

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

April 21, 2022

1:33 p.m.

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CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Merrick called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair
Representative Kelly Merrick, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Ortiz, Vice-Chair
Representative Ben Carpenter
Representative Bryce Edgmon
Representative Andy Josephson
Representative Bart LeBon (via teleconference)
Representative Steve Thompson
Representative Adam Wool

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative DeLena Johnson
Representative Sara Rasmussen

ALSO PRESENT

Representative Matt Claman, Sponsor; Breanna Kakaruk, Staff, Representative Matt Claman; Sara Chambers, Director, Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development; Representative Grier Hopkins, Sponsor.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Colin Maynard, Chair, Alaska Professional Design Council, Anchorage; Charles Bettisworth, Self, Fairbanks; Chelsey Beardsley, Self, Interior Design Student, Anchorage; Catherine Fritz, Chair, Alaska Board of Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors, Juneau; Jomo Stewart, President and CEO, Fairbanks Economic Development, Fairbanks; Alan Weitzner, Executive Director, Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development; Barbara Cash,

American Society of Interior Designers, Anchorage; Matthew Barusch, Government Affairs Advocacy Manager, Council for Interior Design Qualification, Arlington, Virginia; Jessica Cederberg, American Institute of Architects, Anchorage; Katherine Setser, Self, Oxford, Ohio; Larry Cash, Self, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Cara Rude, Self, Anchorage; Abigale Kron, Self, Anchorage; Jeff Garness, Self, Anchorage; Elizabeth Goebel, Self, Anchorage; Ryan Morse, Self, Fairbanks; Mary Knopf, Self, Anchorage; Dana Nunn, American Society of Interior Designers, Alaska Chapter, Anchorage.

SUMMARY

HB 61 REGISTER COMMERCIAL INTERIOR DESIGNERS

HB 61 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 307 EXTEND BOND AUTH FOR INTERIOR ENERGY PROJ

HB 307 was REPORTED out of committee with seven "do pass" recommendations and one "no recommendation" recommendation and with one previously published zero fiscal note: FN1 (CED).

Co-Chair Merrick reviewed the meeting agenda.

#hb61

HOUSE BILL NO. 61

"An Act relating to commercial interior designers and commercial interior design; establishing registration and other requirements for the practice of professional commercial interior design; relating to the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors; relating to liens for labor or materials furnished; relating to the procurement of commercial interior design services; and providing for an effective date."

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REPRESENTATIVE MATT CLAMAN, SPONSOR, thanked the committee for hearing the bill. He introduced the legislation with a prepared statement:

House Bill 61 makes important changes to our professional licensing statute that recognize the expertise of certified commercial interior designers and grant them the corresponding privileges.

As a diverse profession, there are several different specialties under the title of Interior Designer. Among the most knowledgeable and highly trained are those who are pass the National Council of Interior Design Qualification.

The NCIDQ is a three-part, 11-hour examination that was created for the purpose of identifying interior design professionals with the skills and experience to take on additional responsibility. This test is designed to assess the competency of candidates to protect the public through the practice of interior design, and covers subjects such as fire safety, ADA compliance, emergency egress, and material flammability. A candidate unable to prove their understanding of life safety, codes, and standards would be extremely unlikely to pass the exam.

The goal is not to measure Interior Designers by the standards used by architects. While there are shared skillsets between architects and interior designers, interior designers focus on a specific scope of work. By comparison, there are differences between licensing requirements for physician assistants and doctors, who sometimes perform similar activities.

The NCIDQ is rigorous, and requires, at a minimum, a 60 semester credit hours of post-secondary interior design coursework that encompasses a certificate, degree, or diploma from an accredited institution to sit for the exam.

Currently, there is no state licensing of the interior design profession in Alaska. One consequence of this licensing gap is that Commercial Interior designers do not have access to a construction stamp what would allow them to submit their work for permitting.

HB 61 will allow Alaska to join other forward-looking states that have granted certified Commercial Interior Designers a construction stamp, valid only for

projects within their limited professional qualifications.

HB 61 describes what commercial interior designers will be able to produce and stamp independent of an architect or engineer. The practice of commercial interior design described in HB 61 is specific and limited to non-load bearing interior design elements, such as interior planning for occupant loads and exiting and specification of code-compliant interior finishes, furnishings, and fixtures. The scope of commercial interior design practice described in HB 61 is well within the competencies of interior designers as determined by their education, training, and examination.

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Representative Claman continued to read from prepared remarks:

HB 61 will bring economic benefits by increasing professional employment opportunities, providing incentive to hire Alaskans for professional interior design, attracting high-quality design talent to the state, encouraging small business and unrestrained trade, and expanding consumer choices for qualified design professionals. HB 61 does not restrict requirements or daily practice for any other professional in design or construction including architects, engineers, contractors, trades people, decorators, or residential designers.

HB 61 is intended to be cost neutral to the State, as it is self-funded within the AELS Registration Board through application, registration, and renewal fees. As shown in the attached fiscal note, the passage of this bill would enable the AELS Registration Board to hire a much-needed additional Occupational Licensee Examiner, and the cost per licensee would only be an additional \$30 every two years.

With the passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, there will be \$1.2 trillion dollars bringing opportunities for design professionals to work on public facility projects. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will help provide many

opportunities to rebuild our economy and strengthen the construction industry, and this bill will help get projects ready-to-build by having more professionals licensed in their field.

We often talk of making Alaska open and ready for business. This bill turns those words into action and will make Alaska a better place to do business. Please join me in supporting HB 61.

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Co-Chair Merrick asked for a review of the sectional analysis (copy on file).

BREANNA KAKARUK, STAFF, REPRESENTATIVE MATT CLAMAN, provided the sectional analysis (copy on file):

AS 08.01.010. Applicability of chapter.
Removes "Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors" from the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors, and replaces it with "Design Professionals" as it relates to applicability provisions.

Section 2

AS 08.01.065. Establishment of fees.
Removes "Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors" from the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors, and replaces it with "Design Professionals," as it relates to fees collected from the board by the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development.

Section 3

AS 08.03.010. Termination dates for regulatory boards.
Removes "Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors" from the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors, and replaces it with "Design Professionals", as it relates to termination dates of regulatory boards.

Section 4

AS 08.48.011. Board created.
Removes "Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors" from the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors, and replaces it with "Design Professionals," as it relates to the creation of the board.

Section 5

AS 08.48.011. Board created.

Adds two seats to the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors: one for a commercial interior designer and one additional engineering seat (this addition creates separate seats for electrical and mechanical engineering, which currently share a seat).

Section 6

AS 08.48.061. Finances.

Adds commercial interior designer examiners to the list of meetings board delegates may make expenditures to attend.

Section 7

AS 08.48.071. Records and reports.

