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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 extreme opposition to SB-158, An Act Concerning Landscape Architect Licenses. If passed, the consequences would be destructive to state business development and to the careers of hard-working Connecticut professionals who hold these credentials. 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, which the University and professionals have worked hard for many years to achieve accreditation for the state (one all state residents should be proud of). The proposed bill says this training is unimportant and can be replaced with any "bachelor's degree" and three years training. This is absurd and an insult to the hard work all current and future landscape architects strive.

The current law makes 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 believe the state's current licensing law sets an appropriate standard in this area and should not be weakened.

Education, experience, examination, and continuing education are the core principles of licensure and demonstrate to the state that a person is minimally competent to uphold the public's interest in the practice of landscape architecture, a complex mix of site planning services which involves grading, erosion control, plantings, hardscapes, lighting, stormwater management, traffic and pedestrian flow, and protection of natural resources such as wetlands, soils, and wildlife.

Furthermore, consider as noted above that the current standards address minimal competency. Attacking these standards could result in a less than competent individual placing themselves on the same plane as more advanced professionals thereby putting consumers of these services at risk. This is exactly the type of protection that government should be regulating. Not just for the consumers of these services but also for maintaining the highest possible standards for the entire

state. Therefore to reduce the standards of this practice is also to reduce the protections offered to the public.

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.

Indeed, the licensure requirement has been a long fought battle by landscape architects to ensure that the profession is represented by persons who have been educated and trained to specific standards. This not only bolsters the reputation and credentials of individual landscape architects but also of the entire profession and of the state as a whole. In addition, it provides consumers and the public with knowledge that those designing outdoor environments are held to high standard. This raises the reputation of Connecticut as a state that values a specific path of education and training in order to hold this title and to practice landscape architecture but also a state that understands that government oversight is critical to ensure that these standards are met.

To reduce these standards is not just a personal attack on the 30 plus years that I have been on this professional continuum but also lowers the image of the state with regard to the landscape architectural professionals who practice here. It would also threaten the state economy by reducing the perceived and real quality of our professionals who practice here, around the country, and the world. If this proposed change is enacted it will place my ability to practice in Connecticut and in other jurisdictions at risk since a weakened license standard here will likely make me ineligible for reciprocity in other states and reduce my ability to compete.

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

Sincerely,

William Cone

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