

Testimony of Cole Higlin
North Dakota Recreation & Park Association
To Senate Industry, Business and Labor Committee
In Support to HB 1292
Tuesday, March 14, 2023

Chairman Louser and members of the Committee, my name is Cole Higlin, and I am the public policy chair 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 support of adding infrastructure for recreation and community facilities to the list of capital construction projects eligible for loans under the infrastructure revolving loan fund through the Bank of North Dakota (BND).

Park district revenue is generated from programs and fees, property taxes and state aid. They use these funding mechanisms for their infrastructure projects. Allowing political subdivisions to apply for low interest loans for infrastructure, such as parking lots that provide access to facilities and recreation, will assist park districts both large and small in completing projects in their communities that affect the quality of life of your constituents and visitors.

For example, the Mandan Park District constructed a \$4.1 million tennis center and wanted to special assess the parking lot and infrastructure needed to support the facility. They special assessed the improvements; however, the parking lot portion did not qualify for the BND 2% infrastructure loan. The new street qualified, but the parking lot did not, even though the city managed the project and had the same contractors complete the task. Mandan Park District will end up with estimated financing at 5.5% on the parking lot portion and 2% for the street improvement. This is an additional interest cost of nearly \$500,000 if they pay over the 20-year term. The lower interest rate would have saved the taxpayers this money.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for HB 1292 for park district infrastructure needs.