



Testimony of George Hellyer, Executive Director
Grand Forks Park District
To Senate Finance & Taxation Committee
In Opposition to HB 1572
March 17, 2025

Chair Weber and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Grand Forks Park District, I am in opposition to HB 1572, specifically the proposed Section 1 Amendment, which proposes to change park district bonding authority, without a public vote, to \$15 million.

I felt it was pertinent to communicate the concerns of our park district and the potential impact on our community if HB 1572 is passed at it is currently written. The following are key factors that I believe should be considered with this bill:

1. Significantly reduces current General Obligation (GO) bonding authority without a vote by approximately \$15 million for the Grand Forks Park District. The Grand Forks Park District current bonding capacity is just over \$30 million which is 1% of assessed valuation. The impact of such a reduced limit could lead to unnecessary complexity, delays, and added costs to the project.
2. The Grand Forks Park District currently has just over \$6 million in GO debt. This would leave less than \$9 million available to bond even though the debt service payments may be covered through our regular operating budgets or through fundraising for the project.
3. The project buying power of park districts will continue to decrease, due to a preset \$15 million limit, over the years due to inflation which will have a direct negative impact on the amenities and services we are able to offer in our community. The current 1% of assessed valuation grows as the community grows and as inflation grows.
4. Current North Dakota Century Code already exists, a 60-day protest period, as an avenue for citizens to reject a proposed GO bond.

I understand that there are reasons for wanting to limit the size of GO bond issues without a vote. However, I feel that there is already a mechanism for citizens to defeat a proposed GO bond issue and that HB 1572 greatly reduces the bonding authority of the Grand Forks Park District (50% reduction). **I would ask that you vote no for HB 1572 or amend the bill to raise the \$15 million bonding authority to \$30 million.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.