

AIA Alaska OPPOSES HB 159, “An Act relating to registered interior designers and interior design...” as currently drafted.

The scope of restricted practice for interior design is too broad and confusing (Sec. 32. AS 08.48.341). The definition of ‘interior technical submissions’ (24) encroaches into the responsibilities of construction contractors and material/equipment manufacturers. Section (25) “the practice of registered interior design” (A) (i) “includes the professional service of creative work.” restricts other professions from doing creative work on buildings. Sections (25)(B)(iii/vi/vii) use terms defined in the International Building Code but lacks clarification on key life-safety considerations. Industry peers have confirmed this section intends to reduce the qualifications required to change emergency exit components and fire rated construction.

Restrictions at odds with the intent to address labor shortage and safety (Sec 29 AS 08.48.331 (a) (8)). This section has historically allowed over 300 entities with interior design services listed on their business license with the Alaska Department of Commerce to perform services related to interior finishes that are not health, safety, or welfare related. This includes interior finishes such as paint, floor coverings, and furnishings. The impact of the changes to this section will restrict this work to interior designers with NCIDQ qualifications. In 2023, there were approximately 21 NCIDQ qualified Interior Designers in Alaska. AIA Alaska and industry peers with concerns about this provision agree that it is not needed to protect life-safety and will restrict the market for many interior design businesses, as well as those contractors and owners who self-perform interior design on their own buildings, thereby inflating the cost of interior design services in Alaska.

HB 159 represents an unprecedented change in licensing for the design and construction industry and is the only bill like this in the United States.

No other state has adopted a law with similarly broad understanding of regulated interior design scope, and only two states have any laws restricting the practice of interior design.

- There are no threats to the health, safety, and welfare of the public that the proposed legislation would resolve.*
- No other state in the country has a comparably onerous law in place, and some jurisdictions have removed interior design regulations 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 benefit only a very small number of interior design business owners.*
- Alaska’s regulatory board (AELS Board) that is designated in this bill to regulate the interior design profession has voted in opposition of including interior design under their purview.*
- Alaskan architects, engineers, contractors, regulators, and building suppliers who are informed on these bills describe them as unnecessary and harmful to the overall design and construction industry in Alaska.*

Therefore, we urge that you protect the excellent safety record of buildings in Alaska and maintain fair access to design services for the public by opposing the special interest legislation of HB159.

Questions and discussions are welcomed!

Please direct any questions to: AIA Alaska, attention Jessica Cederberg, 2024 AIA Alaska President
phone: (907) 276-2834 or email: contact@aialaska.org