



March 2, 2026

The Honorable Delegate Kriselda Valderrama  
Chair of the Economic Matters Committee  
230 Taylor House Office Building  
231 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Letter of Support  
HB 1180 State Board of Architects - Grounds for Discipline - Requirements

Dear Chair, Valderrama, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee,

I write on behalf AIA Maryland, representing nearly 2,000 Architects across the State of Maryland, to express our strong support of House Bill 1180. This legislation appropriately requires the State Board of Architects to act under specified circumstances and strengthens the Board's authority when individuals falsely represent that they hold a license or permit.

While the risk of misrepresentation existed prior to the widespread use of electronic filing, the rapid growth of internet-based submissions and digital document transfers has significantly increased the opportunity for identity theft and professional impersonation. The unauthorized use of architectural plans, seals, stamps and signatures through e-filing of documents makes it easier for Architects to be mis-represented and for fraudulent documents to receive permit approval, when no verification step is required before issuance. Instances of architectural misrepresentation have occurred in Maryland, and the risk continues to grow as electronic systems evolve.

This is first and foremost a public safety issue. Architects are licensed under a clear mandate: to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Individuals who falsely present themselves as architects lack the education, supervised experience, and examination credentials required for licensure. An untrained individual may misunderstand—or disregard—critical life-safety requirements of building codes and construction standards. When fraudulent documents are submitted for permit approval, the risk extends beyond professional misconduct; it becomes a direct threat to public safety.

Second, this legislation protects licensed professionals from identity theft and liability exposure. The misuse of an architect's seal, stamp, or signature on documents they neither prepared nor reviewed can subject that architect to investigation, civil liability, reputational harm, and financial consequences for work they did not perform. HB 1180 helps ensure accountability rests with the responsible party and not with the victim of impersonation.

It is important to recognize the gravity behind an architectural seal. On average, it takes more than eight years to become a licensed architect. Maryland architects complete rigorous education, documented supervised experience, comprehensive examinations, and ongoing continuing education requirements. The seal represents years of training and a statutory obligation to protect the public. Its misuse undermines both public trust and regulatory integrity.

We assessed how 50 states, the District of Columbia and U. S. territories regulate architect seals and stamps, focusing on fraudulent use prevention, digital/electronic seal requirements, enforcement mechanisms and penalties. Our key findings are summarized below.

- All states treat fraudulent seal use as a professional misconduct subject to board discipline.
- Penalties range from reprimands and fines (\$500 -\$5,000 per violation) to license suspension/revocation.
- At least 15 states impose criminal penalties (typically Class 2 misdemeanor) for unauthorized practice or seal misuse.
- Plan stamping (sealing work not prepared or supervised by the architect) is universally prohibited.
- Electronic/digital seal regulations vary significantly from state to state. Most states allow but do not mandate cryptographic digital signatures.
- Mandatory reporting to boards upon seal loss, theft, or compromise is required in at least 20 states.

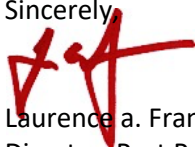
Many jurisdictions allow and in several cases even rely upon expeditors for filing permits documents, but some take proactive steps to protect or verify electronic seals are valid and used by the professional responsible for them. Methods of verification vary ranging from rigorous requirements on the application / implementation of an electronic / digital seal, to contacting the licensed architect to verify the document filing.

Replication of valid looking documents or even use of the actual documents without the architect's knowledge is easier to achieve with the increasing methods of making documentation appear credible. Direct contact with the Architect as proposed in this legislation is a process followed in our neighboring jurisdiction, District of Columbia, and we believe it is an effective means of confirming that the correctly qualified party did indeed file the documents. Additionally, architects typically are aware and alert to communications from jurisdictional plan review authorities. Whether through phone call or electronic communication, we believe this an effective check in an electronic plan filing system.

HB 1180 takes a necessary and measured step to address a growing vulnerability in our permitting systems. It strengthens accountability, protects consumers, and preserves the integrity of licensed architectural practice in Maryland.

We ask for a favorable report of HB 1180 to affirm these means of making building in our state a safer, more secure process.

Sincerely,



Laurence a. Frank, AIA  
Director, Past President, 2009 & 2018  
AIA Maryland