Good Morning

My name is Dan Bailey, President of AIA Maryland the state chapter of the American Institute of Architects. With me today are AIA Maryland Members: Jim Wheeler, Fred Marino, Chris Parts, Tom Spies, and our AIA Maryland lobbyist, Joe Miedusiewski.

Our Society serves over 1800 Maryland Architects. My talented colleagues and I are here on behalf of small, midsize and large state-based Architecture firms, and over 3000 Maryland residents employed in the practice of Architecture. Furthermore, Maryland Architecture firms employ or manage well over 7000 Maryland resident A/E professionals on current projects.

We sincerely appreciate this opportunity to bring to the Council’s attention the Architectural community’s concerns with respect to A/E procurement within the State of Maryland for projects that receive, in whole or in part, state funding. For three decades, Maryland has been a leader in sound quality based selection practices based upon the federally mandated Brooks Act and Maryland’s Architectural and Engineering Services Act. However, within the past 5 years state solicitation practices have increasingly discouraged award to talented, highly capable, and vibrant Maryland Architects.

Requests for proposals are written in such a way that they preclude the ability of talented Maryland Architectural firms to pursue, nevertheless, be awarded, many state funded projects. This has occurred across the spectrum of state departments and institutions, some worse than others. Requests for Proposals have become so complicated and so stringent that it is virtually impossible for quality small or large Maryland firms to pursue without teaming with an out-of-state firm. We hear all too often that firms within our state do not have the experience or credentials to justify selection. Without question, Maryland’s Architects can proudly stand eye-to-eye with the nations best.

We have seen the significant erosion of the QBS system into a troubled fee-based solicitation process; We have seen the requirements of an RFP request project experience of a size, type and cost so unreasonable that only a handful of firms qualify; We have seen the costly implementation of a multi-phase, financially frustrating process which discourages many viable Maryland firms; And, we have seen the acceptance of an out-of-state firm’s disingenuous presentation of its split of responsibility when that firm associates with a Maryland firm. These all must be addressed with consideration of the benefit to our State and its fiduciary responsibility to the public.

The issues I have outlined are evident in recent solicitations that my colleagues will specifically discuss in a few moments. But it is important to understand that the industry’s frustrations extend both to the public and private markets where state funding is involved. The recent shortlist of out-of-state firms for the Shady Grove Biomedical and Engineering facility; or the selection of an out-of-state architecture firm for the fully
state-funded Port Discovery project, each exemplifies a process in need of repair. A process that has seen State facility representatives issue more stringent RFP requirements in order to reduce their review time. We understand the time and energy it takes to review proposal submissions, but frankly, there is no excuse for the implementation of restrictive criteria to make one's review easier.

AIA Maryland has strongly supported the Governor’s efforts to build a strong Maryland economy. This begins by developing policies that support those firms that have built an economic presence here in Maryland. AIA Maryland is not asking for in-state preferential laws or regulations, but rather for fairness in the procurement process. We believe that an equitable process will benefit the State of Maryland by keeping fee dollars here in Maryland, create service-based jobs, improve the Maryland tax base, and empower creative Maryland Architects to build the experience needed to grow and prosper. Such a process will also benefit our nationally ranked graduate architecture programs at the U of M, and Morgan State University.

The AIA Maryland Board of Directors respectfully urges the Procurement Advisory Council, the Governor’s Office, the State Legislative branch, the Executive Departments, and State Agencies and Institutions that are charged to solicit professional design services, to carefully review A/E procurement policies. We strongly believe that steps can be taken quickly to encourage state units to develop a more effective, efficient, and less biased approach to A/E procurement.

Thank you for your time and we encourage the Council to use the valuable resources and expertise available to you through AIA Maryland.