Adds commercial interior designers to the list of statistics the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development assembles relating to the performance of its staff and the performance of the board.

Section 8

AS 08.48.111. Power to revoke, suspend, or reissue certificate.

Adds commercial interior design to the list of professional certificates the board may suspend, refuse to renew, or revoke.

Section 9

AS 08.48.171. General requirements and qualifications for registration.

Adds commercial interior designers to the list of applicants that that can qualify for registration.

Section 10

AS 08.48.181. Registration upon examination.

Adds a new subsection (b) specifying the examination qualifications for a commercial interior designer and clarifies that the procedure and standards must include successfully completing the examination administered by the Council for Interior Design Qualification or its successor.

Section 11

AS 08.48.191. Registration by comity or endorsement.

Adds a new subsection (e) to allow a person holding a certificate of registration authorizing the person to practice commercial interior design in a state, territory, or possession of the United States, the District of Columbia, or a foreign country that, in the opinion of the board, meets the requirements of this chapter, based on verified evidence, may, upon

application, be registered in accordance with the regulations of the board.

Section 12

AS 08.48.201. Application for registration.

Adds commercial interior designers to the list of registrants that must meet the stated application standards.

Section 13

AS 08.48.211. Certificate of registration.

Adds commercial interior designers to the list of certificates of registration that may be awarded.

Section 14

AS 08.48.215. Retired status registration.

Adds commercial interior designers to the list of practices an individual holding a retired status registration may not practice.

Section 15

AS 08.48.221. Seals.

Adds "Registered Professional Commercial Interior Designer" to the list of seals a registrant may obtain. Additionally, it adds commercial interior design to the list of registrants that may not affix or permit a seal and signature to be affixed to an instrument after the expiration of a certificate or for the purpose of aiding or abetting another person to evade or attempt to evade a provision of this chapter.

Section 16

AS 08.48.241. Corporations, limited liability companies, and limited liability partnerships.

Adds commercial interior design to the list of services a corporation, limited liability company, or limited liability partnership may offer.

Section 17

AS 08.48.241. Corporations, limited liability companies, and limited liability partnerships.

Adds commercial interior design to the list of practices the board can issue a certificate of authorization for.

Section 18

AS 08.48.241. Corporations, limited liability companies, and limited liability partnerships.

Adds commercial interior design to the list of major branches the certificate of authorization must specify.

Section 19

AS 08.48.241. Corporations, limited liability companies, and limited liability partnerships.

Adds "a group of commercial interior designers" to the list of groups the board may, in its discretion, grant a certificate of authorization to.

Section 20

AS 08.48.241. Corporations, limited liability companies, and limited liability partnerships.

Specifies that a corporation, limited liability company, or a limited liability partnership authorized to offer commercial interior design is responsible to the same degree as the designated commercial interior designer and shall conduct its business without misconduct or malpractice in the practice of commercial interior design.

Section 21

AS 08.48.241. Corporations, limited liability companies, and limited liability partnerships.

Adds commercial interior designer to the list of certificates the board may suspend or revoke.

Section 22

AS 08.48.251. Certain partnerships.

Adds commercial interior designer to the list of allowable practices a partnership of legally registered commercial interior designers may engage in.

Section 23

AS 08.48.281. Prohibited practice.

Adds commercial interior design to the list of practices a person may not engage in unless they are a registered commercial interior designer.

Section 24

AS 08.48.281. Prohibited practice.

Adds a new subsection (c) specifying that this chapter does not prohibit the practice of commercial interior design by a person who is not registered to practice commercial interior design if the services are being performed by a person acting within the scope of practice authorized by another license that is held by the person, such as an architect.

Section 25

AS 08.48.291. Violations and penalties.

Specifies that a person who practices or offers to practice commercial interior design in the state without being registered or authorized to practice is guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction is

punishable by a fine of not more than \$10,000, or by imprisonment for not more than one year, or by both.

Section 26

AS 08.48.295. Civil penalty for unregistered or unauthorized practice.

Specifies if a person who practices or offers to practice commercial interior design in the state without being registered or authorized to practice, the board may enter an order levying a civil penalty.

Section 27

AS 08.48.311. Rights not transferable.

Specifies that the right to engage in the practice of commercial interior design is considered a personal and individual right, based on the qualifications of the individual as evidenced by the individual's certificate of registration, which is not transferable.

Section 28

AS 08.48.321. Evidence of practice.

Defines "evidence of practice" pursuant to sections prohibiting practice by non-registered individuals.

Section 29

AS 08.48.331. Exemptions.

Adds commercial interior designers to the list of necessary exemptions. Of note, subsection (8) excludes commercial interior designers from this exemption because interior designers practicing within the scope of commercial interior design must be registered (or work under a registered professional). Additionally, new subsection (15) is a policy addition specifically calling out kitchen and bath design in exempted residential structures per the national industry's request.

Section 30

AS 08.48.341. Definitions.

Removes "Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors" from the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors, and replaces it with "Design Professionals" as it relates to the definition of "board" for the purposes of this section.

Section 31

AS 08.48.341. Definitions.

Adds the commercial interior design as a professional service to the definition of "certificate of authorization."

Section 32

AS 08.48.341. Definitions.

Adds new subsections (24) - (27) defining commercial interior design and related terms. These subsections provide for the defined practice of interior design services within buildings whose primary use is public occupancy, identified as commercial interior design.

Section 33

AS 08.48.351. Short title.

Amends a short title for the Architects, Engineers, Land Surveyors, and Landscape Architects Registration Act

Section 34

AS 14.43.310. Selection.

Removes "Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors" from the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors, and replaces it with "Design Professionals" as it relates to awarding memorial education loans.

Section 35

AS 23.30.017. Immunity for third-party design professional.

Adds "landscape architect, or commercial interior designer" to the definition of "design professional."

Section 36

AS 34.35.050. Lien for labor or materials furnished.

Makes a technical change to subsection (1) and adds commercial interior design to a list of services that a person may have a lien on to secure payment.

Section 37

AS 35.15.010. Construction by department.

Adds commercial interior design to the list of professional services in connection with the construction of a public work performed by a state department.

Section 38

AS 36.30.270. Architectural, engineering, and land surveying contracts.

Adds commercial interior design to the list of services one can demonstrate during a contract negotiation.

Section 39

AS 36.30.270. Architectural, engineering, and land surveying contracts.

Adds commercial interior design to the list of services one can demonstrate during a contract negotiation.

Section 40

architectural services.

Adds commercial interior design to the list of contracts states and municipality can award and clarifies that contracts may only be awarded to registered individuals, qualified partnerships, and authorized corporations.

Section 41

AS 39.25.120. Partially exempt service.

Removes "Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors" from the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors, and replaces it with "Design Professionals" as it relates to partially exempt service for the principal executive officer of the board.

