

**Testimony of Shannon Schutt
North Dakota Recreation & Park Association
To House Finance and Taxation Committee
In Opposition to HB 1200
Tuesday, January 19, 2021**

Chairman Headland and Members of the Committee, my name is Shannon Schutt, and I am the executive director of the North Dakota Recreation & Park Association (NDRPA). We represent more than 900 members, primarily park districts, and work to advance parks, recreation and conservation for an enhanced quality of life in North Dakota. We are in opposition to HB 1200.

NDRPA believes public investment in parks and recreation is necessary to achieve positive economic, health, environmental, and social/community benefits for all North Dakotans. Parks and recreation are essential public services and a valuable part of community infrastructure. Providing safe, affordable and accessible recreation opportunities for citizens and visitors is essential to maintaining a high quality of life in North Dakota that attracts and retains workforce and engages tourists.

North Dakota's park districts build and maintain parks and recreation facilities through a variety of funding sources, including property taxes. Park board commissioners are elected by the public to make decisions about necessary park district expenditures, including the amount of property tax levied within statutory limits. Parks and recreation facilities must be constructed as development happens in order to be cost effective and ensure equitable access to citizens. It is more expensive and sometimes nearly impossible to develop parks, trails and facilities in existing neighborhoods.

Arbitrary limits on property taxes would hinder park districts' abilities to meet the needs of their communities and impose funding limitations, as well as the extra costs of an election, on local park board commissioners who are elected to make such decisions for the betterment of their district.

NDRPA urges a do not pass recommendation on HB 1200. Thank you.