be accompanied by the appropriate fee as
18 prescribed by this article.

19 d. Each application shall be accompanied by a certificate of a duly
20 licensed physician, or nurse practitioner to the extent authorized by
21 law and consistent with subdivision three of section six thousand nine
22 hundred two of the education law on a form prescribed by the secretary,
23 showing freedom from any infectious or communicable disease which
24 certificate shall have been issued within thirty days prior to the date
25 of the filing of the application.

26 2. a. Each applicant shall be required to satisfactorily complete an
27 educational training program given and administered by natural hair
28 stylist training schools, schools which provide for natural hair styling
29 training, or natural hair stylists licensed pursuant to this article,
30 which shall not exceed forty hours and of which a significant portion
31 shall be focused on health and safety protocols, and which shall include
32 a practical skills assessment solely to demonstrate proficiency in the
33 braiding of hair. The secretary shall review and approve such educa-
34 tional training program. Upon completion of the required course, an
35 applicant shall receive a certificate evidencing satisfactory completion
36 thereof.

37 b. All educational materials and the practical skills assessment shall
38 be administered in the applicant's natural language or in a language in
39 which the applicant is proficient.

40 3. a. Any person seventeen years of age or older may apply to the
41 secretary for a license to practice natural hair styling.

42 b. Each such application shall also be accompanied by satisfactory
43 evidence of the applicant having completed the required educational
44 component as well as the practical skills assessment.

45 c. Any applicant for a license to practice natural hair styling may
46 submit satisfactory evidence of licensure to practice an equivalent
47 occupation issued by any other state, territory, protectorate or depend-
48 ency of the United States or any other country in lieu of the evidence
49 of education and practical skills assessments required by this section,
50 or the applicant is a member of the household of a member of the armed
51 forces of the United States, national guard or reserves and was a member
52 of such household before such member relocated to the state.

53 4. Upon acceptance by the secretary of a proper application for an
54 operator's license to practice natural hair styling, the secretary may
55 issue a temporary operator's license which shall expire six months from
56 issuance. Upon good cause shown, the secretary may renew a temporary

1 operator's license for one additional six-month period upon filing the
2 appropriate application and fee.

3 5. Notwithstanding the educational requirements of this section and
4 the testing requirements of this section, or any other education or
5 testing requirements of this article, an unlicensed person practicing
6 natural hair styling in New York state or any other state or country for
7 at least five years shall be permitted to apply for a natural hair styl-
8 ing license in New York state. The applicant shall be issued a temporary
9 natural hair styling license upon providing evidence of such required
10 work experience. If evidence of work experience is not available for
11 any reason, an applicant shall self-attest to such required experience
12 on a form approved by the secretary. Such temporary license shall be
13 valid for a period of two years and shall become permanent upon the
14 applicant's completion of an educational course, given and administered
15 by natural hair stylist training schools, schools which provide for
16 natural hair styling training, or natural hair stylists licensed pursu-
17 ant to this article, which shall not exceed twenty hours and shall be
18 focused on health and safety protocols.

19 6. An applicant who otherwise has met the licensing requirements of
20 this article for a natural hair stylist license who shall provide satis-
21 factory evidence they have been actively and continuously engaged in the
22 practice of natural hair styling for at least one year prior to the
23 effective date of this section, may be issued a license for natural hair
24 styling pursuant to this article. Notwithstanding the educational and
25 testing requirements of this section, a person licensed to practice
26 barbering under article twenty-eight of this chapter who otherwise has
27 met the licensing requirements of this article may be issued a license
28 to practice natural hairstyling.

29 7. a. Notwithstanding any provision contained in this article to the
30 contrary, if any person, eligible for any license pursuant to this arti-
31 cle, should be called to active military service at or during the time
32 application for any license is required to be filed and license fee
33 paid, pursuant to the provisions of this article, the period within
34 which said application may be filed and license fee may be paid, is
35 extended on behalf of such person, until three months after the termi-
36 nation of said military service.

37 b. In the case of persons who are called to active military service
38 and will be discharged from active military service, the period of two
39 years specified in paragraph d of subdivision two of this section need
40 not be continuous. The length of time such person was engaged in the
41 practice of natural hair styling before entering active military service
42 may be added to any period of time during which such person was or is
43 engaged in the practice of nail specialty, waxing, natural hair styling,
44 esthetics or cosmetology after the termination of active military
45 service.

46 § 4. Paragraph a of subdivision 1, subdivision 2, and paragraph b of
47 subdivision 4 of section 406 of the general business law, as amended by
48 chapter 341 of the laws of 1998, and paragraph c of subdivision 2 as
49 amended by section 3 of part D of chapter 328 of the laws of 2014, are
50 amended to read as follows:

51 a. Any person intending to practice nail specialty, waxing, [~~natural~~
52 ~~hair styling,~~] esthetics or cosmetology as defined in this article, or
53 to own or operate an appearance enhancement business, shall first make
54 application to the secretary for a license therefor.

