
From: Angie Monteleone <communications@aiaalaska.org>
Sent: Thursday, April 21, 2022 8:42 AM
To: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Kelly Merrick
Cc: Gambardella, Giovanna
Subject: Please accept this email as my personal testimony related to HB61

Sent on behalf of Giovanna Gambardella, AIA – AIA Alaska Chapter 2022 President

Testimony on House Bill 61

No evidence has been presented that a Practice Act like the one proposed will alleviate a current problem or prevent a problem that is on the horizon.

The proposed legislation as presented doesn't appear to clarify which section of the practice the interior designer is responsible for as it relates to the protection of the consumer or public safety, nor it enhances the current legislation.

Over half the states in the country have a statute in the form of a Title Act. A Title Act would be a more appropriate to provide recognition and definitions for well qualified interior design professionals.

In addition, expanding the licensing board from 11 to 13 members adds more direct costs for the program and expense for coordination with additional board members.

The addition of a new design discipline will take significant effort by staff and board members to integrate into regulations and operating procedures.

The lack of clarity in this bill is subject to interpretation with no line of demarcation of what interior design covers compared to currently licensed architects and engineers, thus creating confusion for local officials.

Thank you for your attention,

Giovanna Gambardella , AIA
STANTEC, Anchorage

From: Rob Culbertson [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 11:10 AM
To: House Finance
Cc: bcash@best-yet.net
Subject: Support for HB61 – Registration for Alaska Commercial Interior Designers

Good Morning,

I'm writing to express my support and encourage yours for **HB61 – Registration for Alaska Commercial Interior Designers.**

I am not an interior designer myself, but I work with the industry. I've seen first-hand the impact that an interior designer has on a public space – both good and bad. They must be competent and held accountable in critical areas that impact all of us, including fire, life-safety, building and energy codes, space planning, acoustics, and accessibility standards.

It seems strange to me that we require other professionals, such as hairdressers, to meet an educational standard and be licensed by the state, but not interior designers.

This is not a complex or controversial issue. 27 states currently support professional registration for Interior Designers.

Please show your support for HB61!

Thank you.

Rob Culbertson

[REDACTED]

Anchorage, AK 99516

From: David W. Ziemer <dziemer@rimarchitects.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 20, 2022 4:25 PM
To: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Kelly Merrick
Subject: HB 61, licensing of commercial interior designers OPPOSITION

Dear Representative Foster and Representative Merrick,

My name is David Ziemer and I am a licensed and practicing Architect in the State of Alaska. I would like to state my opposition to HB 61.

As an architect, I have an incredible respect for interior designers and their contributions to our field. However, I feel that HB61 goes a step too far by granting interior designers the authority to stamp construction documents – an authority that I feel should be reserved for architects, whose more rigorous training, testing, and experience provide the most protection for the Alaskan’s public health, safety, and welfare.

The top two reasons for my opposition to HB 61 are as follows:

1. Interior designers do not possess comparable qualifications to architects in terms of public health, safety and welfare (HSW). They receive less than half the training in building codes and safety regulations as architects.
There are considerable differences in registration requirements for interior designers compared to architects. To become a licensed architect state laws have established minimum education, experience, and examinations far beyond that of a commercial interior designer. At least 22% of Architectural Registration Exams are related to building code issues which are required to pass the exams. Interior Designer’s certification criteria, through their national organization, NCIDQ, allows them to pass 2/3 of exams with a 50% score and 0 correct answers on building codes and safety.
2. HB 61 will compromise Alaskan’s Health Safety and Welfare.
Architects coordinate a complex team of engineers and specialists, while overseeing a myriad of construction details, to ensure that buildings are construction in accordance to design. Comparatively, interior designers only work on a narrow scope of a building’s design and do not have the same level of training, testing or experience to guarantee the same competence as an architect to protect public HSW. I have had experience with interior designers trying to play the role of architect or coordination project teams. Their lack a knowledge in the life safety and code aspects of architecture is apparent and they do not always understand all the parts and pieces that are required to put a building together.

