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Testimony of Rep. Bill Bridgeo in support of
LD 1934, An Act to Promote Responsible Outdoor Lighting
Before the State and Local Government Committee

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and distinguished members of the State and Local Government Committee, I am Representative Bill Bridgeo and I represent the East Side of the city of Augusta. I'm before you today to speak in support of **LD 1934, An Act to Promote Responsible Outdoor Lighting**.

From 1998 through 2021, I served as city manager of Augusta. During that time, the City was a leader among Maine's 498 cities and towns in the area of public and private outdoor lighting regulation and upgrades – to the great satisfaction of our residents for both its cost-savings and environmental benefits. It's a story that we in Augusta are rightly proud of, as former councilor and Mayor Dave Rollins can attest.

Outdoor lighting has a significant impact on how we experience our communities. Obviously, it's critical for safety and it has allowed us to move around at night much more easily than our grandparents or their grandparents were able to. But too much lighting, lighting aimed in the wrong direction, or lighting that is too cool in its color will have the opposite effect that we intend. When outdoor lighting is too bright, it makes neighboring properties appear dark, even when they are lit, reducing security. That can lead to property owners installing ever brighter lights to compensate. Lights that are improperly aimed or that allow light to escape up into the sky can blind people looking at the property where they are installed and eliminate our ability as Mainers to see the stars at night. And lighting that is too cool, or blue, in its color has been shown to be uncomfortable for people to spend a lot of time around. The science behind light temperature has even extended to computer and phone screens that now allow you to warm the light color of the screen in the late evening to aid with sleep.

Back in 2007, Augusta adopted an ordinance that tackled many of the concerns that LD 1934 addresses at the strong urging of a local resident who was a flight instructor at the Augusta State Airport as well as a former planning board chair and comprehensive plan committee member. He could see the light pollution that was occurring from a unique perspective and on a daily basis.

The change in the city over the last 18 years has been dramatic. When the city took over all 2,000 street lights in the city from CMP in 2019 and replaced the orange-colored high-pressure

sodium fixtures with modern LEDs, we made sure that the replacement fixtures would have zero up-lighting, that the color temperature was appropriate, and that the amount of light was bright enough to do its job but not too bright. Augusta is a safer and more pleasant place to be at night because of the fairly basic dark sky standards we've had in place for almost two decades and the efforts the city has made to abide by them in all public places. We require the same consideration by all commercial properties when they replace old lights or install new lights. The cost of these compliant light fixtures is no more or less than any other light fixture, so there's no added cost to installing them.

The conversion of the City's street lights from sodium to LED saved Augusta tens of thousands of dollars, and the lighting improvement was immensely popular – and the technology is really neat. Any number of cities and towns followed our lead.

I urge the Committee to unanimously support this legislation. It really does represent a win-win opportunity.

I'm happy to answer any questions.