

**Testimony of Cole Higlin  
North Dakota Recreation & Park Association  
To House Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
In Opposition to HB 1215  
Thursday, February 4, 2021**

Chairman Porter and members of the Committee, my name is Cole Higlin, and I am the public policy committee chair for 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 1215 as it is written.

First and foremost, we appreciate the efforts to introduce this bill to assist in funding for park districts. However, as the bill is written, there are a few items of concern.

The bill transfers 10 percent of oil extraction moneys from the Outdoor Heritage Fund to a new park district loan program. The Outdoor Heritage Fund receives moneys from oil and gas gross production tax rather than oil extraction. As a result, no funds would be transferred to the new program.

Currently, park districts are eligible for funding from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, which requires a 75/25 match. This bill would shift funds from the grant opportunity to a loan program. There are park districts who are facing significant challenges due to COVID and would not be able to secure a loan and would instead benefit from funding through a grant program. Park districts would prefer the structure of the Outdoor Heritage Fund grant program.

Lastly, no specific loan criteria has been provided to determine who or what projects would qualify for the loan program.

NDRPA urges a do not pass recommendation on HB 1215 as written. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee.