

Robert W. Gehrman, AIA
112 Oak Drive
Catonsville, Maryland 21228

March 10, 2025

The Honorable Sheila Ruth
326 Lowe House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Opposition to HB 1554/SB 1045

Dear Representative Ruth,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Maryland House Bill 1554/Senate Bill 1045. As a concerned constituent, I believe that this proposed legislation will have significant negative consequences for Architects, Interior Designers, Graphic Designers, Landscape Architects, and others in the design profession.

This bill raises several concerns, including financial burden, impact on the local economy, competitiveness of fees from designers from other states and countries, among just a few. If enacted, HB 1554/SB 1045 would increase the cost of essential services such as payroll, bookkeeping, consulting, IT support, marketing, and consulting—all services that architecture firms rely on to operate efficiently and stay competitive. This tax would increase the cost of these essential services, forcing firms to cut expenses elsewhere—which could mean fewer resources for hiring, software investments, and professional development.

We would also be burdened with a competitive disadvantage – unlike Virginia and Delaware, which do not impose sales tax on these services, Maryland firms would face higher operating costs, making it harder to compete for projects regionally. This would also prevent us from investing in cutting-edge technology, sustainability initiatives, and professional training, as we will have to divert funds to cover new tax expenses. The higher overhead will ultimately affect clients, leading to increased design fees or reduced budgets for important projects, including historic preservation, sustainability upgrades, and community developments.

This bill will be detrimental to our business and ultimately force us to reduce our employment as our business slowly erodes because of this tax. I urge you and your

colleagues to reconsider this bill and explore solutions that better balance the interests of all stakeholders.

I respectfully request that you vote against HB 1554/SB 1045 and work toward legislation that more equitably addresses the issue at hand. Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your service to our community and welcome any opportunity to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Robert Gehrman, AIA