



# MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY

*Every physician matters, each patient counts.*

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.3164  
AN ACT TO IMPROVE OUTDOOR LIGHTING, CONSERVE ENERGY,  
AND INCREASE DARK-SKY VISIBILITY  
BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS, UTILITIES, AND ENERGY  
JULY 19, 2023**

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) is a professional association of over 25,000 physicians, residents, and medical students across all clinical disciplines, organizations, and practice settings. The Medical Society is committed to advocating on behalf of patients, to give them a better health care system, and on behalf of physicians, to help them provide the best care possible.

The MMS wishes to be recorded in support of H.3164, which would limit excess lighting and the associated harms produced by outdoor lighting fixtures.

Much of the light generated by current roadway and security lighting does not achieve its intended purpose, with minimal efficacy in terms of the intended outcomes of producing security, visibility, or guidance to people. Instead, it shines straight up into the sky. In contrast, well-designed lighting illuminates the ground without the overuse of energy and without being a burden or a nuisance to the environment or other people and property. The most straightforward means to create a glare-free nighttime environment is to utilize fully-shielded lighting fixtures, which emit all of their light downward (below the horizontal) and none of it directly up into the sky.

While there are significant energy savings and environmental advantages to adopting fully shielded lighting fixtures, the MMS is particularly concerned about the medical and safety implications of the current unfettered outdoor lighting. Poorly designed lighting causes harsh glare that blinds and distracts drivers, especially in bad weather and for drivers with poor visibility – this disparately affects our older patients, particularly those with cataracts. Thus, many individuals are faced with the choice of driving under unsafe conditions or severely limiting their mobility at night due to unnecessary and easily preventable glare. This bill would be a positive step in remedying this problem.

This bill would also encourage energy-efficient lighting practices throughout the Commonwealth by requiring the use of fully-shielded exterior lighting in new or replacement installations, and to install that lighting only where it is needed. These steps will result in lowered energy consumption and less glare.

The bill would apply only to new or replacement lighting installations — existing lighting (such as municipal streetlights) would not be affected, and provisions are included to permit waivers when deemed necessary by special circumstances. It would not add to project costs, because well-designed, fully-shielded lighting is now commonly available from a wide range of manufacturers.

The MMS support for these bills is consistent with the American Medical Association's (AMA) advisory on street lighting that states: All street lighting should be shielded to prevent glare to drivers, for driving safety.

Improperly shielded streetlights cause disability glare and impede vision, causing safety hazards. Review of published studies has shown that as the eye ages, it becomes much more sensitive to disability glare, impairing safe driving.

Thank you for your consideration, the MMS urges the Committee to act favorably and expeditiously on H.3164.