

NICOLE A. WILLIAMS, ESQ.
Legislative District 22
Prince George's County

Judiciary Committee



Annapolis Office
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 209
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3058 · 410-841-3058
800-492-7122 Ext. 3058
Nicole.Williams@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 19, 2021

The Honorable Delegate Dereck E. Davis
Chairman of the House Economic Matters Committee
6 Bladen Street, Room 231
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

House Bill 294

Good afternoon, Chair Davis, Vice-Chair Dumais, and members of the committee. I am Delegate Williams and I will be testifying in **favor of House Bill 294**, also known as **Business Occupations and Professions - Architects - Scope of Licensure**.

I first introduced this bill during last year's legislative session, with the issue having been brought to my attention by a constituent, Mr. Jeff Lemieux of Greenbelt, co-owner of Proteus Bicycles in College Park. As a small business owner, Mr. Lemieux faced difficulties with the \$5,000 cap to how much could be spent on modifications and repairs to an existing building before having to hire an architect. When that threshold is exceeded, a licensed architect must be brought in to sign off on building plans before being able to obtain a permit. The architect themselves could cost at least \$10,000, which can oftentimes end up being more than the actual project.

Working as a real estate attorney outside of the Maryland General Assembly, I am frequently in contact with architects and engineers. For larger projects that require major alterations, the need to hire an architect to approve of plans before construction begins is perfectly valid. However, while the current law is written to prevent violations to building codes and uphold public safety, it simultaneously prevents many from making necessary changes to a structure because of the affordability of hiring an architect.

This year's version of the bill would raise the threshold to \$25,000, allowing much more room for individuals to make repairs without having to hire an architect. The updated language of the bill more narrowly defines its intentions by specifying which kinds of alterations and

repairs would be allowed under the new statute, and requiring that they adhere to guidelines laid out in the Maryland Rehabilitation Code.

We believe that this legislation will open the door for more small business owners and homeowners to conduct necessary renovations without taking on an excessive financial burden. I am urging the committee to give this bill a favorable report and help pass House Bill 294.

Sincerely,

Nicole A. Williams, Esq.

Delegate Nicole A. Williams, Esq.