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Sen. Doyle, Rep. Taborsak and respected members of the General Law Committee. I am Eric M. Schoonmaker, a Registered Interior Designer and current President of the Connecticut Coalition of Interior Designers, and first want to thank you for allowing me to testify in **support of HB5307**.

Professional exams separate those who have achieved a level of professionalism from those who haven't. Like Medical boards separate Doctors from Paramedics and the Bar Exam separates Lawyers from Paralegals, the National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) exam separates trained Interior Designers from lesser educated designers and decorators. This is why Connecticut, like other states who register or license Interior Designers, requires the passing of the exam as a prerequisite to registration.

Since I passed my NCIDQ professional exams and became a Registered Interior Designer in 1988, many changes have taken place in this, the business of Interior Design. One of the most notable, yet subtle, is society's trend to change the titles of various trades into 'Designer'. This nebulous cloud lumps us as professionals in with graphic artists, landscapers, and others.

A few years ago, the firm I was a partner in lost out on designing a prototype store for one of our retail clients. The Retailer hired the "Designer" of their logo and letterhead to design the store and provide interior construction drawings and documents. This graphic design firm had no understanding of interior construction, ADA accessibility, building, fire or life safety codes. This uninformed decision cost the Retailer several hundred thousand dollars in additional construction and fit out costs and 6 months of lost sales by the delayed opening.

Allowing Registered Interior Designers to utilize their registration number makes the public aware of both the education and professional standards expected of the Registered Interior Designer. It differentiates the professionally education and trained Interior Designer from a designer without the formal education and training. It also exemplifies the State taking a consistent approach to construction with all of the Design Professionals joining the Licensed Contractors and Home Improvement Contractors in being required to display their registrations. This provides protection of Connecticut residents and allows homeowners and businesses to wisely choose the Designer most appropriate for their project.

Thank you for hearing my testimony on this vitally important issue.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric M. Schoonmaker".

Eric M. Schoonmaker, NCIDQ
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