

January 21, 2024

To: The Honorable Jesse Sumner, Chair
House Labor & Commerce

CC: House Labor & Commerce Members

Please Support HB 159, Professional Registration for Interior Designers

HB 159 proposes reasonable regulation to protect public health, safety, and welfare, by establishing professional registration for interior designers qualified by education, experience, and examination, to practice independently, with stamp and seal privileges, all within a limited scope of work for which they are specifically trained and tested to do.

Interior designers of public-occupancy buildings directly impact public health, safety, and welfare in most aspects of their work. Interior designers who have earned an accredited university degree, completed hands-on training, and successfully passed the internationally-recognized 3-part NCIDQ certification exam are well-qualified to understand and execute the following public safety design responsibilities:

- Design of interior non-bearing wall and ceiling configurations: occupancy class determination, occupant load analysis, exit analysis including number and location of internal exits/exit access, path of travel distance and clear width, accessibility within suites and to exits
- Design and specification of interior materials, furnishings, and fixtures, which require knowledge of the following: accessibility and egress clearances, infection mitigation and control, combustibility, flame spread, smoke propagation, material toxicity, and slip resistance
- Development of interior technical submissions (i.e., plans, specifications, contract documents) in compliance with applicable code, regulation, and guideline requirements; fire detection/suppression device location coordination and coordination with other engineering professions to provide a complete construction package

HB 159 Registration for interior designers will:

- Be voluntary: non-registered interior designers may work in the residential market (single to 4-plex, with height restrictions) or under the direct supervision of a registered interior designer or a registered architect for commercial work
- Be compatible with all design professions: architects will be exempt from this registration and architects that wish to provide interior design services may continue to do so.
- Be considered self-funded through the existing AELS Registration Board fee structure with a minimal increase per license holder.
- Provide a professional stamp for interior non-bearing construction document permitting, giving registered interior designers direct responsibility for their own work which currently must be supervised and over-stamped by a registered architect.

HB 159 Economic Benefits to Alaskans:

- Expands consumer choice of qualified design professionals; encourages small business.
There are very few interior design small businesses in Alaska which perform the work addressed in HB159. It is generally not feasible to independently practice interior design in Alaska outside of private residential work since plan review and permitting necessitate the involvement of a registered architect to oversee and overstamp a designer's work, adding time and expense to projects for clients with limited schedules and budgets.
- Encourages hiring Alaskans instead of "outside experts" for professional interior design.
Most Federal agencies and entities require credentialed Interior Designers under the Unified Facility Criteria (UFC) and/or the Whole Building Design Guide (WBDG). These include U.S. General Services Administration, U.S. Department of Defense (all branches of the military), Department of Veteran Affairs, National Park Service, and Administrative Office of the United States Courts, amongst many others. Many times, these entities seek services outside Alaska, but instituting professional registration for interior designers would make it easier to identify qualified professionals within Alaska and keep that work here.
- Encourages Alaskans earning interior degrees Outside to return home.
My concern for workforce development has only increased in the last several years. The design professions face a shortage of talent amongst all disciplines at all levels nationwide and the post-pandemic market has only increased competition for recruiting. The breadth of upcoming work across Alaska requires both design and construction workforces to take full advantage of the funding allocated to Alaska in the recent Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. It is critically important that Alaska positions itself as an ideal place to start and advance a career, build a life, grow families, and engage in community.
- Ensures unrestrained access to market, enabling qualified design professionals to practice to the full extent of their education, training, and examination, and take responsibility for their work.

Please support HB 159 Registration for Interior Designers to protect public safety, expand consumer choice, and bring economic benefits to Alaska.

Informational video: [What Does an Interior Designer Actually Do?](#)

Sincerely,

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