

**Bill:** HB 13

**Date:** January 29, 2020

**Position:** Support

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

### HB 13 Support

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Environment & Transportation Committee,

Trash Free Maryland and the undersigned organizations support HB 13 which is a bipartisan bill prohibiting a person from knowingly and intentionally releasing a balloon into the atmosphere. Queen Annes's and Wicomico Counties have already passed similar balloon release prohibitions.

Balloons negatively impact our environment by littering our watershed and harming birds and aquatic wildlife. Intentionally releasing a balloon into the atmosphere is like purposefully throwing trash on the ground. While balloon debris isn't among the top ten ocean pollutants, research shows that they are among the most harmful to sea birds and aquatic wildlife. Harder shards of plastic are thought to more easily pass through avian digestive systems, while balloons, which are soft, are more likely to cause blockages. Researchers in Australia estimate that one in five birds that consume balloons die, and that balloons or balloon fragments were the marine debris most likely to cause mortality.

Plastic ingestion is now recognized as a major global threat to marine life, particularly seabirds, with 250,000 tons of marine debris currently floating in the world's oceans. Over a quarter of seabird populations are experiencing serious population declines and scientists think their habit of mistaking marine debris for food is a likely driver of this problem. **We urge a favorable report on HB 13.** Thank you.

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