

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Proclamation for International Dark-Sky Week 2023
(as submitted, February 13, 2023)

WHEREAS, the beauty and wonder of a natural night sky is a shared heritage of all humankind that encourages interest in science and nature, especially among young people; and

WHEREAS, 80 percent of the world's population, including many people in the state of Massachusetts, live under a dome of light pollution — excessive artificial lighting at night that disrupts natural darkness — and may never experience the visual wonder or ecological and health benefits of living under a dark sky, particularly in environmental justice communities; and

WHEREAS, a recent authoritative study used star visibility estimates by thousands of citizen scientists around Massachusetts, our country, and the world to find that night sky brightness has increased over the past 11 years by about 10% annually, a rate about five times that previously recognized; and

WHEREAS, light pollution has scientifically established economic and environmental consequences, which result in significant impacts on the ecology and human health of all communities as recognized by the Massachusetts Medical Society; and

WHEREAS, light pollution represents a waste of energy costing at least \$3 billion per year in the United States and contributes to diminished energy security and energy autonomy of the Commonwealth and will be an important element for city and towns' Climate Action Plans to meet or exceed state climate mitigation and resilience goals; and

WHEREAS, Massachusetts is home to dozens of nocturnal wildlife species — including threatened and endangered ones listed by MassWildlife — that rely on undisturbed night environments to hunt, mate, and thrive, with many statewide nonprofits such as MassAudubon, Sierra Club Massachusetts, Grow Native Massachusetts, and the Native Plant Trust working to conserve them and their habitats; and

WHEREAS, Massachusetts's coastline, in particular, hosts bird migrations for which a dark and starry sky is necessary for them to navigate, light pollution disrupting this process too often fatally; and

WHEREAS, the International Dark-Sky Association, headquartered in Tucson, Arizona, with an active chapter in Massachusetts, is the globally-recognized authority on light pollution and has created International Dark Sky Week to raise awareness of light pollution and provide free education, resources, and solutions to the public to encourage the protection of and enjoyment of dark skies and responsible outdoor lighting,

Now, Therefore, I, Maura Healey, Governor of Massachusetts, do hereby declare April 15-22, 2023, as International Dark Sky Week in Massachusetts.