

Submitter: Kathy Shearin
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure: SB775

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. I believe this is a long overdue update to the current statute.

Please consider:

- For those of us living in urban neighborhoods, it's unrealistic to believe that any of us will own or manage 10 acres of land.
- Someone running for the Presidency of the United States of America doesn't even have this restriction, or one like it!
- The statute that limits eligible candidates for zoned seats to those who own or manage at least 10 acres does not realistically address the needs of Soil and Water districts with larger populations and significant urban considerations when making policy decisions regarding soil and water health.
- This statutory update makes a lot of sense and is long overdue to bring the eligibility for candidates running for soil and water conservation district director positions in larger and more urbanized districts.
- SB 775 only impacts six soil and water conservation districts in Oregon because it only applies to districts with a population of over 250,000, recognizing that smaller more rural districts aren't necessarily having to deal with urban issues as they relate to soil and water health. It seems like a reasonable compromise that responds to actual needs.
- There are no restrictions to run for any other special districts such as school boards, fire districts, etc., who are using public tax dollars in open elections on the ballot. I don't believe that's right.

- I live in Multnomah County and believe that all people should be able to run for these seats. It ensures that as a voter I have more choices and more opportunities for folx to run.

Thank you for your consideration,
Kathy Shearin
Multnomah County Resident and SWCD staff
6036 NE 18th Ave., Portland, OR 97211