Section 42

AS 44.62.330. Application of AS 44.62.330 – 44.62.630.

Removes "Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors" from the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors, and replaces it with "Design Professionals" as it relates to administrative adjudication.

Section 43

Uncodified law - Applicability

Clarifies that there is a two year "grace" period following the effective date for currently practicing commercial interior designers to become registered, July 1, 2024.

Section 44

Uncodified law - Regulations

Clarifies that necessary regulations may be developed immediately for implementation.

Section 45

Effective date

Clarifies that Section 44 takes immediate effect.

Section 46

Effective date

Provides an effective date of July 1, 2022.

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Representative Thompson stated that the Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers & Land Surveyors (AELS) had provided a letter expressing some concern (copy on file). He wanted to follow the board's advice and not adopt the bill, which would increase its workload. He cited parts of the letter as follows:

The complexities of our multi-discipline board (with a myriad of details within each discipline) are already substantial, and we are very concerned about adding a new discipline without thoroughly understanding its impacts.

We may want to consider establishing a new board for Architects and Interior Designers, rather than adding the interior designers and establishing procedures for interior designers that are recommended...

Representative Thompson asked where the board currently stood on the bill.

Representative Claman replied that it was his understanding the concerns had been provided by members of the board, but they were not speaking on behalf of the entire board. He did not believe the board had taken a formal position on the bill. Representative Thompson reiterated that the board sent a letter expressing 5 points of concern. He wondered whether they still had the concerns and if the legislature should "step back" from the bill.

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Representative Claman felt that creating a new board would grow government. He indicated that there was a lot of overlap in expertise between engineers and architects and by adding interior designers it added more overlap. He maintained that keeping it a single board with the "cross pollination" of overlap was beneficial. He maintained that creating a new board would be costly and the fiscal note for the bill only added one position. He thought that was sufficient for the added workload.

Co-Chair Merrick moved to invited testimony.

COLIN MAYNARD, CHAIR, ALASKA PROFESSIONAL DESIGN COUNCIL, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), provided information about the AELS board and his experience on the board. He elaborated that the Alaska Professional Design Council (APDC) is a non-profit corporation that represents the common interests of Alaska's design professionals. The members include engineers, land surveyors, landscape architects and interior designers and until the prior year included architects. The council existed for 50 years. He served on the council's legislative committee for over 30

years and the objections raised against HB 61 were similar to the objections in the late 1990's regarding the response to register landscape architects. He noted that the complaints were baseless. The national and state architects' organizations were opposed to landscape design registration. However, he reported that the National Council of Architects Registration Board, which oversaw the national licensing of architects engaged in a thorough review of the systems that registered architects and certified interior designers. The study was done in conjunction with the Council on Interior Design Certification. The study had been completed by architects and interior designers and took 3 years. The report was released in 2021 and concluded that the two professions were unique and distinct disciplines. The study did not suggest a merging of the two professions. He qualified that some aspects of architecture and interior design was similar, but the analysis illuminated some clear differences. He believed that the study could be used to promote productive collaboration and dialogue between the two professions to agree on reasonable regulation of architects and interior designers. The council supported HB 61 and believed it contained the framework for reasonable regulation and did not prevent architects from providing the services they already carried out while allowing interior designers to provide their services without hiring an architect when a public safety code arises. He responded to the question about splitting the board. He emphasized that he was loath to do so. He noted that states with separate architect and engineer boards typically had disputes between the boards about what was in their purviews. The scenario did not exist in Alaska because those discussion took place amongst a common board.

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CHARLES BETTISWORTH, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), shared that he is a resident of Fairbanks, an architect, a member of the American Institute of Architects, and a fellow of the institute. He was a lifelong Alaskan and for over 40 years he owned and managed Bettisworth North Architects and Planners, a multidisciplinary firm providing services in architecture, landscape design, and interior design in both Anchorage and Fairbanks. He explained that for most building projects architects engaged the services of geotechnical engineers; landscape architects; civil, structural, electrical, mechanical, and environmental

engineers. All the disciplines had special training and qualifications and were licensed in their disciplines. When they stamped and sealed documents they took full responsibility for their work and in doing so the architects fully trusted that life, safety, and welfare requirements were met. With licensure and registration for interior design professionals, architects would benefit from the similar assurances with respect to interior design services. He had provided a letter of support (copy on file) to the committee and fully supported the passage of the bill.

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CHELSEY BEARDSLEY, SELF, INTERIOR DESIGN STUDENT, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill. She shared that she was a 29 year old lifelong Alaskan and West High School student and Steller Secondary Graduate currently living in Fort Collins, Colorado, where she was completing her bachelor's degree at Colorado State University's CIDA-Accredited Interior Design Program. She reported that interior design school was demanding and intense. She was currently finishing the most course-heavy year of my program. She related that her cohort was exposed to individual courses that covered: building codes, fire and life safety, accessibility guidelines, evidence-based design, design theory, lighting, sustainability, material health and building wellbeing. She planned to accept an internship over the summer as part of her degree requirement and was considering post graduate employment opportunities. She was prioritizing places that provided the best opportunities to achieve her professional goals. Since Alaska does not currently recognize the interior design profession and she would be required to work under the oversight of an architect to do the kind of commercial interior design work she aspired to, opportunities out of state were currently more enticing, especially as more and more states were recognizing their interior design professionals and providing them with better practice opportunities in the Lower 4 states with their respective interior design legislative initiatives. She asked the committee to vote in favor of HB 61 because it would protect the public, increase professional job opportunities, attract high-quality design talent to Alaska, and encourage those earning interior design degrees "outside" to return home for professional registration.

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Co-Chair Merrick asked to hear from the chair of the AELS board.

Representative Carpenter asked for clarification on who had requested to hear from the AELS board chair.

Co-Chair Merrick replied that a committee member had made the request.

CATHERINE FRITZ, CHAIR, ALASKA BOARD OF ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS, AND LAND SURVEYORS, JUNEAU (via teleconference), shared that she was an architect in Alaska since 1990 and a resident of Alaska for 39 years. She reported that the board sent the committee a letter dated January 26, 2022 (copy on file) that contained a summary of a meeting of the board's legislative committee chaired by Loren Leman. She indicated that the board had concerns regarding HB 61 but not necessarily over whether interior designers should be licensed. She noted that the letter contained 5 points. She had requested to work with the bill sponsor and the interior design industry to address concerns included in the letter. She mentioned concerns regarding the workload the bill may require.

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Vice-Chair Ortiz asked how many board members there were. Ms. Fritz answered that the overall number of licensees were approximately 7,400 with about 600 architects. She did not have the breakdown showing how many of the licensees were in-state versus out-of-state.

Co-Chair Merrick asked the department to follow up with the information.

