

Senator Brenner
Representative Gramlich
Members of the Environment & Natural Resources Committee

LD 1845, An Act to Regulate Outdoor Lighting

My name is Debra Hart. I am a resident of Manchester, Maine . I am testifying in opposition to LD 1845 on behalf of the Dirigo Electric Cooperative Companies. These are Maine's consumer-owned electric utilities and they include Van Buren Power & Light, Eastern Maine Electric Cooperative, Houlton Water Company, Madison Electric Works, Isle Au Haut Power Company, Fox Island Electric Cooperative, Kennebunk Power & Light and the electric company at Brunswick Landing.

Section 3131.2 Prohibitions is very problematic.

Shields on lights have been used very infrequently and in unique circumstances. Generally, a shield is used if a consumer has an issue with a light. Requiring lights to have a shield would reduce the effect intended by the light. This is the case with streetlights or security lights placed at a house or business.

The light is intended to light up an area, whether it is a street intersection or in the yard of a house. In both cases, the illuminated area is desired for public safety and for security. Having a shield on the light would eliminate much of the desired lighting benefits.

Many streetlights are 70 watts or more as well as flood/wide lights. It is not known if a shield exists for a flood/wide light.

It is not reasonable or possible to put a shield on all lights by January 1, 2024. This would be a very large cost to the utility, and the time involved to install shades would result in the utility not being able to accomplish necessary utility work and projects. In addition, although the bill specifies that costs can be recovered in rates, the COUs do not go to the Public Utilities Commission on a regular basis for rate increases so these costs would be dormant for a long period of time without the ability for the utility to recover them.

Requiring a light that does not have a shield to not illuminate between 11 pm to sunrise runs contrary in many cases to the reason for the light. If this was required and could actually occur, this could result in all street intersections being dark after 11 pm. In addition, in many cases photocells control the time that the lights are on or off.

Some utilities may still have current inventory of mercury lights. If this is the case, the utility should be allowed to use the lights to install or replace an existing light. Prohibiting this would result in the utility not being able to utilize an asset that it has already purchased.

For these reasons, the Dirigo companies are opposed to LD 1845.