

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

May 6, 2024

7:10 p.m.

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CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Foster called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Neal Foster, Co-Chair
Representative DeLena Johnson, Co-Chair
Representative Julie Coulombe
Representative Mike Cronk
Representative Alyse Galvin
Representative Sara Hannan
Representative Andy Josephson
Representative Dan Ortiz
Representative Will Stapp
Representative Frank Tomaszewski

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Bryce Edgmon, Co-Chair

ALSO PRESENT

Brian Meisner, Principal Architect, ECI Architect, AIA Member, Anchorage; Kelsey Conway, Owner, SALT Interior Design, Eagle River; Sylvan Robb, Director, Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development; Serena Hackenmiller, Staff, Representative Jesse Sumner; Catherine Fritz, Former Chair, Alaska State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE

Paul Baril, American Institute of Architects Alaska, Anchorage; Jessica Cederberg, President, American Institute of Architects Alaska, Anchorage; Jason Gamache, Self, Anchorage; Dana Nunn, Chair of the Government Affairs Committee, American Society of Interior Designers Alaska Chapter, Anchorage; Elizabeth Goebel, Self, Anchorage;

Melissa Tribyl, Self, Anchorage; Caitlin Cunningham, Self, Anchorage; Mary Knopf, Self, Anchorage; Colin Maynard, Self, Anchorage; Charles Bettisworth, Self, Fairbanks; Larry Cash, Registered Architect, Anchorage; Barbara Cash, Self, Anchorage; Ramona Schwimscheimer, Self, Anchorage; Michele Elfers, Self, Juneau; Thomas Livingston, Self, Anchorage.

SUMMARY

HB 149 NURSING: LICENSURE; MULTISTATE COMPACT

HB 149 was SCHEDULED but not HEARD.

HB 159 REGISTER INTERIOR DESIGNERS

HB 159 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

HB 190 ALASKA SUNSET COMMISSION

HB 190 was SCHEDULED but not HEARD.

HB 259 COUNCIL ON HUMAN AND SEX TRAFFICKING

HB 259 was SCHEDULED but not HEARD.

Co-Chair Foster reviewed the meeting agenda. The only bill heard was HB 159. He moved directly to invited testimony followed by public testimony.

#hb159

HOUSE BILL NO. 159

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

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BRIAN MEISNER, PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT, ECI ARCHITECT, AIA MEMBER, ANCHORAGE, supported the bill. He was grateful to work with interior designers every day. He listed projects where he worked closely with interior designers. He stated that it would raise the ceiling for interior designers to have the ability to stamp and do their own work. He believed that it was good for the state. He encouraged the committee to pass the bill.

KELSEY CONWAY, OWNER, SALT INTERIOR DESIGN, EAGLE RIVER, spoke in support of the bill. She was a business owner in downtown Anchorage and her firm worked primarily on commercial buildings. She elaborated that the bill covered the scope of work on commercial not residential buildings. The bill was important for her practice, which called for careful consideration of building codes that included things like accessibility compliance, interior partition modifications, and designing safe methods of egress. She voiced that interior designers performed the work and should be registered in the same manner that matched their peers. The registration would offer the most effective and thorough protection of Alaskans' public safety and welfare. Currently, interior designers were working collaboratively with architects and engineers and the bill allowed designers ownership of their work while still maintaining collaborative work. She shared that as a firm owner, attraction and retention was difficult and passage of the bill would create a strong pull to attract and retain designers.

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Representative Stapp supported the bill and lauded the two testifiers for their presence in the capitol all day waiting and for their patience. He believed it showed their dedication to the importance of the topic.

Representative Ortiz asked why the bill was necessary. Ms. Conway responded that the legislation would enable registered interior designers to engage in certain aspects of interior construction that did not modify things beyond their scope of practice. The bill would allow designers to stamp and seal their own work. She noted that even with smaller projects where designers had done the bulk of the work, the designers had to retain an architectural consultant to oversee the final product and stamp and seal. The bill would allow designers to own their work rather

than having an architect come in to stamp the work at the end of a project.

Representative Galvin understood that the federal Department of Defense (DOD) required a registered interior designers and they were unable to work on DOD projects if they were not registered. She asked for comment. Ms. Conway confirmed that there were some contracts through DOD that required registered interior designers. She offered to provide a solicitation.

