

ShoreRivers Testimony SB716 - Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Bassett, Elle

Position: FAV



**Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 716 – Solid Waste Management - Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the Atmosphere
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**

February 24, 2020

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments IN SUPPORT of **Senate Bill 716 – Solid Waste Management - Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the Atmosphere**. ShoreRivers represents more than 3,500 local members and our mission is to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, and education.

Professionally for the past 3 years as Riverkeeper, and personally as an avid boater, I have had the fortune to spend a significant amount of time on Eastern Bay and the Miles and Wye River. I have noticed that trash in these waterways and all of our local waterways is an increasing problem, from minute particles like micro-plastics to larger trash such as Styrofoam containers, plastic bottles, and balloons.

In fact, **balloons are one of the most common pieces of trash that I recover in Eastern Bay** – I commonly retrieve at least one balloon from the water when completing water quality testing runs during the season. I recognize that many balloon releases are done with good intentions, yet they are tantamount to indiscriminate pollution of our environment and our waterways.

Thank you for your leadership by taking an important step to prevent trash from entering Maryland's rivers and the Chesapeake Bay.

For these reasons, ShoreRivers urges the Committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE** report on **Senate Bill 716**.

Sincerely,

Elle Bassett

Miles-Wye Riverkeeper, on behalf of:

ShoreRivers

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director

Annie Richards Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper
Elle Bassett, Miles-Wye Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper

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shorerivers.org

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SB716 OPCC Testimony 2021.pdf

Uploaded by: Bunting, Kerrie

Position: FAV



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,

Kerrie Bunting President/CEO
kerrie@oceanpineschamber.org

Ocean Pines Chamber of Commerce
Phone: 410-641-5306
Fax: 410-641-6176

SB 716 Sen Carozza Written Testimony Final (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Carozza, Senator Mary Beth

Position: FAV

MARY BETH CAROZZA
Legislative District 38
Somerset, Wicomico,
and Worcester Counties

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 24, 2021

**The Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
SB 716 Solid Waste Management – Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the Atmosphere
Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza**

Thank you Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee for the opportunity to respectfully ask for your support of Senate Bill 716 Solid Waste Management – Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the Atmosphere. This bill simply prohibits, with specified exceptions, a “person” from knowingly and intentionally releasing, or causing or organizing the release of, a balloon into the atmosphere.

I had the opportunity to present this legislation with my Senate colleagues, Senators Clarence Lam and Steve Hershey last session. This is the same bill that this Committee and the full Senate approved last session but did not make final passage due to the early COVID-19 session adjournment. The cross-filed House Bill 391, sponsored by Delegate Wayne Hartman, passed the House of Delegates on February 16, 2021 with bipartisan support by a vote of 94 to 34.

Once again this year, this balloon release prohibition legislation has broad support including the Maryland Coastal Bays Foundation, the Assateague Coastal Trust, the Assateague Island Alliance, the Queen Anne’s Conservation Association, the Humane Society, the Maryland Farm Bureau, the National Aquarium, the Maryland Zoo, and the Greater Ocean City and Salisbury Chambers of Commerce.

My constituent, Ocean Pines Chamber of Commerce Director Kerrie Jones Bunting, caught wind of the actions to mitigate balloon pollution in Queen Anne’s County and brought that to my attention and also to Delegate Hartman who represents Ocean City. Due to Ms. Bunting’s leadership, she involved several local community and environmental organizations including the Ocean City Surf Club, of which I am a member. During our “Adopt a Beach” outings, I personally can attest to pieces of balloon that I have picked up during our volunteer beach clean ups.

I also would like to highlight the extraordinary work of another constituent, Nancy Gaither, the President of the Assateague Island Alliance. This local organization educates on ways to protect horses and other wildlife, and to preserve their nature and health. As noted in Ms. Gaither’s testimony, “horses have been seen to ingest balloons, which is beyond troubling, and, of course, the balloons wreak havoc with sea animals.”

The purpose of Senate Bill 716 is to educate individuals on the harmful effects that balloons have on our environment including killing wildlife, causing power outages, and polluting our trees and waterways. It does include a civil penalty of no more than \$250 for those who intentionally release balloons into the environment. I urge my colleagues and committee members to pass this common-sense and bipartisan legislation to protect our birds, sea-life, and of course, our beloved Assateague ponies.

My panel includes Jay Falstad with Queen Anne's Conservation Association who will explain the origins of this bill, Kerrie Bunting with the Ocean Pines Chamber of Commerce, and Ferrell Santacrose-Beachler, a constituent who is an active member of the Humane Society. All witnesses will highlight the necessity of this legislation to protect our wildlife in the great State of Maryland.

I respectfully ask my colleagues on the Senate Educational, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee for a favorable report of Senate Bill 716.

Thank you for your kind consideration.



SB 716 Balloon Release Ban.pdf

Uploaded by: Cox, Effie

Position: FAV



Ocean City Surf Club

*Celebrating the heritage and future
of our ocean community*

SENATE BILL 716

The Ocean City Surf Club is an environmental nonprofit 501(c) 3 dedicated to protecting and preserving our natural resources for future generations. OCSC believes in the conservation and collaborative stewardship of our shared natural heritage: the public lands and waterways and all that make Maryland's great outdoors priceless. We need policies and investments that will strengthen protection of our natural resources and wildlife.

Our Adopt Your Beach program gives passionate volunteers the tools to lead independent cleanups, collection of critical marine debris data and to actively participate in protecting what we love. Over the last four (4) years, our volunteers have picked up over 3500 balloons and strings on the beaches of Ocean City and Assateague Island. Even so-called 'biodegradable' balloons take years to break down in the environment. Therefore, wildlife and marine animals will continue to ingest them.

As someone who was raised on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, it saddens me to see how much more trash litters our beaches now as compared to when I was little and playing on the dunes of Ocean City. I believe this bill serves as an opportunity to decrease one of the most harmful types of marine debris and will help protect our wildlife from ingesting balloon fragments.

