

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2021

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HOUSE BILL 820

Short Title: Construction Contract Changes. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Arp, Stevens, Brody, and Winslow (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Local Government - Land Use, Planning and Development, if favorable, Rules,
Calendar, and Operations of the House

May 5, 2021

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO CLARIFY THE DESIGN-BUILD AND DESIGN-BUILD BRIDGING
3 STATUTES, TO PROHIBIT WAIVER OF FUTURE CLAIMS FOR PROGRESS
4 PAYMENTS ON CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS, TO REQUIRE ATTORNEYS' FEES
5 IN CERTAIN LIEN CLAIMS, AND TO CLARIFY THE LAW DECLARING CERTAIN
6 INDEMNITY CONTRACTS VOID.

7 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

8 SECTION 1.(a) G.S. 143-128.1A reads as rewritten:

9 "§ 143-128.1A. Design-build contracts.

10 (a) Definitions for purposes of this section:

11 (1) Design-builder. – As defined in G.S. 143-128.1B.

12 (1g) Design professional. – As defined in G.S. 143-128.1B.

13 (1p) First-tier subcontractor. – As defined in G.S. 143-128.1B.

14 (2) Governmental entity. – As defined in G.S. 143-128.1B.

15 (3) Licensed contractor. – As defined in G.S. 143-128.1B.

16 (4) Licensed subcontractor. – A person or entity, not including design
17 professionals or employees of the design-builder, that will be performing work
18 under the design-builder and whose scope of work proposed for the project
19 requires that it be licensed in accordance with Article 2 or Article 4 of Chapter
20 87 of the General Statutes.

21 (5) Unlicensed subcontractor. – A person or entity, not including design
22 professionals or employees of the design-builder, that will be performing work
23 under the design-builder and whose scope of work proposed for the project
24 does not require that it be licensed in accordance with Article 2 or Article 4 of
25 Chapter 87 of the General Statutes.

26 (b) A governmental entity shall establish in writing the criteria used for determining the
27 circumstances under which the design-build method is appropriate for a project, and such criteria
28 shall, at a minimum, address all of the following:

29 (1) The extent to which the governmental entity can adequately and thoroughly
30 define the project requirements prior to the issuance of the request for
31 qualifications for a design-builder.

32 (2) The time constraints for the delivery of the project.

33 (3) The ability to ensure that a quality project can be delivered.



- 1 (4) The capability of the governmental entity to manage and oversee the project,
2 including the availability of experienced staff or outside consultants who are
3 experienced with the design-build method of project delivery.
- 4 (5) A good-faith effort to comply with G.S. 143-128.2, G.S. 143-128.4, and to
5 recruit and select small business entities. The governmental entity shall not
6 limit or otherwise preclude any respondent from submitting a response so long
7 as the respondent, itself or through its proposed team, is properly licensed and
8 qualified to perform the work defined by the public notice issued under
9 subsection (c) of this section.
- 10 (6) The criteria utilized by the governmental entity, including a comparison of the
11 advantages and disadvantages of using the design-build delivery method for a
12 given project in lieu of the delivery methods identified in subdivisions (1), (2),
13 and (4) of G.S. 143-128(a1).
- 14 (c) A governmental entity shall issue a public notice of the request for qualifications that
15 includes, at a minimum, general information on each of the following:
- 16 (1) The project site.
- 17 (2) The project scope.
- 18 (3) The anticipated project budget.
- 19 (4) The project schedule.
- 20 (5) The criteria to be considered for selection and the weighting of the
21 qualifications criteria.
- 22 (6) Notice of any rules, ordinances, or goals established by the governmental
23 entity, including goals for minority- and women-owned business participation
24 and small business participation.
- 25 (7) Other information provided by the owner to potential design-builders in
26 submitting qualifications for the project.
- 27 (8) A statement ~~providing that directing~~ each design-builder ~~shall to~~ submit in its
28 response to the request for qualifications an explanation of its project team
29 selection, which selection. The governmental entity may specify which of the
30 following the statement must include, or if not specified, the statement shall
31 consist of either of the following:
- 32 a. A list of the licensed contractors, licensed subcontractors, and ~~licensed~~
33 design professionals whom the design-builder proposes to use for the
34 project's design and construction. If this option, the design-builder
35 may self-perform some or all of the work with employees of the
36 design-builder and, without bidding, also enter into negotiated
37 subcontracts to perform some or all of the work with licensed
38 subcontractors, including, but not exclusively with, those identified in
39 the list. In submitting its list, the design-builder may, but is not
40 required to, include one or more unlicensed subcontractors the
41 design-builder proposes to use. If this option is used, the
42 design-builder may, at its election and with or without the use of
43 negotiated subcontracts, accept bids for the selection of one or more
44 of its first-tier subcontractors.
- 45 b. ~~An~~ A list of the licensed contractors and design professionals whom
46 the design-builder proposes to use for the project's design and
47 construction and an outline of the strategy the design-builder plans to
48 use for open contractor and subcontractor selection based upon the
49 provisions of Article 8 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes. If this
50 option is used, the design-builder may also self-perform some or all of

1 the work with employees of the design-builder but shall not enter into
2 negotiated contracts with first-tier subcontractors.

