AIA Michigan

LARA recently issued a report titled “Cutting Red Tape: Recommendations to Protect People and Promote Business.” In the introductory letter, LARA Director Marlon Brown states that Governor Whitmer requested LARA continue it efforts to reduce barriers to professional licensure, to identify regulatory requirements that could be amended or eliminated and to cut unnecessary red tape. From the summary of the report, “In its simplest terms, the Cutting Red Tape report is about protecting people and promoting business in the state of Michigan.

LARA surveyed licensees last May and reportedly received over 16,00responses, resulting in 80 recommendations of varying complexity and depth. Of those 80, three are related specifically to the practice of architecture:

Repeal law requiring two-thirds of principal owners to be licensed at architecture, engineering and surveying firms.

STATUTE MCL 339.2010(1)

Firms practicing architecture, professional engineering, or professional surveying in Michigan are legally required to have at least two-thirds of their principals licensed in the state. The Legislature should consider striking the two-thirds law for firm ownership, as this requirement is not necessary to protect the public and would also better align Michigan with professional requirements across the country.

Expand pathways for licensure for architects to better serve those learning under apprenticeships.

STATUTE MCL 339.2004(1)(a)

Licensed architects are required to have an architectural degree which is a barrier to those who have learned via apprenticeship. The Legislature should amend state law to include reference to a “professional degree or equivalent” which would expand a pathway into the profession for applicants who have demonstrated competency in the profession but lack the specific type of college degree required. It would also bring the profession in line with engineers and surveyors in Michigan as well as public policy nationwide.

Review National Architectural Accrediting Board requirements.

STATUTE MCL 339.2004(1)(a)

The Legislature should review the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) Accredited School Graduation requirement to determine if it is overly burdensome.

AIA Michigan

Regarding the recommendation to repeal the law requiring two-thirds of principal owners to be licensed at architecture, engineering, and surveying firms:

Our counterparts within the AESLC stated some interesting opinions. It is unclear what the original intent of the law was. It is a law in Michigan that does not appear to be heavily enforced or monitored. It could be a law that would benefit from amendment.

From an architect's perspective, eliminating the 2/3 could allow design-build a wider slice of the market—they would only need one architect or engineer as a principal. It reduces the influence and value of engineers and architects.

On another note, many large, national firms form state corporations to comply with state laws, which can be considered a minor hindrance rather than anything substantive. Illinois law provides for a requirement that professional businesses have one licensed professional, referred to as a managing agent, to be on-site and in charge of the office.

This is an opportunity for change with positive results.

Regarding expanding pathways for architects to better serve those learning under apprenticeships:

This is an area to approach carefully. AIA Michigan is in the process of reducing barriers to licensure as architects. Other states have less stringent laws that allow licensure with differing amounts of higher education and working experience. There may be ways of equalizing Michigan with those other states that have found it acceptable without affecting the protection of public health safety and welfare, i.e. the knowledge and abilities of a licensed architect. The need for higher education has not been eliminated in those cases, merely reduced.

There is a possibility of expanding the pathways to architecture licensing without reducing the effectiveness of the licensing process. AIA Michigan and our professional cohorts are willing to work toward affecting the means to licensure without reducing the level of protection of the public health, safety, and welfare, i.e. the meaning of an architect license.

Regarding the review of National Architectural Accrediting Board requirements:

Both the NAAB and NCARB are common nationwide standards that all states use as reference and requirements for licensing. Individual states may add specific requirements for licensing in their states, but eliminating or changing the standardized test requirements does not appear to be of any benefit and may decrease the value of licensing within the state of Michigan.

AIA Michigan

Now is a key opportunity for architects to have input on this process and the GAC, AIA MI Board, and the Alternative Means to Licensing Committee need to prioritize our proposals on licensing reform so our voice our opinions and shape any change prior to the beginning of the legislative process.

Regards,

Bob
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Government Affairs Committee Chair