



May 22, 2023

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

Chair Lieber and Committee Members,

The East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District (EMSWCD), which serves all of Multnomah County east of the Willamette River, provides technical services to protect and enhance soil and water quality and habitat by supporting voluntary conservation in partnership in both urban and rural areas with private landowners and managers as well as federal, state, and nonprofit partners. We would like to submit our 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 that ensures that people in zones where the likelihood of any critical mass of people who own or manage 10 or more acres is negligible at best. And, we need this diversity of perspectives given the largely urbanized district are working in with taxpayer dollars. For EMSWCD, this update will ensure that candidates who can bring needed expertise in the areas of urban heat islands, green infrastructure needs, stormwater management, climate resilience, reducing pesticide use in urban yards, to name just a few, might be represented on our board, in addition to the critical farm-focused voices we already enjoy.

This change only impacts six soil and water conservation districts across the entire state, which we think is a thoughtful consideration of the differences between larger, more urbanized districts and our rural partners with whom we work all the time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jasmine Zimmer-Stucky
Chair, EMSWCD Board of Directors