

RESOLUTION NO. 167-323**RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO ALTER THE NEW YORK SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT LAW**

WHEREAS, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) have existed for over 70 years in communities across New York State and were established to meet the needs of the state's diverse geographical regions with local leadership; and

WHEREAS, SWCDs provide counties with a wide range of environmental services, including watershed monitoring, soil health protection, sediment and erosion control, stormwater management, invasive species mitigation; and

WHEREAS, SWCDs strive to make programs and services that are inclusive and open to everyone; and

WHEREAS, state law establishes that each SWCD's Board of Directors shall have two members of the county board and three members who are not of the county board, two of whom shall be practical farmers selected by the county Grange and county Farm Bureau; and

WHEREAS, this framework provides each county with the flexibility to select a Board that meets its unique needs; and

WHEREAS, the New York State Association of Conservation Districts (NYACD) was notified that the Watershed Health Coalition has proposed significant changes to Soil and Water Conservation Districts Law without adequate input from local stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, the proposed changes include a mechanism by which a District's two county board representatives may be removed and replaced via open election; and

WHEREAS, the proposed changes include the revocation of the county Grange and County Farm Bureau's authority to appoint representatives; and

WHEREAS, SWCD Board members from the county board, Grange, and Farm Bureau provide local knowledge and experience to SWCDs that enable them to deliver valuable conservation services to their communities; and

WHEREAS, changing the structure of SWCD Boards could have a significant negative impact on their ability to make decisions through informed partners on the very issues that SWCDs deal with every day; and

WHEREAS, the proposed changes would also impact local initiatives that counties receive funding for through other sources and change how planning would be done, as watersheds extend past county and municipal boundaries.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Orleans County Legislature, New York State Association of Conservation Districts (NYACD) and the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) opposes any amendments to Soil and Water Conservation District laws that would change the make-up, mission, and function of the State and County Soil and Water Conservation Districts without local input; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Orleans County Legislature urges the New York State Legislature to seek input from County Legislatures and Boards of Supervisors, the New York Farm Bureau, the New York State Grange, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, and SWCDs before proposing changes to SWCD law; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Clerk of the Legislature shall forward certified copies of this resolution to Governor Kathy Hochul, Congresswoman Claudia Tenney, Congressman Joseph Morelle, Senator Robert Ort, Assemblyman Steve Hawley, New York State Association of Conservation Districts (NYACD), New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC), the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets and all others deemed necessary and proper.

Moved, Eick; second, Morgan.

Adopted. 7 ayes; 0 nays.

COUNTY OF ORLEANS
STATE OF NEW YORK

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of a resoluton duly adopted by the Orleans County Legislature on the 28th day of March 2023.

Dated at Albion, New York
March 29, 2023



A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Lisa Stenshorn". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Lisa Stenshorn, Clerk
Orleans County Legislature
County of Orleans, New York