

May 5th, 2023
State of Alaska,
Juneau, AK

To: Honorable Jesse Sumner
Chair
House Labor & Commerce

Dear Mr. Chair & Members of the House Labor & Commerce Committee:

HB 159, Registration for Interior Designers

My name is Melissa Pribyl, I'm a born and raised resident of Anchorage Alaska, a commercial interior designer, and a partner at one of the Architecture and Design Firms here in Alaska.

HB 159 is very important to me. As an interior designer qualified through education, experience, and national examination to protect public safety in commercial buildings, I should be allowed to practice the full scope of commercial interior design and take responsibility for my own work. When you look at the timeline of design professions, (architects, engineers, landscape architects, land surveyors, etc.) you will find that interior designers are the newcomers, born in the 20th century out of necessity for a honed skill and knowledge set that compliments these disciplines to increase positive outcomes for our community and our environment. Our 21st century budgets and construction schedules need a team, a team of diverse individuals with specific education and skill sets that contribute to the success of the project as a whole. I am part of that educated team, alongside my fellow architects.

My firm brought on their first Commercial Interior Designer in 2015. Before that, they would do one of two things; they would contract out the material selection work to an interior designer who resided in Oregon, or they selected materials and colors after the construction documents were completed from a chain set of options provided by the contractor and design interior details in shop drawings. Those in our firm that say they are "guilty" of this laugh when we bring our ideas on more than "just finishes" to the drawing table at the start of a project. As once a new hire to a startup architectural firm, they were "surprised" when I could answer questions pertaining to the international building code (IBC) regarding exiting and egress. Interior design is a direct arm to architecture. It is a subject matter that has direct resources for study, examination, and implementation. Architects know this, as they are also educated in the specialty. We are qualified to be recognized alongside architects for our knowledge in interior design and allow the public to be protected from individuals that have no education or examination to follow up their choices.

There are firms that are recognizing the need for diversity and inclusion in more ways than just the sex or race of an individual, but also in professional diversity. In 2016 I witnessed our firm hire their first female architect in the 40 years of their existence and promote their first female interior designer to partner in 2018. I followed as partner in 2023. Since 2015 our interior

design department has developed new vertical markets for our company and increased our revenue stream.

HB 159 will expand consumer choice of qualified design professionals, encourage small businesses, increase professional employment and salary opportunities, encouraging high-quality design talent to remain or relocate to Alaska, and reduce the professional workforce gap. It will also encourage hiring Alaskans instead of “outside experts” for professional interior design, and support those earning interior design degrees outside our state to return home for professional registration, like me.

I know you have been presented with many facts in the past few weeks regarding this bill. I hope this perspective from an Alaskan business owner helps illustrate our need for diversity of registered professional services. Interior designers and the profession will continue to grow in numbers, grow in knowledge, and grow our economies while helping to create a healthy, safe, and beautiful built environment with our fellow Architects. [Please support HB 159](#) to protect public safety, expand consumer choice of qualified design professionals, and bring economic benefits to our great state of Alaska.

Sincerely,
Melissa Pribyl, Principal at MCG Explore Design

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Informational video: [What Does an Interior Designer Actually Do?](#)