I have picked up so many pieces of balloon debris on our beaches that all I can do is shake my head with disbelief. It is heartbreaking to witness the realities of these issues firsthand while also doing my best to help where I can. It is important that everyone realize the magnitude of this very evident problem in our community. While releasing a helium balloon into the atmosphere during a celebration or a solemn memorial may be visually pleasing, it is extremely detrimental to the environment. The pain and suffering experienced by animals because of these releases is staggering. Discarding a balloon into the atmosphere is simply littering. Once released, balloons can travel for hundreds of miles before they burst or deflate and become dangerous litter. Seabirds, sea turtles, seals and other marine mammals are injured or killed after ingesting or becoming entangled in balloons and their strings. We have all seen the pictures online of our beautiful, wild Assateague ponies with balloon strings hanging out of their mouths.

Our unparalleled coastline, fields, and waterways are resources worthy of the greatest standards of protection. There are ecofriendly alternatives to balloon releases that are appropriate for celebratory or solemn events including lighting a candle, creating a charity fundraiser, planting a tree, or organizing a service day. As we become aware of the harmful implications of balloon releases, we need to change our behavior accordingly and ensure we are compassionate not only towards humans, but toward all living things. We sincerely hope you recognize the need for everyone to be as 'green' as we possibly can be to protect our beautiful state.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Effie Cox

Ocean City Surf Club Environmental Chairperson
Ocean City Surf Club Environmental Scholarship Chairperson
Town of Ocean City Environmental Legislative Committee member
Adopt Your Beach Coordinator

Facebook.com/oceancitysurfclub
oceancitysurfclub.com **oceancitysurfclub.org**

PO Box 4752 • Ocean City MD 21843 • Email: info@oceancitysurfclub.org



Photo courtesy Penny Sperry



Photo courtesy Karen Lockard

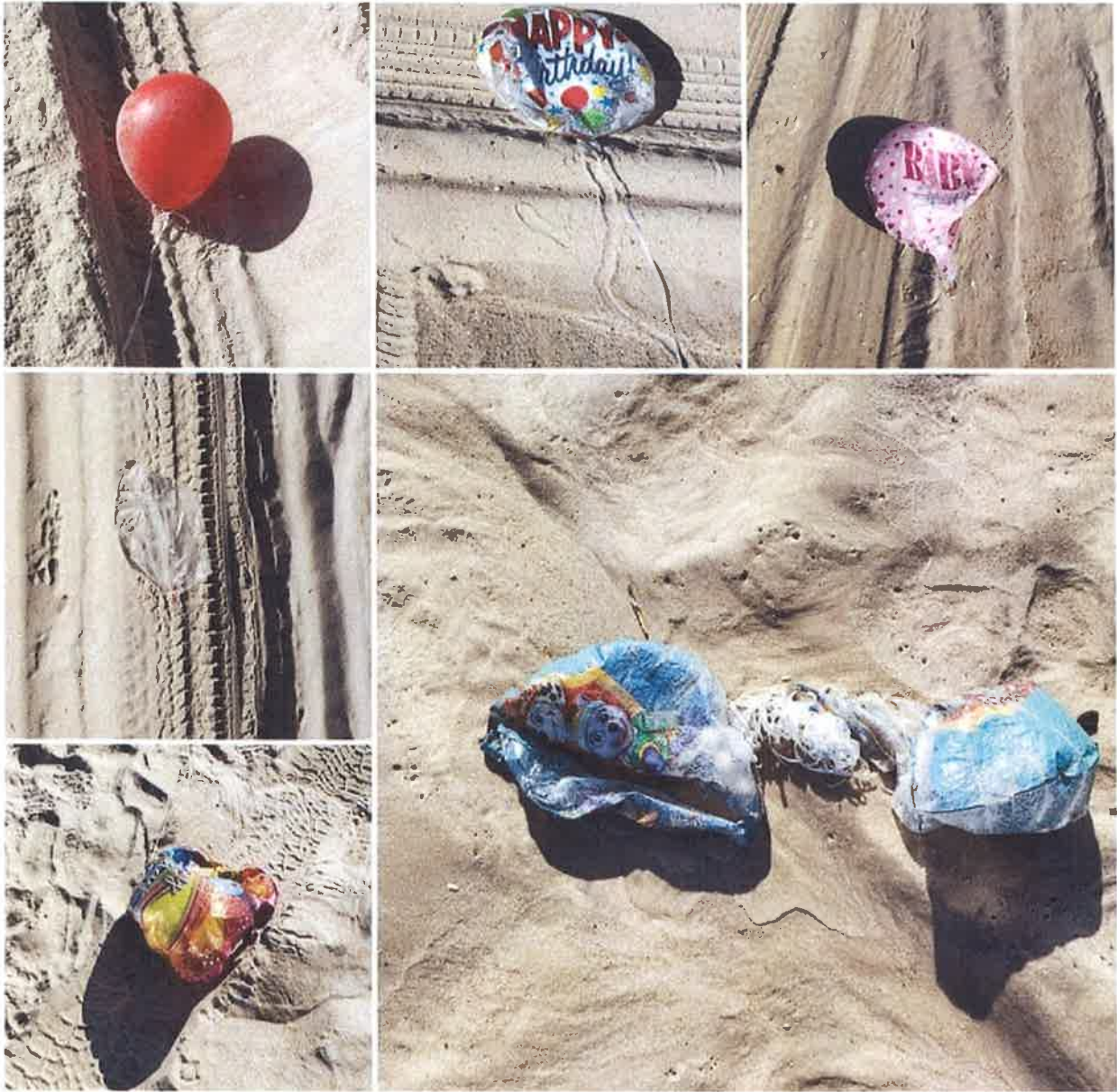


Photo courtesy Robin Zimmerman



Photo courtesy Robin Zimmerman



Photo courtesy Lisa Burdsall

AWI's Testimony in Support of Maryland SB0716.pdf

Uploaded by: Dylewsky, Kate

Position: FAV



Animal Welfare Institute

900 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20003
awionline.org phone: (202) 337-2332 fax: (202) 446-2131

Testimony for the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee In Support of Maryland Senate Bill 716

Submitted By: The Animal Welfare Institute
Hearing Date: February 24, 2021

The Animal Welfare Institute, a national nonprofit animal advocacy organization with members in Maryland, strongly supports SB0716, sponsored by Senators Carozza, Hershey, and Lam, to prohibit the intentional release of balloons. This bill reflects growing concerns among the public and the balloon industry regarding the harmful effects of balloon releases on both the environment and human safety. To date, four states and numerous municipalities – including Baltimore, Ocean City, Montgomery County, and Queen Anne's County – have adopted similar laws.

