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July 10, 2026

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Dear Members of the Conference Committee:

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) is a professional association of over 22,000 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 thank you for serving as a member of the conference committee on the environmental bond bill, H.5518 and S.3064, *An Act to Build Resilience for Massachusetts Communities*. This important legislation will significantly strengthen the Commonwealth's infrastructure, protect our waterways and nature, and increase investment in the farms and local economies of the Commonwealth.

The MMS would like to be recorded in support of Section 11F from H.5518, policy known as "Dark Sky", to limit excess lighting and the associated harms produced by outdoor lighting fixtures.

Much of the light generated by current roadway and security lighting fails to achieve its intended purpose of improving security, visibility, and guidance for people. Instead, a significant portion is directed upward into the night sky rather than where it is needed. In contrast, well-designed lighting directs illumination onto the ground providing effective visibility while reducing energy use and minimizing impacts on the environment, neighboring properties, and the public. The most straightforward means to create a glare-free nighttime environment is through the use of fully-shielded lighting fixtures, which direct 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 poorly designed outdoor lighting. Unshielded 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, as documented by a report by the American Medical

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Association's Council on Science and Public Health.¹ As a result,, many people are faced with the choice of driving under unsafe conditions or severely limiting their mobility at night due to unnecessary and easily preventable glare. Adoption of the House Dark Sky language in the conference committee report would be an important step toward addressing this avoidable safety hazard.

SECTION 11F would promote safer, more energy-efficient lighting practices throughout the Commonwealth by requiring that new or replacement exterior lighting installations use fully-shielded fixtures and that lighting be installed only where it is necessary. These commonsense measures would reduce energy consumption, minimize glare, and improve nighttime visibility.

SECTION 11F 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 the Dark Sky provision 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.

For all the above reasons, the Society urges you to support SECTION 11F and to include the Dark Sky provision in the conference committee report.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Rebecca W. Brendel, MD, JD

¹ American Medical Association. Report 4 of the Council on Science and Public Health (A-12). Light Pollution: Adverse Health Effects of Nighttime Lighting. www.ama-assn.org/sites/ama-assn.org/files/corp/media-browser/public/about-ama/councils/Council%20Reports/council-on-science-public-health/a12-csaph4-lightpollution-summary.pdf