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Representative Galvin stated that no follow up was necessary. She had heard from an architect in Fairbanks who had to work with designers from outside the state to work on DOD contracts. She asserted that registration would be an advantage for Alaska. She understood there were a lot of interior designers in Alaska who worked for home building projects. She asked how to respond to those interior designers if they had questions about whether there should be a new registration law. Mr. Meisner answered that it would not change their ability to practice. The bill allowed registered interior designers to stamp some interior renovations that required an architectural stamp, but it would not change anything they were currently doing. The bill raised the ceiling for interior designers to consider seeking registration.

Representative Coulombe observed that current interior designers had until July 1, 2025, to become registered. She asked if the registration was required and how much it would cost. Ms. Conway answered that a designer could continue to practice without being registered if an architect was hired to oversee the work. She elaborated that in order to become registered, the designer would need to enroll in a course offered through the University of Alaska, Anchorage (UAA) called Northern Design, which was a semester long course. The bill allowed for time to take the course.

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Representative Coulombe asked about the cost. Ms. Conway did not know the number, but she would follow up with the information.

Representative Josephson asked for the number of licensed architects in Alaska. Mr. Meisner responded that he did not know. He was registered in multiple states and thought that Alaska had a smaller number than other states.

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SYLVAN ROBB, DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF CORPORATIONS, BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSING, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, replied that there were 618 architects registered in Alaska in 2023. Representative Josephson asked for a breakdown of all of the Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors (AELS) Board's categories and subcategories such as landscape architects and others. Ms. Robb replied that the information was available on the department's website, and she would be happy to point him in the right direction or provide it for the committee.

Representative Hannan asked how many people the board licensed. Ms. Robb answered that the board licensed about 7,800 firms and individuals.

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Representative Josephson remarked that the bill was not prescriptive defining that interior designers could do "A through Z." He understood it allowed the board to make those decisions. Ms. Robb replied that it allowed some things to be defined by the board via regulation. Representative Josephson asked if it specified what an interior designer could or could not do. Ms. Robb deferred the answer to the sponsor's staff.

Representative Hannan thought it seemed the board had a very large group to oversee. She asked if the number the board oversaw was much larger than most other licensure professional boards. Ms. Robb answered that the Board of Nursing oversaw 32,000 licensees and was the largest licensure. She noted that the next largest licensure was construction contractors with 11,000 licensees and the medical board oversaw 8,000 licensees. The AELS board oversaw 22 license types, which was a large number.

Co-Chair Foster asked the sponsor's staff to provide a brief summary of the bill.

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SERENA HACKENMILLER, STAFF, REPRESENTATIVE JESSE SUMNER, provided a brief explanation of the bill. She explained that the bill formally recognized interior design as a regulated profession in the state and placed them under the purview of the Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors. The bill would also enhance public safety to ensure that designers met specific educational experience and examination requirements when working on buildings for public use. The legislation allowed registered interior designers to work independently of architects and engineers on non-structural elements, occupant planning, and code compliance. The bill was intended to be cost neutral and was expected to have a positive economic impact on the state, The legislation did not alter the requirements for any other design or construction professionals.

Co-Chair Foster asked if that was the conclusion of her remarks. Ms. Hackenmiller offered to provide more detail on the bill including a sectional analysis. Co-Chair Foster noted they would move to public testimony and hear the sectional at a future bill hearing.

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Co-Chair Foster OPENED public testimony. He asked testifiers to try to keep their testimony to two minutes.

