

# **Plastic Free QAC**

1305 Oyster Cove Drive

Grasonville, MD 21638

## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 391**

### **Ban on Balloon Release**

**January 15, 2021 ENT**

Hon. Kumar P. Barve, Chair, Environment & Transportation Committee

House Office Building

Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Barve and Committee Members:

My name is Bente Cooney and I am the Founder of Plastic Free QAC, a non-profit organization concerned with single-use plastic. I would like the record to show that Plastic Free QAC strongly supports HB 391 which prohibits the release of non-biodegradable balloons.

We are proud that Queen Anne's County passed an ordinance last year to ban intentional release of balloons.

There is no question that mylar and so-called biodegradable latex balloons, while festive going up, return as ugly litter to the earth and kill countless animals.

According to the organization "Balloons Blow" they travel thousands of miles and pollute the most remote and pristine places as well as cause unwelcome power outages in populated areas. Some balloons are marketed as biodegradable.

However, they take months, and sometimes years, to degrade, and in the meantime cause harm to animals.

My colleague, Sara Shelley, was on an osprey-nest watching boat trip in the Grasonville Kent Narrows area. She not only saw evidence of balloons in our local

waters, but also observed how the ribbons and other plastic debris can be used by ospreys to decorate their nests. Unfortunately, an osprey chick can easily get entangled in such string and die as a result. Balloons and their strings have no place in our natural environment.

At the hearing before the OAC's County Council on the balloon ban, a farmer testified how clumps of balloons spook his horses. They get frightened seeing colorful balloons moving across his field.

My husband is a private pilot and over the years, we have taken many trips in single-engine airplanes. I'll never forget the times we have encountered a balloon in the airspace. While I don't think it causes danger to the plane, it certainly shocks one's system to suddenly encounter this strange object that does not belong.

My husband and I sailed the seas for many years before we settled in Grasonville, and we always hated to see balloons floating on the surface of the ocean. The potential danger they cause to sea life is well documented.

While balloon releasing signifies celebration and commemoration, it is totally misguided and people need to be educated about its damage and danger to nature and our wild-life.

We urge you to vote HB 391 favorably out of Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.