


2920 Forestville Road
Ste 100 PMB 1294
Raleigh, NC 27616



The Green Tape Measure

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(919) 229-9864 

info@thegreentapemeasure.org 

To:

House Finance Committee
State Capitol, Room 505
Juneau, AK 99801

April 20, 2026

RE: Opposition to HB 314 — Interior Designer Licensing Amendments

Dear Committee Members,

We are The Green Tape Measure, a volunteer-run data-driven advocacy organization based in North Carolina. While we are not Alaska residents, we are writing to oppose HB 314 because its amendments to Alaska's interior designer licensing framework create regulatory subordination that undermines both public safety and professional equality.

HB 314 purports to establish "registered interior designer" licensing within the Alaska State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors. However, the bill accomplishes the opposite through systematic regulatory subordination: unequal naming conventions, board composition bias, untitled practice exemptions, and vague exemption language that leaves critical safety questions unanswered.

Interior design is a distinct profession with distinct expertise. HB 314 treats it as a subordinate discipline within architecture's regulatory framework.

Critical Failures in HB 314

1) Systematic Unequal Naming

Throughout HB 314, interior design is referred to exclusively as "registered interior design" or "registered interior designer"—markedly different from other professions on the same board:

- Architecture (not "registered architecture")
- Engineering (not "registered engineering")
- Landscape Architecture (not "registered landscape architecture")
- Land Surveying (not "registered land surveying")

Every other profession uses its simple name. Only interior design receives the "registered" prefix attached to every reference.

This creates:

- Public confusion: Consumers don't understand why this profession alone is labeled differently
- Implied inferiority: The "registered" distinction implies it is a subordinate credential
- Regulatory discrimination: Unequal naming for equal professions is discriminatory
- Public safety liability: When consumers don't understand credential distinctions, they cannot make informed hiring decisions

This mirrors a critical flaw in other states' approaches that GTM has opposed. Professional equality requires naming equality.

2) Board Composition Favoritism

Section 3 (amending AS 08.48.011(b)) creates a 4-2-2-1-1-1 split:

- 4 engineers
- 2 land surveyors
- 2 architects
- 1 landscape architect
- 1 interior designer (added in Section 4)
- 1 public member

Each profession regulated by the board should have equal representation. Why should engineering have four times the voting power of interior design on matters affecting interior design regulation?

Equal professions require equal governance voices. Section 3 violates this principle.

3) Untitled Practice Exemption: Major Public Safety Violation

Sections 7 and 15 (AS 08.48.101(c) and 08.48.218) allow anyone to practice interior design without a license:

"This chapter does not prohibit the practice of interior design by a person who is not registered as a registered interior designer if the person does not use the title 'registered interior designer.'"

This allows unlimited untitled interior design practice. Anyone can:

- Design commercial interiors
- Specify materials and finishes
- Coordinate with architects and engineers
- Submit design documents for permitting
- They simply cannot use the title "registered interior designer."

This is title protection, not practice protection. It fails to protect public safety.

The data supports this risk: GTM analyzed 42 deadly building fires in the United States—all occurring after architecture licensing commenced. ALL were found to result from inappropriate interior finishes, inadequately designed egress, and/or insufficient life safety coordination. **Interior design expertise is essential to fire safety.** Allowing untitled practice eliminates accountability for these critical decisions.

4) Vague Exemption Language Creates Legal Chaos

Section 28(a)(8) (AS 08.48.331(a)(8)) exempts:

"a person furnishing drawings, specifications, instruments of service, or other data for alterations or repairs to a building or its grounds that do not change or affect the structural system or the safety of the building, or that do not affect the public health, safety, or welfare"

This is dangerously vague: What is "the safety of the building"? What does "affect the public health, safety, or welfare" mean?

Does changing interior finishes affect safety? (Yes—fire safety) Does redesigning an egress path affect safety? (Yes—evacuation safety) Does coordinating ventilation systems affect health? (Yes—indoor air quality)

The exemption language is so broad it potentially exempts almost all commercial interior design. The language should be clear, measurable, and with no room for interpretation.

5) Title Regulation Issue: Freedom of Speech Conflict

Section 33 (AS 23.30.017) and related sections restrict the title "Design Professional" to include "registered interior designer."

"Design Professional" is used across industries:

- Graphic Designers (require significant training and education)
- UX/UI Designers (require significant technical expertise)
- Product Designers (require engineering knowledge)
- Software Architects (require advanced technical competency)

Codifying "Design Professional" creates legal conflicts with other professions. GTM opposed the same issue in California's AB 1796.

6) Board Name Doesn't Reflect New Representation

Section 2 extends the State Board of Registration for Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors until 2033 but does not rename it to reflect the addition of interior designers and landscape architects.

The board now represents five professions (architecture, engineering, land surveying, landscape architecture, interior design), but its name omits two. This creates:

- Public confusion about the board's scope
- Reduced professional visibility for interior design and landscape architecture
- Symbolic subordination through exclusion from the board's official name

What HB 314 Actually Accomplishes vs. What It Claims

HB 314 claims to "establish registered interior designer licensure."

What it actually does:

1. Creates a credential called "registered interior designer"
2. Does NOT prevent unlicensed interior design practice
3. Uses unequal naming that subordinates the profession
4. Underrepresents interior design on the licensing board
5. Leaves scope and exemptions dangerously vague
6. Regulates the generic term "Design Professional," creating inter-industry conflicts
7. Excludes interior design from the board's official name

This establishes regulatory subordination, not professional equality.

Recommended Changes

For HB 314 to truly establish equal interior designer regulation, we urge the following:

1. Use equal naming conventions. Refer to "interior design" and "interior designer"—not "registered interior design" and "registered interior designer"—matching the terminology used for other professions.
2. Balance board composition. Reduce engineers to 2-3 seats and increase interior designers to 2 seats, ensuring each profession has proportional representation.
3. Prohibit untitled interior design practice with narrow exemptions (e.g., residential projects under specific square footage thresholds).
4. Clarify exemption language. Replace vague safety language with more specific direction.
5. Remove "Design Professional" title restriction.
6. Rename the board to "State Board of Registration for Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying, Landscape Architecture, and Interior Design."

Closing Statement

Interior design in Alaska should be regulated as an equal profession with distinct expertise, not subordinated through unequal naming, board underrepresentation, and untitled practice exemptions.

HB 314 creates the appearance of interior designer licensing while systematically subordinating the profession. Equal regulation requires equal naming, equal board representation, practice protection (not just title protection), and clear exemption language.

Alaska has an opportunity to establish model interior design regulation that respects professional equality. HB 314 does not achieve this.

We urge the Committee to reject HB 314 and require amendments addressing the regulatory subordination outlined above before advancing.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to reach out with questions.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Wright".

Amy Wright
Founder