
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 759
Author: Valencia (D)
Amended: 7/17/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE BUS., PROF. & ECON. DEV. COMMITTEE: 11-0, 7/14/25
AYES: Ashby, Choi, Archuleta, Arreguín, Grayson, Menjivar, Niello,
Smallwood-Cuevas, Strickland, Umberg, Weber Pierson

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/29/25
AYES: Caballero, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0, 6/2/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Architects: architects-in-training

SOURCE: American Institute of Architects – California

DIGEST: This bill authorizes a candidate for licensure as an architect who has successfully passed the first division of the licensure examination, to use the title, “architect-in-training” (AIT) for three years while meeting additional licensure requirements. This bill authorizes use of the title only under the supervision of a a licensed architect who would be held responsible for any wrongdoing by an architect-in-training under their charge. This bill prohibits continued use of the title after January 1, 2032, and repeals the provisions on January 1, 2036.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the Architects Practice Act (Act) to regulate the practice of architecture in California. (Business and Professions Code (BPC) §§ 5501 et seq.)

- 2) Defines the practice of architecture as offering or performing, or being in responsible control of, professional services which require the skills of an architect in the planning of sites, and the design, in whole or in part, of buildings, or groups of buildings and structures. Architect's professional services may include any or all of the following: investigation, evaluation, consultation, and advice; planning, schematic and preliminary studies, designs, working drawings, and specifications; coordination of the work of technical and special consultants; compliance with generally applicable codes and regulations, and assistance in the governmental review process; technical assistance in the preparation of bid documents and agreements between clients and contractors; contract administration; and construction observation. (BPC § 5501)
- 3) Makes it a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$5,000, or by imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year, or by both that fine and imprisonment, for any person who is not licensed to practice architecture to practice architecture in this state, to use any term confusingly similar to the word architect, to use the stamp of a licensed architect, or to advertise or put out any sign, card, or other device that might indicate to the public that the person is an architect, is qualified to engage in the practice of architecture, or is an architectural designer. (BPC § 5536)
- 4) Requires a person to file their application for examination with the Board and pay the application fee, as specified, before taking the licensing examination. (BPC § 5550)
- 5) Requires an applicant for a license to practice architecture to not have committed acts or crimes constituting grounds for denial of a license, as specified, and provide evidence of having completed eight years of training and educational experience in architectural work. A five year degree from a school of architecture approved by the California Architects Board (CAB) is equivalent to five years of training and educational experience in architectural work. (BPC § 5552)
- 6) Grants candidates training credit only when: the supervising professional is licensed or registered in a United States jurisdiction or a Canadian province and the work experience is obtained or the project is located in a United States jurisdiction or Canadian province; or the supervising professional is licensed or registered in a qualifying foreign country where the work experience is obtained or the project is located. (Title 16 of the California Code of Regulations. (16 CCR), § 117 (c)(2))

- 7) Requires every candidate to earn at least one year of training credit for experience as or under the direct supervision of an architect(s) licensed or registered in a United States jurisdiction granted at 100% credit or at least two years of experience under the direct supervision of an architect(s) registered in a Canadian province granted at 50% credit. (16 CCR, § 117 (c)(4))

This bill:

- 1) Beginning January 1, 2027, specifies that a person may apply to the CAB and obtain authorization to use the title “architect-in-training” (AIT) once they have been identified as a candidate for licensure by the Board and have successfully passed at least one division of the Architect Registration Examination (ARE), as developed by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (Council).
- 2) Establishes supervision requirements by a licensed architect for candidates to use the title and requires reporting when a supervisor changes or is no longer in a supervisory role.
- 3) Allows those approved to use the AIT title to change supervisors or place their approval on inactive status while between supervisors at no charge.
- 4) Establishes that the supervising architect may be subject to discipline for violations of the Act made by an AIT under their supervision.
- 5) Prohibits any abbreviation or derivative of the title “architect-in-training,” other than “AIT,” from being used.
- 6) Prohibits a person from using the title “architect-in-training” to independently offer or provide architectural services to the public.
- 7) Specifies that notwithstanding any other law, the Board may disclose a person’s authorization to use the title “architect-in-training” to a member of the public upon request.
- 8) States that unlawful use of the title “architect in training” may constitute unprofessional conduct and subject the user of the title to administrative action, including, but not limited to, citation, discipline, and denial of a license.
- 9) Authorizes the Board to charge a fee, not to exceed the reasonable cost to evaluate whether a candidate meets the requirements to use the title “architect-in-training.”