Thank you for taking time to read and take into consideration my opposition of HB 61, Licensing of commercial interior designers.

I was unable to attend the April 19 hearing, so I have prepared this written testimony in lieu of speaking at Monday's hearing, but ask that my testimony please be included in the record.

Regards,

David W. Ziemer AIA NCARB PMP LEED AP BD+C
Principal | Senior Architect



645 G Street, Suite 400, Anchorage, Alaska 99501
907.258.7777 main | 907.360.1204 mobile
dziemer@rimarchitects.com
www.rimarchitects.com

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From: Morse, Ryan N. <ryanm@designalaska.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 20, 2022 4:54 PM
To: House Finance; Rep. Bart LeBon
Subject: HB61 Written Testimony

Representative LeBon & House Finance Committee Members,

My name is Ryan Morse. I live and work in Fairbanks within House District 1 and am a licensed Architect. I have had the opportunity to represent my peers as the board president of AIA Alaska and currently sit on the AIA National Strategic council representing Alaska and the Marianas Islands. Over the past dozen years I have contributed the Alaska's design and construction industry – working closely with all engineers, fellow architects, specialty designers including interior designers, and contractors both large and small.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my opposition to HB61 and have provided further information below to explain why I request that you vote against this bill.

The framing question that continues to come up among my peers in the industry is “Why do we need this legislation?” and the simple answer is that we don't. There has been no evidence presented that licensing of interior design professionals will alleviate a current problem, or prevent a foreseeable problem. Passing this bill would simply add unnecessary expenses and confusion. In other words, it offers a solution where no problem exists.

There are only 22 people in Alaska who meet the requirements in the bill to become a licensed Interior Designer, yet this bill would add members to the AELS board and necessitate additional staff for the department. The costs will therefore be spread to all individuals currently licensed under AELS. Given that there is no public health, safety, or welfare problem currently, it is unnecessary to burden existing registrants with this costs when interior design licensing is not needed.

I want to dispel the idea that architects opposed to this legislation are participating in some sort of turf war or trying to prevent interior designers from providing the services they are qualified to offer to the public. The reality is that each design and engineering profession is uniquely trained and tested on a certain set of skills and knowledge. When combined they make up a team capable of creating a wide range of critical infrastructure to the community. Two areas that only licensed architects have been rigorously trained and tested through national licensing exams are the coordination of the other disciplines and analyzing the overall impact of a building to the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Like engineers we carry a portion of the responsibility to comply with building codes and assure that what is built does not pose a risk to the public. This does not mean that interior designer – much like acoustic experts, kitchen designers, and many other common members of the building design team – are not valuable. What it does mean is that they are parts of the team that do not require government oversight and licensing to safely contribute to the project.

Architects are allies at heart to interior designers and always prefer opportunities to work closely together both professionally and with elected officials when needed. Unfortunately, what benefits and motivates a minority of the design community you have undoubtedly heard from on this topic is that those who would qualify for a license under this legislation would be able to increase their perceived status and billing rates. This does not benefit the public or the state and also appears to be detrimental to the rest of the interior design industry in Alaska. Because this legislation is written as a practice act, there is a financial impact to people who are currently practicing interior design who currently need only a business license to provide their services. If the bill passes, interior designers will have to pay to become licensed, furthermore, if they do not meet the qualifications of the bill, they could lose their business since the bill requires that interior designers be licensed in order to practice in Alaska. An individual cannot call themselves an architect or engineer without the correlating license, by passing similar legislation for interior designers it would also

infer these same limitations on many interior designers who have been providing valuable services throughout the state for decades with no issues or restrictions.

This is not a debate about the quality of anyone's characters or the strength of their design work. This is simply a question of what is best for the Alaskan public. The current laws protect the public by setting strict standards for who can stamp construction documents. The existing laws are successful. They protect all of us by guaranteeing that construction documents are only stamped by the state's most qualified and prepared design experts. Any benefits that proponents of HB61 claim it will provide must be weighed against the proven track-record of safety and success that the current licensing structure has provided to the Alaskan community for decades.