1 2. a. Any person seventeen years of age or older may apply to the
2 secretary for a license to practice nail specialty, waxing, [~~natural~~
3 ~~hair styling,~~] esthetics or cosmetology.

4 b. Each such application shall also be accompanied by satisfactory
5 evidence of having taken and passed the appropriate examination or exam-
6 inations offered by the secretary pursuant to this article for the
7 license sought and evidence of the successful completion of an approved
8 course of study in nail specialty, waxing, [~~natural hair styling,~~
9 esthetics or cosmetology in a school duly licensed pursuant to the
10 education law.

11 c. Any applicant for a license to practice nail specialty, waxing,
12 [~~natural hair styling,~~] esthetics or cosmetology may submit satisfactory
13 evidence of licensure to practice an equivalent occupation issued by any
14 other state, territory, protectorate or dependency of the United States
15 or any other country in lieu of the evidence of schooling and examina-
16 tion required by this subdivision, provided that such license was grant-
17 ed in compliance with standards which were, in the judgment of the
18 secretary, not lower than those of this state and provided that such
19 state, territory, protectorate, dependency, or country extends similar
20 reciprocity to the licensees of this state, or the applicant practiced
21 an equivalent occupation in such state, territory, protectorate, depend-
22 ency or country for a minimum of five years, or the applicant is a
23 member of the household of a member of the armed forces of the United
24 States, national guard or reserves and was a member of such household
25 before such member relocated to the state.

26 d. Notwithstanding the educational requirements of this section and
27 the testing requirements of this section, an applicant who otherwise has
28 met the licensing requirements of this article for a nail specialist,
29 waxer, [~~natural hair stylist,~~] esthetician or cosmetologist who shall
30 provide satisfactory evidence [~~he or she has~~ they have] been actively
31 and continuously engaged in the practice of nail specialty, waxing,
32 [~~natural hair styling,~~] esthetics or cosmetology for at least one year
33 prior to the effective date of this article, may be issued a license for
34 nail specialty, waxing, [~~natural hair styling,~~] esthetics or cosmetology
35 pursuant to this article. [~~Notwithstanding the educational and testing~~
36 ~~requirements of this section, a person licensed to practice barbering~~
37 ~~under article twenty eight of this chapter who otherwise has met the~~
38 ~~licensing requirements of this article may be issued a license to prac-~~
39 ~~tice natural hairstyling.~~] Other than applicants licensed under article
40 twenty-eight of this chapter, those persons who apply after a twelve
41 month period from the effective date of this article will be required to
42 provide evidence of training and to take the examination or examinations
43 as required for other licenses pursuant to this article.

44 e. Upon acceptance by the secretary of a proper application for an
45 operator's license to practice nail speciality, waxing, [~~natural hair~~
46 ~~styling,~~] esthetics or cosmetology, the secretary may issue a temporary
47 operator's license which shall expire six months from issuance. Upon
48 good cause shown, the secretary may renew a temporary operator's license
49 for one additional six-month period upon filing the appropriate applica-
50 tion and fee.

51 b. In the case of persons who are called to active military service
52 and will be discharged from active military service, the period of two
53 years specified in paragraph d of subdivision two of this section need
54 not be continuous. The length of time such person was engaged in the
55 practice of nail specialty, waxing, [~~natural hair styling,~~] esthetics or
56 cosmetology before entering active military service may be added to any

1 period of time during which such person was or is engaged in the prac-
2 tice of nail specialty, waxing, [~~natural hair styling~~] esthetics or
3 cosmetology after the termination of active military service.

4 § 5. Subdivision 1 of section 407 of the general business law, as
5 amended by chapter 255 of the laws of 1999, is amended to read as
6 follows:

7 1. The examinations for the license to practice [~~natural hair styl-~~
8 ~~ing~~] esthetics, nail specialty and cosmetology shall be practical and
9 written. The examinations for the license to practice waxing shall be
10 limited to a written examination only. The secretary shall determine
11 reasonable standards of performance for each license and shall evaluate
12 the prospective applicants and applicants on the basis of such stand-
13 ards. The objectives of the examinations shall be to insure that
14 prospective applicants and applicants have sufficient basic skills to
15 safeguard the health and safety of the public and to insure that
16 prospective applicants and applicants have attained adequate levels of
17 skill to competently engage in the activities authorized by the license.

18 § 6. This act shall take effect on the sixtieth day after it shall
19 have become a law.