Vice-Chair Ortiz clarified that he was wondering how many board members there were. He asked if the letter reflected the entire board, or only the members listed in the letter. Ms. Fritz answered there was a cover letter dated January 26, 2022, signed by the chair of the board at the time, Elizabeth Johnston, PE, FPE, that stated the letter was a board document. She answered that there were currently 11 board members. Vice-Chair Ortiz appreciated the concern about the committee's time. He asked Ms. Fritz to summarize the board's concerns with the bill. Ms. Fritz answered that

the first point related to the overlap of practice. She stated there was not a clear "lane" established in the bill. They were concerned there would be investigations due to the lack of clarity. Second, there were many passages within the bill that were not aligned with existing statutory language for other design disciplines. She exemplified the word "commercial" in the title of the act - none of the other design professions were exclusively commercial. She added that projects were industrial, residential, or commercial. The board believed that signifying only commercial work was problematic and counter to the board's core mission to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the practice. She referenced the definition of interior design in Section 32 of the bill related to "public occupancies." She pointed out that architects and engineers were responsible for public and private occupancies and questioned whether work on private owned facilities were within the purview of the law. She referenced workload as the third listed concern and noted the prior discussion regarding the issue. She furthered that there would be a significant impact on implementation and later enforcement of the bill. She highlighted the fourth point that HB 61 relied heavily on an organization called the Council for Interior Design Qualification (CIDQ) (referenced by previous testifiers) to determine the adequacy of a candidate's education, experience, and provide the examination. She related that the board questioned how CIDQ operated. She provided an example; CIDQ decided whether a candidate was qualified for the exam. Alaska Statutes required the Board to review and approve candidates before examination. She related that she spoke with a representative from CIDQ who assured Ms. Fritz that the organization would figure out something to make it align with Alaska's statute. The board would like to know the details before a new law was adopted. She offered that the fifth point resulted from confusion in the previous session when the bill had been in the House Labor and Commerce Committee (HL&C). She explained that there was confusion regarding whether the law was voluntary, and if licensure was not required, however, that was contrary to the bill. She detailed that Section 23 of the bill specifically stated that a person may not engage in commercial interior design unless they were registered. The provision would impact individuals who had been operating a commercial interior design business for many years.

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Ms. Fritz continued that the board had not taken a position to oppose the legislation, but it believed the bill needed some work. The board wanted to have its concerns addressed prior to becoming law.

Representative Josephson referenced Ms. Fritz's mention of Section 23 of the bill and the concern that some people may be left out and could not earn a living any longer. He asked whether it was the board's greatest concern. Ms. Fritz responded in the affirmative. She did not see an enforcement reason per se that HB 61 would impact the board. She guessed that it may create extra workload for the department, dealing with frustrated people who may have their license curtailed. She deduced that the impact on the board was negligible.

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Representative Josephson referenced Ms. Fritz's testimony that the CIDQ would be responsible for licensing and examining the new licensees. He noted that would be a different body than what was currently employed. He assumed that a change in how one profession was certified would have an incidental and remote impact on other board members' licensed professionals. Ms. Fritz could not speak to his example. She voiced that the board's concern with the CIDQ was it was an unknown entity. The CIDQ was younger and had many of the important components of other organizations but there were specific things the board was charged to do by statute like approving applicants before the exam took place. She reiterated that was not part of the CIDQ process. Anyone who had a CIDQ qualification had worked directly with the organization and was certified without reference to or participation by a jurisdictional authority. She determined that the issue could be overcome with existing statute or modification of HB 61 to ensure the elements worked properly.

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Representative Josephson acknowledged that board authority was important but hoped Ms. Fritz would describe what was happening on the ground when working on a project. He requested Ms. Fritz explain "structurally" why it was important for who gets to stamp and who did not. He asked how the bill would impact the occupant, consumer, or visitor of the building. Ms. Fritz responded that the

consumer would not see anything different in the future than they did currently. She explained that any architectural project had a team approach to most building projects. The team included people who did and did not have registrations. She exemplified geologists that were not regulated through the statutes addressed by the bill. She offered that there was "a couple dozen" interior designers in Alaska who met the qualifications of the bill. They worked independently or with architecture firms and made good contributions to projects but were not trained at the same level as architects. She maintained that clarity regarding the authorized duties of interior designers was necessary and their "lane" "needed to be defined or taken away from the practice of architecture." She noted that North Carolina statute stated that interior designers could not practice architecture. North Carolina had statutory definitions for the health, safety, and welfare components for architecture and were able to refer to that for interior designers. She furthered that interior design included things that were not health, safety, and welfare related like choosing furniture, fixtures, and floor finishes, etc.

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Representative Wool specified that the letter had concern about the scope of practice being too wide and undefined. He asked for details. Ms. Fritz referred to the definition in the bill under Section 32, on page 15, line 11, that read "for a building the primary use of which is public occupancy...". She pointed out that architects and engineers dealt with public and private occupancies through definitions in current statute. She pointed to subsections (A) through (E) and noted terms that were not necessarily health, safety, and welfare related such as analysis, research, planning, enhancing. She delineated that the board had concerns that they should not be in the business of "overly defining things that were not health, safety, and welfare related." She referenced the word "fixture" in subsection (B) and wanted clarification about what kind of fixtures the bill was referencing. She related that for the board's other professions the definitions were succinct versus in HB 61 the definitions were broad when trying to enforce things like research and analysis.

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Representative Wool referenced Representative Josephson's question about how a consumer's experience would be changed with passage of the bill. He asked how the planning process would change in a firm that had engineers, architects, and interior designers. He assumed there were plans that engineers and architects had to stamp for approval to verify they were safe. He noted that currently, an interior designer did not have a stamp, and he guessed that their work may be covered under another stamp. He asked if tasks defined under the domain of an interior designer were the same tasks that would no longer be under the domain of an architect, and if it would require only the stamp of the interior designer. Ms. Fritz replied there were provisions in HB 61 that would let architects do everything interior designers could do, because architects already performed the tasks, and the bill was not eliminating any authority architects already possessed. She affirmed that his assumption of how the stamping approval process worked was correct. There were many interior designers working in firms and it would be up to the firm to determine who would stamp the sheets and it was often related to corporate authorization, liability, experience, and the expertise needed for the project. She explained that provisions in HB 61 allowed interior designers to work alone, stamp plans and assume all the project liability and could work as a prime consultant. Interior designers would be able to employ an unlimited number of sub-consultants like architects. She noted that interior designers were not vigorously "trained in multi-tier project management." She reported that some states limited the number of subconsultants an interior designer could employ. She suggested the bill could be amended to address her concerns.

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Representative Wool referenced the definition of scope of practice for an independent interior designer. He wondered whether Ms. Fritz thought it was too broad and allowed the designer to sign off on plans or work in areas where they were not qualified or trained to do.

