

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-0550

March 4, 2021

Governor Gavin Newsom  
1303 10th St, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814-4905

Dear Governor Newsom,

I am writing to bring to your attention a critical problem that California's state government has caused and is obligated to resolve. At least 7,000 Californians are currently unable to attain their cosmetology licenses because the state been unwilling to craft a solution to offer a final licensing exam during the majority of the COVID response. This is inexcusable.

Among the three cosmetology schools in the 50<sup>th</sup> Congressional District alone, students completed their entire course of study except for the in-person component that was shut down by state mandate in March 2020. Throughout the course of the state's long lockdown, multiple announcements were made that tests would eventually and partially resume, which continued until they were resumed on February 22 of this year. As you would expect, this caused a staggering backlog of 7,000 graduates waiting for the state to provide what it has promised.

While testing has resumed in two locations at 50 percent capacity, literally thousands of individuals wait, unlicensed and unable to seek employment, a number that increased with every new graduate. Every day that goes by is another day that these people are denied the opportunity to apply their education, practice their trade, and work for a living. People are, and have been, ready to reemerge into the workplace, especially those who acquired new professional skills and completed job trainings during the mandatory closure of the economy.

Typically, cosmetology students are awarded their licenses on the same day of taking their final exam, which is a single day of testing comprised of a written and practical element. I recently learned of one local student who graduated eleven months ago and just received confirmation that he will not be permitted to sit for his exam until October 2021. That is almost two years of pay and experience taken from him before he can begin a career that he has been qualified to perform the entire time.

The State needs to make a priority of equipping cosmetology graduates with viable solutions that take into consideration the full range of options for them to receive the exam. As in-person tests are required for cosmetologists to be certified, California should look for any new and available ways to allow for them, as well as online exams for both written and practical test components.

The State should also consider the adoption of waivers for these students to work under supervision in licensed spas, salons, and barberies. Through the training they have already completed, these candidates for certification are qualified to perform certain tasks in their desired fields. Other states, including

Arizona and New Jersey, have developed alternatives that have already allowed their students to utilize temporary work permits and extend their deadlines a year to facilitate their steady employment.

While it is clearly time for your administration to fix the problem it created, this is also an ideal opportunity for the state to demonstrate it has the capacity and the commitment to adapt in a challenging environment and serve a clear public need. In short, the graduates have done everything we could ask of them: they invested in their education, made a commitment of their time and effort, and fulfilled every state requirement to prove they are ready to be licensed.

Now that the students have fulfilled their obligations, it is time for the State of California to do the same.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darrell Issa", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Darrell Issa  
Member of Congress