

**Testimony of Shannon Schutt
North Dakota Recreation & Park Association
To House Appropriations – Education and Environment Division
In Support of SB 2019
Monday, March 6, 2023**

Chairman Nathe and Members of the Committee, my name is Shannon Schutt, and I am the executive director of the North Dakota Recreation & Park Association (NDRPA). NDRPA represents more than 900 members across the state and works to advance parks, recreation and conservation for an enhanced quality of life in North Dakota. NDRPA is in support of Senate Bill 2019.

Public parks and recreation facilities are valuable community infrastructure, and usage in our state is significant. Six out of every 10 North Dakota households (60 percent) report outdoor recreation is very important, while 93 percent report it is important, according to the *2018-2022 North Dakota State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*. Five percent more North Dakota households feel outdoor recreation is very important today compared to five years ago.

NDRPA supports funding for operation, maintenance and projects for the Parks and Recreation Department, as well as parks' infrastructure funding through the local park district grant, which is a 50/50 match grant. Governor Burgum had recommended \$6 million for the local park district grant. The Senate has allocated \$750,000 to the grant fund with a \$100,000 cap for each awarded entity. During the 2021 Special Session, the Legislature approved a similar grant of \$5 million. Over \$30 million in grant applications were submitted. Funding awarded provided assistance to complete much needed infrastructure projects in communities both large and small, such as renovating the 50-year-old pool in Cavalier, ballpark safety net installation in Jamestown, a parking area for the Patterson Lake Recreation Area in Dickinson, a scoreboard/videoboard and lighting for the Municipal Ballpark in Bismarck, and renovations to Raging Rivers Water Park in Mandan, to name a few.

With the state's growing population, the Parks and Recreation Department and local agencies need sufficient resources to provide and build upon our public parks and recreation areas. Parks, open spaces, trails, greenways, water, recreation facilities, programs, and services provide documented benefits, among them economic, health, environmental, and social/community. Providing safe, affordable and accessible recreation opportunities for our citizens and visitors is essential to maintaining North Dakota's commitment to a high quality of life.

Thank you for the opportunity to express support for this bill and for your continued commitment to North Dakota's quality of life needs.