Ms. Fritz answered in the affirmative. She clarified that the specific concern had not been addressed by the board but there had been conversations about the topic due to "the lack of checks and balances" and the broad definition in the bill. Representative Wool referenced the

approximately 24 interior designers the bill directly affected and the current interior designers that were not qualified for the licensure and asked how the bill would impact their businesses. Ms. Fritz responded that the reference to the 2 dozen people came from the National Council for Interior Design Qualifications (NCIDQ) website and specified that there had been 22 individuals with the NCIDQ test certification. However, there could be people who met the qualifications who were not registered with the council. She had used Google to identify Alaskan interior design businesses and had seen numerous businesses listed but she was unaware how the bill would impact existing businesses because she lacked the information regarding the qualifications of the firm's designers.

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Representative Carpenter referenced the five points the board had come up with. He discerned that there was not unanimous consent among the board on its position on the legislation. He wondered if he was correct. Ms. Fritz answered in the affirmative. She delineated that the legislative liaison committee had discussed doing a markup of the bill the previous year and suggest language to address its concerns. However, some board members expressed concern that the action would indicate board support of the bill and it had not officially taken a position. She shared some member's doubts that it was not in their purview to do so. She determined that the board's role was to regulate the laws passed by the legislature but share its expertise on legislation when necessary. Representative Carpenter remarked that "keeping the peace on the board is one of the challenges of the leadership of the board." He inquired whether the board currently had authority to better define the boundary between architectural practice and interior design practice through regulation or statute change. Ms. Fritz responded in the affirmative. She indicated that the board worked on regulatory change all the time; however, a statute clarifying the role of interior designer was nonexistent so currently there were no regulations. She emphasized that the board was very involved in working on statute, proposing statute, and writing regulation. Representative Carpenter asked if the board could currently create a requirement for the interior designers to obtain a CIDQ or another similar license. Ms. Fritz answered that the board did not have the authority to do so due to the lack of statute regarding interior design.

[2:26:51 PM](#)

Representative Thompson looked at point 5 in the board's letter that included some alternatives that could help the bill work for all involved. He asked if there were other ways not listed in the letter that would make the legislation work for all. Ms. Fritz responded that she was speaking from a personal standpoint. She offered that there was "clean up language" that would improve the bill, or they could rely on how a small number (three other states and the District of Columbia) of other states addressed interior design as a practice act. She added that currently, there was no "model law" that would help structure a "good interior design bill," but the board would attempt to do its best. She acknowledged that there were numerous, ongoing, and "serious" efforts between architects and interior designers to develop something that would work for both professions. The architects recommended a different type of regulation similar to the way home inspectors and geologists were regulated. She maintained that the interior designers had not been receptive to those ideas.

[2:29:07 PM](#)

Representative Claman referenced the letter provided by the board's prior chair. He clarified that the letter the committee had received was not from the entire board but from the board's chair reflecting a report by the board's legislative liaison committee of which Ms. Fritz was a member. He compared it to a bill in the legislature that was passed out of a committee but never made it to the body's floor. He conveyed that the document specified that the board was following the bill but there was no official action regarding its position. He emphasized that the AELS board itself had not taken official action and that Ms. Fritz was not speaking on behalf of the board and was not authorized to do so. He referred to point 5 of the letter made by the board's Legislative Committee and elucidated that it was merely a debate of whether to approve a practice act or a title act. He explained that the distinction between the acts was that a practice act would authorize the interior designer to stamp documents within their scope of practice and a title act would recognize the profession but would lack stamping authority. He deduced that from a construction standpoint, the core of the debate was the ability to stamp documents within the field of

practice. He noted the support of many other design professionals for HB 61.

2:31:28 PM

Representative Carpenter asked if the bill was adopted whether some interior designers currently operating without a CIDQ license would not be able to continue working. Ms. Fritz guessed that some interior designers would be in jeopardy of losing their license, but she could not answer from the capacity of the licensing board. Representative Carpenter thought it may also be a legal question.

SARA CHAMBERS, DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF CORPORATIONS, BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSING, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, responded to Representative Carpenter's question. She indicated that there were currently 320 interior designers. The department did not track whether the business may include an architect or someone who could stamp documents. She furthered that when new licensing professions were added by the legislature, there were some practitioners currently doing what was in the scope of practice who would no longer be able to do their work without a license. She expected a large portion of commercial interior designers would be required to get a license.

2:33:54 PM

Representative Carpenter asked for the number of licensed architects in Alaska. Ms. Chambers replied there were approximately 600 professional architects registered in 2021.

Representative Carpenter asked if the board had discussed regulatory or statutory changes in the past five years that would define the responsibilities between architects and interior designers or discussed ways to move forward with stamping authority. In addition, if discourse on how changes to statute or regulation may allow interior designers to regulate their profession took place. Ms. Fritz replied in the affirmative. She had served on the board for about six years and discussions with interior designers were ongoing for 5 years. She delineated that initially, interior designers requested the ability to be registered and most of the current concerns were raised with them. The board suggested that the interior designers

return to the board with proposed legislation. She stated that the interior designers were not interested in sitting down and going through the proposed bill with the board. She shared that the board was welcoming and open to their ideas and concerns, but the board was not able to work with them on any legislation.

[2:36:28 PM](#)

Representative Carpenter stated that Ms. Fritz response only partially answered his question. He looked at the makeup of the board that included engineers and architects. He listed the composition of the board. He did not see anyone from the interior design community on the board. He considered that perhaps maybe there were some members who did not want to solve the problem. He asked whether the board provided recommendations for registering interior designers regardless of whether the interior designers agreed with them. Ms. Fritz replied that the board had not taken any official action on the bill. She reported that the legislative committee had been actively examining the bill and attempted to bring the issues up that could be collaboratively solved. She maintained that the letter to the committee was from the past board chair, Elizabeth Johnson who was an electrical engineer. She had served on the legislative liaison committee at the time but was not currently a member of the committee. Over the past year, the topic of HB 61 had been on every meeting agenda. She restated that the board did not feel it was its purview to take a position on the bill. She offered to address the matter on the board's next meeting agenda if it was the desire of the committee.

[2:39:37 PM](#)

Representative Carpenter questioned whether action would be taken if the interior design community asked the board to act. He thought there may be "slow rolling", or the board was delaying action due to lack of consensus. He perceived that a group from the industry was coming to the legislature because the board was not taking action or solving the issue. The industry wanted its responsibilities defined, stamping authority, and professional regulations yet the board had "failed" to put forward any recommendations. He stated HB 61 was the avenue to make the change, yet the board was not taking a stance. He saw a

large inconsistency on the board's dealing with the industry and lack of care to take a stance on HB 61.

