

Testimony HB33

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chairman Cirino, Ranking Minority Member Sykes and all members of the Senate Finance Committee

My name is Jim Wiechart. I currently serve as Mercer County Engineer. Both as office holder and in various staff capacities, I have worked in 2 different county engineer offices for 30 years. Recently, there was an amendment added to HB33 to reduce the qualifications to hold the Office of County Engineer by removing the P.S. license requirement. Most people do not know that the Office of County Engineer began as County Surveyor. The 2 license requirements (P.E. & P.S.) are critical components to the oversight and management of the office. There is not a day that I come into work that I am not utilizing the professional surveyor license.

The referenced diminishment of qualifications would allow non-civil engineer P.E. licensed individuals to be a county engineer. It would allow an electrical or computer science P.E. to run and hold the office. Critical public safety decisions are made by the office holder – the county engineer related to bridges, roads and rights-of-ways; to which this proposal would have a long-term detrimental effect.

Just as a law license is critical to the interpretation of the law, virtually every bridge, road, drainage and right-of-way plan requires P.S. oversight in interpretation of the elements depicted on the plan, plat or map. The amendment allows for a separate P.S. to be hired in lieu of the P.S. requirement, but in no way does it cover the increased cost and the multitude of problems it would present for counties to meet their mission.

Should the legislature intend to consider changes to the qualifications of this office, an amendment to a budget bill with limited and no in person meetings is not beneficial to good public policy and any such consideration with all input should be in a separate bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

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Mercer County Engineer