Threat to Wildlife and Other Animals:

The negative effects that balloons have on ecosystems and wildlife are well documented. Most commercial balloons are made of either mylar or latex, which is often touted as the “greener” option. Unfortunately, the latex used in most mass-produced balloons is treated with ammonia, tetramethyl thiuram disulfide, and zinc oxide in order to protect it from bacterial decomposition and extend the life of the balloon. Because of this treatment, it can take between 6 months and 4 years for latex balloons to decompose on land, while balloons that land in seawater can last up to 12 months.

For this reason, balloons are highly dangerous to marine animals. In fact, balloons are considered one of the top five most dangerous forms of pollutants in the ocean. After landing on water, balloons become subject to the same forces as seaweed and other ocean debris, often congregating into huge “garbage patches.” A number of marine species, particularly turtles and birds, can consume balloons by accident, mistaking them for jellyfish. Large, tough, pieces of latex and ribbon can choke these animals, many of whom are accustomed to softer targets. Once consumed, balloon fragments can have an even more insidious effect. The very treatment designed to preserve balloons from decomposition makes it extremely difficult for animals to digest fragments. This can result in a blockage in the digestive tract, leading to death by starvation.

Balloons pose a similar threat to land animals. Grazing animals are particularly vulnerable and there have been documented incidents in recent years involving farm animals. For instance, in 2015 a show horse died after choking on a balloon ribbon that had fallen into his enclosure. The animal panicked and crashed through two fences, breaking two legs and his neck. In 2011, a farmer won a court case in the UK after his cow choked to death on one of the hundreds of balloons released by a neighboring school.

Public Safety and Infrastructure:

In addition to their damaging environmental effects, balloons can also threaten public safety and infrastructure. These risks can once again be linked to their composition. In order to improve appearance, longevity, and durability, mylar balloons are coated in a thin metal film. This film is highly conductive, which can cause surges, shorts, and showers of sparks when mylar balloons become entangled in electrical wires.

Clean Virginia Waterways found that 20 percent of power outages that occurred in the state during 2015 were the result of mylar balloons getting caught in overhead power lines. The most significant of these outages left 14,600 customers without power. Similarly, Dominion Power reported that between 2011 and 2015, they encountered at least 40 balloon-related incidents each year in Virginia. The Los Angeles police department reported even more dramatic numbers. Out of the 912 power outages caused by external factors that occurred in 2015, 519 were the result of mylar balloons coming into contact with power lines. The majority of these outages occurred around special events when balloon releases commonly occur, such as Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Easter, and graduations.

Beyond simple inconvenience, these kinds of balloon-related incidents can pose a greater threat to human safety due to electrical fires. For example, a transformer in San Diego overloaded and exploded after its neighboring power lines became entangled with a cluster of mylar balloons. This resulted in downed power lines and the outbreak of at least one vehicle fire. A similar incident occurred in 2019, when a mylar balloon became entwined with a power line in Montana. The electrical arcs and sparks produced by this contact set off the Saddle Butte fire, which destroyed 255 acres.

Spread of Balloons:

Finally, it is important to remember that balloons are not simply a local problem. After being released, balloons can rise as high as 28,000 ft (5 miles) into the atmosphere. At this altitude, the temperature falls to roughly 40 degrees Fahrenheit, which causes balloons to elongate and shatter in a process called "brittle fracture." The resulting cloud of fragments then falls to earth, blanketing the area below with dangerous pollutants. Depending on the composition of the balloon, this process can take weeks to occur. Helium-filled mylar balloons can float for up to two weeks if properly sealed, while latex balloons tend to float for 1-2 days and generally remain at lower altitudes.

Throughout this process, air currents move the balloons away from the location of release. A balloon released as part of a 2002 study focusing on wind direction was found 1,300 miles away from where it started. Another study documented the discovery of an almost-intact balloon from the 1998 Olympic Games in Nagano, Japan, on a beach in Los Angeles, almost 5,300 miles away. This discovery was made just 49 hours after the celebration began. The same study found that many of the balloons discovered floating in the ocean and washed up on beaches in Japan were released as part of celebrations conducted much further inland and had managed to travel hundreds if not thousands of miles away. Because of these factors, it is incumbent upon every locality – whether adjacent to water or not – to prevent this widespread pollution. Only through collaboration among municipalities all across the nation can this danger be averted.

The Animal Welfare Institute respectfully urges the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee to pass SB0716 and bring Maryland one step closer to joining the growing number of states,

counties, and cities that have already banned intentional balloon releases. We welcome any questions on the information presented in this testimony.

Contact:

Kate Dylewsky

Senior Policy Advisor, Animal Welfare Institute

kate@awionline.org | 781-801-6448

OCSurfrider_MDBalloons_Feb2021.pdf

Uploaded by: Feeser, Marina

Position: FAV



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
chair@oceancity.surfrider.org

Support of SB 716 - Solid Waste Management - Prohi

Uploaded by: Ferguson, Colby

Position: FAV



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

3358 Davidsonville Road • Davidsonville, MD 21035 • (410) 922-3426

February 24, 2021

To: Senate Education, Health & Environment Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: Support of SB 716 - Solid Waste Management - Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the Atmosphere

On behalf of our member families, I submit this written testimony in support of SB 716, legislation that prohibits a person from knowingly and intentionally releasing or causing to be released, or organizing the release of, balloons into the atmosphere. This does not apply to: (1) a balloon that is released for scientific or meteorological purposes; (2) a hot air balloon that is recovered after launch; or (3) the negligent or unintentional release of a balloon. The bill establishes a civil penalty of \$250 for a violation of the Act.

With the ribbon from balloons hindering a farmer during planting and harvesting of crops, removing this litter from the landscape will help reduce a farmer's cost for repairs and downtime when having to remove the ribbon from planters and harvest equipment.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We propose stricter enforcement of laws protecting property owners from losses due to trespassing, arson, vandalism, **littering**, poaching, and looting.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 716 AND ENCOURAGES A FAVORABLE REPORT.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colby Ferguson'.

