

November 24, 2020

L. Jane Frederick, FAIA, President  
Board of Directors  
The American Institute of Architects  
1735 New York Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear President Frederick and Members of the Board:

AIA Seattle wishes to express our support for the National Ethics Council's (NEC) proposed amendments to the AIA Code of Ethics related to the design and construction of spaces that violate human rights – as outlined in NEC Chair Elise Woodward's letter to President Frederick dated Oct. 9, 2020.

Specifically, we support proposed Rule 1.403, "Members shall not knowingly design spaces intended for execution," and proposed Rule 1.404, "Members shall not knowingly design spaces intended for torture, including indefinite or prolonged solitary confinement."

AIA Seattle believes the design of facilities for execution and torture are contrary to our chapter's mission and values and conflict with AIA's larger commitment to the support and protection of human rights. Further, we believe these spaces represent the physical manifestation of systemic racism, and knowingly designing them goes against AIA's existing code of ethics where we are called to design buildings and spaces that "enhance and facilitate human dignity and the health, safety, and welfare of the individual and the public" (Canon I, Rule 1.402, E.S. 1.5).

Our vision as a chapter calls on the power of design to foster equitable, resilient, and thriving communities, and it is incumbent on us to ensure that architects' skills address all members of our communities, not just those who have traditionally had the power and resources to access our profession's benefits. We particularly underscore the need to serve individuals from Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color, as well as those from lower-income neighborhoods, who might benefit the most from our skills as architects and the power of good design. Within the criminal justice system, individuals from these communities suffer the most from our country's racially biased systems of law enforcement and mass incarceration, and we must acknowledge and work to address these inequalities.

As we champion the central role of architects in creating and sustaining a better built environment, we believe this effort must incorporate the larger systems that impact our communities, including criminal justice, education, housing, employment, health care, and more. Design

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solutions that address these core human needs are integral to our profession's commitment to uphold the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Importantly, we believe all these commitments exclude the acceptance of torture and execution, both professionally and as citizens of a larger society.

We are pleased that the Board has resolved to consider this critical issue, and we believe this is a first step in a larger effort to elevate our profession's positive influence on the intersection of design and justice. As we join a larger public effort to transform the criminal justice system into something more humane and equitable, architects must start by declaring that there is no place for torture or execution in our society.

Respectfully,

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