

**Testimony of Shannon Schutt  
North Dakota Recreation & Park Association  
To House Political Subdivisions Committee  
In Opposition to HB 1367  
Thursday, February 11, 2021**

Chairman Dockter 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 1367.

During the 2017 legislative session, political subdivisions worked collaboratively with legislators and the Tax Department to revise the budget adoption timeline for local government in order to increase transparency and opportunity for public comment on preliminary budgets of political subdivisions. This included moving adoption of the preliminary budget one month earlier to August 10 and requiring a tax notice with preliminary budgets and hearing dates for all political subdivisions levying more than \$100,000 in property tax to be mailed to all taxpayers.

HB 1367 requires adoption of preliminary budgets a month earlier on July 10. To meet the proposed deadline, park districts would need to begin their budget process before completing their audits from the previous year. It would also be challenging for newly elected park board commissioners to provide input on the preliminary budget, as they take office just three weeks before the proposed July 10 deadline. Further, the bill gives citizens the right to refer a preliminary budget. The timeline for referring the budget and holding an election would be difficult. Political subdivisions need at least 64 days to call an election and this bill does not change the requirement to have a preliminary budget submitted to the county by August 10. It also does not change the requirement to have final budgets submitted by October 10. Budget hearings would still need to be held between September 7 and October 7.

There are current protocols in place today that work well and provide transparency and communication to North Dakota taxpayers.

NDRPA urges a do not pass recommendation on HB 1367. Thank you.