



January 29, 2020

Delegate Kumar P. Barve, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee

Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair,
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

RE: Maryland State bills HB 13 and S 28, which would ban the intentional release of balloons in Maryland.

Dear Delegate Barve and Senator Pinsky,

Surfrider Foundation's Ocean City Chapter would like to express our support for Maryland State bills HB 13 and S 28, which would ban the intentional release of balloons in Maryland.

The Surfrider Foundation is a grassroots environmental organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's ocean, waves, and beaches for all people. We submit these comments on behalf of our 80 chapters, 90 youth clubs, and more than 500,000 supporters, activists, and members in the United States, including our local chapter most affected by this proposed legislation: our Ocean City Chapter.

Most people don't think about what happens to a balloon after it is released, but what goes up must come down. Often balloons end up in our oceans, where they can choke marine life like turtles and whales who mistake them for food, or animals can get tangled in the ribbon.

We aren't talking about a child accidentally releasing a balloon. We want to ban the act of intentionally releasing balloons, which often happens at special events, commemorations, or parties where multiple balloons are released on purpose.

Another issue is that there is currently a shortage of helium, a non-renewable resource valuable to diverse industries, including research and healthcare. We should be preserving this valuable resource for critical uses.

Many other states, cities, and counties have banned intentional balloon releases, including California, Connecticut, Florida, and Tennessee. Right here in Maryland, the Town of Ocean City as well as Wicomico, Queen Anne's, and Frederick counties have already passed such legislation, so it makes sense to take the idea statewide in order to have one standard.

The Surfrider Foundation keeps track of the trash we collect in our beach cleanups. We found balloons at virtually every cleanup in 2018 and 2019.

Please help us stop this senseless littering of our oceans and beaches and pass common sense legislation HB 13 and S 28, banning the intentional release of balloons in Maryland.

Thank you for considering our comments,

Jane Robinson, Chair,
Ocean City Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation
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