



House Bill 504  
Proponent testimony  
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Ohio House Economic Development, Commerce & Labor Committee  
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Chairman Young, Vice Chairman Riedel, and Ranking Minority Member Lepore-Hagan, and members of the Ohio House Economic Development, Commerce & Labor Committee. Thank you for your time this afternoon to express my support for House Bill 504, which establishes permissive certification of Ohio's educated and qualified Interior Design profession governed under the already established Board of Building Standards regulated by the Ohio Department of Commerce.

My name is Rebekah Matheny, and I live in Columbus, Ohio. I am an Assistant Professor of Interior Design in the Design Department at The Ohio State University. I hold a Bachelor of Science Architecture and a Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) Bachelor of Science Interior Design degree from the University of Cincinnati. I also hold a Master of Architecture and a Technical Teaching Certificate in Sustainable Design Strategies for Interior Architecture with a focus in lighting and materials from the University of Oregon. I have practiced as an interior designer in a range of firms across the country and here in Ohio, from large commercial design firms to specialized practices for 15 years and have been involved as an interior design educator for the same. I am currently sitting on the IIDA OH/KY board as the Vice President of Student Relations.

I am proud that Ohio State's Interior Design program is one of six CIDA accredited Interior Design programs in Ohio. This alone illustrates the importance of interior design within Ohio, as many neighboring states have fewer. CIDA, much like the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) for architecture education, establishes the quality standards for interior design education and is in alignment with the professional standards established by the Council for Interior Design Qualifications (CIDQ) which administers the National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) examination. It's important to note, that to be eligible to sit for the NCIDQ exam, one must either have a bachelor's or master's degree from a



CIDA-accredited program, or 60 semester credits of approved interior design courses. Additionally, all must have 3,520 hours of qualified interior design professional experience, meaning work done under the supervision of an NCIDQ professional. Conversely, a person with an architecture degree wishing to take the NCIDQ exam must have 7,040 hours of qualified interior design experience. I point this out to illustrate the parallels between interior design and architecture, but also to exemplify the unique qualifications that someone educated and trained as an interior designer brings to the human experience of space. Personally, these nuances and the attention to the user [human] that are intrinsically connected to interior design are what led me to be an interior design educator.

CIDA articulates in their mission statement that “Interior designers are sought after professionals because of their education and expertise in elevating the human experience in the built environment”. As an educator dedicated to cultivating the next generation of interior designers, I strive to instill this in my students, providing the technical knowledge and life safety codes in order to construct the built environment as well as a deep understanding of human behaviors. It is the responsibility of interior designers to support and enhance the health, safety, and welfare of the public, addressing ALL populations from those with disabilities or ailments, marginalized communities, or the growing ageing population. Interior designers address environmental issues, striving to mitigate the built environments impact and integrating biophilia and other research to improve indoor health. Interior designers use their knowledge to contribute to school safety or combat the opioid crisis. These, and many more, are the human issues plaguing today’s society that interior designers can and are working to solve.

HB 504 is critical in the acknowledgment of what is encompassed within the practice of interior design. It will recognize the professional and educational credentials needed to practice as an interior designer. It will give interior designers the ability to practice within our scope of work and clarify the identity of the interior design practice.

From an educator’s perspective, HB 504 is important for maintaining our talented and knowledgeable interior designers. Too often I see our students moving out of state to pursue job opportunities in those states that statutorily recognize the profession, and more importantly allow them to practice as a recognized professional to their fullest educational capabilities. In Ohio, we have renowned interior designers who have specialized expertise in the design of healthcare environments, workplaces, or learning spaces, however our state is still suffering the unintended consequences of an older, overly broad, and under-inclusive state statute that does not recognize how the profession and its standards have evolved over the last several decades. The passing of HB 504 will encourage our designers to stay in Ohio and invest in building their career, be it at a larger multi-disciplinary design firm or starting their own practice, this bill will open the door for many more possibilities for our interior designers.



Personally, as an educator and researcher, HB 504 will allow me to practice without restriction as an interior designer in the State of Ohio. Allowing my research to manifest within the built environment and positively impact the human experience.

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Ohio House Economic Development, Commerce & Labor Committee, thank you for your willingness in allowing me to testify as a proponent of HB 504. I believe that what is proposed by this bill is long overdue. For far too long, interior design has been misunderstood as something other than the technical and human-centered practice of creating safe, sustainable, elevated and efficient environments that support the day to day life of ALL persons who enter public spaces. House Bill 504 makes the option to get a certification from the Board of Building Standards permissive and would allow a highly educated and trained professional the ability to take ownership of their own intellectual property, in turn thereby creating more competition which ultimately lowers cost to the consumer. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions that you or the committee may have.