CATHERINE FRITZ, FORMER CHAIR, ALASKA STATE BOARD OF REGISTRATION FOR ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS, AND LAND SURVEYORS, informed the committee that, as a former chair, the board had authorized her to speak to the issues of HB 159. She referenced a letter from the current AELS board chair, Jeffrey Garness that outlined actions the board took at its May 2023 meeting. She delineated that the two primary actions were voting against adding interior design to its responsibilities, and recommended amendments to the bill. The recommendations included deleting provisions to add two more seats to the board, removing redundancies, and revising the transition provisions. The AELS board's Legislative Liaison Committee chaired by Loren Leman, requested that she draw attention to Section 24 of the bill, which added the word "construction." The committee believed that the change was substantive and affected more than interior design and changed the meaning and intent of the existing statute. She furthered that in 2022 the board formed a working group of architects and interior designers

to collaboratively study interior design regulations and recommend options. The bill did not represent the approach that was favored by the working group. The group discovered that there were some simpler models that were different than the one before the committee. The bill provided for a Practice Act that was utilized in two states. The more contemporary model was a Title Act. She offered to share the details of the acts. She wanted to clarify from the earlier testimony of Ms. Conway and Mr. Meisner that statute required that the work for the stamped interior design drawings must be under the direct supervision of the person stamping. She stressed that there had to be a strong relationship between the person stamping and the designers producing the drawings. She thanked the committee for the opportunity to speak.

Representative Josephson referenced her point about the supervision of the work of the designer. He asked about the possibility that Ms. Conway was working in proximity to an architect. Ms. Fritz answered that the way Ms. Conway termed it struck a chord with her because it did not sound to her like she practiced under Mr. Meissner or that he provided direct supervision. Representative Josephson understood that there was a "massive chasm" between the two models and where a bill could fall between the two. Ms. Fritz responded in the affirmative. She explained that a Title Act allowed the individual to use the title with a definition of the work that could be done under the title. A Practice Act meant the person must be registered or they were in violation of the law. Representative Josephson deemed that HB 159 left open the precise work an interior designer could do in their scope of practice and left it to the board. He asked if that was correct. Ms. Fritz responded his conclusion was basically correct. She explained that there was a provision that contained a broad definition that allowed for the creative work of interiors or similar language. However, another section specified that the AELS board would define the practice of interior designers under health and life safety. Representative Josephson asked that if the bill passed, would the interior designers be left with carving out a space for itself considering the board's opposition to the bill.

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Ms. Fritz answered that the board would work hard and diligently to comport to the statutes that were the

framework on which it operated. She furthered that the difficulty was to define the life and safety elements under interior design by a board comprised of engineers and land surveyors. They were unfamiliar with the design concepts. She declared that it was a new field, and it would be very difficult for not only the interior designers but "for the board to come up with what is the practice of interior design that we are supposed to regulate."

Representative Galvin referenced from Ms. Fritz testimony that the bill required two more seats on the board and removed redundancy. She asked for clarity. Ms. Fritz affirmed that the bill added two seats to the board totaling 13 seats. The board was opposed to the addition of two more seats. There were 22 professions under the board, and it was unnecessary that every profession had a representative on the board. She added that the redundancy in the bill caused confusion when attempting to interpret statute to develop regulations. The board wanted a clean bill. Representative Galvin surmised that the board may not be familiar with all the intricacies of interior design which might explain the provision regarding two board seats. She knew that statutes often contained redundancy and would examine the bill.

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Representative Hannan recalled Ms. Fritz prior testimony that a practice act required registration for everyone working in the profession. She had heard a different interpretation and wanted to understand the discrepancy in the bill. Ms. Fritz responded that it was complicated and confusing. She explained that the bill specifically used the word registered interior design that was distinct from interior design. She reiterated that interior design would be defined in regulation. An interior designer would need to be registered. The process of obtaining registration required passage of a test from a recognized testing organization. She stated that there was only one organization in the United States (U.S.) called the Council for Interior Design Qualification (CIDQ) who administered the National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) examination. The certificate from the organization would be necessary to acquire certification. Representative Hannan recalled that it was only applicable if they chose to be a registered interior designer otherwise the designer could continue to work for a firm. She asked whether she

was correct. Ms. Fritz answered in the affirmative. She explained that if an architect was not registered in Alaska, they could practice architecture, but they would be required to work under a registered architect and their stamp. She indicated that designers were currently allowed to do many things under the law but if they wanted to take on the new level of responsibility they would need to be registered. Representative Hannan cited the federal requirements and understood that currently all DOD projects required a registered designer. She learned that frequently DOD was the first to adopt the type of requirement and shortly after other federal agencies adopted the same regulations. She stated that the state spent a lot of federal money in Alaska and was aware that if Alaskan interior designers did not have their own registry, they would need to use out of state designers or designers registered in another state. She felt that was a compelling reason to keep up and maintain a state workforce that was designed for Alaska. She understood that Ms. Fritz was opposed to the bill, but she favored the legislation.

