

LD 1934, An Act to Promote Responsible Outdoor Lighting

Pamela Mackill, Mt Vernon, Maine

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I strongly support for LD 1934, An Act to Promote Responsible Outdoor Lighting, sponsored by Representative Laurie Osher and co-sponsored by nine other members of the House and Senate.

My connection to the Belgrade Lakes region spans over 35 years. Before purchasing a home here, I spent many summers vacationing with my family in lakeside cottages. This long-term experience has instilled in me a deep appreciation for Maine's natural beauty, including its pristine night skies.

My current home is located near the former Elizabeth Arden estate in Mount Vernon, Maine. This estate has been transformed into the Travis Mills Foundation, which provides invaluable, all-inclusive, all-expenses-paid, barrier-free experiences for veterans injured in active duty or as a result of their service.

I wholeheartedly support the Travis Mills Foundation's mission. I applaud their dedication to providing our veterans and their families with the opportunity to enjoy the outdoor experiences Maine has to offer. Their work is both noteworthy and important.

The Travis Mills Foundation is financially sound and actively engages in successful fundraising, enabling them to continually expand their programs and facilities. However, this expansion, while providing more high-quality service to veterans and their families, has, unfortunately, had a negative impact on the surrounding environment. My neighbors have been compelled to install blinds in their bedrooms due to excessive light. The foundation's parking lot is illuminated as brightly as a commercial shopping plaza, and walkway and path lighting remains on 24/7, even though the retreat is not occupied year-round. From the water, the estate resembles a landing strip.

LD 1934 is critical because it educates our communities about the importance of preserving dark skies. I do not believe the Travis Mills Foundation's excessive lighting is intentional or malicious; rather, it highlights a need for greater awareness and clear standards.

This bill addresses this need by establishing crucial standards for outdoor lighting on state and municipal properties. These standards include:

- Downward-shielded fixtures to direct light where it is needed, not into the sky or neighboring properties.
- Lamps with warm color temperatures, which are less disruptive to the natural environment and human health.

- Guidelines for extinguishing or dimming lights late at night, reducing unnecessary illumination.
- Standards to minimize light trespass onto neighboring properties, protecting residents' quality of life.
- Standards for lighting sports fields.

Furthermore, the bill directs the Department of Administrative and Financial Services to develop model zoning and lighting ordinances for towns, which would be adopted by 2028. This provision is essential for promoting consistent, responsible lighting practices across the state.

Of all the challenges we face, light pollution is one where we can all make a difference. At home, we can do our part by using light only when and where it's needed, and by choosing appropriate color temperatures and brightness. However, to address the broader issue of light pollution from state and municipal properties, and to provide leadership for our communities, we need LD 1934. This legislation will apply these responsible standards to public spaces and empower towns to adopt effective ordinances.

Thank you
Pamela Mackill, Mt Vernon, Maine