Only three states – Louisiana, Nevada, and North Carolina – currently regulate the practice of interior design, which is what House Bill 61 is proposing. Florida recently repealed their statute regulating the practice of interior design because it was determined to be unnecessary and confusing. If legislation to recognize the qualifications of certain interior designers is believed to be necessary in Alaska, a more appropriate approach would be a Title Act which more than half of the states in the country have adopted. This would provide registration and acknowledgment of highly qualified and tested interior designers, without a burden to the AELS Board or unnecessary complication of a licensure process for professionals who's duties are not integral to the health, safety and welfare of Alaskans.

The proposed legislation contains new terms and definitions for "commercial interior design," that lack clarity, do not align with current legislation or code language, and are highly subject to interpretation. It offers no clear line of demarcation of what commercial interior design covers all while covering what architectural services already provide. This will create overlap and confusion for code informants officials at state and local levels.

So when the time comes to make a decision on HB61, I ask that you consider this questions, "Why do we need this legislation?" I sincerely believe there has been no justifiable need for this bill presented, and I ask you not to support unnecessary costly and confusing legislation.

Thank you for your continued service to our State and thoughtful deliberation on this matter.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any follow-up questions.

Kindest Regards,

Ryan N Morse, AIA, NCARB
Architecture | Design Alaska, Inc.

601 College Road | Fairbanks, AK 99701
907.452.1241 | RyanM@designalaska.com

From: Anna Lee <AnnaLee@alderarch.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 20, 2022 6:18 PM
To: Rep. Neal Foster; Rep. Kelly Merrick; Rep. Daniel Ortiz
Subject: Opposition to HB 61 REGISTER COMMERCIAL INTERIOR DESIGNERS.pdf
Attachments: Opposition to HB 61 REGISTER COMMERCIAL INTERIOR DESIGNERS.pdf

Thank you very much. Please see attached.

Thanks so much,
Anna M. Lee, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP
Principal Architect

259 S. Alaska Street
Palmer, Alaska 99645
Office: 907-745-ALDR (2537)
Cell: 907-982-1543
E-mail: AnnaLee@alderarch.com
www.alderarch.com



From: Jason Arnold <jarnold@rimarchitects.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 21, 2022 8:07 AM
To: Rep. Kelly Merrick
Cc: Rep. Neal Foster; House Finance
Subject: Opposition to HB 61

Dear Representative Merrick;

I caught wind that HB 61 is collecting testimony and public input prior to a House Finance Committee meeting tomorrow, April 21, 2022. I also wanted to include Representative Foster and the House Finance Committee email but I am writing to you directly as a constituent who resides in Eagle River and a concerned citizen.

I strongly oppose the language in HB 61.

This unnecessary bill is a solution looking for a problem. There are no documented health, safety or welfare problems that exist that this bill is trying to solve. The legislation, as written, does not provide further protection to the consumer or enhance public safety. However, this bill will **add costs** by expanding the licensing board from 11 to 13 plus additional administrative costs so that a small population of interior designers can be regulated by the State. I see no reason why the State would adopt such language. Only three other states in the US regulate the practice of interior design (Louisiana, Nevada and North Carolina), and Florida recently repealed their statute because they determined it to be unnecessary!

Please do not push this bill forward because of any false narratives that this is necessary to the State, it is not. The regulations and statutes in current existence are more than sufficient for Alaskans and I urge you not to support this bill.

I would be more than happy to continue to speak with you about how unappropriated this bill is.

Very Respectfully,

Jason Arnold AIA NCARB CDT
Owner | Principal



645 G Street, Suite 400, Anchorage, Alaska 99501
907.258.7777 main | 515.570.8171 mobile
jarnold@rimarchitects.com
www.rimarchitects.com

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April 20, 2022

Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair
Representative Kelly Merrick, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Ortiz, Vice Chair
House Finance Committee
email: Representative.Neal.Foster@akleg.gov
Representative.Kelly.Merrick@akleg.gov
Representative.Dan.Ortiz@akleg.gov

Re: **Opposition to HB 61** REGISTER COMMERCIAL INTERIOR DESIGNERS

Dear Representatives Foster, Merrick & Ortiz,

I am writing in opposition to HB61, a proposed statute related to establishing regulations and licensing for commercial interior designers.

