



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

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February 24, 2021

To: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chairman, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.
Re: Solid Waste Management – Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon into the Atmosphere – SB-716 – Support

Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chairman Kagan, members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chairman of Maryland Votes for Animals. We champion humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. Speaking for Maryland Votes for Animals, our Board of Directors, and our thousands of members across Maryland, I respectfully request that the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee vote favorably for Solid Waste Management – Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon into the Atmosphere – SB 716.

This bill would ban balloon releases in Maryland, placing a civil fine for intentionally releasing balloons into the atmosphere. While mylar balloons are not biodegradable, latex balloons, touted as environmentally friendly, take six months to four years to biodegrade. During that time, a balloon, its remnants, and the strings attached to it, can travel for miles when it becomes airborne and can go even farther as it travels in the ocean with other debris. Balloons are often mistaken for food and pose a hazard for marine species, birds, and other wildlife. Colorful, and often sporting ribbons and tassels, wildlife is attracted to the balloons and can become entangled in their remnants, resulting in permanent injury or death. This can occur before a balloon has time to biodegrade.

Five states, including Virginia, New York, California, Connecticut, Florida, Tennessee, and Texas as well as numerous cities and counties, including Baltimore City and Queen Anne's County, have balloon release bans.

SB 716, which eliminates a source of pollution and pain to both our environment and animals, a bill simply about banning the release of balloons, should not be a heavy lift for this committee.

In closing, I thank for Senator Carozza for sponsoring this bill, and urge a favorable report on SB 716.

Let Kindness Reign, Vote Humane

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