

Public Hearing for LD 1934, "An Act to Promote Responsible Outdoor Lighting"

Maine State House via Zoom
Monday, May 12, 2025, 10:00am
Submitted via: vla@legislature.maine.gov

Testimony by Jon Silverman
14 Congress Street, Augusta, Maine 04330
jonathan.d.silverman@gmail.com
(781) 820-7644

Greetings to the Chair, Senators, Representatives, Distinguished Members of the Committee on State & Local Government, Fellow Mainers, Good Friends:

I am Jon Silverman of 14 Congress Street in Augusta, here in support of LD 1934, "An Act to Promote Responsible Outdoor Lighting." I am president of the Central Maine Astronomical Society, an astronomy club with three observatories under dark skies near Augusta; and, secretary of Dark Sky Maine, a 501c3 nonprofit and Maine's chapter of DarkSky International. Dark Sky Maine promotes an appreciation of the night sky through education and encourages lighting that improves security on the ground, promotes the health of people and wildlife, and maintains Maine's beautiful, star-filled dark skies.

Astronomers are the canaries in Maine's dark sky coal mines. We are among the first to notice the beginnings of the loss of Maine's dark skies, yet we share the concerns that other Mainers have, and which may be more persuasive in earning your vote.

Light that ruins the sky wastes electricity. That wastes money. We want to light the ground, not the sky. We want to light what we need to see, not to blind ourselves with glare. Pointing light only toward the ground prevents paying to light the sky. If you do not vote for this bill, you're leaving money on the table.

Let's kill the myth that dark sky lighting is expensive. That used to be true when the market was small, but it is growing, and this bill seeks to enlarge it further. Besides, in a nod to the expense of any purchase, this bill does not force anyone to replace fixtures that are still working.

Maine's dark skies are worth money. The skies throughout most of the East Coast are already ruined. Astronomers become a significant clientele when they travel to Maine and spend real money. Promoting Maine as a premier destination for astronomers to spend money dies if the skies die.

We need responsible legislation because, without it, people will keep buying and installing the same kinds of bad fixtures they have always used, killing our opportunity to — as the name of the bill says — install responsible outdoor lighting. This bill creates the necessary, economical market. Vote for it! If your constituencies misunderstand it, sell them on it. Maine's dark skies are only beautiful and profitable if we keep them so. This bill is your opportunity.