

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 05 , 2026

RE: H.B. No. 1697

H.D. 1

Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura  
Speaker, House of Representatives  
Thirty-Third State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2026  
State of Hawaii

Madame:

Your Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce, to which was referred H.B. No. 1697 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO NATURAL HAIR BRAIDING,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to exempt natural hair braiders from the licensing requirements under the Barbering and Cosmetology Licensing Act.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission; Institute for Justice; Grassroot Institute of Hawaii; and numerous individuals. Your Committee received testimony in opposition to this measure from two individuals. Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology.

Your Committee finds that hair braiders practice the artistic and individualized craft of twisting, braiding, weaving, and locking natural hair. Natural hair braiding is a cultural tradition often learned in childhood and honed over years. The practice is typically categorized as natural hair care because it involves no cutting, dyeing, application of heat, or use of caustic chemicals and is often practiced by women serving minority communities.



Your Committee further finds that under existing law, a hair braider is required to be licensed, requiring hours and hours of education that has nothing to do with the practice of hair braiding. Your Committee notes that many other states have relaxed the regulation of natural hair braiders.

However, your Committee additionally finds that, although natural hair braiders should be exempt from licensure due to the nature of their practice, natural hair braiding nevertheless involves direct contact with clients and the use of tools and materials that, if not properly sanitized or sterilized, may create conditions that pose risks to the health and safety of clients. Thus, while natural hair braiders should not be subject to the onerous educational requirements applicable to other professions covered by the Barbering and Cosmetology Licensing Act, natural hair braiders should be subject to some regulation to ensure that practitioners are complying with sanitation standards.

Accordingly, your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) In addition to being exempt from the licensing requirements applicable to barbers and cosmetologists, establishing a regulatory framework in which natural hair braiders must register with the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, including the submission of proof of completion of courses or programs on sanitation, health, and safety;
- (2) Requiring the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology to approve courses or programs on sanitation, health, and safety no later than November 1, 2026;
- (3) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (4) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 1697, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as H.B. No. 1697, H.D. 1, and be placed on the calendar for Third Reading.



Respectfully submitted on  
behalf of the members of the  
Committee on Consumer  
Protection & Commerce,

for   
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SCOT Z. MATSUYOSHI, Chair



