

Submitter: Whitney Bailey
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure: SB775

Dear Chair Lieber and Committee Members,

I live in eastern Multnomah County, and both pay taxes for and am served by the East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District. As such I would like to indicate my support for SB 775. The current eligibility requirements for the Board of Directors are unsuitable for the needs of an urban population, though urban populations are in just as much need of SWCD services as rural areas. The vast majority of the population that EMSWCD serves lives within the urban area, yet because of the antiquated requirement that all Directors own or manage 10+ acres, urban needs are unable to be represented on the Board. Given that soil and water health are just as important in urban areas as rural, and given that urban sustainability is an essential component of climate change adaptation, it is critical that urban perspectives be represented in organizations serving the needs of urban populations.

SB 775 currently only impacts 6 SWCDs in Oregon, and is a common-sense solution to fix a modern-day problem that was never anticipated when SWCDs were founded. It is an entirely reasonable update that will enable SWCDs to respond to the changing needs of Oregon's cities now and in the future. Other special districts supported by public tax dollars do not have land-based eligibility requirements, and to maintain such a requirement in urban areas, in effect excluding the vast majority of affected constituents from being able to run for office, would be anti-democratic.

Please vote yes on SB 775 to remove the 10 acre eligibility criteria for SWCDs serving populations over 250,000 people. Thank you for your consideration.