3 (d) Following evaluation of the qualifications of the design-builders, the three most
4 highly qualified design-builders shall be ranked. If after the solicitation for design-builders not
5 as many as three responses have been received from qualified design-builders, the governmental
6 entity shall again solicit for design-builders. If as a result of such second solicitation not as many
7 as three responses are received, the governmental entity may then begin negotiations with the
8 highest-ranked design-builder under G.S. 143-64.31 even though fewer than three responses
9 were received. If the governmental entity deems it appropriate, the governmental entity may
10 invite some or all responders to interview with the governmental entity.

11 (e) The design-builder shall be selected in accordance with Article 3D of this Chapter.
12 Each design-builder shall ~~certify~~ certify, in the response to the request for qualifications in
13 subsection (c) of this section, to the governmental entity that each ~~licensed~~ design professional
14 who is a member of the design-build team, including subconsultants, was selected based upon
15 demonstrated competence and qualifications in the manner provided by G.S. 143-64.31.

16 (f) The design-builder shall provide a performance and payment bond to the
17 governmental entity in accordance with the provisions of Article 3 of Chapter 44A of the General
18 Statutes. The design-builder shall obtain written approval from the governmental entity prior to
19 changing key personnel as listed in sub-subdivision (c)(8)a. of this section after the contract has
20 been awarded."

21 **SECTION 1.(b)** G.S. 143-128.1B reads as rewritten:

22 **"§ 143-128.1B. Design-build bridging contracts.**

23 (a) Definitions for purposes of this section:

24 (1a) Costs of the subcontractor work. – The sum total amount of all first-tier
25 subcontract packages bid or proposed to be bid under subsection (f) of this
26 section.

27 (1) Design-build bridging. – A design and construction delivery process whereby
28 a governmental entity contracts for design criteria services under a separate
29 agreement from the construction phase services of the design-builder.

30 (2) Design-builder. – An appropriately licensed person, corporation, or entity
31 that, under a single contract, offers to provide or provides design services and
32 general contracting services where services within the scope of the practice of
33 professional engineering or architecture are performed respectively by a
34 licensed engineer or licensed architect and where services within the scope of
35 the practice of general contracting are performed by a licensed general
36 contractor.

37 (3) Design criteria. – The requirements for a public project expressed in drawings
38 and specifications sufficient to allow the design-builder to make a responsive
39 bid proposal.

40 (4) Design professional. – Any professional licensed under Chapters 83A, 89A,
41 or 89C of the General Statutes.

42 (5) First-tier subcontractor. – A subcontractor who contracts directly with the
43 design-builder, excluding design professionals.

44 (5g) General conditions. – A specific list compiled by the government entity that
45 identifies the tools, resources, and equipment not directly related to the actual
46 construction activities, but that are required to complete the project and for
47 which the design-builder is to be compensated. As examples, this term shall
48 include at least all of the following: on-site construction office and storage
49 trailers; electrical and other utility services during construction; on-site
50 construction superintendent, construction supervisors, and clerical staff; trash

1 collection; security; and other temporary measures. This term shall not include
2 any of the following:

3 a. Construction work to be bid pursuant to subsection (f) of this section.

4 b. Design services of a design professional.

5 c. The costs of the subcontractor work.

6 (6) Governmental entity. – Every officer, board, department, commission, or
7 commissions charged with responsibility of preparation of specifications or
8 awarding or entering into contracts for the erection, construction, alteration,
9 or repair of any buildings for the State or for any county, municipality, or other
10 public body.

11 (7) Licensed contractor. – A person or entity whose scope of work proposed for
12 the project requires that it be licensed in accordance with the provisions of
13 Article 1 of Chapter 87 of the General Statutes.

14 (b) A governmental entity shall establish in writing the criteria used for determining the
15 circumstances under which engaging a design criteria design professional is appropriate for a
16 project, and such criteria shall, at a minimum, address all of the following:

17 (1) The extent to which the governmental entity can adequately and thoroughly
18 define the project requirements prior to the issuance of the request for
19 proposals for a design-builder.

