

Friday, February 11, 2022

Members of the House State Government Finance and Elections Committee,

AIA Minnesota appreciated the opportunity for a member architect to address the committee on Thursday, February 10th and offer testimony in favor of Chair Nelson's HF 3091, specifically the provisions that would adjust dollar thresholds and establish a regular threshold review process for the State Designer Selection Board (SDSB) program.

Unfortunately, time ran out before discussion of the bill was complete and you will be considering the bill again on Monday, February 14th. AIA Minnesota would like to reiterate our support for HF 3091 and share some background on the SDSB dollar threshold provisions.

This bill updates the dollar thresholds to reflect modern construction costs for public building projects. This was first proposed in a 2018 report crafted by AIA, the American Council of Engineering Companies, and the State Arts Board, that examined the overall SDSB process. The current statutory thresholds were set in 1996 - we can all agree nothing costs the same today as it did 25 years ago. This means that projects that were not originally meant to go through the SDSB process are now subject to it purely because the statutory thresholds are not aligned with actual costs.

Adding a regular review process will help ensure that the thresholds accurately reflect the prices and economic realities of design and construction, allowing the SDSB process to focus on the more complex projects it was intended to. The measurement proposed for use for these updates is the Means Quarterly Construction Costs Index Average, which averages costs from 5 major Minnesota communities.

It is important to note we are talking about small projects without significant design challenges, so this will not result in a large number of projects falling under the threshold. At the time of the 2018 report, only three projects would have been impacted by the change. Keeping the threshold at an appropriate level will balance our dual goals of quality and efficiency. It will provide a simpler selection process for the state, as well as architects and engineers, and should encourage greater bidding participation from a broader group of professionals on these smaller projects.

We value the work of the State Designer Selection Board to help ensure that significant public projects select designers based on qualifications, rather than price alone, to ensure fairness and equity for designers around the entire state. We believe this change will help keep the SDSB

focused on its mission and functioning well to produce the highest quality design work in Minnesota.

We urge you to support HF 3091.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 612-767-1747 or hansen@aia-mn.org.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sheri Hansen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sheri Hansen
Director of Communications, Advocacy, and Public Outreach
AIA Minnesota