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House Economic Development, Commerce, and Labor Committee
Sponsor Testimony – House Bill 504
Representatives Dorothy Pelanda
February 27, 2018

Thank you Chairman Young, Vice-Chairman Riedel, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan, and members of the House Economic Development, Commerce, and Labor Committee for the opportunity to provide Sponsor Testimony on House Bill 504.

HB 504 establishes the permissive certification of Ohio’s educated and qualified commercial interior design professionals.

The intent of the legislation is to allow these professionals to practice and pursue their professional goals to their fullest capabilities while protecting the public, as well as retain talent and increase job creation in the State of Ohio.

In order to practice interior design in Ohio, an individual typically obtains a degree from a recognized Interior Design program from a Council of Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) University. In the state of Ohio these include: The Ohio State University; Kent State University; Miami University; Ohio University; University of Akron; and the University of Cincinnati. These individuals must also record 3,520 hours of work experience with a National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) Certified Professional, or a Licensed Design Professional as direct supervisor, and be eligible for and successfully pass the NCIDQ examination (National and International Standard). Commercial interior design professionals apply their knowledge and principles of Ohio’s existing laws, regulations, and extensive building codes across the state in the design of public spaces, which includes, but are not limited, to the Americans’ with Disabilities Act (ADA), health compliance, Fire-Life Safety, Ingress/Egress, WELL AP, and LEED certification.

Commercial interior design was primarily developed in the post war era and now interior designers are suffering the unintended consequences of an older, overly broad, and under-inclusive state statute. In Ohio, interior design professionals are not free to practice to their fullest capabilities which dramatically impacts their ability to compete in the marketplace. This has put many professionals and interior design firms, the majority sole proprietorships owned by women, at a distinct disadvantage by operating in the state of Ohio.

While many interior design professionals enjoy great working relationships with the architectural firms they work with, there are many who own their own businesses and Ohio's current environment makes it difficult to compete with these restrictions.

The intent of the legislation would be to allow those professionals, who choose to obtain certification, the ability to submit their own drawings and documents to obtain building permits for their clients.

As previously stated, the State of Ohio is home to six accredited Council of Interior Design (CIDA) institutions. Many graduates of these programs choose to leave the State of Ohio and pursue their profession to their fullest educational capabilities in other states that have recognized interior design laws. The legislation will not only create a long-term solution for job growth and retention, but it will define a profession that will align the state with the Federal model of the Government Service Administration (GSA).

Specifically, HB 504 will:

- **Establish a permissive certification of Ohio's commercial interior design professionals within the already established Board of Building Standards. A certified interior design professional will have the ability to submit their own documents for permitting purposes.**
- **Limit the measure to only include work performed on buildings to be used for business, mercantile occupancy, or public spaces (non-residential), which is currently under the guidance of the Ohio Board of Building Standards.**
- **Generates small business growth and increase state revenue by retaining and growing employment in our state.**
- **Enhance the future of the students in Ohio's six accredited CIDA institutions. Entices recent graduates to remain in Ohio to utilize their skills and put their degree to use.**
- **Creates more competition and decreases prices by offering alternatives. Cost savings for the client, the public, and the professional.**
- **Creates more efficiency. Provides for a more streamlined process for code examiners who can work directly with the professional who prepared the work which in turn saves time and money in having to have plans approved by other entities.**

Here are some specific items that HB 504 does not address:

- **The bill does not require an interior designer to become certified, nor does it put non-certified interior designers out of business.**
- **The bill does not impact residential design as it only applies to the "Nonresidential Building Code".**
- **The bill does not infringe on the duty, or practice act of any other profession. It only seeks to enhance the already existing powers to protect the public required by the Board of Building Standards.**
- **The bill does not create a new licensure board and utilizes current regulatory structures.**

Again, thank you for the opportunity to address HB 504 today and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.