20 (2) The time constraints for the delivery of the project.

21 (3) The ability to ensure that a quality project can be delivered.

22 (4) The capability of the governmental entity to manage and oversee the project,
23 including the availability of experienced staff or outside consultants who are
24 experienced with the design-build method of project delivery.

25 (5) A good-faith effort to comply with G.S. 143-128.2, G.S. 143-128.4, and to
26 recruit and select small business entities. The governmental entity shall not
27 limit or otherwise preclude any respondent from submitting a response so long
28 as the respondent, itself or through its proposed team, is properly licensed and
29 qualified to perform the work defined by the public notice issued under
30 subsection (d) of this section.

31 (6) The criteria utilized by the governmental entity, including a comparison of the
32 advantages and disadvantages of using the design-build delivery method for a
33 given project in lieu of the delivery methods identified in subdivisions (1), (2),
34 and (4) of G.S. 143-128(a1).

35 (b1) The governmental entity, as a criterion in subsection (b) of this section, shall not
36 require the design-builder to provide the costs of the subcontractor work in the design criteria
37 package. The design-builder may be required to disclose such cost after the contract has been
38 executed.

39 (c) On or before entering into a contract for design-build services under this section, the
40 governmental entity shall select or designate a staff design professional, or a design professional
41 who is independent of the design-builder, to act as its design criteria design professional as its
42 representative for the procurement process and for the duration of the design and construction. If
43 the design professional is not a full-time employee of the governmental entity, the governmental
44 entity shall select the design professional on the basis of demonstrated competence and
45 qualifications as provided by G.S. 143-64.31. The design criteria design professional shall
46 develop design criteria in consultation with the governmental entity. The design criteria design
47 professional shall not be eligible to submit a response to the request for proposals nor provide
48 design input to a design-build response to the request for proposals. The design criteria design
49 professional shall prepare a design criteria package equal to thirty-five percent (35%) of the
50 completed design documentation for the entire construction project. The design criteria package
51 shall not include the costs of the subcontractor work and shall include all of the following:

- 1 (1) Programmatic needs, interior space requirements, intended space utilization,
2 and other capacity requirements.
- 3 (2) Information on the physical characteristics of the site, such as a topographic
4 survey.
- 5 (3) Material quality standards or performance criteria.
- 6 (4) Special material requirements.
- 7 (5) Provisions for utilities.
- 8 (6) Parking requirements.
- 9 (7) The type, size, and location of adjacent structures.
- 10 (8) Preliminary or conceptual drawings and specifications sufficient in detail to
11 allow the design-builder to make a proposal which is responsive to the request
12 for proposals.
- 13 (9) Notice of any ordinances, rules, or goals adopted by the governmental entity.
- 14 (10) The list of general conditions prepared by the governmental entity for which
15 the design-builder is to provide a fixed fee in accordance with sub-subdivision
16 (10)a. of subsection (d) of this section.
- 17 (11) The form of the contract to be entered into by the successful design-builder to
18 whom the project is awarded pursuant to subsection (e) of this section. The
19 form of the contract may, upon discretion of the governmental entity, allow
20 for multiple phases, termination for convenience and rights arising therefrom,
21 and the subsequent setting of guaranteed maximum prices.
- 22 (12) A statement directing each design-builder to submit in its response to the
23 request for qualifications an explanation of its proposed plan for its good-faith
24 compliance with G.S. 143-128.2.
- 25 (d) A governmental entity shall issue a public notice of the request for proposals that
26 includes, at a minimum, general information on each of the following:
 - 27 (1) The project site.
 - 28 (2) The project scope.
 - 29 (3) The anticipated project budget.
 - 30 (4) The project schedule.
 - 31 (5) The criteria to be considered for selection and the weighting of the selection
32 criteria.
 - 33 (6) Notice of any rules, ordinances, or goals established by the governmental
34 entity, including goals for minority- and women-owned business participation
35 and small business entities.
 - 36 (7) The thirty-five percent (35%) design criteria package prepared by the design
37 criteria design professional.
 - 38 (8) Other information provided by the owner to design-builders in submitting
39 responses to the request for proposals for the project.
 - 40 (9) A statement providing that each design-builder shall submit in its request for
41 proposal response an explanation of its project team selection, which shall
42 consist of a list of the licensed contractor and ~~licensed~~ design professionals
43 whom the design-builder proposes to use for the project's design and
44 construction.
 - 45 (10) A statement providing that each design-builder shall submit in its request for
46 proposal a separate sealed envelope with all envelope, contemporaneously
47 with the response to the request for proposals, the design-builder's fixed fees,
48 excluding the costs of the subcontractor work, for designing and constructing
49 the project in accordance with requirements set forth by the government
50 entity's criteria and the terms and conditions set forth in the form of the

1 contract under subdivision (11) of subsection (c) of this section for each of the
2 following: following, listed separately by item:

- 3 a. The design-builder's price for providing the general conditions of the
4 contract identified in the request for proposal.
5 b. The design-builder's proposed fee for general construction
6 services, services not otherwise provided for in this subdivision.
7 c. The design-builder's fee for design services, services necessary to
8 complete the project.

