



Rachel Talbot Ross
Senator, District 28

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Rachel Talbot Ross introducing
**LD 1861, “An Act to Require Training on Textured Hair for Aestheticians, Barber
Hair Stylists, Cosmetologists and Hair Designers”**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor
May 6, 2025

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, I am Senator Rachel Talbot Ross. I represent Senate District 28, which includes part of my hometown of Portland and Peaks Island. Thank you for the opportunity to present LD 1861, “An Act to Require Training on Textured Hair for Aestheticians, Barber Hair Stylists, Cosmetologists and Hair Designers.”

The bill is simple but critical: it directs the Department of Professional and Financial Regulation to include training in textured and curly hair in the training required to work as a hairstylist in Maine. Importantly, this bill would not impact existing licenses and would not require additional hours or even changes to the examination. It simply directs the Commissioner to ensure that curly and textured hair training is included in courses, and the bill leaves it up to the Commissioner to determine the best ways to do that. I am open to any amendments to the bill that the department may suggest to clean up terminology or ensure that the intent of this bill can be implemented.

For so many Mainers, this bill is also essential. Until now, many individuals have struggled to find hairstylists who know how to work with curly and textured hair. When mistakes are made that impact the aesthetics of a haircut, it can affect the morale of the person receiving that cut. When this experience becomes an institutional pattern from stylist to stylist, the same customer may feel marginalized and less valued than other customers. This is demoralizing and can impact one’s self-esteem and feelings of belonging.

As a young child growing up in Maine, I can personally attest to this impact as it substantially affected how I, along with generations of women of color, understand beauty, leading to internalized standards that felt unattainable — like our natural hair was somehow less beautiful or acceptable.

Beyond that, however, is the very real health danger posed by stylists who are inexperienced and untrained in working with curly or textured hair. Indeed, we know that inexperience with braiding textured hair can lead to traction alopecia (the hair falling out of the head). This often happens from excess tension or from leaving braids in too long. Inexperience with coloring or lightening services for textured hair can alter the curl pattern and weaken the hair. Highly textured hair is more susceptible to



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damage based on its shape, so knowledge and care must be taken when using certain treatments on this hair type.

These health problems have been shown to be avoided in other states when students are given an opportunity to see demonstrations of and to work on all textures of hair prior to licensure. This training provides exposure and practice, building confidence and knowledge to work with textured hair.

Maine would not be alone in adopting this legislation. Similar laws have been enacted in Louisiana, New York, Connecticut, Minnesota, California, and (just this past weekend) Washington State. New Jersey and Vermont are considering similar legislation this year.

I respectfully ask that you support LD 1861. Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Rachel Talbot Ross
State Senator, District 28
Representing part of Portland and Peaks Island