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Ms. Fritz replied that she was "trying to wear her AELS hat." She stated that there was a misunderstanding related to the DOD regulations. She offered that there were only 28 states that regulated interior design and only 2 used the practice model. She was confident most of the 22 other states that lacked registration all had good examples of beautiful federal projects interior designers had worked on. She deferred the answer to someone that was familiar with the federal guidelines.

Representative Stapp asked if Ms. Fritz was currently on the board. Ms. Fritz answered in the negative and reminded the committee that the board had asked her to continue to speak to the bill. Representative Stapp referenced her statements regarding interior designers' difficulty designing their profession and scope of work. He asked if designers had practical and professional required exams that defined those things. Ms. Fritz replied affirmatively and cited the NCIDQ exam. She added that there was no model law within the CIDQ. Representative Stapp offered his perspective. He relayed that in his district \$350 million was currently invested in Fort Wainright and there were many jobs where the bids required a registered interior designer. He supported the bill because he wanted designers

in his district to get the job versus a designer in Florida or some other state. He asked if Ms. Fritz did not want licensed interior designers in the state or if she knew a better way to meet the federal requirements. Ms. Fritz answered that the board's position favored a Title Act, which would fulfill the requirement and allow for participation on federal projects. She noted that there was participation on the federal projects in all states and she believed there was a misunderstanding on the solicitations' interpretation. The NCIDQ certificate alone made the interior designer eligible to compete for the work. She clarified that the board did not object to the work of interior designers. She stated there were two questions for the board to consider: whether the tasks rose to the level of public health, safety and welfare for the public's responsibility and liability under AS 08.48 [Title 8]. She reported that the majority of the board members voted no because the issue was a factor in the no vote. The board was supportive of a Title Act. There could be a single board and other ways to better serve what the interior designers were seeking. She added that the board did not disapprove of a regulatory model and had been waiting for the interior design working group to come back with recommendations, but it did not happen.

Representative Coulombe asked about the opposition to adding the word "construction." She asked where it was located in the bill. Ms. Fritz replied that it was contained in Section 24.

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PAUL BARIL, AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS ALASKA (AIA), ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in opposition to the bill. He was an owner of an architectural firm called Envision. He clarified that he was supposed to be an invited testifier for the bill. He related that there was an Alaska chapter of AIA representing over 200 architects and was a newly appointed member of the AELS board. He voiced that he was testifying on behalf of AIA. He stated that the bill was not a turf war between architects and interior designers. His firm had interior designers on its staff. He viewed that the issue was about public health, safety, and welfare. The debate was about what was best for the Alaskan public. He believed that an architect was better trained and prepared to protect the public through building design than an interior designer would be. He

delineated that current law set strict standards for who could stamp construction documents. The existing laws were successful by guaranteeing that commercial construction documents were only stamped by the states most qualified design experts. He proposed weighing any benefits of HB 159 against the proven track record of safety and success that architects had provided for decades. He asked the House and Senate to consider the issues and not jeopardize a successful system. He respected the work of interior designers. He informed the committee that the Senate Finance Committee currently had the companion bill, SB 73 and the committee had asked the sponsor to continue working with the architects to find a compromise. He shared some history regarding the working group and noted that the bill was introduced before the working group made its recommendations. The AIA would only agree to a title act and the interior designers wanted a practice act. He noted that AIA offered a compromise and had recommended amendments that he sent the committee via email on Friday May 3, 2023 (copy on file). He contended that the DOD requirement for registered interior designers was "a complete lie." He explained that a certified (through NCIDQ) interior designer working for an Alaskan firm was qualified to perform DOD work. He thanked the committee for their time.

Co-Chair Foster apologized to the testifier for not having them listed as invited testifiers.

