

Testimony – SB 2347
House Government & Veterans Affairs Committee
March 9, 2023
By Cody Schulz
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Good morning Chairman Schauer and members of the House Government & Veterans Affairs Committee, my name is Cody Schulz. I am the Director of the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department. I offer this testimony in support of SB 2347.

Due to the nature of the work we do and the projects we typically construct, we strongly support both the increase in the cost threshold from \$200,000 to \$500,000 for “regular” public improvements and from \$200,000 to \$1 million for pre-engineered units. In many cases the current threshold and requirements may not be necessary, as simple projects generally do not require the level of expertise and oversight that is provided by architects and engineers. Additionally, when not needed, the current requirements can both slow down the construction process and significantly increase the overall cost of the project.

We have specific examples of how current law not only slows construction and increases cost, but in one case makes it nearly impossible to purchase/construct park amenities.

1. **Playground Equipment:** In the current economic environment, it would not be uncommon for a large, ADA compliant, set of playground equipment to exceed the current \$200,000 threshold for requiring drawings and specifications from an architect or engineer. However, unique specifications (and the cost to procure them) would be wasteful and useless, because virtually the only way to purchase playground equipment is as a “pre-engineered” unit. Therefore, if we put a unique set of specifications out for bid, we would likely get few or no responses, and any responses/bids we would receive would likely be much higher than a more generally specified unit in which pre-engineered vendors would be able to bid.
2. **Comfort Stations:** Comfort stations, also known as “shower houses” are another example where we believe the current requirements are adding considerable cost and time to projects. Beyond the simple attributes of square footage, number of showers, toilets, and sink fixtures, and general aesthetics, other specifications are generally unimportant. There are a number of vendors that offer pre-engineered solutions, but they do so either exclusively at their own specifications or charge a premium price for modifications – which would be required if we had an architect draw up specifications separately.
3. **Cabins:** Much like comfort stations, the general layout of rooms and detailed specifications are much less important than the general requirements of square footage, number of rooms, amenities, and aesthetics. There are no fewer than a dozen vendors that offer pre-engineered options that would enjoy the opportunity to compete for the State’s business, but again, they generally only build to their own specifications and would be unable to bid if we are required to have unique specifications drawn up.

In conclusion, we believe the changes laid out in this bill are common sense, reasonable solutions that both cut red tape and costs, but leave in place accountability measures that protect public investment and taxpayer dollars.

On behalf of North Dakota Parks and Recreation, I recommend SB 2347 receive a Do Pass.

Thank you for your time; I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.