

May 23, 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, one of only 6 soil and water conservation districts in the state that will be impacted by this proposal. However, ours is a very populous district, and the vast majority of the people who live here are currently ineligible to run for the Board.

While the land-based requirement might make sense in a rural area where many people own or manage acreage, here in the Portland metro area (and other urban areas in Oregon) it is patently unfair. Most of my fellow residents here pay taxes to the District and are impacted by its programs, but are ineligible to run for the Board. SB 775 offers a practical change that would make our soil and water conservation districts more democratic.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emily Cooper".

Emily Cooper
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