

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2013

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HOUSE BILL 739

Short Title: Civil Procedure/Require Certificate of Merit. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Bryan, Moffitt, Hager, and Setzer (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of Sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly Web Site.

Referred to: Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House, if favorable, Judiciary.

April 11, 2013

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT REQUIRING A CERTIFICATE OF MERIT IN CIVIL ACTIONS OR
3 ARBITRATION PROCEEDINGS BROUGHT AGAINST A PERSON OR FIRM
4 PROVIDING ARCHITECTURE OR ENGINEERING SERVICES IN THIS STATE.

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6 **SECTION 1.** Subchapter VI of Chapter 1 of the General Statutes is amended by
7 adding the following new Article to read:

8 "Article 12A.

9 "Certificate of Merit in Malpractice Claims Against Design Professionals.

10 **"§ 1-123.1. Definitions.**

11 The following definitions shall apply in this Article:

- 12 (1) Claim. – A claim, counterclaim, cross-claim, or third-party claim alleging
13 malpractice against a design professional.
14 (2) Defendant. – A design professional against whom a claim of malpractice is
15 asserted.
16 (3) Design professional. – A professional engineer licensed pursuant to Chapter
17 89C of the General Statutes, an architect licensed pursuant to Chapter 83A
18 of the General Statutes, or any firm in which the licensed engineer or
19 architect practices, including a corporation, professional corporation, limited
20 liability corporation, partnership, limited liability partnership, sole
21 proprietorship, joint venture, or any other business entity.
22 (4) Practice of architecture. – As defined by G.S. 83A-1(7).
23 (5) Practice of engineering. – As defined by G.S. 89C-3(6).

24 **"§ 1-123.2. Certificate of merit in malpractice claims against design professionals.**

25 (a) Any claim in a civil action or arbitration proceeding asserting malpractice by a
26 design professional shall be dismissed unless both of the following conditions are met:

- 27 (1) The pleading asserting the claim specifically asserts that the professional
28 services provided by the defendant and all records pertaining to the alleged
29 negligence that are available to the claimant after reasonable inquiry have
30 been reviewed by a licensed professional engineer or licensed architect who
31 holds the same type of professional license and practices in the same area of
32 practice as the design professional against whom the claim is being brought,
33 who is willing to testify that the professional services provided by the
34 defendant did not comply with the applicable standard of care, and who
35 either is reasonably expected to qualify as an expert witness under



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1 G.S. 8C-1, Rule 702, or is a person whom the claimant will seek to have
2 qualified as an expert witness by motion under subsection (b) of this section
3 filed with the pleading; and

4 (2) The pleading asserting the claim is accompanied by a certificate of merit
5 signed by a licensed professional engineer or licensed architect who holds
6 the same type of professional license and practices in the same area of
7 practice as the design professional against whom the claim is being brought,
8 certifying that the engineer or architect has reviewed the services provided
9 by the defendant and all records provided by the claimant relating to those
10 services, has reviewed the pleading asserting the claim against the defendant,
11 and is willing to testify that the claim of malpractice against the defendant
12 has merit.

13 The claimant shall provide, at the request of the defendant, proof of compliance with this
14 subsection through up to 10 written interrogatories, the answers to which shall be verified by
15 the expert required under this section. These interrogatories do not count against the
16 interrogatory limit under G.S. 1A-1, Rule 33.

17 (b) Upon motion by either party, a resident judge of the superior court in the county or
18 judicial district in which the action or proceeding is pending may allow expert testimony on the
19 appropriate standard of care by a witness who does not meet the requirements of G.S. 8C-1,
20 Rule 702, or of subdivision (a)(2) of this section relating to type of license and area of practice,
21 but who is otherwise qualified as an expert witness, upon a showing by the movant of
22 extraordinary circumstances and a determination by the court that the motion should be allowed
23 to serve the ends of justice.

24 (c) Upon motion by the plaintiff prior to the expiration of the applicable statute of
25 limitations, a resident judge of the superior court for a judicial district in which venue for the
26 cause of action is appropriate under G.S. 1-82 or, if no resident judge for that judicial district is
27 physically present in that judicial district, otherwise available, or able or willing to consider the
28 motion, then any presiding judge of the superior court for that judicial district may allow a
29 motion to extend the statute of limitations for a period not to exceed 120 days to file a
30 complaint in an action alleging malpractice by a design professional in order to comply with
31 this section, upon a determination that good cause exists for the granting of the motion and that
32 the ends of justice would be served by an extension.

33 (d) This section shall not apply to a claim for breach of contract or breach of warranty."

34 **SECTION 2.** G.S. 1A-1, Rule 9, is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

35 "(j1) Design Professional Malpractice. – Any pleading alleging malpractice by a design
36 professional, as defined by G.S. 1-123.1(3), shall be filed in accordance with Article 12A of
37 Chapter 1 of the General Statutes."

38 **SECTION 3.** This act becomes effective October 1, 2013, and applies to actions
39 and proceedings commenced on or after that date.