

Testimony of Robert G. Marvinney
in Support of
An Act to Regulate Outdoor Lighting
LD 1845

Public Hearing date: May 8, 2023

Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and members of the Committee, I am Robert Marvinney of Readfield, Maine, offering qualified support for LD 1845, “An Act to Regulate Outdoor Lighting.” My support is for legislation to address the impact of outdoor lighting on night skies, although I have concerns about some of the details of this bill.

I grew up in the 1960s in northern New Jersey when it was possible to occasionally see the Milky Way a few nights out of the year, a sight that is no longer possible. On a family camping trip to Acadia National Park in 1971, I was awestruck by the brilliance of the Milky Way in the dark night sky, further stoking my interest in amateur astronomy. When I moved to Maine in 1987 from the dark sky wasteland of Houston, Texas, although my work was in Augusta, we purposefully elected to live in rural Readfield to avoid the light pollution of Augusta’s commercial district. I am an example of a person coming to Maine at least in part for the night skies. There are many others. In the last 35 years, burgeoning development in Augusta and throughout the region has significantly impacted our night sky.

There are simple things that can be done to reduce the impact of outdoor lighting, such as shielding identified in this bill, timing of lighting, and lights that are activated by motion.

Outdoor lighting should:

- Only be on when needed
- Only light the area that needs it
- Be no brighter than necessary
- Minimize blue light emissions
- Eliminate upward-directed light

It would also be better to use a standard in lumens rather than watts to determine which lights fall under this proposed regulation – low wattage LED lights can be very bright. Further, reducing the blue light spectrum is more harmonious with the natural night environment, specifically light with a color temperature below 3000 Kelvins.

Thank you for your consideration.