

Submitter: Donna Torres  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules  
Measure: SB775

I Strongly oppose SB 775 with the -3 Amendment. There are several areas where the population threshold of 250,000 or greater this would apply to that are rural farming and strong agricultural communities and without having their knowledge at the table within their district would be detrimental to conservation. Board members work with their neighbors and network on conservation practices and policies and help them gain technical support as well as support through grants from federal and state agencies and sometimes from districts directly. Breaking down that communication in the community would be detrimental to conservation. SB 775 would greatly affect some of the top agriculture producers in the state and sharing that knowledge through the board members and staff is important. Most states have similar board eligibility requirements.

I realize that the rationale behind eliminating land-based requirements assumes that larger population counties are more urban and the land-based requirement is less relevant as well as to make the director positions open to a wider range of citizens. There are, however, more good reasons for the land-based requirement as they provide assurance that directors will have relevant experience for the work conducted by the districts.

This bill assumes that only larger population counties would favor elimination of land-based requirements, however, the extensive survey that OACD did in 2020 showed that the majority of SWCDs throughout the state want to retain the land-based requirements.

I feel the solution to fixing SB 775 would be to allow all districts to have choices for retaining land-based requirements. This would allow all districts to decide what works best for themselves. The statute can be written to allow this decision to be made at some time in the future as the situations for each district change and evolve.

There is too much debate on this issue within the SWCD community and there are very strong feelings about this matter. If districts are given a choice, the differences of opinions would be muted.

Please say NO to SB 775.