



**Statement of the  
American Council of Engineering Companies  
and the National Society of  
Professional Engineers**

June 19, 2018

The American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) and the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) are pleased to submit this statement to the House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development for its hearing “Occupational Licensing: Reducing Barriers to Economic Mobility and Growth.” We appreciate the opportunity to express our strong support for maintaining professional licensing standards for design professionals due to the essential role they play in protecting public health and safety.

ACEC is the business association of the nation’s engineering industry, representing over 5,000 member firms engaged in a wide range of engineering works that propel the nation’s economy, and enhance and safeguard America’s quality of life. The Council represents engineering businesses of all sizes, from the single professional engineer to firms that employ tens of thousands of professionals working in the United States and throughout the world.

NSPE exists to strengthen and advance the practice of engineering in all technical disciplines through its support of the Professional Engineer (P.E.) license. Through education, licensure, leadership training, multidisciplinary networking, and outreach, NSPE enhances the ability of its members to ethically, competently and professionally practice engineering. Founded in 1934, NSPE serves more than 31,000 members and the public through 52 state and territorial societies and over 400 chapters.

We understand the Subcommittee’s interest in reviewing licensing requirements for various occupations to ensure a proper balance between the free flow of commerce and the need to protect the public interest. However, if this effort weakens the stringent standards that apply to professional engineers who design solutions to many of society’s most pressing challenges, this balance will be disrupted and the public interest will be compromised.

The foremost responsibility of professional engineers is to practice in a manner that protects public health, safety, and welfare. Professional engineers design and administer the construction of many public and private development projects, such as bridges, tunnels, buildings, wastewater treatment facilities, factories, and processing plants. The work they do has a direct impact on public health and safety, requiring strong licensing requirements so that the public can be assured that only rigorously trained and tested individuals are practicing in the engineering and related design fields.

The professional engineer's license was first introduced in Wyoming in 1907 in response to well-publicized construction failures and the tragic loss of life attributable to the work of unqualified individuals. Within 40 years, every state had adopted engineering licensure laws to protect public health, safety, and welfare.

To become licensed as a professional engineer, an applicant must meet specific education, examination, and experience requirements. Violation of state requirements can result in disciplinary actions and even license revocation. A professional engineer's foremost ethical responsibility is to protect public health, safety, and welfare, and the current licensing system for engineers throughout the country is designed to ensure this protection. The public relies on state licensing boards to grant licenses only to individuals who have demonstrated that they have the education and professional experience to be entrusted as a professional engineer.

Licensing boards also enforce compliance with ethical standards for professional engineers. These include holding paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public; performing services only in their area of competence; issuing public statements only in an objective and truthful manner; and acting in the interests of each employer or client as a trusted adviser would.

Absent this system of professional licensure, the public could not be confident in the infrastructure it uses every day. ACEC and NSPE appreciate the Subcommittee's exploration of the important topic of occupational licensure and the opportunity to explain the essential role professional engineers play in protecting public health and safety.