

March 26, 2025

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Dear Senate Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public testimony on SB54. I have been an active member of the Alaska Chapter of the AIA that has opposed previous interior design bills. Today I am speaking to you as an individual, and not representing the AIA for any other group.

I've lived in Alaska for 42 years and have been a registered architect since 1990. I served on the AELS Board for 8 years, the last 2 of which I was Chair. There are many aspects of the bill that will be confusing to administer. I'd like to focus on 1 specific point today.

I oppose the expansion of the AELS Board to 13 members (it is currently the largest board with 11 members). The bill provides separate seats for mechanical and electrical professions. This is unnecessary. Prior to 2023, there was a restriction in statute that did not allow mechanical and electrical engineers to serve simultaneously. That problem was remedied with passage of SB 126. Thank you very much for supporting that bill.

The second new seat in SB54 is dedicated to a registered interior designer. There are fewer than 2 dozen Alaskan interior designers who currently have the credential to be eligible for voluntary registration, so there will be a very small pool to draw from for Board service. But my bigger concern is that it is not appropriate to have an interior designer serve on the Board because they will be regulated through a Title Act, which is the purpose of SB54 - a Title Act, not a Practice Act. SB54 allows anyone to continue to be able to practice interior design - only those who are registered will be able to use the title, "Registered Interior Designer." A seat on the Board gives interior designers authority and responsibility to act on the regulated practices of engineering, architecture, etc. which is not appropriate since interior design will not be a regulated practice itself.

The 2023 statute changes also allowed the AELS Board staff to take on more of the Board's previous workload. I just cannot think of any need to permanently expand the Board size.

When Landscape Architecture became a regulated profession (through a Practice Act) in 1998, a temporary non-voting seat was added to the Board to provide expertise in developing regulations. If SB54 passes, there will need to be a limited amount of regulation developed, but again, since the focus of the bill provides a Title to Interior Designers, the regulation development will not be extensive so a temporary seat could provide subject matter expertise if needed.

Please do not expand the AELS Board, even if you find a need to regulate interior design.

Thank you, sincerely, for your time today,

Catherine Fritz, Architect

