



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure  
In Support of H.197/S.125 An Act to mandate domestic violence and sexual assault awareness education for  
aestheticians, barbers, cosmetologists, electrologists, hairdressers, manicurists, and massage therapists  
By Palma McLaughlin, LWVMA Specialist on Children and Family Issues  
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts asks you to support H.197/S.125 An Act to mandate domestic violence and sexual assault awareness education for aestheticians, barbers, cosmetologists, electrologists, hairdressers, manicurists, and massage therapists.

The League's goal is the prevention of domestic violence. We support a strong statewide response to domestic violence that is integrated, interdisciplinary, and adequately funded, involving all segments of the criminal justice system, the medical community, the schools, social services, and the private sector....[and] public campaigns to raise awareness of domestic violence. (*Where We Stand* p. 37-38)

Requiring one hour of basic domestic violence awareness training for salon professionals is practical and significant.

One of the first things abusers do is isolate their victim. The more isolated their victim, the more control the abuser has, the more dependent the victim is, and the less likely that their victim will leave. The isolation can take many forms—taking up all their target's time, monitoring all their phone calls and social media, accompanying them nearly everywhere they go, and convincing them that they cannot trust "outsiders" to believe them, to understand, or to help. Too often victims of domestic violence say they didn't know where to turn.

Hairdressers and salon professionals occupy a unique place amidst all this isolation. The salon is one of the few places victims are rarely accompanied. Most women develop long-term, trusting relationships with their hairdresser. Hairdressers and other salon professionals are in a position to notice the physical signs of abuse, like the neck or wrist bruises carefully hidden from view.

The ability to talk about the abuse in an empathic, noncritical environment which avoids criticism of a person's life and decisions is an important key to positive outcomes for individuals in violent relationships. Support networks may provide insufficient support because untrained observers are unaware of the needs of the abused. Training salon professionals to recognize and respond appropriately and without criticism is important.

Salon professionals state they frequently encounter victims of domestic violence, and many want to know how to handle the realization that their clients are being abused. This bill ensures that salon professionals have a minimum level of training to respond to inevitable disclosures of abuse.