



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SB653 Testimony: State Board of Architects**

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Thursday, February 26, 2026 1PM

For several years, I have worked to strengthen consumer protections and improve accountability for Maryland's professional licensing systems. SB653 continues that effort by addressing a serious gap in how counties verify an architect's credentials and the State Board of Architects adjudicates violations.

SB653 is prompted by a constituent's experience whose professional sign and seal were stolen and used without authorization. A building contractor submitted architectural plans under my constituent's name. He reported the fraudulent use after being alerted to it and learned that there was no reliable process in place to verify whether the signature was valid. Moreover, the Maryland Architects' Board lacked clear authority to take enforcement action against the fraudster. This incident revealed loopholes that put homeowners, local businesses, and licensed professionals at risk.

SB653 proposes two essential reforms:

First, it requires counties to verify an architect's credentials before accepting sealed documents or approving plans. This will ensure that documents are signed and stamped by licensed architects prior to receiving approval and prevent fraudulent submissions.

Second, it strengthens the State Board of Architects' enforcement authority against those who misuse or forge an architect's credentials. The Board would investigate wrongdoing, issue penalties, and protect the integrity of the profession. Under the bill, subject to the hearing provisions of §3-411:

- The Board shall deny, reprimand, suspend or revoke a license if it is fraudulently obtained or misused.
- The Board may impose penalties up to \$5,000 per violation, considering the seriousness of the violation, the harm caused, the good faith of the applicant, and any history of prior violations.

These reforms are narrow and practical. They ensure that county permitting systems and state oversight work together to safeguard public safety, prevent fraud, and maintain trust in the permitting process. SB653 directly responds to a real case of credential theft and protects Maryland families and communities from similar incidents. It also supports hard-working architects whose professional reputations should never be jeopardized by fraudulent activity.

Working with the American Institute of Architects Maryland (AIA MD), we've requested two minor amendments:

1. Clarifying that counties SHALL affirmatively verify that the architect's seal was stamped by the registered professional before the permit is processed.
2. The State Board of Architects MAY create a portal to receive anonymous complaints about unlicensed architectural activity. Architects often work in tight-knit communities and hesitate to report illegal activity because of potential professional repercussions.

SB653 is a meaningful step toward ensuring stronger verification and accountability.

I urge a favorable report.