

**Testimony to the Alaska Legislature  
Senate Labor and Commerce Committee  
Regarding Sponsor Substitute for SB54, Version B  
February 26, 2025**

For the record, my name is Colin Maynard, I am a retired Civil and Structural Engineer and am testifying on behalf of the Alaska State Board of Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors (AELS) as the Chair of the AELS Legislative Liaison Committee.

At our February 2025 meeting, the AELS Board voted to support this bill. I would like to address a few provisions in which we have particular interest and suggest a couple of amendments:

- Section 1 – we are proud to see that the Legislative Audit found that the Board has been complying with the relevant statutes and regulations and is performing its duty to protect the public safety, health, and welfare. We believe that an extension of eight years is warranted.
- Section 2 – Board makeup
  - Adding petroleum and chemical engineering disciplines to the mining engineering seat as an option, instead of a fallback position, expands the pool of possible volunteers from 36 to 148 while keeping the seat in the resource extraction industry.
  - Breaking the current mechanical/electrical engineering seat into two seats recognizes that they are the two most common disciplines after civil engineering, even more than architects or land surveyors. It also recognizes that these disciplines are different from each other and expecting one person to have expertise in both is asking a bit much.
  - We understand that we are already one of the largest State licensing Boards, but we regulate eighteen different disciplines with more registrants than all but two Boards. The cost of the Board is borne by those registrants, not by the public.
- Section 26 – Exemptions on page 13 of the bill
  - Item 10 (B) – In 2018, a natural gas pipeline explosion in Massachusetts resulted on the destruction of 40 residences. The National Transportation Safety Board attributed design by unlicensed engineers as part of the cause. They wrote all 50 state governors and copied their respective licensing boards in 2019 asking for removal of the industrial exemption for natural gas pipelines where public safety is an issue. The AELS Board wrote a letter to the Governor indicating support for this request. The NTSB wrote an additional letter in 2022 asking for an update. The AELS Board again wrote a letter to the Governor indicating support and stated that they would address it during the sunset process, had it not been addressed earlier. That is the genesis of this language. At our February meeting, we determined that the language you see before you is too extensive and should be limited to pipelines where public safety is an issue. We are interested in licensed engineers designing pipelines in

communities and not necessarily on the North Slope or Beluga. We suggest the following language for this exception to the exemption:

- **(B) natural gas distribution systems that could pose a threat to public safety; "natural gas pipeline" has the meaning given in AS31.25.390;**
- Item 15 – during a discussion with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) regarding regulations that they had adopted that required engineers to perform tasks that violate licensing law, DEC requested that an exemption be granted for small commercial domestic wastewater systems, so that they could be designed by DEC certified contractors instead of licensed engineers. The Board agreed to that request. However, this exemption should not be applicable to industrial wastewater, just wastewater from kitchens and bathrooms. Thus, we suggest one small change to the current language – modify ‘conventional onsite wastewater system’ to “onsite commercial domestic wastewater system” in both locations it occurs.

There is one other provision that the Board would like to have added to the bill. The Board has been having problems retaining our Executive Administrator. We have been working with the Division and Department to get an Office of Management and Budget class evaluation for years. The fact that it is a class of one has not made that very easy and it has dragged out for years. The evaluation finally started last fall, still has several steps to go, and may not have a conclusion with which the Board agrees. Before the evaluation started, the Board decided to request that our statute specify that the AELS Executive Administrator has a salary in Range 23. Other Boards that have a similar number of registrants have a similar provision.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill and I am willing to try to address any questions you might have.