



11031 Cathell Road
Ocean Pines, Maryland 21811

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT ON BEHALF OF OCEAN PINES CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE IN SUPPORT OF SENATE Bill 716
Solid Waste Management - Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the Atmosphere**

The Ocean Pines Chamber of Commerce, in Worcester County, is proud to partner with over 300 community business and non profit leaders. On their behalf, I am writing to express our SUPPORT of Senate Bill 716, Solid Waste Management - Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the Atmosphere.

Given our proximity to sensitive environments and animal species, the Chamber feels businesses should help protect our whole community by practicing responsible marketing. While this bill aims to halt actual releases, balloons used for marketing and as an eye catching visual do escape, potentially causing the same damage to wildlife a mass release would. These days, businesses demonstrating an understanding of local impacts, especially when they pertain to the environment, can actually increase their reputation and bottom line. We encourage our Chamber partners to consider environmentally friendly practices.

The main point of this bill is education, not enforcement or punishment. Once a balloon is released, the damage has been done. A fine does not reverse that damage. But understanding the impact of the activity and that it IS illegal, will, hopefully stop planned mass releases in the future and encourage businesses and residents to stop utilizing balloons entirely. While our unique location in the state affords us the unfortunate opportunity to witness birds, fish, turtles, Assateague ponies and seals perish because they eat or became entangled in a balloon and it's string, animals everywhere face this possibility. Local farmers tell tales of their horses eating the balloon or getting spooked by one and harming themselves. This issue is not specific to aquatic environs, all animals are at risk and litter can happen anywhere.

Maryland prides itself on its unique environments and wildlife whether it's agriculture based or wild, aquatic or terrestrial. Passage of SB716, will aid in protecting both. Thank you for your consideration of passing this legislation.

Regards,

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