9 (e) Following evaluation of the qualifications of the design-builders, the governmental
10 entity shall rank the design-builders who have provided responses, grouping the top three without
11 ordinal ranking. If after the solicitation for design-builders not as many as three responses have
12 been received from qualified design-builders, the governmental entity shall again solicit for
13 design-builders. If as a result of such second solicitation not as many as three responses are
14 received, the governmental entity may then make its selection. From the grouping of the top three
15 design-builders, the governmental entity shall select the design-builder who is the lowest
16 responsive, responsible bidder based on the cumulative amount of fees provided in accordance
17 with subdivision (d)(10) of this section and taking into consideration quality, performance, and
18 the time specified in the proposals for the performance of the contract. Each design-builder shall
19 certify to the governmental entity that each licensed design professional who is a member of the
20 design-build team, including subconsultants, was selected based upon demonstrated competence
21 and qualifications in the manner provided by G.S. 143-64.31.

22 (f) The design-builder shall accept bids based upon the provisions of this Article from
23 first-tier subcontractors for all construction work under this section.

24 (g) The design-builder shall provide a performance and payment bond to the
25 governmental entity in accordance with the provisions of Article 3 of Chapter 44A of the General
26 Statutes. The design-builder shall obtain written approval from the governmental entity prior to
27 changing key personnel, as listed under subdivision (d)(9) of this section, after the contract has
28 been awarded."

29 **SECTION 1.(c)** G.S. 143-129(e)(11) reads as rewritten:

30 "(11) Contracts by a public entity with any of the following:

- 31 a. A construction manager at risk executed pursuant to G.S. 143-128.1.
32 b. A design-builder executed pursuant to G.S. 143-128.1A.
33 c. A design-builder executed pursuant to G.S. 143-128.1B.
34 d. A private developer executed pursuant to G.S. 143-128.1C."

35 **SECTION 1.(d)** This section becomes effective October 1, 2021, and applies to
36 contracts entered into, amended, or renewed on or after that date.

37 **SECTION 2.(a)** Article 1 of Chapter 22B of the General Statutes is amended by
38 adding a new section to read:

39 **"§ 22B-5. Waiver of liens or claims as a condition of progress payment invalid.**

40 Provisions in lien waivers, releases, construction agreements (as defined in G.S. 22B-1(f)(1)),
41 or design professional agreements (as defined in G.S. 22B-1(f)(5)) purporting to require a
42 promisor to submit a waiver or release of liens or claims as a condition of receiving interim or
43 progress payments due from a promisee under a construction agreement or design professional
44 agreement are void and unenforceable unless limited to the specific interim or progress payment
45 actually received by the promisor in exchange for the lien waiver. This section does not apply to
46 (i) lien waivers or releases for final payments or (ii) agreements to settle and compromise
47 disputed claims after the claim has been identified by the claimant in writing regardless of
48 whether the promisor has initiated a civil action or arbitration proceeding."

49 **SECTION 2.(b)** This section becomes effective October 1, 2021, and applies to liens
50 attached on or after that date.

51 **SECTION 3.(a)** G.S. 44A-35 reads as rewritten:

1 **"§ 44A-35. Attorneys' fees.**

2 (a) In any suit brought or defended under the provisions of Article 2 or Article 3 of this
3 Chapter, the presiding judge may allow a reasonable attorneys' fee to the attorney representing
4 the prevailing party. This attorneys' fee is to be taxed as part of the court costs and be payable by
5 the losing party upon a finding that there was an unreasonable refusal by the losing party to fully
6 resolve the matter which constituted the basis of the suit or the basis of the defense costs with the
7 final judgment or arbitration award.

8 (b) The court or arbitrator shall determine the prevailing party based on the principal
9 amount in controversy between the parties as of the commencement of the trial, arbitration, or
10 hearing resulting in a judgment or arbitration award, considering all relevant facts and
11 circumstances.

