

January 17, 2024

Honorable Jesse Sumner, Chair
House Labor and Commerce Committee
Sent via email to: House.Labor.And.Commerce@akleg.gov

Dear Chair Sumner and members of the House Labor & Commerce Committee,

I am writing in opposition of HB 159, a bill to regulate interior design and interior designers.

I have served on the Alaska Board of Registration of Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors (AELS) since 2016, and I am currently serving my second term as Board Chair. While the AELS Board has taken actions relating to proposed legislation to regulate interior design, this letter reflects my personal position only.

I have been an active part of many discussions about possible regulation of interior design for over 5 years. During the past 1.5 years, I have served on the Interior Design Working Group, a group that was initiated by the AELS Board and consists of both architects and interior designers. For the first six months, our group analyzed interior design regulation in other states, considered the needs for such regulation in Alaska, and, with the help of AK Division of Professional Licensing staff, studied three possible models for interior design regulation, if such regulation was deemed necessary by the legislature.

Without knowledge of the Working Group, SB 73 was introduced in February 2023. HB 159 is an early version of SB 73 and has the same fundamental flaws. Over the past year, the architects of the Working Group, as well as the Alaska Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and many in allied industries (eg. engineers, construction, AELS Board) have taken every possible opportunity to recommend changes in the best interest of the state's general public and design/construction industries. SB 73's sponsor has declined to consider amendments that would resolve the onerous nature of the bill.

My request to you is that if you feel that interior design needs to be regulated, please work with the architects, engineers, contractors, and regulators of Alaska to amend HB 159 to address concerns.

Alaska currently has an excellent record of building safety and no examples of actual or perceived threats to public health, safety, or welfare due to the current lack of interior design regulation. Consumers have not requested this legislation. Rather, it has been promoted by a handful of interior designers who will financially benefit from its passage. In 2023, only 21 Alaskans held the credential required to become a registered interior designer under this bill. Additionally,

- No other state in the country has a comparably onerous law in place, and some jurisdictions have repealed interior design laws after legal challenges.
- Carrying out these regulations would be expensive and complicated to implement, increase costs to consumers, reduce access to basic design services statewide, and

negatively impact a large number of people who currently perform interior design services.

- Alaska's board (AELS Board) that is designated in both HB 159 and SB 73 to regulate the interior design profession has opposed adding interior design to their duties. Further, the AELS Board has suggested changes to SB73 that have been ignored.

I urge you to oppose HB 159. I am available to answer questions or provide additional information about this topic.

Thank you, sincerely, for your time on this matter and for the important work you do for our state.

Catherine Fritz, AIA, NCARB

C: Representative Sara Hannan, Senator Jesse Kiehl