

# Massachusetts Dark Sky Legislation

## 1. Overview: The Urgent Need for Action

Light pollution is increasing at an alarming rate of approximately **10% per year** nationally. This rapid increase occurs amidst a significant affordability crisis, yet the Commonwealth continues to waste millions of dollars annually on public lighting that is excessively bright and shines directly into the sky, rather than onto our streets. **Massachusetts is currently the only state in the Northeast without statewide outdoor lighting legislation.** To address this fiscal waste and environmental degradation, the legislature must pass **H.3494 / S.2243, An Act to improve outdoor lighting, conserve energy, and increase dark-sky visibility.** This legislation provides a common-sense framework to modernize our infrastructure, protect public health, and restore our night sky heritage.

## 2. Legislative Impact of H.3494 / S.2243 on Light Pollution

Issue & Impact	Legislative Solution
<b>Energy Waste &amp; Municipal Costs:</b> Massachusetts wastes millions of dollars annually on light shining into the sky. Towns using smart-controlled streetlights are often overcharged due to inflexible flat utility rates.	<b>Creates Reduced-Rate Tariffs:</b> Directs the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) to establish reduced-rate tariffs for dimmed or low-wattage lighting, providing immediate fiscal relief to affected municipalities.
<b>Public Safety:</b> Intensely bright, unshielded lighting creates harsh glare that distracts and temporarily blinds drivers, posing a significant risk to elderly motorists and those driving in inclement weather.	<b>Mandates Fully-Shielded Fixtures:</b> Requires all new publicly funded lighting to use fully shielded fixtures that direct light downward and use the appropriate brightness level to improve visibility and roadway safety.
<b>Human Health:</b> Exposure to blue-rich artificial light at night disrupts circadian rhythms and suppresses melatonin, which is linked to increased risks of breast and prostate cancer.	<b>Limits Blue Light Emissions:</b> Sets a Correlated Color Temperature (CCT) limit of 3000 K for public lighting—prioritizing warmer tones over biologically harmful blue light.
<b>Ecological Harm:</b> Excessive light disorients migrating birds and disrupts nocturnal pollinators. This decline in insect populations threatens regional food systems and biodiversity.	<b>Aligns with Biodiversity Goals:</b> Establishes illumination thresholds and ensures lighting is only installed where necessary, bringing state policy in line with environmental mandates.
<b>Preservation of the Night Sky:</b> Skyglow is increasing by 10% annually, preventing over 90% of Massachusetts residents from seeing the Milky Way from their homes.	<b>Modernizes Infrastructure:</b> Requires MassDOT to update roadway lighting criteria to align the Commonwealth with commonly accepted dark-sky best practices.

### 3. Action Alert: Restoring the Night Sky

Our primary objective is to urge legislative leadership to favorably report **S.2243** and **H.3494** out of the Ways and Means Committees. Please contact the following leaders to demand action:

- **Senator Michael J. Rodrigues - Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means**
  - Email: [Michael.Rodrigues@masenate.gov](mailto:Michael.Rodrigues@masenate.gov)
- **Senator Karen E. Spilka - Senate President**
  - Email: [Karen.Spilka@masenate.gov](mailto:Karen.Spilka@masenate.gov)
- **Representative Aaron Michlewitz - Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means**
  - Email: [Aaron.M.Michlewitz@mahouse.gov](mailto:Aaron.M.Michlewitz@mahouse.gov)
- **Representative Ronald J. Mariano - Speaker of the House**
  - Email: [Ronald.Mariano@mahouse.gov](mailto:Ronald.Mariano@mahouse.gov)

### 4. Sample Email Script

To:

[Michael.Rodrigues@masenate.gov](mailto:Michael.Rodrigues@masenate.gov); [Karen.Spilka@masenate.gov](mailto:Karen.Spilka@masenate.gov);  
[Aaron.M.Michlewitz@mahouse.gov](mailto:Aaron.M.Michlewitz@mahouse.gov); [Ronald.Mariano@mahouse.gov](mailto:Ronald.Mariano@mahouse.gov)

**Subject: Support S.2243 / H.3494 – "An Act to improve outdoor lighting, conserve energy, and increase dark-sky visibility"**

Dear Speaker Mariano, Senate President Spilka, Ways & Means Chairs Rodrigues and Michlewitz

I am writing to urge your support for S.2243 and H.3494, "An Act to improve outdoor lighting, conserve energy, and increase dark-sky visibility." Despite light pollution growing at 10% per year, Massachusetts is the only state in the Northeast without statewide outdoor lighting legislation.

Amidst an affordability crisis, the state of MA wastes millions of dollars annually by allowing public lighting to shine directly into the sky. Furthermore, many towns in MA that use smart controlled streetlights are severely overcharged by flat utility rates. This common-sense legislation will correct this by requiring new publicly funded lighting installations to be fully shielded fixtures, limiting color temperature to 3000 K (warm white), using the appropriate lighting level for the task, while creating fair tariffs for municipalities that dim their lights.

This legislation is a win for municipal budgets, public safety, human health, and our Commonwealth's environment. Please help move these bills out of the Ways and Means Committee and toward a favorable vote this session.

Sincerely, [Your Name] [Your Town]