Like many Alaskan members of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), I am opposed to HB61 because it is unnecessary, redundant, and most importantly, may negatively affect public health, safety, and welfare for the following reasons:

1. The definition of interior design is too far-reaching, and it creates an overlap of services rendered by State Licensed Architects whose rigorous education, training, testing, and experience provides the reliable and proven protection for the health, safety, and welfare of Alaskans, and
2. It will create confusion for the public and contractors with regards to liability and responsibility, also creating unnecessary costs to the State for enforcement, and
3. It injects potentially unqualified persons into a structured regulatory framework wherein the State will risk critical health and safety issues to be determined by unqualified persons.

I have a great deal of respect for the work of interior designers who are often part of project teams that are led by Architects. But also note that there are many interior designers in Alaska who currently work independently, as small businesses, without infringing on health, safety and welfare issues. They currently use their skills in the marketplace and do not need to be mandated to obtain a license. This is an unnecessary burden to existing interior designers, and to the State of Alaska.

Out of respect for your time and that of the Committee, I have prepared this written testimony in lieu of speaking at Thursday's hearing but ask that my testimony please be included in the record. I have copied my District Representative Mr. James Kaufman on this email.

I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ramona Schimscheimer

Ramona Schimscheimer, AIA, PMP
Principal Architect ASRC Energy Services
Email: [REDACTED]

Copy:

cc: District 28 Representative Mr. James Kaufman

HB61
RELATING TO THE REGISTRATION OF COMMERCIAL INTERIOR DESIGNERS

House Finance Committee
Public Hearing - April 20, 2022

Testimony of
Katherine S. Setser, NCIDQ, ASID, IIDA, IDEC
Department of Architecture + Interior Design, Miami University, Oxford, OH

Madam Chair, Mr. Chair, and Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information in support of House Bill 61. I am Katherine Setser, an NCIDQ certified interior designer, researcher, and educator. I serve as a technical advisor for the development of several codes, including the National Fire Protection Association's NFPA 101 Life Safety Code, currently used in every U.S. state, including Alaska.

I ask the Finance Committee to support passage of HB61 as a means to improve health, safety, and welfare within the built environment for Alaskans.

The last 20 years of my professional and academic career have been devoted largely to the realm of forensic design, that is, to the analysis and research of design projects that have failed. I have witnessed and studied in-depth the impact that improper design of interior space can have on public health, safety, and welfare, and the serious potential for public harm from unregulated interior designers in commercial spaces. My research reinforces the importance necessity of trained, credentialed interior designers working in code regulated spaces.

The most significant responsibility of interior designers to protect the public, especially in regard to fire- and life-safety. Interior designers must understand requirements for fire ratings of partition walls, door assemblies as well as interior materials, finishes and content that affect the spread of fire and toxic smoke.

The proper selection and specification of interior materials, finishes and content are essential to an occupant's ability to safely exit a building during a fire or other emergency. This is precisely the domain of the registered commercial interior designer.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the proper selection of interior space content is a primary determinant of whether accidents become tragedies. In fact, the NFPA states that interior finishes and furnishings in public assembly spaces (spaces which carry special risk to the occupants during an emergency) have a greater impact on the protection of life and property than any other element with the exception of the actual fire ignition source itself. This interior content is more important than onsite fire protection such as fire alarms and sprinkler systems. It's more important than exiting requirements such as maximum occupancy, number and arrangement of exits, even emergency signage and lighting.

It's simple. The faster a fire develops, the greater the threat to the occupants of a building and their ability to exit safely. The appropriate selection of interior content slows flame and toxic smoke spread across floor, wall and ceiling coverings and allows additional time for occupants to relocate within, or evacuate from, a building. This is fundamental to the specialized expertise of the commercial interior designer and an essential component of any code regulated environment.