[2:41:11 PM](#)

Representative Claman asked Ms. Chambers whether the division distinguished between residential and commercial interior designers. Ms. Chambers answered that business licensing did not make the differentiation because it was a business license and not a professional license. She elaborated that interior designer was selected from the NAICS code list of professional services. Since the profession was not currently regulated by the state there was no cause to ask for the distinction. She turned to some of the concerns raised by Representative Carpenter. She noted that AELS did not currently regulate the profession. She speculated that since the AELS board did not regulate interior designers and did not have a fiduciary responsibility to the group it may be reluctant to utilize their resources to put forward a solution for something that was typically driven by the industry profession itself. She shared that over the last 5 years the division had discussed options that the interior designers could pursue.

[2:42:53 PM](#)

Representative Carpenter pointed out that while the board may not currently have statutory authority, it may have the power to make recommendations for changes that would provide the statutory authority, considering some architects employed interior designers and interior designers were currently fully reliant on architects for a recommendation by the board to grant interior designers any sort of definition of responsibility, stamping authority, or regulation of their profession. He stressed the reliant nature of interior designers on architects in their profession.

Representative Josephson asked if there were ways, short of offering full licensure that could expand interior designers' scope of practice. Ms. Chambers answered that she had discussed a way with the interior designers that did not involve licensure but added an exemption in statute that allowed an interior designer with a CIDQ certification to identify their scope of practice and perform certain duties.

Representative Josephson cited Ms. Fritz's statements that the board had not taken a position, but the legislative committee had concerns. He asked whether he was correct. Ms. Fritz replied in the affirmative. Representative Josephson referenced the North Carolina effort to certify interior designers and he had a copy of the statute. He deemed that it appeared more prescriptive than Section 32 of the bill. He asked if Ms. Fritz had seen the language. Ms. Fritz responded in the affirmative. She recalled the specific references that distinguished architecture from interior design. She clarified a prior statement, and recalled that in a November 2021 board meeting, the board had taken action to allow the board's chair to write a cover letter and resend the legislative committee's concerns to the House Finance Committee in January 2022. She determined that the cover letter was insufficient to demonstrate that the entire board had taken an action to share the concerns with the legislature. She stated that the board's intent was to express the concerns listed by the legislative committee.

[2:47:35 PM](#)

Representative Josephson cited a letter from the Alaska Professional Design Council and its member societies included the American Institute of Architects (AIA). He noted that the AIA supported the bill. He asked if the committee should or should not assume that the state chapter of AIA spoke for architects at large in the state. Ms. Fritz answered that AIA was a professional organization under the umbrella of APDC and it was not mandatory to be part of the professional organization to participate as an architect or engineer. She perceived that the organization was acting in its professional society business capacity.

[2:48:55 PM](#)

Representative Thompson stated that Representative Claman was correct the letter was from a legislative committee but the reason the issue had been brought up was that the January 26, 2022, letter was on the board's letterhead. He believed that the purpose of the letter was to point out the numerous concerns that had not been worked out. He stated there were potential solutions to changing the bill to get it to work for everyone. He thought it would take

work to get the bill to a point where everyone would be satisfied.

Representative Wool referenced Ms. Chambers statement that if the bill was adopted all interior designers would need to be licensed through a board. He was trying to understand licensure requirements. He asked about the several hundred interior designers and wondered whether they would be required to take the CIDQ test, or if another licensure test would be administered by the state to obtain certification. Ms. Chambers answered that anyone who wanted to perform the work in Section 32, which was limited to commercial interior design needed to get CIDQ certified and apply for the exam and licensure to work independently, unless they were not working independently and had an architect signing and stamping for them; the licensure was not necessary. She confirmed that it was unknown how many of the 320 interior design firms performed commercial work. The interpretation of "public occupancy" in the bill likely referred to a commercial building and meant that a residential interior designer would not be regulated or require a license, but a commercial designer would.

[2:52:59 PM](#)

Representative Wool asked if there would be pressure for interior designers to become licensed due to customer demand if the bill was adopted.

Representative Claman replied that he had heard specifically from consumers of commercial buildings who related a real interest in having licensed interior designers due to cost. He noted that architects charged a higher hourly fee than interior designers. He exemplified a commercial design project that included interior walls that were not load bearing but needed an approval stamp. He emphasized that it was less expensive for the customer to have the stamp from the interior designer. He furthered that some architectural firms supported the bill because they viewed the certification as offering a broader range of services to their clients.

[2:55:10 PM](#)

Representative Wool ascertained that the concept underlying the bill was that one group would gain responsibility that was previously only available from another group like

stamping a design and helped him put much of the written testimony in perspective.

HB 61 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

[Note: the bill was taken up again later in the meeting.]

[2:56:05 PM](#)

AT EASE

[3:05:43 PM](#)

RECONVENED

Co-Chair Merrick moved to the following bill.

#hb307

HOUSE BILL NO. 307

"An Act relating to the financing and issuance of bonds for a liquefied natural gas production system and natural gas distribution system; and providing for an effective date."

[3:05:49 PM](#)

Co-Chair Merrick noted she did not receive any amendments for the bill. She asked to hear from the bill sponsor.

REPRESENTATIVE GRIER HOPKINS, SPONSOR, briefly described the bill. He articulated that the bill was important for the Fairbanks area as it looked to expand its natural gas supply to businesses and residential neighborhoods and ensure a stable supply. The bill allowed the Interior Gas Utility (IGU) to utilize the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) bonding authority to utilize the extension if bonding was necessary. He remarked that bonding would be repaid by the ratepayers. He furthered that the provisions had been in effect since 2013 and the last extension was in 2017. The current bill would be an additional five year extension to 2028.

[3:07:41 PM](#)

Co-Chair Merrick OPENED public testimony.

JOMO STEWART, PRESIDENT AND CEO, FAIRBANKS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), spoke in support of the legislation. He shared that he was the general manager of the former Interior Gas Utility (IGU). He pointed out that projects often took longer than initially planned. The IGU had made significant progress in achieving its goal of providing a lower cost, cleaner energy alternative to the Fairbanks area. He noted that under the current environment of high energy prices the work to expand service was critical.

Co-Chair Merrick CLOSED public testimony.

[3:09:28 PM](#)

Co-Chair Merrick asked Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) to review the fiscal note.

ALAN WEITZNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AND EXPORT AUTHORITY, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (via teleconference), reviewed the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development zero fiscal note [FN 1 (CED)]. He reported that there was no fiscal impact with the extension of current bonding capacity for the IEP.

[3:10:08 PM](#)

Co-Chair Foster MOVED to REPORT HB 307 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal note.

HB 307 was REPORTED out of committee with seven "do pass" recommendations and one "no recommendation" recommendation and with one previously published zero fiscal note: FN1 (CED).

