



Maryland General Assembly – Environment and Transportation Committee – March 1, 2023

HB 851 Department of the Environment – Development of Outdoor Lighting Standards

TESTIMONY OF DR. MARK SOUTHERLAND – **SUPPORT**

I am a professional ecologist who has served on the boards of Maryland Science Council, Maryland Water Monitoring Council, Safe Skies Maryland, Howard County Environmental Sustainability Board, Patapsco Heritage Greenway, and Howard County Conservancy. I am speaking on behalf of the Safe Skies Maryland, Maryland Ornithological Society (<https://mdbirds.org/safeskiesmaryland>).

Safe Skies Maryland, Lights Out Baltimore, American Bird Conservancy, and many others have been working for decades to reduce the negative impacts on both birds and people caused by excess artificial lighting at night. We have learned that it is not just lights from tall buildings in cities that attract birds and impact people—even ground level lighting of roads and parking lots can have a negative effect. In addition to luring birds into danger, and causing depression and other effects in people, unnecessary lights at night also waste energy, create greenhouse gases, and make it impossible to see the stars. The states of Minnesota and Illinois, as well as many other places in the United States, such as New York City, have recognized the importance of birds to sustainability and passed laws mandating bird safe lighting standards.

Maryland has the chance to do our part to protect birds, address climate change, improve human health, and save money for the generations to come.

We respectfully ask for your favorable report on HB 851.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Southerland", written over a horizontal line.

Mark Southerland, PhD
Safe Skies Maryland
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