Colby Ferguson
Director of Government Relations

For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396

Support SB0716 Balloons.pdf

Uploaded by: Fine, Maureen

Position: FAV

***Support SB0716 Solid Waste Management – Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon into the Atmosphere – Senator Carozza – Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Committee-Feb.24,1:00***

Dear Senators,

Please support SB0716. Balloons are seen as fun and harmless objects, but they are deadly when released into the environment. Plastic pollution is one of our biggest environmental issues---microplastics are in our food, water, air, and in our bodies.

Released balloons, in addition to adding more plastic pollution, become deadly for wildlife, and are overall hazardous to the environment. Mylar balloons don't break down, while latex balloons take a long time to degrade. Some cause power outages when they come in contact with power lines. Wildlife, livestock, and pets may eat or become entangled in debris from balloons.

Let's stop balloon pollution! Support SB0716

Thank you,
Maureen Fine
2509 Knighthill Lane
Bowie, MD 20715
240-421-3454

SB716- Balloon Release Testimony - Senate.pdf

Uploaded by: Fredriksson, Ryan

Position: FAV

Date: February 24, 2021

Bill: Senate Bill 716, Solid Waste-Management- Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the Atmosphere

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for **Senate Bill 716, Solid Waste-Management- Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the Atmosphere**, which will reduce the harmful impact plastic balloons can have when released into the environment while increasing public awareness of plastic pollution.

The plastic pollution crisis is well-documented, and updated estimates indicate that globally, about 20 million metric tons of plastic enters aquatic ecosystems each year – or about 11% of all plastic waste generated¹. That is the equivalent of more than two dump trucks full of plastic emitted to the ocean every minute. Plastic breaks down into smaller pieces, particles which endanger wildlife and contaminate the global food web. Balloons are a significant contributor to this plastic pollution, which is hazardous to habitats and wildlife, as animals may confuse plastic pieces for food.

In 2004, the National Aquarium was proud to support a similar bill in the General Assembly named the “Inky bill,” after a pygmy sperm whale that was found critically ill on a New Jersey beach. The U.S. Coast Guard transported the young whale to a hospital pool at the National Aquarium where our medical team was able to extract foreign material lodged in her stomach—including mylar balloons and other various types of plastic.



Caption: Balloons collected from Maryland beaches.

A recent report by Oceana compiled data from 51 organizations, including the National Aquarium, and found nearly 1,800 cases of documented plastic consumption or entanglement in sea turtles and marine mammals, mostly from 2009 to 2018.² Of these cases, 90% of them involved animals swallowing plastic. Ingested plastic can obstruct an animal’s digestion or lacerate intestines, interfering with their ability to survive.

Once released, balloons can stay in the air for up to two weeks, traveling hundreds of miles. Balloons are easily caught in ocean currents that take them far beyond the Chesapeake Bay. To this day, released balloons have been recovered as far as 45 miles off the coast of Maryland.

By passing SB 716, Maryland will reduce the amount of harmful plastic pollution entering waterways and littering communities, while protecting the health of the people and marine animals living there. **We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB716.**

Contact:

Ryan Fredriksson

Vice President, Government Affairs

410-385-8276

rfredriksson@aqua.org

¹ Borrelle, S.B. et al. (2020) Predicted growth in plastic waste exceeds efforts to mitigate plastic pollution. *Science*, 369:1515.

Balloon Testimony_AIA_2021.pdf

Uploaded by: Gaither, Nancy

Position: FAV



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www.AssateagueIslandAlliance.org

February 22, 2021

Assateague Island Association (AIA), the official friends group of Assateague Island National Seashore, works diligently with our supporters to promote the preservation and education of the island and its wildlife. One project, close to our hearts, is a "FED HORSE IS A DEAD HORSE" campaign intended to make island visitors aware that horses are to be respected and observed from a distance, not fed, petted or approached. Horses have been seen to ingest anything offered to them as they are curious, which is beyond troubling (see photo with balloon string hanging from mouth of horse), and, of course, the balloons wreak havoc with sea animals. Additionally, balloons that are released can be found in quantities on the beach and our supporters are known for collecting them to dispose of properly.

We wholly endorse this bill and will continue to help with education and awareness. Please let us know what we can do to support this. Thank you for helping to protect "A Little Slice of Heaven" in Maryland.

Have a great week!

Sincerely,

Nancy E. Gaither

Assateague Island Board President

MISSION STATEMENT: **Assateague Island Alliance** (AIA) is a non-profit 501c3 friends group partnering with the Assateague Island National Seashore to promote the awareness and protection of the island's wildlife and natural resources for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

Testimony in support of SB 716 (Balloon Bill).pdf

Uploaded by: Hucker, Tom

Position: FAV



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

TOM HUCKER
Councilmember

Member, Public Safety Committee
Chair, Transportation & Environment Committee

February 22, 2021

The Honorable Paul Pinsky
Chair of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
2 West
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

I am writing to you to express my support for SB 716. This bill will help reduce trash pollution and is one of the many critically important steps we must take to maintain a more healthy and sustainable environment.

Last September, I passed Bill 6-20 which bans the intentional release of balloons in Montgomery County. My legislation was supported unanimously by my colleagues, as well as numerous environmental and animal welfare groups. Now, it's important we pass similar State legislation.

I was surprised how common the mass outdoor releases of latex or mylar balloons continues to be. These balloons are used to celebrate all kinds of events such as weddings, graduations, birthdays, and more. However, the problem is when these balloons come down, locally or sometimes hundreds of miles away, they end up in the mouths and digestive tracts of all kinds of animals, from sea turtles and marine birds to the wild horses on Assateague Island. Balloons are the deadliest form of marine debris for seabirds. Balloons are often mistaken for prey and ingested by animals, and the animals also get entangled in their ribbons which can lead to death as well.

Releasing balloons are hazardous to wildlife and it is time to end planned littering. Other jurisdictions have passed similar legislation including Queen Anne's County, Ocean City, California and Virginia. It's time for the state of Maryland to pass legislation.