12 (c) If a party serves (i) an offer of judgment in accordance with G.S. 1A-1, Rule 68, or
13 (ii) a written settlement offer, so that the offer is received at least 30 days before the
14 commencement of the trial, arbitration, or hearing resulting in a judgment or award resolving all
15 matters in controversy between the parties, the last offer shall be deemed to be that party's
16 monetary position for purposes of determining the amount in controversy.

17 (d) In determining the amount of reasonable attorneys' fees and expenses under this
18 section, the court or arbitrator may consider all relevant facts and circumstances, including,
19 without limitation, the following:

20 (1) The amount in controversy and the results obtained.

21 (2) The reasonableness of the time and labor expended, and the billing rates
22 charged, by the attorneys.

23 (3) The novelty and difficulty of the questions raised in the action.

24 (4) The skill required to perform properly the legal services rendered.

25 (5) The relative economic circumstances of the parties.

26 (6) Settlement offers made prior to the commencement of the trial, arbitration, or
27 hearing.

28 (7) Offers of judgment pursuant to Rule 68 of the North Carolina Rules of Civil
29 Procedure and whether judgment finally obtained was more favorable than
30 such offers.

31 (8) Whether a party unjustly exercised superior economic bargaining power in the
32 conduct of the action or withheld payment of undisputed amounts.

33 (9) The timing of settlement offers.

34 (10) The extent to which the party seeking attorneys' fees prevailed in the action.

35 (11) The amount of attorneys' fees awarded in similar cases.

36 (e) A party may submit evidence relating to an award of attorneys' fees by affidavit or
37 declaration. The court or arbitrator may admit other evidence, including, without limitation, live
38 or deposition testimony. A party may submit expert testimony to support an award, but the court
39 or arbitrator shall not require expert testimony.

40 (f) ~~For purposes of this section, "prevailing party" is a the party plaintiff or third party~~
41 ~~plaintiff who obtains a judgment of at least fifty percent (50%) of the whose monetary amount~~
42 ~~sought in a claim or is a party defendant or third party defendant against whom a claim is asserted~~
43 ~~which results in a judgment of less than fifty percent (50%) of the amount sought in the claim~~
44 ~~defended. Notwithstanding the foregoing, in the event an offer of judgment is served in~~
45 ~~accordance with G.S. 1A-1, Rule 68, a "prevailing party" is an offeree who obtains judgment in~~
46 ~~an amount more favorable than the last offer or is an offeror against whom judgment is rendered~~
47 ~~in an amount less favorable than the last offer. position at the commencement of the trial,~~
48 ~~arbitration, or hearing is closest to the amount of the judgment or arbitration award. The court or~~
49 ~~arbitrator shall determine the prevailing party based upon the principal amount in controversy~~
50 ~~between the parties as of the commencement of the trial, arbitration, or hearing resulting in a~~
51 ~~judgment or arbitration award, considering all relevant facts and circumstances."~~

1 **SECTION 3.(b)** This section becomes effective October 1, 2021, and applies to any
2 claim arising on or after that date.

3 **SECTION 4.(a)** G.S. 22B-1 reads as rewritten:

4 "**§ 22B-1. Certain indemnity and defend agreements invalid.**

5 (a) Provisions in, or in connection with, a construction agreement or design professional
6 agreement purporting to require a promisor to indemnify or hold harmless the promisee, the
7 promisee's independent contractors, agents, employees, or indemnitees against liability for
8 damages arising out of bodily injury to persons or damage to property proximately caused by or
9 resulting from the negligence, in whole or in part, of the promisee, its independent contractors,
10 agents, employees, or indemnitees, is against public policy, void and unenforceable. Nothing
11 contained in this subsection shall prevent or prohibit a contract, promise or agreement whereby
12 a promisor shall indemnify or hold harmless any promisee or the promisee's independent
13 contractors, agents, employees or indemnitees against liability for damages resulting from the
14 ~~sole~~ negligence of the promisor, its agents or ~~employees~~ employees when the negligence of the
15 promisee, the promisee's independent contractors, agents, employees or indemnitees is not a
16 proximate cause of the damages sought.

17 (b) Provisions in, or in connection with, a construction agreement or design professional
18 agreement purporting to require a promisor to indemnify or hold harmless the promisee, the
19 promisee's independent contractors, agents, employees, indemnitees, or any other person or entity
20 against losses, damages, or expenses are against public policy, void, and unenforceable unless
21 the ~~the~~ fault of the promisor or its derivative parties is a proximate cause of the loss, damage, or
22 expense indemnified.

23 "

24 **SECTION 4.(b)** This section becomes effective October 1, 2021, and applies to
25 construction agreements and design professional agreements entered into on or after that date.

26 **SECTION 5.** Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes
27 law.