



May 8, 2023

Honorable Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

My name is Alicia Heyburn, and the Executive Director of Teens to Trails, an organization that connects Maine youth with outdoor experiences. Today, I am here to testify in support of LD 1845, **Act to Regulate Outdoor Lighting**, legislation that promotes dark skies, so Maine youth can have the opportunity to see the stars and experience the power of awe.

We support outdoor programs at 68 schools across Maine and consistently hear from teachers that easily accessible group outdoor experiences like trail walks and stargazing bring immense mental health benefits, like joy, social connection, purpose and pride.

Research has shown that spending time in nature can have a significant positive impact on mental wellbeing, particularly for those who may be feeling isolated or lonely. The opportunity to look up at the night sky and witness the beauty of the stars can be a transformative experience, bringing a sense of wonder and awe that is difficult to replicate in any other way. However, in many parts of Maine, light pollution obscures the night sky, making it difficult to see the stars.

Legislation that promotes dark skies would help to address this issue, allowing Maine youth to experience the power of awe that comes from being able to see the stars. This would provide opportunities for Maine youth to connect with each other and with nature, promoting a sense of community and providing a valuable outlet for their mental health which is so fragile right now due to isolation and anxiety.

Teens to Trails believes that legislation promoting dark skies is an important step towards providing Maine youth with inspiring outdoor spaces where they can build a sense of community and experience the positive impact of nature on their mental health. Therefore, we strongly urge the committee to support this legislation and help to ensure that Maine's youth have access to the awe-inspiring beauty of the night sky.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alicia Heyburn', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Alicia Heyburn, Brunswick
Teens to Trails, Executive Director

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