I respectfully suggest the committee consider two amendments, however, my support is not contingent upon these changes.

1. The definition of balloon. The Montgomery County language states: Balloon means an inflatable object: (A) manufactured from plastic, latex, rubber, or mylar; and (B) inflated with a gas that is lighter than air, such as helium. The current language in SB 716 is unclear and includes unfilled balloons.
2. The definition of an 'instance' of a balloon release. The Montgomery County language states: Each release of 50 or fewer balloons at one time is a separate civil violation. That way an individual or organization releasing 500 balloons would receive a stronger penalty than someone releasing only 1. This language was used in the recently passed Montgomery County law, and including it here would create consistency with that recent reform.

Lastly, we have done our part to keep balloons out of our waterways and away from our wildlife. Now, it is up to the State to promote a sustainable and healthy environment by prohibiting the release of balloons into the atmosphere. I respectfully urge the committee to give this bill a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Hucker", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tom Hucker
Councilmember
Montgomery County Council

HSUS MD balloon testimony Senate cmte 2021.pdf

Uploaded by: Kullberg, Kathryn

Position: FAV



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

February 22, 2021

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humanesociety.org

Senate Committee on Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

SB 716: Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon into the Atmosphere

FAVORABLE

Susan Atherton
Co-Chair

Thomas J. Sabatino
Co-Chair

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President and CEO and
Chief International Officer

G. Thomas Waite III
Treasurer
Chief Financial Officer and
Acting Chief Operating Officer

Katherine L. Karl
General Counsel and
Chief Legal Officer

Michaelen Barsness
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Sharon Lee Patrick
Marsha R. Perelman

Jonathan M. Ratner
Thomas J. Sabatino, Jr.

Walter J. Stewart, Esq.
Jason Weiss

David O. Wiebers, M.D.

The Humane Society of the United States, representing our members and supporters across Maryland, strongly supports SB 716. This legislation is aimed at ending environmentally unsound balloon releases in Maryland.

We do have two technical amendments that we encourage the committee to consider, but our support is not conditional on these changes.

We recommend that the current definition of balloon be replaced with language that makes it clear what a balloon is: **Balloon means an inflatable object: (A) manufactured from plastic, latex, rubber, or mylar; and (B) inflated with a gas that is lighter than air, such as helium.** The current language is unclear and includes balloons that are unfilled.

We also recommend that the definition of an 'instance' of a balloon release be specified, such as: **Each release of 50 or fewer balloons at one time is a separate civil violation.** That way an individual or organization releasing 500 balloons would receive a stronger penalty than someone releasing only 1. This language was used in the recently passed Montgomery County law, and including it here would create consistency with that recent reform.

While releasing a helium balloon into the atmosphere during a celebratory event or a solemn memorial may be visually pleasing, it is extremely detrimental to the environment and the pain and suffering experienced by animals as a result of these releases is staggering. Discarding a balloon into the atmosphere is simply littering. Once released, balloons can travel for hundreds of miles before they burst or deflate and become litter. Seabirds, sea turtles, seals and other marine mammals are injured or killed after ingesting or becoming entangled in balloons and their strings. Animals on land such as horses, cows, and other farm animals are also at risk.

Balloons are commonly made of latex or mylar materials and present a danger to animals who perceive them as food, or they may get caught in the ribbons attached to them, hindering their ability to move around and feed. For example, when balloons burst, they resemble jellyfish, the natural prey of sea turtles, and subsequently block their digestive tract when ingested. Seabirds are at particular risk, as a [recent study](#) found that balloons are the leading marine debris risk of mortality for seabirds.

Both the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) and the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) warn against the practice. Even so-called 'biodegradable' balloons take years to break down in the environment. Therefore, wildlife and marine animals will continue to ingest them. A study found more than [18,000 balloons](#), strings, and other pieces were picked up along the Great Lakes shorelines in Detroit from 2016 to 2018.

Maryland's beaches, mountains, and fields are resources worthy of the greatest standards of protection. There are eco-friendly alternatives to balloon releases that are appropriate for celebratory or solemn events including lighting a candle, creating a charity fundraiser, planting a tree, or organizing a service day. As we become aware of the harmful implications of balloon releases, we need to change our behavior accordingly and ensure we are compassionate not only towards humans, but toward all living beings.

It is important to note that there is a lot of momentum on this issue at the county level in Maryland. Queen Anne's, Wicomico, Frederick, and most recently Montgomery County have already enacted bans. Maryland needs a statewide prohibition to be a leader on this issue, and to reinforce the importance of ending this harmful practice.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. We respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 716, with the two technical amendments noted above.

For more information contact Jennifer Bevan-Dangel, Maryland State Director, at JBevanDangel@HumaneSociety.org or 202-963-8446.

Solid Waste Management – Prohibition on Releasing

Uploaded by: Radov, Lisa

Position: FAV



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

PO Box 10411
BALTIMORE, MD 21209

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.

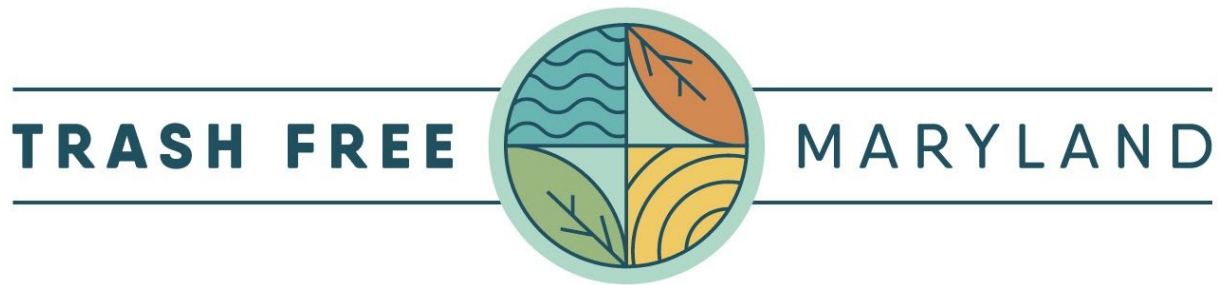
Let Kindness Reign, Vote Humane

WWW.VOTEANIMALS.ORG

SB716 Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the

Uploaded by: Robinson, Shane

Position: FAV



Bill: SB 716

Date: February 24, 2021

Position: Support

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

SB 716

Support

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

Trash Free Maryland and the undersigned organizations support SB 716 which is a bipartisan bill prohibiting a person from knowingly and intentionally releasing a balloon into the atmosphere. Queen Annes's, Montgomery, 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 SB 716.** Thank you.

