



**APPALACHIAN
MOUNTAIN CLUB**
SINCE 1876

**Testimony of Eliza Townsend
In support of
LD 1934 *An Act to Promote Responsible Outdoor Lighting*
May 12, 2025**

Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and distinguished members of the Committee on State and Local Government. I am Eliza Townsend, Maine Conservation Policy Director for the Appalachian Mountain Club.

AMC is a people-centered conservation organization with members from Maine to Virginia. Our mission is the protection, enjoyment, and understanding of the outdoors. We manage 130,000 acres of forestland in Piscataquis County for multiple use, including sustainable forestry, backcountry recreation, and outdoor education. We pay property taxes on all of our land.

The night skies there are truly amazing, so dark and clear that Dark Sky International has certified the property as an International Dark Sky Park. Our annual Dark Sky Festival consistently sells out, with 75% of participants new to our lodges. They are coming to experience what they cannot see at home. Sadly, young people who visit are sometimes surprised to learn that the same stars that shine so brightly over the Maine woods also hang over their homes—because they have never seen them before.

As you have heard, 80% of North Americans cannot see the Milky Way. Let's not allow this fate to befall Maine and our children and grandchildren. LD 1934 lays out reasonable steps so that the State of Maine and the communities we live in can lead the way in curbing light pollution through responsible practices.

What is responsible outdoor lighting? It is lighting that is pointed down, shielded to prevent spill, uses warm-color light, and is turned off when not needed. Importantly, the bill contains exemptions for public safety, airports, temporary construction activity, and historic and seasonal lighting.

The bill is timely. The Land Use Planning Commission adopted stricter lighting standards for more than half the state last fall. At least a dozen Maine municipalities have already adopted local outdoor lighting ordinances, from Rangeley to Bar Harbor, Greenville to York. Further, the excess electricity wasted by generating lighting that shines into the sky and into our eyes instead of lighting what we need to see contributes to climate change. After the devastating storms of last year, we know that we must act decisively to slow climate change.

Fortunately, light pollution is the one form of pollution that is relatively easy to fix. Further, using responsible lighting *saves* money. Finally, interest in enjoying celestial events is growing, drawing visitors, as we have seen at AMC's lodges, as the towns of Greenville and Rangeley recognized with their ordinances, and as we all saw when roughly 250,000 visitors spent a collective \$200 million to experience the April 2024 eclipse.

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By passing LD 1934, we can curb light pollution, save electricity costs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and attract visitors to experience the awe of the night sky. We can ensure that our children and grandchildren can experience the stars, not only in remote parts of Maine, but over their homes.

I ask you to vote Ought to Pass.