

June 5th, 2023

To: Senate Rules Committee

Re: SB 775 Soil and Water Conservation District Board Eligibility

Chair Lieber and Committee Members,

I would like to submit this letter of support for SB 775.

SB 775 seeks to update the eligibility rules for soil and water conservation districts so candidates for zoned seats in districts with populations of over 250,000 do not have to own or manage at least 10 acres of land. We believe this is a long overdue update to the current statute.

I live in the East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District. For those of us living in urban neighborhoods, it's unrealistic to believe that any of us will own or manage 10 acres of land.

In addition, there is a chronic issue of vacancies on these important boards. If there were a lot of people running for these seats, this might not be as big an issue. However, that's not the case. As a matter of fact, SWCD's are long known for having the same people sitting on their boards because they can't find another qualified candidate to run for their seats.

The statute that limits eligible candidates for zoned seats to those who own or manage at least 10 acres does not realistically address the needs of Soil and Water districts with larger populations and significant urban considerations when making policy decisions regarding soil and water health.

This statutory update makes a lot of sense and is long overdue to bring the eligibility for candidates running for soil and water conservation district director positions in larger and more urbanized districts.

Thank you for your consideration,

Svetlana Hedin