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COLLEGE OF VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

Dr. Rose Mary Botti-Salitsky, FASID, NCIDQ  
Home Address: 297 Water Street, Portsmouth RI, 02871  
April 2, 2026

Re: Bill H7842/ S2518 – An Act Relating to Businesses and Professions: State of Rhode Island Interior Design Practice Act

Dear Honorable Members of the House Committee on Corporations,

I am writing to express my strong support for Bill H7842/S2518: An Act Relating to Businesses and Professions – State of Rhode Island Interior Design Practice Act. I am an Associate Professor and Program Coordinator of the Interior Architecture + Design program at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and a resident of Portsmouth, Rhode Island. I have spent more than 35 years as a design educator, and I remain deeply connected to Rhode Island’s design community where I began my career.

I also served as the lead author of this legislation and as a member of the Rhode Island consortium of practitioners, educators, small business owners, and industry leaders who collaborated to thoughtfully develop this bill. Our goal was to create legislation that strengthens professional standards while recognizing the diversity of design practice within the state.

The timing for this legislation is particularly compelling. On March 31, 2026, Idaho became the 30<sup>th</sup> state and 32<sup>nd</sup> U.S. jurisdiction to enact reasonable regulation of the interior design profession. This milestone underscores a strong and growing national movement recognizing the importance of qualified interior designers in safeguarding public health, safety, and welfare.

This progress is also the result of meaningful collaboration across the design professions. In 2021, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) National Board made a significant policy shift by eliminating its outright opposition to interior design licensure and regulation. This decision opened the door for state AIA chapters to engage constructively with interior designers, fostering a more unified and collaborative approach to advancing the profession.

Since that time, this spirit of collaboration has led to successful legislative outcomes in multiple states, including North Carolina (2021); Illinois and Wisconsin (2022); Iowa (2023); Nebraska and Oklahoma (2024); Utah (2025); and now Idaho (2026). Rhode Island now has the opportunity to join this national momentum by advancing legislation that reflects established professional standards—education, experience, and examination—while ensuring responsible, qualified practice.

I began my professional career in Providence and had the opportunity in 1989 to work with Peter Wooding Design Associates, where I worked on the renovation of the historic Providence Train Station as it was transformed into the global headquarters for Cookson America. I later completed my graduate studies at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) before transitioning fulltime to design education, where I have dedicated my career to preparing future interior design professionals.

In 2018, I led a small cohort of faculty that launched the only public Interior Architecture + Design program in New England, expanding access to the profession through an affordable public-university pathway. Many Rhode Island students enroll in our program through a direct transfer path from Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) and regional tuition waivers because there is currently no public interior design program in Rhode Island. Through my

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work as an educator and mentor, I see firsthand the importance of establishing clear professional standards that support both emerging professionals and practicing designers.

Interior design is a distinct profession focused on the planning and design of interior environments that protect the health, safety, and welfare of occupants while enhancing the human experience. Qualified interior designers meet rigorous professional standards through the three E's: Education, Experience, and Examination.

This legislation recognizes those qualifications and allows interior designers who meet these standards to practice to the full extent of their training, including the ability to stamp and seal non-structural interior construction documents, aligning interior designers with other licensed design professionals such as architects and engineers.

Importantly, the legislation was written to respect the breadth of design practice and includes clear exemptions for residential designers, kitchen and bath specialists, architects, and other related professionals. It is designed to strengthen professional recognition while avoiding unnecessary restrictions.

This bill affirms that qualified interior designers who meet established education, experience, and examination standards can responsibly contribute to the design of code-compliant and safe interior environments. It also provides clarity for building officials and allied professionals while supporting economic growth within Rhode Island's design and construction industries.

As a designer, educator, Rhode Island resident, and contributor to the development of this legislation, I respectfully urge the committee to support Bill H7842/ S2518 in recognition of the important role interior designers play in protecting the public and advancing the profession.

Thank you for your service to the people of Rhode Island. I would welcome the opportunity to answer any questions or discuss this legislation further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rose Mary Botti-Salitsky'.

**Rose Mary Botti-Salitsky Ph.D., FASID, NCIDQ**

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