

**House Professional Licensure Committee
Testimony on Senate Bill 612
March 4th, 2008 at Temple University
Provided by John D. Wanner, CAE
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Thank you, Chairman Sturla, for the opportunity to testify today. I am John Wanner, President of Wanner Associates an association management and public affairs company based in Harrisburg. I have served as Executive Director of the Pennsylvania/Delaware Chapter of the American Society of Association Executives since 1985, and have been involved in a number of legislative initiatives on behalf of ASLA. Senate Bill 612 addresses two issues within the Landscape Architects Registration Law. It increases the number of continuing education hours required for relicensure and eliminates an out-dated grandfather's clause.

Roughly a decade ago, ASLA supported the initial legislation that required continuing education for landscape. Enactment of that legislation resulted in the current law which requires that landscape architects in Pennsylvania obtain 10 hours of continuing education every two years. Compared to other states, the number of hours required in Pennsylvania is much lower. While a lesser requirement may, on the surface, appear beneficial, it makes reciprocity with other states a much more cumbersome process.

Landscape Architects commonly work in multiple states, and hold licenses in multiple states. This legislation will update the Pennsylvania law to conform more closely to requirements for landscape architects in surrounding states. Thirty-seven states have statutory authority providing for mandatory continuing education for registered landscape architects. The national average of contact hours required is 22.56 hours every two years. In neighboring states, landscape architects are required to obtain the following number of hours:

DE - 20/biennium
NJ - 24/biennium
NY - 36/triennium
OH - 24/biennium

Keeping the number of hours required similar to surrounding states makes it far easier for licensees to maintain their licenses in those other jurisdictions. Reciprocity of continuing education is an important factor in ASLA supporting Senate Bill 612. The increased number of hours required by SB 612 will also mirror the contact hours required by other design professionals in Pennsylvania. Professional Engineers, land surveyors, and geologists will be required to obtain 24 continuing education hours every two years under a law enacted last session.

Not only is the increase in hours appropriate from the licensee's perspective, but continuing education also serves the public by requiring that licensees stay current with new developments within their profession. Mr. Keleman has provided a number of examples of areas in which a practicing landscape architect must be proficient. Those examples are by no means comprehensive. A registered landscape architect deals with a continuously changing body of knowledge ranging from environmental regulations to advances in technology for designers. ASLA supports continuing education as the best way to ensure that landscape architects maintain continuing professional competency.

Senate Bill 612 also contains an amendment to eliminate the provision to obtain a license without examination. Pennsylvania began licensing landscape architects in 1965, so it is safe to say that a traditional grandfather clause that allows individuals practicing prior to the profession being regulated is no longer necessary. I have seen other boards eliminate this avenue to licensure as

well, because it was no longer deemed necessary. My understanding is that the Landscape Architects Board has not issued a license under this provision for many, many years. Its continued existence in the statute only serves to give individuals who are reluctant to take the test false hope that one may be provided under this essentially defunct provision.

Board members have expressed to me that they do not do not feel comfortable issuing a license without examination. An individual's experience remains an avenue to qualify to take the licensure exam, but it is not a substitute for passing the test and thereby demonstrating the minimum level of knowledge required to practice landscape architecture. The deletion of this section was added to the bill at the request of individual Board members who indicated that it was no longer a functioning part of the law. Only one other state, Colorado, presently allows for licensure without examination and, in that case, it is the grandfather's clause of a 2007 Act. Grandfather's clause provisions are a feature of laws for newly regulated individuals. ASLA believes that this particular provision is no longer needed given the more than 40 years of licensure history for Pennsylvania landscape architects.

In conclusion, I would like to again thank the committee for its interest in this legislation and the opportunity to present testimony. I respectfully ask for the committee's support of Senate Bill 612. I am happy to answer any questions the committee members have.