

**Testimony of Cole Higlin
North Dakota Recreation & Park Association
To Senate Appropriations – Education and Environment Division
In Support of HB 1019
Thursday, March 6, 2025**

Chairman Sorvaag and Members of the Committee, my name is Cole Higlin, and I am the public policy chair 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 House Bill 1019.

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 latest *North Dakota State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*.

NDRPA supports funding for operation, maintenance and projects for the North Dakota State Parks and Recreation Department, as well as the \$7.5 million in funding for park grants for the construction renovation, or upgrade of outdoor recreational facilities for outdoor activities to be used by children and young adults. During the 2023 Legislative Session, the Legislature approved a similar grant of \$6 million. Over \$10 million in grant applications were submitted for projects in communities both large and small, that ranged from parks and playground improvements to pools and baseball field updates, and more.

With the state's growing population, the Parks and Recreation Department and local park districts 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.