

State Representatives George Lang and Bride Rose Sweeney
Sponsor Testimony –House Bill 402
House State and Local Government Committee
February 12, 2020

Lang:

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the House State and Local Government Committee – thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 402.

House Bill 402 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, retaining talent, and increasing 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.

There are six CIDA schools in Ohio: The Ohio State University, Kent State University, Miami University, Ohio University, University of Akron, and the University of Cincinnati.

After graduation 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, to be eligible to take and successfully pass the NCIDQ examination. The NCIDQ exam is the national and international standard for the industry.

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.

Commercial interior design was primarily developed in the post-World War II era and now interior designers are suffering the unintended consequences of an older, overly broad, undefined, 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 restriction has put many professionals and interior design firms, the majority of which are 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 with which they work, there are many interior designers who own their own businesses and Ohio’s current environment makes it difficult to compete with these

restrictions in place. 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 approval for their clients' projects. The result is less out-of-pocket costs for the client since the bureaucracy is removed and a competitive marketplace is fostered.

Many interior design graduates 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), allowing them to bid on federal contracts.