

**Testimony of Shannon Schutt
North Dakota Recreation & Park Association
To Senate Finance & Taxation Committee
In Opposition to HB 1572
Tuesday, March 18, 2025**

Chairman Weber 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 1572, specifically Section 1, which limits general obligation bonding authority for park districts from 1% of assessed valuation to 1% up to \$15 million. We appreciate the House's amended version of the bill which increased the proposed cap from up to \$1 million to up to \$15 million, but we believe this is still insufficient, especially for larger park districts facing significant, multi-phase projects spanning several years and rising construction costs. This cap would limit the ability of park districts to meet the needs of their communities, potentially creating a need to rely on special assessments.

We propose amending the bill to raise the cap to \$30 million, which would better reflect the financial realities faced by larger park districts while still ensuring fiscal oversight.

Regarding taxpayer protection, the existing 60-day protest period already provides ample opportunity for public input, ensuring transparency and accountability. With this process in place, further restrictions on park districts' bonding capacity are unnecessary.

Park districts are currently subject to a much lower cap of 1% of assessed valuation, compared to other political subdivisions, which are allowed 5%. Imposing a \$15 million cap would unnecessarily restrict their ability to plan for long-term projects.

In conclusion, we respectfully request that the committee either amend Section 1 to include a \$30 million cap to account for rising construction costs or remove the section entirely. Thank you for your time and consideration.