



**February 21, 2021**

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

**RE: Maryland State bills HB-391 and SB-716, which would ban the intentional release of balloons in Maryland.**

To Chair Senator Pinsky and the members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

Surfrider Foundation's Ocean City Chapter would like to express our support for Maryland State bills HB-391 and SB-716, 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, nearly 100 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 consider what happens to a balloon after it is released, but what goes up must come down. A mass release of balloons is essentially littering when you think about. Often balloons end up in our oceans, where they can get ingested by marine life like turtles and whales who mistake the balloons for food, or animals can get tangled in the ribbons.

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.

Many other states, cities, and counties have banned intentional balloon releases, including California, Connecticut, Florida, Tennessee, and very recently Virginia. Right here in Maryland, the Town of Ocean City as well as Wicomico, Queen Anne's, Montgomery, 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 in a database. Over the last few years of data collection, our Ocean City volunteers have logged over 300 balloons collected from our Maryland shoreline, with many more collected but not recorded.

Please help us stop this senseless littering of our oceans and beaches and pass HB-391 and SB-716, banning the intentional release of balloons in Maryland.

Thank you for considering our comments,

Marina Feeser, Chair,  
Ocean City Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation  
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