Contact:

Shane Robinson, Executive Director, Trash Free Maryland

shane@trashfreemaryland.org 202-684-0984

MD-State-BalloonReleases-1.13.21.pdf

Uploaded by: Ross, Jacob

Position: FAV

**Testimony of Jacob Ross
Mid Atlantic Campaign Organizer, Oceana
To the Maryland Senate EHEA Committee
January 13, 2021**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of SB 716, the Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the Atmosphere. Oceana is the largest international advocacy organization dedicated solely to ocean conservation. As of July 2020, we have 17,800 supporters across Maryland. We work to advance science-based policies at the federal, state, and local level that will restore the ocean's abundance and biodiversity. We submit this testimony to share our strong support for SB 716 and to urge you to pass this important legislation.

Plastic Pollution and Balloons Are a Growing Problem for Ocean Health

A 2019 scientific report found that among the marine debris items ingested by seabirds, balloons were the most likely to result in death.¹ Balloons, which can travel hundreds of miles after they're released, must land somewhere. Those released anywhere in the state could end up in the Chesapeake Bay, which is home to hundreds of bird species, including many that are threatened with extinction. Additionally, plastic debris like balloons can affect other types of marine life, from plankton to dolphins and sea turtles. Tens of thousands of individual marine animals have been observed to be suffering from entanglement in, or the ingestion of, plastic.²

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Plastic pollution is everywhere. Scientists have found plastic floating on the surface of the ocean, washing up on the world's most remote coastlines, melting in Arctic sea ice, raining onto the Rocky Mountains, and even sitting at the deepest part of the ocean floor.^{5,6,7,8} Plastic is harming our native wildlife and contaminating Maryland's waterways.⁹

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- After surveying dozens of government agencies, organizations and institutions that collect data on the impact of plastic on marine animals, Oceana found evidence of nearly 1,800 animals from 40 different species swallowing or becoming entangled in plastic since 2009. Of those animals, a staggering 88% were from species listed as endangered or threatened with extinction under the Endangered Species Act.¹⁵

Global production of plastic is now projected to increase at least fourfold between 2014 and 2050.¹⁶ As plastic production increases, so will the amount of plastic that enters the ocean.

Solution: Reduce Plastic Pollution at the Source

Recycling is not enough to solve the plastic pollution crisis. Waste-management solutions have not adequately dealt with plastic pollution in the past and cannot realistically keep up with the rising rates of plastic production. Only 9% of all the plastic waste ever produced has been recycled.¹⁷ The rest of it has been incinerated, landfilled, or lost in the environment.

Policies governing the production and use of single-use plastic are the most effective way to stem the flow of it into our oceans, bays, and wetlands, and these policies are becoming more common all around the world. While multiple countries have taken national action, the United States has so far failed to implement a nationwide policy that comprehensively addresses the plastics crisis threatening our future.

Thankfully, local communities are acting by passing policies limiting the use of single-use plastic and banning balloon releases. Baltimore, Ocean City, Queen Anne's County, Montgomery County, and Frederick have already prohibited the release of balloons into the environment. Communities across Maryland are calling on the Maryland General Assembly to follow suit.

Passing HB 391, the Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the Atmosphere, is a critical step in reducing plastic pollution at the source. By working to reduce the intentional release of plastic balloons throughout

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the state, Maryland would be taking a key step towards addressing the pollution concerns of communities across the state.

We strongly support SB 716. We believe this bill will have a significant impact on the amount of plastic pollution that impacts the Chesapeake Bay, marine life along the Atlantic coast, and communities who depend on these unique ecosystems and species. We thank you for the opportunity to testify and urge you to pass this important legislation to reduce plastic pollution.

Jacob Ross
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Uploaded by: Ross, Jacob

Position: FAV

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A 2019 scientific report found that among the marine debris items ingested by seabirds, balloons were the most likely to result in death.¹ Balloons, which can travel hundreds of miles after they're released, must land somewhere. Those released anywhere in the state could end up in the Chesapeake Bay, which is home to hundreds of bird species, including many that are threatened with extinction. Additionally, plastic debris like balloons can affect other types of marine life, from plankton to dolphins and sea turtles. Tens of thousands of individual marine animals have been observed to be suffering from entanglement in, or the ingestion of, plastic.²

Plastic pollution is a growing threat to the world's oceans, as well as to our food, health and climate. Each year, an estimated 17.6 billion pounds of plastic enters the marine environment. This is roughly equivalent to a garbage truck full of plastic being dumped into the oceans every minute.³

Nearly 40% of all plastic produced is for packaging, most of which is used once and then thrown away.⁴ Balloons and other packaging and single-use products are profoundly flawed by design. These products are designed to be used for only a few moments before being disposed of, but the material they are made of was created to last for centuries. In the end, communities across Maryland and marine life are left to deal with the consequences of this growing problem.

Plastic pollution is everywhere. Scientists have found plastic floating on the surface of the ocean, washing up on the world's most remote coastlines, melting in Arctic sea ice, raining onto the Rocky Mountains, and even sitting at the deepest part of the ocean floor.^{5,6,7,8} Plastic is harming our native wildlife and contaminating Maryland's waterways.⁹

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- Home to over 3,600 plant and animal species, the Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the country and is an important part of Maryland's identity and economy. But it's being impacted by our dependence on single-use plastics - according to a 2014 study, microplastics were found in 59 out of 60 water samples from the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.¹²
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Global production of plastic is now projected to increase at least fourfold between 2014 and 2050.¹⁶ As plastic production increases, so will the amount of plastic that enters the ocean.

