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February 14, 2024

SUPPORT: HB305 - Outdoor Lighting - Standards and Use of State Funds

Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

Maryland LCV supports HB305 - Outdoor Lighting - Standards and Use of State Funds, and we thank Delegate Wilkens for her leadership on this issue.

This bill is consistent with the goals of Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan, which presents a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 60% by 2031, and to achieve net zero emissions by 2045. In this plan, MDE calls for an all of society approach, where each sector of our economy will be called on to use best practices to reduce emissions. HB305 will reduce the electricity consumption of tens of thousands of lighting fixtures across the state, helping to contribute to these critical goals.

Further, according to a 2023 [report](#) from the National Wildlife Federation, outdoor lighting can have numerous detrimental effects on wildlife. Habitats are fragmented by overlit areas that create boundaries within limited territories of keystone species such as cougars. Songbirds are negatively impacted by artificial lighting, which interferes with the functioning of their internal compass during migration. Sea turtle hatchlings can turn towards the light upon emerging, instead of the critical pathway to reach the sea. These are just a few examples of how the improper deployment of outdoor lighting can have serious consequences for mammals, insects, birds, and even sealife.

HB305 will strengthen existing state law, by expanding the scope from the current focus on state buildings, to include our state highways, parks and trails. It requires that outdoor lighting procurement decisions include consideration of energy conservation, environment, public health and safety. The bill calls on the Maryland Department of the Environment to develop standards, based upon these requirements. It also includes a requirement that limits the light temperature of each fixture to 3,000 degrees Kelvin, in keeping with global recommendations from Dark Sky International.

Maryland LCV urges a favorable report on this important bill, which will have positive impacts on wildlife habitat, reducing light pollution and helping to achieve our climate goals.