

Submitter: Stacey Dalgaard  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules  
Measure: SB775

June 6, 2023

To: Senate Rules Committee  
Re: SB 775 Soil and Water Conservation District Board Eligibility

Chair Lieber and Committee Members,  
I am submitting this letter of support for SB 775.

SB 775 seeks to update the eligibility rules for soil and water conservation districts so that candidates for zoned seats in districts with populations of more than 250,000 people are no longer required to own or manage at least 10 acres of land. As a resident that cares deeply about equity and urban resilience, I believe this is a long overdue update to the current statute.

I live in Senate District 21 and House District 41. I am a landowner and taxpayer with two properties in the East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District in urban Southeast Portland. However, I do not own 10 acres of land and therefore am limited in how I can represent myself and the interests of my community when it comes to urban tree canopies, stormwater runoff, pesticide use in backyards, and other issues that affect urban areas differently than our rural neighbors.

For those of us living in urban parts of the state, it is unrealistic to believe that any of us will own or manage 10 acres of land. That leaves very few people with very different interests and priorities making decisions for thousands of urban Oregonians without their voice being meaningfully heard. There is a chronic issue of vacancies on these important boards, furthering the lack of representation for urban areas that collectively have a massive footprint on our soil and water resources. SB 775 only impacts six soil and water conservation districts in Oregon because it only applies to districts with a population of more than 250,000 people, where significant urban considerations need representation in our state's solutions to sustainable soil and water health.

In 2021, this body recognized in Senate Concurrent Resolution 17 that a legacy of segregation, economic exclusion and historically biased zoning codes has created disparities for frontline communities in Oregon, and that frontline communities historically have been excluded from the policy and funding decision-making process. The statute that limits board representation to landowners of at least 10 acres is a relic of these biased and discriminatory policies that limit the representation of more

urban and lower-income communities across the state. SB 775 is an opportunity to create more access for all urban Oregonians to contribute meaningfully to a resilient future.

Let's update this outdated statute and allow all comers to run for the office and hope that the most qualified candidate for that zone wins.

Please vote YES on SB 775.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Stacey Dalgaard  
Resident of Portland, OR