Fire is not a small problem. Despite continual updating of fire- and life-safety/building codes, the fire and death rates in the U.S. remain among the deadliest in the industrialized world and the cost – in lives and in dollars – is staggering. Alaska is no exception. Alaska's death rate from fire is more than double that of the national average.

And, although states adopt and enforce rules governing design, construction, repair, and alteration of buildings, the truth is that regulatory systems provide significant oversight *only* in new construction and substantial renovation

projects. Over the life of a building, incremental change to interior space, especially finishes and content, is a frequent occurrence, due to changes in ownership and tenancy or deterioration and obsolescence. These largely unregulated modifications far outnumber new construction and significant renovations requiring regulatory oversight. With few exceptions, Alaska jurisdictions, as in most states, often exempt alteration projects that relate to interior finishes and furnishings.

Fire investigations, data, and other evidence expressly points to interior content as consistent, direct, and significant contributing factors in the loss of life and property and are shown to exacerbate the hazard to occupants.

I respectfully request that your Committee acknowledge not only the necessity for regulation of interior design practice in code-regulated, commercial spaces, but also recognize the significant education, experience, and expertise employed by interior design professionals to safeguard public health, safety, and welfare in the built environment. Please support the passage of HB61.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Katherine S. Setser". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Katherine S. Setser
Department of Architecture + Interior Design
Miami University
101 Alumni Hall, 350 E Spring Street
Oxford, OH 45056



Alder

Architecture and Design

259 S. Alaska Street

Palmer, Alaska 99645

o. 907-745-2537 c. 907-982-1543

AlderArchitecture@gmail.com

April 20, 2022

To: Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair
Representative Kelly Merrick, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Ortiz, Vice Chair
House Finance Committee
emails: Representative.Neal.Foster@akleg.gov
Representative.Kelly.Merrick@akleg.gov
Representative.Dan.Ortiz@akleg.gov

Re: Opposition to HB 61 REGISTER COMMERCIAL INTERIOR DESIGNERS

Dear Representatives Foster, Merrick & Ortiz,

I am writing in opposition to HB61, a proposed statute related to establishing regulations and licensing for commercial interior designers.

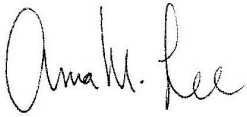
I have a small architect firm in Palmer, Alaska. We do work with many clients on all disciplines pertaining to buildings, including interior design. I personally have been involved in many interior design projects for the last 26 years of my career. Allowing HB61 to pass, would only dilute my services and eliminate some job opportunities for my firm. I have 6 "mouths to feed" in my firm, and we provide full architectural services. In the last 2 years, we have completed a few interior remodels for larger clients such as Southcentral Foundation, UAA Matsu College and City of Unalaska.

Like many Alaskan members of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), I am opposed to HB61 because it is unnecessary, redundant, and most importantly, may negatively affect public health, safety, and welfare for the following reasons:

1. I have recently completed a 4-day conference with training of the adaption of the 2021 International Building Codes. This is to stay current on my license and for the life safety welfare of my clients and their projects, as Alaska will be adopting this more current building code very soon. The definition of interior design is too far reaching, and it creates an overlap of services rendered by State Licensed Architects whose rigorous education, training, testing, and experience provides the reliable and proven protection for the health, safety, and welfare of Alaskans.
2. It will create confusion for the public and contractors with regards to liability and responsibility, also creating unnecessary costs to the State for enforcement.
3. It injects potentially unqualified persons into a structured regulatory framework wherein the State will risk critical health and safety issues to be determined by unqualified persons.

I have a great deal of respect for the work of interior designers who are often part of project teams that are led by Architects. But also note that there are many interior designers in Alaska who currently work independently, as small businesses, without infringing on health, safety and welfare issues. They currently use their skills in the marketplace and do not need to be mandated to obtain a license. This is an unnecessary burden to existing interior designers, and to the State of Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna M. Lee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anna M. Lee, AIA, LEED AP, Owner/Principal