

Testimony Prepared for the  
**House Political Subdivisions**  
January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
By: Donnell Preskey, NDACo



**RE: Support for HB 1108**

Good morning Chairman Dockter and committee members, I'm Donnell Preskey with the North Dakota Association of Counties. In my role at NDACo, I serve as Executive Director for the Auditors and Treasurers Associations which are in support of this bill.

HB 1108 does not eliminate the requirement to list of bills paid by a county – it merely seeks to change *where* the information is published. This bill is about where can citizens get the best information. We believe the best place is on county websites. Currently, 11-11-37 in the Century Code is where counties are mandated to publish minutes. A 2012 Attorney General's opinion cites that expenditures are part of the minutes and therefore counties should publish the expenditure report.

Because most counties put their minutes on their websites already, most counties are already publishing this information. Several counties have also made the expenditure data available on their websites using transparency portals which are essentially an open checkbook for citizens to view expenditure and budget information. This information is easy to understand and navigate.

Often times this same information, when printed in the newspaper, is in very minute print and takes up a large amount of space making it a very expensive publication and one that is of interest to very few citizens. We know of papers who do not wish to publish this information due to the space it requires. This bill would allow for a county to avoid publishing this information in a newspaper if it is available on the county's website. We found that three counties do not have county websites.

In 2018, counties spent approximately \$450,000 on meeting publication requirements in total. A survey of counties shows the publication of minutes plus bills is approximately 30-35% of the total cost.

It is important to note that advertising rates are negotiated and set every biennium by OMB. Although this mechanism is efficient, local governments have little direct control of this cost.

It is no secret, many of the major newspapers in the state have reduced the number of days they are printing, which adds to our argument that the best place for this detailed information is with the county on their websites that is available 24-7.