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Representative Galvin referenced Mr. Baril's comments about lies that were being told and the 28 states that registered interior design. She wondered if among the states' offering registration had any experienced safety issues that were concerning to the board. Mr. Baril responded there were incidences and work experiences he had seen in his career where interior designers did not possess the qualifications to meet health, safety, and welfare. The concern was centered around the AELS board to define the parameters of interior design. He related that the working group was unable to agree on the level of health, safety, and welfare. He reported that they looked at the NCIDQ exam and determined that there was not enough evidence provided by CIDQ that the level of qualification from the area of life, health, and safety on the test was sufficient. He believed that where to draw the line was a big question. He referred

to his amendments and noted that the revised bill was a Title Act with permitting privileges, which was agreed to by Senator Claman. The revised provision contained language defining what interior designers were authorized to do and prohibited from doing to obtain permitting privileges. Representative Galvin asked if there were states that had incidents that resulted in collapsed buildings or other issues resulting in loss of life that the committee could study. She was aware of an architecture firm in Fairbanks who was able to secure DOD contracts because the interior designer had the NCIDQ certification and was registered in another state. She noted that the reason for the bill was Alaska lacked the same opportunity for registration. She commented that she had a different interpretation regarding the DOD requirements and was looking for ways to bridge the disconnect.

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Representative Josephson asked who Mr. Baril sent the information to. Mr. Baril responded that he sent it to the House Finance Committee.

Representative Hannan asked Mr. Baril to spell his last name. Mr. Baril complied.

Co-Chair Foster noted that Ms. Cederberg was an invited testifier.

JESSICA CEDERBERG, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS ALASKA, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), opposed the bill. She read from prepared remarks. She shared that she was a licensed architect. She remarked that over the prior four years the AIA had engaged in the issue and the work of finding consensus and recommending amendments. She asserted that the bill did not represent the consensus. She believed that the primary issue was the legislation segregated certain types of interior designers from others that did not have the same qualifications and provided an "exclusive right" to 21 individuals. The bill created a class of people that had privilege and access above others with equal qualifications. She believed that the bill disregarded the recommendations of the AELS board and "the vast majority of services the interior designers performed and was not related to the health and safety of the public." She added that the work did not rise to the level of responsibility and liability to the public as other work

related to design professionals. She felt that the legislation was "excessively broad" and did not contain sideboards to practice. She exemplified Section 8, line 7 that read:

(A) professional service or creative work in the design of interior spaces;

Ms. Cederberg believed that the language invited unqualified practice and would be a direct threat to public safety. She felt that the current system worked well. She reiterated that the 21 individuals presently holding the NCIDQ certification was already able to compete on federal contracts. She implored the committee to not pass the bill and send it back to the drawing board.

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Representative Stapp noted that the bill was about two years old, and he thought a suggestion to send the bill back to another committee for consideration was a delay tactic. He imagined that if an equitable compromise was available, it would have happened before the bill was scheduled. Ms. Cederberg disagreed with his statements. She stated they had been in communication with Senator Claman on the bill and had been trying to find a common ground. She voiced that the opponents proposed a Title Act with permitting privileges. She thought it still needed to be looked at and should not be pushed through just because the time was short in the session.

Co-Chair Foster began hearing Public Testimony.

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JASON GAMACHE, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported the bill. He shared that he is an architect and owned his own firm, Explorer Design. He employed 30 individuals comprised of both architects and interior designers. He believed that Alaska had an "incredible work force pool of interior designers" and with a change in the law they would have liability, responsibility, and authorship of their work with stamping approval. He agreed the topic had been in the works for two years and he did not want to see any more delays or stall tactics. He announced that he was a member of AIA and voiced that with a few exceptions he did not have any other colleagues or

competitors that did not support the bill. He delineated that his firm did chase DOD work and were awarded the contracts because the firm's designers had the NDICQ certification and licensure out of state in places like Texas or Florida. He would like to see the registration local. He would love to keep the work in Alaska and the money in Alaska, but the state lacked enough employee resources for the large workload. He wanted to employ more interior designers. He stressed that the bill did not deny those who were currently practicing interior design from continuing their work. He emphasized that HB 159 allowed registered designers to stamp their own work. He supported an interior designer position on the board to help prevent and clarify the confusion around the role of an interior designer.

