

Testimony in Support to Amend Landscape Architecture Licensure Requirements (Proposed Bill No. 158)

Chairmen Carlo Leone and Tim Larson, Ranking Member Gayle Slossberg, and members of the General Law Assembly, thank you for hearing **AN ACT CONCERNING LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT LICENSES: Proposed Bill No. 158**, and for providing me with an opportunity to submit testimony.

I am asking that The Connecticut General Law Assembly please re-evaluate the regulations and requirements currently in place for Landscape Architect Licensure. Rather than be paralyzed by a singular educational degree path, we need to parlay our knowledge and experience of landscape architecture to erode barriers and transform the field. Connecticut allows those with a degree in Landscape Architecture, Architecture, and Engineering from an **accredited** university to qualify for taking the CLARB Examination (L.A.R.E) with two years of experience as an apprentice. If you do not have a degree from an accredited school or if you possess a degree in a related field such as Landscape Design, Horticulture, or Land Surveying, you must apprentice for 8 years under a licensed professional.

This is incredibly limiting to the industry and hinders potential new professionals by shutting out an entire new generation of advocates in the industry.

Connecticut is a state that values advancements in green infrastructure and thoughtfulness for our environment. We need more responsibly practicing landscape architects. We need to allow for others to have the opportunity to take the exam with less stringent restrictions.

I understand the need for responsible licensure and education requirements. I have a Master's of Science degree from Columbia University in Landscape Design. I would like to be a registered landscape architect; however, I am currently being considered with the same restrictions as someone who has a bachelors degree in Philosophy or Poetry. We need to transform academic knowledge into practice. Theories are only good if they can be implemented. Connecticut needs to consider multidisciplinary and similarly applied fields for landscape architecture to not only think about the crux of environmental design but also ask for the imagination to solve, build and create solutions.

Landscape Architecture is an incredibly diversified field. Experts specialize in everything from high-end residential design, to calculating storm water management practices, to finding solutions for urban heat island effect. Landscape Architects are environmental scientists having to discern the soil science between a fen and a bog to best select the plant material; they have to be engineers to calculate soil load capacities for green roofs. They have to be anthropologists to make culturally sensitive public spaces for children to safely play and people to commune. Landscape Architects aren't able to create successful work without eroding those disciplinary barriers. We should allow those with related degrees to take the examination instead of simply limiting it to

"accredited Landscape Architecture degrees." The test is the great equalizer.

I can understand the Connecticut Chapter of Landscape Architects' concerns about opening up the industry to those 'less than qualified.' However, that is not what I am asking. I am asking that we allow those with similar degrees to be allowed to be candidates for the licensure exam: L.A.R.E. **The exam is the qualifier.** It puts everyone on a level playing field. It is an arduous, intellectually aggressive test; those who pass the test have earned licensure. This exam takes over a year's time commitment to complete all 4 sections and costs over \$2500 in fees. All individuals who take the test take it seriously and with grave consideration to be a member of the landscape architecture community. It is not for the light of heart—with a passing rate average of only 54% on the 4th part of the exam. As such, those who pass the test are not 'less than qualified' because they have a degree in Horticulture or Landscape Design. Anyone who passes the test is qualified. We need to allow more individuals this opportunity without so many unreasonable regulations.

The limiting of Landscape Architectural candidates suffocates Connecticut's job growth and economy. It is important to realize that occupational licenses are not mere state-sponsored certificates to signal that workers have completed some level of training; occupational licensing laws *forbid* people from practicing in their occupations without meeting these incredibly rigid state requirements. If the rationale for licensing a landscape architect is to protect public safety, the environment and legitimacy of the field, it is difficult to see what rationale supports not allowing others to take the qualifying examination. **The examination determines competency.**

Such strict occupational licensure requirements create a burden on would-be workers looking to enter licensed occupations. This has real consequences for job creation. *By erecting a barrier for entry into an occupation, occupational licensing can slow job growth and limit employment opportunities.*

Furthermore; the requirement of strident educational requirements and apprenticeship only from accredited universities and degree descriptions creates a barrier to the occupation. This barrier creates less market competition and allows the incumbent landscape architects to collect profits and monopolize all the work. Given this possibility, it is not surprising that much of the push for exaggerated occupational licensing has come from occupational associations themselves, not the general public.

We want all registered landscape architects to have a proven level of competency, but the regulation is too limiting. We are at a crossroads where we are deciding what makes a healthy diverse society. I appreciate your taking the time to re-direct the landscape architecture licensure discussion, and furthermore help articulate the solutions.

We need to allow those with a diversity of related degrees and apprenticeship years to take the great equalizer: the L.A.R.E exam. This will allow for great job

growth in Connecticut. It will help generate revenue in licensure fees. It will advocate for the industry by having a great presence with more members, and it will allow for new members in the profession to grow.

I want to thank you for giving attention to this proposed change to the licensing of landscape architects. I appreciate your time and consideration.



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