Solution: Reduce Plastic Pollution at the Source

Recycling is not enough to solve the plastic pollution crisis. Waste-management solutions have not adequately dealt with plastic pollution in the past and cannot realistically keep up with the rising rates of plastic production. Only 9% of all the plastic waste ever produced has been recycled.¹⁷ The rest of it has been incinerated, landfilled, or lost in the environment.

Policies governing the production and use of single-use plastic are the most effective way to stem the flow of it into our oceans, bays, and wetlands, and these policies are becoming more common all around the world. While multiple countries have taken national action, the United States has so far failed to implement a nationwide policy that comprehensively addresses the plastics crisis threatening our future.

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¹⁴ Watts AJR, Urbina MA, Corr S, Lewis C and Galloway TS (2015) Ingestion of Plastic Microfibers by the Crab *Carcinus maenas* and Its Effect on Food Consumption and Energy Balance. *Environmental Science & Technology* 49: 14597–14604. doi: 10.1021/acs.est.5b04026

¹⁵ Oceana.org

¹⁶ -- (2016) The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the future of plastics. World Economic Forum. 36p.

¹⁷ Ibid.

the state, Maryland would be taking a key step towards addressing the pollution concerns of communities across the state.

We strongly support SB 716. We believe this bill will have a significant impact on the amount of plastic pollution that impacts the Chesapeake Bay, marine life along the Atlantic coast, and communities who depend on these unique ecosystems and species. We thank you for the opportunity to testify and urge you to pass this important legislation to reduce plastic pollution.

Jacob Ross
Mid Atlantic Campaign Organizer, Oceana

MD-State-BalloonReleases-1.13.21.pdf

Uploaded by: Ross, Jacob

Position: FAV

Testimony of Jacob Ross
Mid Atlantic Campaign Organizer, Oceana
To the Maryland Senate EHEA Committee
January 13, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of SB 716, the Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the Atmosphere. Oceana is the largest international advocacy organization dedicated solely to ocean conservation. As of July 2020, we have 17,800 supporters across Maryland. We work to advance science-based policies at the federal, state, and local level that will restore the ocean's abundance and biodiversity. We submit this testimony to share our strong support for SB 716 and to urge you to pass this important legislation.

Plastic Pollution and Balloons Are a Growing Problem for Ocean Health

A 2019 scientific report found that among the marine debris items ingested by seabirds, balloons were the most likely to result in death.¹ Balloons, which can travel hundreds of miles after they're released, must land somewhere. Those released anywhere in the state could end up in the Chesapeake Bay, which is home to hundreds of bird species, including many that are threatened with extinction. Additionally, plastic debris like balloons can affect other types of marine life, from plankton to dolphins and sea turtles. Tens of thousands of individual marine animals have been observed to be suffering from entanglement in, or the ingestion of, plastic.²

Plastic pollution is a growing threat to the world's oceans, as well as to our food, health and climate. Each year, an estimated 17.6 billion pounds of plastic enters the marine environment. This is roughly equivalent to a garbage truck full of plastic being dumped into the oceans every minute.³

Nearly 40% of all plastic produced is for packaging, most of which is used once and then thrown away.⁴ Balloons and other packaging and single-use products are profoundly flawed by design. These products are designed to be used for only a few moments before being disposed of, but the material they are made of was created to last for centuries. In the end, communities across Maryland and marine life are left to deal with the consequences of this growing problem.

Plastic pollution is everywhere. Scientists have found plastic floating on the surface of the ocean, washing up on the world's most remote coastlines, melting in Arctic sea ice, raining onto the Rocky Mountains, and even sitting at the deepest part of the ocean floor.^{5,6,7,8} Plastic is harming our native wildlife and contaminating Maryland's waterways.⁹

¹ Roman L, Hardesty BD, Hindell MA and Wilcox C (2019) A quantitative analysis linking seabird mortality and marine debris ingestion. *Scientific Reports* 9. doi: 10.1038/s41598-018-36585-9

² Gall SC and Thompson RC (2015) The impact of debris on marine life. *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 92: 170–179. doi: 10.1016/j.marpolbul.2014.12.041

³ Jambeck JR, Geyer R, Wilcox C, *et al.* (2015) Plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean. *Science* 347: 768-771. doi: 10.1126/science.1260352

⁴ Geyer R, Jambeck JR and Law KL (2017) Production, use, and fate of all plastics ever made. *Science Advances* 3. doi: 10.1126/sciadv.1700782

⁵ Lavers JL and Bond JL (2017) Exceptional and rapid accumulation of anthropogenic debris on one of the world's most remote and pristine islands. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114: 6052-6055. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1619818114

⁶ Chiba S, Saito H, Fletcher R, *et al.* (2018) Human footprint in the abyss: 30 year records of deep-sea plastic debris. *Marine Policy* 96: 204-212. doi: 10.1016/j.marpol.2018.03.022

⁷ Peeken I, Primpke S, Beyer B, *et al.* (2018) Arctic sea ice is an important temporal sink and means of transport for microplastic. *Nature Communications* 9 doi: 10.1038/s41467-018-03825-5

⁸ Wetherbee G, Baldwin A and Ranville J (2019) It is raining plastic: Open-File Report 2019-1048. *United States Geological Survey*. doi: 10.3133/ofr20191048

⁹ Soper S (2019) Assateague Horse Incident Highlights Balloon Dangers. The Dispatch. Available: <https://mdcoastdispatch.com/2019/05/29/assateague-horse-incident-highlights-balloon-dangers/>. Accessed Feb 19, 2020.

Marine species around the globe and here in Maryland are being affected by plastic debris. A piece of plastic can look like food to a fish, turtle, marine mammal or bird. We are seeing increasing reports of dead whales beached with bellies full of plastic debris.¹⁰ Tens of thousands of individual marine animals have been observed suffering from entanglement or ingestion of the plastic permeating the marine environment.¹¹

- Home to over 3,600 plant and animal species, the Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the country and is an important part of Maryland's identity and economy. But it's being impacted by our dependence on single-use plastics - according to a 2014 study, microplastics were found in 59 out of 60 water samples from the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.¹²
- Plastic ingestion and entanglements can lead to death by starvation or suffocation for marine life. Ingested plastic may also cause ulcers or punctures and impair feeding, growth, mobility, reproduction and behavior.^{13,14}
- After surveying dozens of government agencies, organizations and institutions that collect data on the impact of plastic on marine animals, Oceana found evidence of nearly 1,800 animals from 40 different species swallowing or becoming entangled in plastic since 2009. Of those animals, a staggering 88% were from species listed as endangered or threatened with extinction under the Endangered Species Act.¹⁵

Global production of plastic is now projected to increase at least fourfold between 2014 and 2050.¹⁶ As plastic production increases, so will the amount of plastic that enters the ocean.

