Following is a message AIA Ohio has delivered to Ohio’s thirty-three (33) Senators:

AIA Ohio opposes SCR 25 because it would inhibit the continued progress Ohio has made in achieving higher performing, sustainable buildings through the use of the LEED rating system.

While AIA Ohio does not favor the use of any one rating system over another, it does support the general intentional use of green building rating systems not only to encourage sustainable design and construction, but to provide essential guidance to public officials, facility leaders, and design/construction teams in successfully navigating the complexity of delivering sustainable facilities serving the public good. By banning state agencies from using LEED v4, Ohio would be removing an undeniably successful tool for encouraging building owners to pursue sustainability goals in their buildings.

While the superior energy efficiency and environmental outcomes that result from green buildings are their own reward and will continue to be strived for by Ohio architects, certifications such as LEED demonstrate improved performance over non-certified buildings. They also provide marketplace distinction in the real estate market with proven long-term value, thus increasing demand among building owners for high performing, certified green buildings.

By disallowing the use of LEED, the state of Ohio risks damaging its own impressive progress in the sustainable building sector – Ohio ranks first in the number of LEED certified schools, benefitting Ohio taxpayers through energy and water cost savings – and risks deterring the growth of energy efficient, sustainable building in the private sector by sending mixed messages about the value of sustainable, high-performance buildings.

Furthermore, AIA Ohio does not agree with the claim in SCR 25 that, because it does not follow American National Standards Institute (ANSI) procedures, LEED’s technical development process is illegitimate or insufficiently transparent. In its 2012 review of green building rating systems, the U.S. General Services Administration concluded that LEED meets the following criteria of a voluntary consensus standard as defined by the Office of Management and Budget: Openness, Balance of interest, Due process, An appeals process and Consensus--which is defined as general agreement, but not necessarily unanimity, and includes a process for attempting to resolve objections by interested parties, as long as all comments have been fairly considered, each objector is advised of the disposition of his or her objection(s) and the reasons why, and the consensus body members are given an opportunity to change their votes after reviewing comments.

To develop LEED v4, USGBC’s 13,000 members had six public comment periods to voice their opinions before a member vote. AIA believes this process is sufficiently open and inclusive to accurately reflect the leading sustainability practices in the design and construction industry.

Finally, there are many other widely used codes and standards that do not use ANSI, including ENERGY STAR, and the building codes of the International Codes Council.

As architects, we are trained in building sciences. Beyond the details of our day-to-day profession, we know that Americans spend an average of 90% of our time indoors and, as such, buildings are fundamental to our health, comfort and productivity. We know that buildings use 13.6% of all domestic potable water use, account for 73% of electricity consumption, 38% of all CO2 emissions and that nearly 60% of our landfills are full of building materials from demolition and waste. We know that green buildings can help, and that nearly 500 LEED-certified buildings across the state are helping. Recent research by the U.S. General Services Administration has found that, compared to the rest of its portfolio, its LEED-certified buildings: consume 25% less energy and 11% less water; have 19% lower maintenance costs; boost 27% higher occupant satisfaction; and contribute 34% less greenhouse gas emissions.

In response to the claim in SCR 25 that LEED is not science-based, we point to our own expertise and experience – expertise that has been appropriately represented in LEED’s consensus development process – and also to the National Academy of Sciences which, in a 2013 study, endorsed the use of LEED for public buildings and military facilities.

For these reasons, AIA Ohio believes that SCR 25 would be detrimental to the state’s laudable sustainability and building performance goals and urges the Ohio legislature to oppose it.