[3:10:48 PM](#)

AT EASE

[3:13:36 PM](#)

RECONVENED

#hb61

HOUSE BILL NO. 61

"An Act relating to commercial interior designers and commercial interior design; establishing registration and other requirements for the practice of professional commercial interior design; relating to the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors; relating to liens for labor or materials furnished; relating to the procurement of commercial interior design services; and providing for an effective date."

[3:13:45 PM](#)

Co-Chair Merrick OPENED public testimony. She reminded testifiers that testimony was limited to 2 minutes.

[3:14:16 PM](#)

BARBARA CASH, AMERICAN SOCIETY OF INTERIOR DESIGNERS, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), strongly supported HB 61. She wanted buildings to be designed by registered professionals educated to protect public life-safety, from the inside-out, including commercial interior design. She voiced that the bill would accomplish this. She elaborated that HB 61 established professional registration and defined the scope of work that clients, building officials, and architects were already aware of. The bill established registration qualifications in public life-safety design that aligned with other Alaska design professionals: engineers, architects, landscape architects and land surveyors. The commercial interior designers' training included: a bachelor's degree or equivalent in interior design, work experience under direct supervision of a registered commercial interior designer or architect, and successful completion of the national 3-part interior design exam. House Bill 61 expanded the professional design workforce, attracted qualified designers, grew small businesses, and granted registered commercial interior designers' responsibility for their own work. She emphasized that it did not apply to architects, or to residential interior designers (single family to 4-plex), or to non-registered interior designers working under the direct supervision of a registered interior designer. She thanked the committee for its time and consideration.

Co-Chair Merrick noted that Representative LeBon had joined the meeting via teleconference.

Representative Carpenter asked if Ms. Cash currently had an industry certification. Ms. Cash answered that she had a certification, not a license. She added that she had a bachelor's degree in interior design, and she passed the NCIDQ exam.

[3:16:52 PM](#)

MATTHEW BARUSCH, GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS ADVOCACY MANAGER, COUNCIL FOR INTERIOR DESIGN QUALIFICATION, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA (via teleconference), spoke in favor of the legislation. He shared that the CIDQ administered the NCIDQ exam, that was nationally recognized since 1974. The council's mission was to protect the public and the built environment through interior design competency assessment. The council's membership was comprised of state regulatory boards, much like its counterparts in other design fields. He emphasized that CIDQ was prepared and committed to work with the AELS board to implement the bill to protect health, safety, and welfare and to ensure that practicing commercial interior designers were competent. He noted that the council made documents available to the committee ["NCIDQ-Certified Interior Designers: Highly Qualified Design Professionals" and "The Interior Design Response to Opponent Claims Concerning HB 61" (copy on file)] He asked the committee for its support.

[3:18:17 PM](#)

JESSICA CEDERBERG, AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), opposed to the bill. She shared that she had practiced architecture for over 25 years and listed her affiliations with architecture organizations. She was opposed to HB 61 due to its lack of clarity regarding what commercial interior design covers compared to currently licensed architects. She thought that the definitions for commercial interior design did not align with current licensing and construction permitting practices. She pointed to the words "commercial," "public occupancy," "code compliant," and "internal circulation systems" that were not used in the current AELS statute. She stated that the bill failed to define the practice of commercial interior design and was too broad. She furthered that only three states regulated the practice of interior design and Michigan, and Florida repealed its practice acts. Over half the states had title acts for interior designers and the American Institute of Architects (AIA), Alaska Chapter supported a title act. She deemed that the

bill was confusing and would result in investigations unless it was amended to clearly define commercial interior design.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked for Ms. Cederberg's specific concern with the definition in the bill. He deduced that it was an attempt to narrow rather than broaden duties. Ms. Cederberg believed the current bill was too broad with too many gray areas and overlapping duties.

[3:21:43 PM](#)

KATHERINE SETSER, SELF, OXFORD, OHIO (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill. She shared that she was a NCDIQ certified interior designer. She was a technical advisor and co-developer for 5 buildings' life, safety, and fire codes, including the National Fire Protection Association's NFPA101 Life Safety Code that was used in all 50 states. She reported that the proper specifications of interior materials and contents were essential to public safety during a fire and any other emergency. She offered that the faster a fire developed the greater the threat to occupants. She maintained that interior designers needed to understand requirements of fire ratings for partition walls, door assemblies, and interior finishes and contents that slowed flame and toxic smoke spread within a building, leaving time for occupants to escape. She revealed that frequently interior design projects were completed outside of oversight requirements. The knowledge was "fundamental and unique" to the specialized expertise of the commercial interior designers and an essential component of any code related environment. She urged the committee's support for the bill.

Representative Wool referenced Ms. Sester's remarks regarding fire safety codes and asked if architects currently approved fire safety plans. Ms. Setser answered in the affirmative. She stated that architects currently signed off on the fire safety work in cases where a building permit was required.

[3:25:21 PM](#)

LARRY CASH, SELF, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA (via teleconference), testified in support of the legislation. He had been a registered architect in Alaska since 1978 and founded his firm, RIM Architects, in Anchorage. He

understood that the American Institute of Architects, (AIA) Alaska and National organizations were opposing HB 61. He voiced that as a long time member and now Fellow in the AIA (FAIA) it was even more important to voice his emphatic support for the legislation. He offered that his support came from years of successful experience working with expert Commercial Interior Designers. He emphasized that the bill was about designing the safest buildings possible and HB 61 enabled that goal. He communicated that it was his responsibility as the architect to assemble and lead a comprehensive design team. He delineated that designing buildings that were safe for the public required the professional participation of a team of credentialed experts who were registered to practice in their focused disciplines: such as structural, mechanical, electrical, and civil engineers, and landscape architects. Qualified Commercial Interior Designers had a focused, higher level of expertise in interior finishes regarding fire, smoke, infection control, and toxicity characteristics that most registered Architects do not possess. He wanted the option to include registered professional interior designers as members of his team to ensure buildings in Alaska were as safe as possible. He urged the committee to support the bill.

Vice-Chair Ortiz asked if Mr. Cash had been listening to the concerns raised by AELS. Mr. Cash replied affirmatively. Vice-Chair Ortiz asked for Mr. Cash's perspective on the difference of opinion between architects. Mr. Cash replied that he could not speak for others. He was coming from the perspective of safety. He believed the bill would enhance the safety characteristics of buildings in the state. He believed it was the time to pass the bill.

[3:29:58 PM](#)

Representative Wool asked if he was related to an earlier testifier named Barbara Cash. Mr. Cash replied that Ms. Cash was his wife of 43 years. Representative Wool asked if the two currently worked together. Mr. Cash answered that his wife was a retired interior designer, but they had worked together in previous years.

