

# **SB0653 - State Board of Architects - Grounds for D**

Uploaded by: Chris Parts

Position: FAV



February 24, 2026  
Senator Brian Feldman  
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Support  
SB 0653 State Board of Architects - Grounds for Discipline - Requirements

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

As a board member representing over 2,000 architects, on behalf of AIA Maryland, I write to express strong support of Senate Bill 0653, which requires the State Board of Architects to take action for a licensee under certain circumstances, and it expands to include situations when an individual misrepresents that they hold a license or permit.

While the chance for misrepresentation may have existed prior to electronic filing of documents, the rate of identity theft has increased with the expanded use of the internet and electronic document transfers. Unauthorized use of architectural plans or unauthorized use of seals and signatures through e-filing of documents for a building permit may make it easier to be mis-represented and get documents approved for permit, if there is not a step of verification before a permit is issued. We are strongly behind this legislation for two key reasons.

- First, for public safety to help protect others from potential malfeasance of individuals posing as an architect without proper training and credentials. Our professional obligation is to help protect the health, safety and welfare of those who occupy the buildings we create, and an untrained individual, may not be aware of, or could even consciously ignore aspects of design that could put the public at risk
- Second, we wish to help protect our members, who may unknowingly have their identities stolen and used to obtain a building permit for a project they had no role in reviewing and preparing documents. This can subject our architect members to need to defend against claims or issues that they had no part in.

Cases of misrepresentation as an architect have happened in Maryland and this proposed legislation proactively takes steps to prevent future offenses of misrepresentation as a licensed architect.

We assessed how all 50 states, the District of Columbia and U. S. territories regulate architect seals and stamps, with a specific focus on fraudulent use prevention, digital/electronic seal requirements, enforcement mechanisms and penalties. The key findings of our search 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.
- Electronic/digital seal regulations vary significantly from state to state. Most states allow but do not mandate cryptographic digital signatures.
- Plan stamping (sealing work not prepared or supervised by the architect) is universally prohibited.
- Mandatory reporting to boards upon seal loss, theft, or compromise is required in at least 20 states.

Many jurisdictions allow and in a number of cases even rely upon expeditors for filing documents for permits, but some states and jurisdictions take proactive action to protect or verify electronic seals are valid and used by the professional responsible for them. Methods of verification vary among states ranging from high requirements on electronic seal framework, to directly contacting the licensed architect to verify if they were the ones filing documents for a specific permit. We believe that direct contact with the professional may be the most effective means of validating that the architect is aware of permit filing and was indeed responsible for preparing documents for submission. Replication of valid appearing documents and even outright use of the actual documents without the architect being aware of this is more easily created with multiple means of making documentation appear credible. Direct contact with the design professional as proposed in

this legislation is a process followed in our neighboring jurisdiction of DC, and we believe it is an effective means of confirming that the correctly qualified party did indeed file the documents. Additionally, architects are often particularly aware of communications from jurisdictional plan review authorities. Whether phone call or electronic communication is a path of notification, we believe this an effective check on an electronic plan filing system.

Our members of AIA Maryland have all worked exceptionally hard to gain the training and complete the testing and continuing education requirement to help protect the health, safety and welfare of inhabitants of buildings we design here in Maryland. This legislation takes a step to protect residents from someone falsely claiming to be an architect and submitting plans for construction, and it requires the State Board to take action against someone who may do this. We ask for your support of SB0653 to affirm these means of making building in our state a safer, more secure process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'C' and 'P' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Chris Parts, AIA

Director, Past President, AIA Maryland

# **SB0653 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Craig Moloney

Position: FAV

# CEM DESIGN

520 Anderson Ave. Rockville, MD 20850 301- 294 - 0682

February 24, 2026

Written Testimony

Senate Bill 653 (SB0653) State Board of Architects - Grounds for Discipline – Requirements

Position: FAVORABLE

Chair and Members of the Committee,

A few years ago I received a call from a structural engineer friend of mine, asking if I designed a new store in a local shopping mall. I replied that I had not recently. He proceeded to tell me that he received a call from a county code official about a retaining wall project bearing his signature and professional engineer's seal, that had been submitted for a building permit. The structural engineer told the code official that he did not design the retaining wall. The plans had been submitted by a building contractor who apparently copied the professional credentials and affixed them to his own drawings. The code official ran a check of all of the permit applications submitted by this contractor. He found plans for a residence which had been submitted using the engineer's signature and seal, and designs for a store submitted using my signature and seal. I never would have known that my professional credentials were being fraudulently used but for the coincidence that the code official called a friend of mine.

This is a public safety issue because buildings are built without proper design and engineering, and I incur liability because my signature and seal are affixed to a set of plans. I contacted the Maryland Board of Architects and my State Senator to report the problem. I found that there is currently no way to track the use of professional credentials and no penalty if someone is caught fraudulently doing so.

This Bill changes that. It establishes a simple requirement that the code official has to verify that the plans submitted for permit were, in fact, created by the professional who signed and sealed them. It also establishes penalties for the fraudulent use of professional credentials.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important issue.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Moloney', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Craig Moloney, AIA, LEED AP  
CEM Design

**SB0653\_HB1180\_Board%20of%20Architects\_Letter%20of%**

Uploaded by: John Dove

Position: FAV

**SB0653 (HB01180)**

**Date:** February 23, 2026

**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Bill Title:** State Board of Architects – Grounds for Discipline – Requirements

**Re:** Letter of Support

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the Committee,

I write this letter on behalf of the Maryland State Board of Architects (the Board). Senate Bill 653 would grant the State Board additional authority to enforce professional standards by allowing it to reprimand or suspend licensees practicing in the State.

In addition, SB 653 will help combat fraudulent activities related to unlicensed practice in architecture and construction. This bill also fosters greater collaboration among all code officials on regulatory matters, ensuring the safeguarding of the health, safety, welfare, and property of Maryland citizens. SB 653 will provide public benefits now and into the future; therefore, the Board respectfully requests a favorable report from the committee. Members of the Board are ready to answer any questions the committee may have regarding SB 653.

Respectfully,

/s/ Zevi Thomas  
Executive Director  
Maryland Board of Architects

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**Sen. Kagan SB653 Testimony\_ Architects' Act.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV



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.