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DANA NUNN, CHAIR OF THE GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, AMERICAN SOCIETY OF INTERIOR DESIGNERS ALASKA CHAPTER, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in favor of the legislation. She emphasized that interior designers should not be precluded from practicing to the extent of their abilities as demonstrated by educational experience and examination. She wanted the stalling to end. She corrected earlier inaccurate statements. She referenced an earlier statement regarding the Northern Design Course and the cost of registration. She explained that currently, the course was not required for interior designers, but would be under the bill. She reported that she completed the course in the previous spring and found it reasonable and appropriate for any practitioner of vertical construction in Alaska. The cost was slightly under \$1,000 because the University's fee structure lacked distinction between full time students and an individual taking a required continuing education course. She relayed that there were 592 registered architects in Alaska. The AIA had 196 members that were a mix of architects and architecture graduates working towards their degree and other related industry partners. She proposed that the AIA perspective represented a relatively small proportion of Alaska's registered architects. She urged the committee to pass the bill.

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ELIZABETH GOEBEL, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), favored that bill. She shared that she was an emerging

junior interior designer working on public projects in the state. She commented that HB 159 ensured the opportunity for designers to advance in their careers and encouraged other young talents towards the profession. She asked the committee to support the bill.

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MELISSA TRIBYL, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported that bill. She relayed that she was an interior designer and owner of MCT Explorer Design. She thought that the bill increased consumer choice, provided clients other options for simple renovations and improved project timelines by eliminating the need for an architect's stamp. She noted that ENCARB, the architect certifying agency, and NCIDQ maintained similar paths to a regulated practice that included: education, professional experience, and examination. A study concluded that 77 percent of architecture tests and interior design tests had definite or some similarity. She offered to provide the report to the committee and to work with the AELS board and help them understand the interior design community.

Representative Galvin asked if Ms. Tribyl if she had taken the NCIDQ exam. Ms. Tribyl answered affirmatively. Representative Galvin asked if she decided to register for a license from another state. Ms. Tribyl responded that she had chosen not to in the hopes that she would be supported by the state. However, her coworker in Alaska had a license in Texas.

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CAITLIN CUNNINGHAM, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in favor of the bill. She shared that she was an emerging interior designer. She determined that the bill would allow her to advance her career and attract more people to come from out of state to work in the field and remain in the state. She urged for passage of the bill.

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MARY KNOPF, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), supported the bill. She related that she was an interior designer. She provided clarifying statements about a Practice Act versus a Title Act. She explained that A Title Act established a voluntary registration, and a Practice Act

established a mandatory registration. The bill was not a full Practice Act because it enabled people to practice interior design with current exclusions. However, any interior designers who chose not to become registered could work under an architect or a registered interior designer. Secondly, she pointed out that AIA recommended a "title certified" model, which was very confusing because the NCIDQ exam was taken to earn a certification. She clarified that if a person took the NCIDQ they were certified but not registered. She urged for passage of the bill.

Representative Galvin cited prior testimony that 21 interior designers were currently qualified for the registration. She asked whether the number was correct. Ms. Knopf replied that there were 50 designers that had the NCIDQ certification, but only 21 were active and kept their certificate current, which required continuing educations and fees. She noted that designers could recertify. Representative Galvin asked if Ms. Knopf was registered in another state. Ms. Knopf replied in the negative. She elaborated the firm she worked for did not do DOD work. She was aware of designers that did seek registration in other states. Representative Galvin deduced that the current board had 7,800 members and the bill would add approximately 50 members with an additional level of licensure. She asked if she was correct. She wondered whether the bill was adding another level of licensure. Ms. Knopf answered in the affirmative and added that the goal was representation on the board as part of their particular group of licensees.

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COLIN MAYNARD, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), favored the bill. He indicated that he was a structural engineer and a former and current member of the AELS board. He was speaking on his own behalf. He addressed the fiscal note. He deemed that the cost with the addition of interior designers seemed to be overestimated. The majority of the fiscal note cost was for a second licensing examiner that was required by the current workload of 6,700 registrants and 1,100 corporations. He pointed out that if there were only 21 active NCIDQ registrants, it was small by comparison to every other professional group registered by the board. He estimated that 80 individuals would likely become registered once it was available. The cost directly associated with the interior design profession were quite

minimal at \$2.50 per licensee above the current \$100 biannual fee. He urged the committee to pass the bill, which offered the public more options.

