



February 16, 2015

Senator Carlo Leone, Co-Chairman
Representative David Baram, Co-Chairman
Members of the General Law Committee

Re: SB-158, An Act Concerning Landscape Architect Licenses

I would like to express my opposition to SB-158, An Act Concerning Landscape Architect Licenses. As you know, like architects and engineers, landscape architects are entrusted through licensure to protect the public health, safety, and welfare. The proposed bill as presently written would greatly weaken the licensure standard for landscape architects in Connecticut by:

- 1) Potentially eliminating the requirement for the nationally accepted LARE exam, a four-part rigorous exam which 50 states require to gain licensure.
- 2) Reducing the technical training required. Currently, licensure applicants must acquire a degree from a college program accredited by the Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB), such as UConn's landscape architecture program. The proposed bill says this training is unimportant and can be replaced with any "bachelor's degree" and three years training.

I believe the author of the proposed bill has a misunderstanding of the practice of Landscape Architecture and its technical difficulties. It is the design of all outdoor spaces to create safe places that support the needs of the public while protecting the natural environment. In designing an outdoor environment, Landscape Architects are responsible for the specifications of the following:

- the appropriate removal of site elements, vegetation and structures
- erosion and sediment control
- existing tree protection
- existing soil protection
- layout and grading of all hardscape including walks, roads, parking, drives, patios, terraces, pools, walls, etc.
- accessible routes
- stormwater management planning and drainage design
- the proper placement and installation of plant material
- the protection of the environmental resources
- lighting design
- detailing of all materials
- detailing of all plant materials

A Landscape Architect must be knowledgeable of all codes including building, land use and environmental.
A Landscape Architect must be able to create documents for submission to all federal, state and local

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agencies. A Landscape Architect must be able to represent their clients to these agencies and the general public. A Landscape Architect must be able to communicate and coordinate with all other team members. Therefore, for a Landscape Architect to be truly qualified to design at this level of expertise, they are educated with not only design classes, but site engineering, surveying, site drainage, structural design, architecture, urban design, planning, soils, dendrology, ecology, environmental psychology, sociology, plant identification, plant diseases, and many other classes. One of my clients expressed it best; the Landscape Architect is the only profession that looks at the entire project holistically.

I have practiced Landscape Architecture in this state since I left college in 1978, as an apprentice and then as a licensed professional. I started my own practice in Connecticut in 1989 and have mainly practiced in the commercial and public sectors. My personal education includes a BS in environmental studies, BLA in Landscape Architecture, and MSLA in Landscape Architecture from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry at Syracuse University. After an apprenticeship of three years, I was able to take the licensing exam. With that in hand, I still felt there was so much to know that, even before it was a licensing requirement, I consistently attended continuing education classes to expand my knowledge base. I also believe that the Northeast is one of the most challenging places to practice due to the weather challenges, the topographic challenges and the density of population. Therefore, weakening the licensing requirements for this very complicated profession does not protect the health safety and welfare of the public but weakens a time honored profession whose roots are in Connecticut as the birthplace of Frederick Law Olmsted.

However, the current law does make an exception for the person who does not acquire LAAB-accredited education by requiring eight years of experience under the direction of a licensed landscape architect before they can sit for the exam. I personally do not believe that anyone should be allowed to practice without the proper education and experience however even with this clause in the law, the result has been high quality practitioners in the state.

Our present strong licensure standard is well respected by peer professionals and government officials, who trust that our work will follow local, state and federal regulations and adequately protect the public health, safety and welfare in the design of public and private outdoor spaces. I have been privileged to work for several of the Connecticut municipalities and the state designing parks, plazas, streetscapes, and master plans. Many of these projects are very complex, but I confidently draw from my education and experience and proudly have designed many successful projects that have become iconic places in their communities.

Therefore, I believe the state's current licensing law sets an appropriate standard in this area and should not be weakened by reducing the examination or education requirements. I believe this proposal will also create a huge impediment for licensed Connecticut Landscape Architects moving forward to obtain reciprocity from other states, especially in the northeast.

For these reasons, I urge you to also oppose SB-158.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jane L. Didona". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "D".

Jane L. Didona, PLA, ASLA