



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 13

Solid Waste Management - Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the Atmosphere

DATE: JANUARY 29, 2020

POSITION: SUPPORT

POSITION

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) recommends a favorable report on HB 13 from the Environment and Transportation Committee. This bill would prohibit releasing balloons in Maryland.

COMMENTS

Balloons are a form of man-made litter. As helium-filled balloons fall or burst, the return to the ground and become litter on land and in marine environments. Data collected by the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) show evidence that more than 630,000 balloons were found worldwide during the ICC from 2008-2016.¹

Increasing evidence also suggests that plastics, including fragments of balloons, accumulate as "microplastics" found in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Microplastics create an imbalance in the food chain in Chesapeake Bay, disrupting the primary food source for many marine animals.² Balloon fragments may be mistaken for food by marine life and when ingested may lead to death. Balloons and balloon strings may entangle land animals, such as birds and farm animals.

Local jurisdictions throughout the country, and in Queen Anne's County, Maryland, have passed similar balloon release bans, targeting behavior that will reduce the accumulation of litter and negative impacts on the environment.

CONCLUSION

For these reasons, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation recommends a favorable report on HB 13 from the Environment and Transportation Committee. Please contact Carmera Thomas at carmerathomas@cbf.org with any questions.

¹ Witmer, V., Register, K., & McKay, L. (2017). Balloon Release Research in Virginia and Reducing Balloon Debris through Community-Based Social Marketing. Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program (Virginia Department of Environmental Quality).

² Cole, M. (2015). The Impact of Polystyrene Microplastics on Feeding, Function and Fecundity in the Marine Copepod *Calanus helgolandicus*. *Environ. Sci. Technol.* 49, 2, 1130-1137. <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/full/10.1021/es504525u>.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 107,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.