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CHARLES BETTISWORTH, SELF, FAIRBANKS (via teleconference), supported the bill. He shared that he was an architect in Fairbanks and owner of a firm employing 35 architects, interior designers, and landscape architects. He expounded that since the bill had first been introduced a couple of years ago one thing had changed. The DOD requirement had changed, and he understood that not all projects required the registration however, some do. He thought that passage of the bill would be a pathway for interior designers to compete for DOD work. He applauded legislators for the work they do.

Representative Stapp thanked Mr. Bettisworth for calling in and providing additional testimony via email.

Representative Ortiz asked some personal questions of Mr. Bettisworth.

Mr. Bettisworth added that none of his 35 employees opposed the bill. He submitted that AIA was not speaking for most architects, who favored the bill. He encouraged passage of the legislation.

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LARRY CASH, REGISTERED ARCHITECT, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), strongly supported the bill. He shared that he was a practicing architect for 40 years and had started his firm that currently included over 100 employees; it provided services all over the state as well as globally. He emphasized that registration was important for DOD work and resulted in safer buildings. He believed there should be registered interior designers in Alaska regardless of the DOD debate. The designers would be legally responsible for their work on his projects exactly like engineers and landscape architects were. He was frustrated that a small group of architects were constantly stalling the legislation. He stated the stall tactic had occurred the previous year as well. He implored the committee to adopt the legislation.

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BARBARA CASH, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), favored the bill. She believed that it was the "right solution for Alaska." She shared that she was an interior designer and has practiced in Alaska for 40 years. She detailed that of the 28 states regulating interior design, there were at least 12 states with permitting privileges similar to those in HB 159. The majority of those states had regulatory boards comprised of architects, interior designers with many also including engineers and landscape architects. They were all tired of the stalling and delaying by the bill's opponents. She stated that the DOD specifications clearly wanted interior designers to have legal responsibility for their own work. She agreed with other testifiers that interior designers should not have to be registered in other states. She wanted to keep the fees and work in Alaska. She encouraged the committee to pass the bill.

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RAMONA SCHWIMSCHEIMER, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), opposed the bill. She communicated that she was a licensed architect in Anchorage. She stated there was no evidence that the bill would solve a non-existent problem. Secondly, the bill was unnecessary and confusing and would not protect the consumer nor increase public safety.

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MICHELE ELFERS, SELF, JUNEAU (via teleconference), supported the bill. She urged the committee to pass the legislation. She stated that many individuals had been working on the bill for years and hoped the work would not drag on for years. She reminded that committee that approximately 20 years prior the state had a similar struggle when landscape architects wanted a registration and licensure and some engineers stood in opposition. The law had finally passed and over the past 20 years they worked very well together and were part of the AELS board. She observed that the issue was history repeating itself with architects and interior designers. She acknowledged that among design professionals there was a lot of overlap on projects, and they all contributed to one set of plans for a building, but each had their own specialties. She

commented that interior designers were the best trained for the work they did. Licensing them for the health, safety, and welfare of a building was the best thing possible. She voiced that by registering interior designers, it ensured safer facilities for the public.

[8:39:02 PM](#)

THOMAS LIVINGSTON, SELF, ANCHORAGE (via teleconference), spoke in opposition of the bill. He related that he was a licensed practicing architect since 1976. He found no evidence that the bill would provide services that were not currently provided by architects. He opined that the legislation was confusing and unnecessary and did not enhance public safety. He stated that current regulation of building design and engineering should not be changed and thought that the legislation was vague. He determined that the legislation created a design overlap between design disciplines that he had not seen in his years of practice. He explained that a building design team typically included architects, civil, structural, mechanical, and electrical engineers; all defined disciplines without overlap. He noted that only 3 states utilized a Practice Act. He believed that a Practice Act was more appropriate. He thanked the committee.

Co-Chair Foster left public testimony open and noted there had been public testifiers earlier in the day who were unable to testify.

HB 159 was HEARD and HELD in committee for further consideration.

Co-Chair Foster discussed the schedule for the following day.

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ADJOURNMENT

[8:44:24 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.