[3:31:08 PM](#)

CARA RUDE, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), testified in support of the legislation. She explained that she became an owner of the longest established and one of the largest architectural practices in Alaska. The lack of professional registration for commercial interior designers became an impediment and two years ago, the company had to restructure from a professional corporation to a Limited Liability Company (LLC). The bill reflected the reality of the modern design marketplace. She elaborated that accelerated construction timelines and constant technology advancements had led to the demand for Interior Designers that provide a focused education on environments to support human health, wellness, ethical material chemistry, and commercial public life safety. She added that the federal government recognized the NCIDQ certification as a standard for structural interior design. She related that for over a decade she had designed national security facilities across the country and in Alaska. She explained that the qualifications to provide structural interior design for those types of projects could only be done by a designer holding an NCIDQ certification. She emphasized that there was a distinction between the architectural scope and interior design scope for federal projects. She believed that HB 61 would lead to better built environments and safeguard an elevated design marketplace

[3:33:14 PM](#)

ABIGALE KRON, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported the bill. She relayed that she was an NCIDQ certified interior designer practicing in Anchorage for over 15 years. She provided information regarding the knowledge base required for accreditation by the national accrediting organization that included: interdisciplinary collaboration for project management, business practices and professional ethics, communication, documentation, building an environmental system, construction, and developing fire, life, safety, and accessibility regulations and guidelines. She stressed that accredited interior design education was appropriately rigorous and relevant to the practice of interior design for code related public occupied spaces that prepared graduates to safeguard public health safety and the welfare of the built environment. She asked the committee to support the bill.

[3:35:40 PM](#)

JEFF GARNES, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), shared that he was the chair of the AELS board testifying on his own behalf. He wondered what the driver of the bill was. He wondered whether it was health, safety, and welfare or the financial interest of a small group of interior designers who could increase their fees with individual licensure. He believed that as occupations like engineering became more specialized and the specializations branched off into its own category of engineering, they maintained a specific safety and welfare component. He thought that most professions had a component of health, safety, and welfare in any profession. He wondered whether there was enough of the component to interior design to create a separate licensure to the AELS board. He questioned whether there had been life, safety, and welfare problems arising in recent years in interior design work. He did not know the answer, but thought the questions needed answers. He wondered if the legislation would be creating a new field under the board without any indications of significant problems. He thought it needed to be significant enough to carve out a new certification on the AELS board. He ascertained that the bill was trying to grant a specific board seat to serve 25 people. He deduced that the inclusion would increase the costs for other registrants of licensing fees for a small group of people. He did not support the bill. He questioned whether it was the proper avenue for interior designers to enhance their profession.

[3:39:32 PM](#)

ELIZABETH GOEBEL, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported the bill. She was a junior interior designer at an architectural firm in Anchorage. She was currently working towards NCIDQ certification for interior designers. She believed the bill proposed reasonable regulation to protect public health, safety, and welfare by establishing professional registration allowing interior designers to practice independently with stamp and seal privileges in a specific and limited scope adhering to their training.

Representative Carpenter asked if Ms. Goebel had any industry certification. Ms. Goebel replied that not currently because she was a recent graduate.

[3:41:19 PM](#)

RYAN MORSE, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), opposed the bill. He was an architect practicing in Fairbanks. He clarified that the AIA had not endorsed the bill at any point in time. He was the former president of the AIA Alaska chapter and as the current National AIA strategic Council Chair it was his experience that the majority of architects, he had worked with did not support the bill. He thought the bill offered a solution where no problem existed. He indicated that architects did oversee a wide variety of specialties and through architects training they coordinated all the disciplines and analyzed the overall impact of a building's health and safety. He acknowledged that interior designers did play an important valuable roll. It only meant they were part of a team that did not require government oversight and licensing to safely contribute to projects. He characterized architects as allies to interior designers and would prefer to work closely together. He asked the committee to not to support the bill.

[3:43:51 PM](#)

MARY KNOFF, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), favored the legislation. She shared that she was a commercial interior designer and was a partner in an architectural firm in Anchorage called ECI. Her three architectural partners were also in support of the bill but unable to call in. She communicated that the bill provided economic benefits to consumers by eliminating a layer of architectural design oversight and related costs to a small scope of work for public buildings for public occupancy. The AELS licensing fees would increase by approximately \$30 for a two year license. She believed that it broadened consumer choice. She indicated that architecture and interior design had evolved into two distinct disciplines that complimented each other but had their own unique area of knowledge and expertise. She elucidated that historically, related professions had evolved and included complimentary regulations for similar but separate areas of expertise to better serve the public like nurse practitioners and doctors or landscape architects and architects. She believed that the public had benefitted from a broad offering of choice.

[3:45:50 PM](#)

DANA NUNN, AMERICAN SOCIETY OF INTERIOR DESIGNERS, ALASKA CHAPTER, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in support of the bill. She reported that she was a nearly 19-year resident of Anchorage and a NCIDQ-certified commercial interior designer. She stated that interior design had been misconstrued and mischaracterized as trying to be architecture. She defined interior design as a technical, complex, and human centered practice of creating safe and sustainable efficient interior environments in compliance with law and regulation. She elaborated that commercial interior designers were qualified by specific education, required work experience, and rigorous examination. They were trained to design within in the constraints of building, fire, life safety acceptability, and sustainability guidelines. She noted that workforce development stood out as a timely benefit provided by the bill with the oncoming capital and infrastructure projects. The current design workforce would strain under the increased workload and struggle to meet the needs for design services. Professional registration could provide incentives to attract individuals who want a rewarding career in interior design to the state. The bill removed obstacles to small businesses and possible increased opportunities for military spouses who could work for Alaskan firms versus working remotely for outside firms. The professional registration would also provide increased opportunity for Alaskan design students to return to the state post-graduation. She asked for passage of the bill.

Co-Chair Foster CLOSED public testimony.

Co-Chair Foster referenced the new fiscal note from the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development.

SARA CHAMBERS, DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF CORPORATIONS, BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSING, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, reviewed the fiscal note that would add one occupational licensing examiner at \$88,000 per year, \$4,000 per year for two new board members, and regulation charges associated with adopting regulations and adding staff. She emphasized that the department did not anticipate the program to take 100 percent of a license examiner's time. She explained that the division currently had two examiners for 7,400 registrants and was beyond capacity. She indicated that AS 08.01.065(f) that governed fee setting for professional licensure required that all license fees for the AELS board

were charged the same amount. The additional cost in the fiscal note would be spread across the membership of the entire board as part of the cost of doing its business. There was a benefit and cost to the entire board for adding staff.

[3:50:53 PM](#)

Representative Wool asked how many licensees the board oversaw. Ms. Chambers replied there were currently 7,400 licensees.

HB 61 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Foster reviewed the schedule for the following morning.

ADJOURNMENT

[3:51:42 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 3:51 p.m.