- 10) Limits how long a person may use the title “architect-in-training” to four years after approval by the Board, but allows a person to reapply for another four years if the person has passed another division of the examination during the four years immediately preceding reapplication.
- 11) Includes a January 1, 2036, sunset date of the provisions to allow a person to submit an application to use the title, “architect-in-training” and prohibits a person from applying to the CAB to obtain authorization to use the title “architect in training” on or after January 1, 2032.

Background

Generally, to become a licensed architect, a total of eight years of architectural training and education experience is required for licensure (BPC § 5552). Up to five years may be substituted with education on a year for year basis. The candidate must successfully take all divisions of the Architect Registration Examination (ARE), as well as the California Supplemental Examination. This bill would provide title protection for aspiring architects by allowing the unlicensed architect to use the title “architect-in-training” for three years after having completed five years of education and/or experience and successfully taken the first division of the ARE.

Comparison to "Engineer-in-Training". This bill would grant title protection to an unlicensed population of aspiring architects. This bill’s language is modeled after the Board for Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors, and Geologists’ (Engineers) engineer-in-training certificate. The engineer-in-training title is a certification that is used to identify those who have passed the first division of the examination, typically after their third year in school (see BPC § 6751(a)(3)) and was historically imposed by schools as a graduation requirement; however, schools have been eliminating the requirement that a student obtain the engineer-in-training certification prior to graduation. There is no similar graduation requirement for architect students to meet so there is no similar impetus to grant a title to an unlicensed individual.

Additionally, obtaining the engineer-in-training certificate is a required step in the process to become licensed as a professional engineer (BPC § 6751(c)(3)). Becoming an architect-in-training is not a requirement of licensure and consequently, should not be compared to the engineer-in-training certificate. Similarly, the BPELSG requires a land surveyor-in-training, which is also used for comparison, but obtaining the certificate is a necessary step in the licensure process for those professions (BPC §§ 8741(d)(4)).

Prior legislation to create an AIT. AIA-CA sponsored SB 1132 (Galgiani of 2016), which was similar to this bill. That bill was vetoed by Governor Brown, whose veto message stated, “In May 2015, this very same Board discouraged the use of any title that implied a person was an architect, stating ‘architects are those who have met all the requirements to become licensed. Everyone else is not an architect.’ I agree with this assessment.”

Most recently, the Legislature considered this proposal as part of the Board’s 2024 sunset review. Committee staff recommended that the Board discuss the pros and cons of the proposal and advise the Assembly Business and Professions Committee and the Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee on efforts to reduce barriers to entering the profession. The proposal was ultimately not included in SB 1452 (Ashby, Chapter 482, Statutes of 2024), the Board’s sunset review bill, based on the trend of state policy moving away from title protection and a lack of enforcement mechanisms in the proposal.

Comments

The purpose of title protection is to allow individuals who have attained a specific level of qualifications, education and experience to use a title. Unlike a license, which gives the practitioner authority to work in the given profession, title protection gives the beneficiary of title protection an advantage in the marketplace when competing against others who perform the same work without the title. There would be no similar benefit for an “architect-in-training” who would be working under a licensed architect (as required for licensure) because they would be employed under the supervision of a licensed architect as a condition of licensure. An “architect-in-training” would not be in the marketplace operating independently like other professions with title protection so it is not clear why title protection is necessary in this instance.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: Yes Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, CAB reports costs of approximately \$264,000 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026-27 and \$248,000 in FY 2027-28 and annually ongoing for additional staff to establish the title, review applications, and conduct enforcement activities. Fee revenues may offset the board’s administrative costs to some extent; however, costs will not be offset until the board is able to determine, establish, and collect title application fees. The Office of Information Services within the Department of Consumer Affairs notes an absorbable IT impact of approximately \$6,000.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/29/25)

American Institute of Architects – California (source)

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/29/25)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: The American Institute of Architects writes, “The process of becoming a licensed architect in California is lengthy and rigorous, requiring at least five years of education, three years of supervised experience, completion of the Architectural Experience Program (AXP), and passing the Architect Registration Examinations (ARE) (6 individual exams) along with the California Supplemental Exam. This process results in an average time to licensure of just over 13 years according to the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB). Despite these significant milestones, individuals on this path are currently prohibited from using any variation of the title “architect.” Instead, they must adopt generic job titles such as “designer” or “intern,” which fail to appropriately recognize their specialized expertise and commitment to the profession. AB 759 proposes a much-needed change by allowing those who have passed the first division of the ARE to use the title “Architect-in-Training” (AIT).”

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0, 6/2/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

Prepared by: Yeaphana La Marr / B., P. & E.D. /
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