Solution: Reduce Plastic Pollution at the Source

Recycling is not enough to solve the plastic pollution crisis. Waste-management solutions have not adequately dealt with plastic pollution in the past and cannot realistically keep up with the rising rates of plastic production. Only 9% of all the plastic waste ever produced has been recycled.¹⁷ The rest of it has been incinerated, landfilled, or lost in the environment.

Policies governing the production and use of single-use plastic are the most effective way to stem the flow of it into our oceans, bays, and wetlands, and these policies are becoming more common all around the world. While multiple countries have taken national action, the United States has so far failed to implement a nationwide policy that comprehensively addresses the plastics crisis threatening our future.

Thankfully, local communities are acting by passing policies limiting the use of single-use plastic and banning balloon releases. Baltimore, Ocean City, Queen Anne's County, Montgomery County, and Frederick have already prohibited the release of balloons into the environment. Communities across Maryland are calling on the Maryland General Assembly to follow suit.

Passing HB 391, the Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the Atmosphere, is a critical step in reducing plastic pollution at the source. By working to reduce the intentional release of plastic balloons throughout

¹⁰ Irfan U (2019) The alarming trend of beached whales filled with plastic, explained. In: *Vox*. Available: <https://www.vox.com/2019/5/24/18635543/plastic-bags-whale-stomach-beached>. Accessed Jun 25, 2019.

¹¹ Gall SC and Thompson RC (2015) The impact of debris on marine life. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*. 92: 170–179. doi: 10.1016/j.marpolbul.2014.12.041

¹² Yonkos LT, Friedel EA, Perez-Reyes AC, Ghosal S and Arthur CD (2014) Microplastic in four estuarine rivers in the Chesapeake Bay, U.S.A. *Environmental Science & Technology* 48: 14195-14202. doi: 10.1021/es5036317

¹³ Cole M, Lindeque P, Fileman E, Halsband C and Galloway TS (2015) The Impact of Polystyrene Microplastics on Feeding, Function and Fecundity in the Marine Copepod *Calanus helgolandicus*. *Environmental Science & Technology* 49: 1130–1137. doi: 10.1021/es504525u

¹⁴ Watts AJR, Urbina MA, Corr S, Lewis C and Galloway TS (2015) Ingestion of Plastic Microfibers by the Crab *Carcinus maenas* and Its Effect on Food Consumption and Energy Balance. *Environmental Science & Technology* 49: 14597–14604. doi: 10.1021/acs.est.5b04026

¹⁵ Oceana.org

¹⁶ -- (2016) The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the future of plastics. World Economic Forum. 36p.

¹⁷ Ibid.

the state, Maryland would be taking a key step towards addressing the pollution concerns of communities across the state.

We strongly support SB 716. We believe this bill will have a significant impact on the amount of plastic pollution that impacts the Chesapeake Bay, marine life along the Atlantic coast, and communities who depend on these unique ecosystems and species. We thank you for the opportunity to testify and urge you to pass this important legislation to reduce plastic pollution.

Jacob Ross
Mid Atlantic Campaign Organizer, Oceana

SB 716 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Santacroce, Ferrell

Position: FAV

2/22/221

Good Afternoon Chairpersons and Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to hear and take action on SB716 - Solid Waste Management – Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the 3 Atmosphere ...

We recognize the deleterious impacts that marine debris, including balloons, has on wildlife and their habitats, leading to an alarming natural resource concern throughout the state. Marine debris harms land and ocean-based habitat through smothering and abrasion and impacts a variety of wildlife through ingestion and entanglement.

SB716 gives “teeth” to the laws being passed to protect wildlife and human interests. With education and enforcement, I believe passing SB716 will be a deterrent and have a positive effect for wildlife, the environment and residents of the state of Maryland.

Thank you again for hearing and voting in favor of Senate Bill 716.

Ferrell S. Santacroce
32068 Melson Rd.
Delmar, MD 21875
443.397.5427

TESTIMONY FOR SB0716.pdf

Uploaded by: Schablein, Jared

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY FOR HB0716

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

Bill Sponsor: Senator Carozza

Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Organization Submitting: Lower Shore Progressive Caucus

Person Submitting: Jared Schablein, Chair of the LSPC

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0716 on behalf of the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus. The Caucus is a political and activist organization on the Eastern Shore, unaffiliated with any political party, committed to empowering working people by building a Progressive movement on the Lower Eastern Shore. It is a top priority of the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus and our members to protect the environment and support legislation that would protect our pristine environment for generations to come. HB0391 is a bi-partisan common-sense bill that would better protect the environment from unnecessary pollution and trash.

Balloons, on average, take six months to 4 years to fully decompose. Once released into the atmosphere, they can wreak havoc on the environment for long periods. Once the balloon falls back into the environment, its waste poses a risk for wildlife in two significant ways. The first way is being ingested by wild animals attracted to the color, ribbons, and tassels. Eating the balloon is often a death sentence for the animal. The second way it poses a risk to wildlife is the balloon waste forming the perfect trap for animals to become entangled. Once entangled, the animal is often trapped until it dies or continues to live with extreme discomfort and limited mobility.

It is for these reasons the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus supports this bill and recommends a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

Safe SkiesSafe Skies Maryland Testimny SUPPORT SB7

Uploaded by: Southerland, Mark

Position: FAV



Safe Skies Maryland

Dedicated to a Sustainable Future

Maryland General Assembly 2021 SB 716- Prohibit Release of Balloons Position: Favorable

Safe Skies Maryland is a statewide conservation initiative with an organizational membership representing a diverse and active body of citizens seeking to advance sustainability. We advocate for birds and other wildlife and their relationship with human quality of life. We respectfully submit this letter in support of SB 716.

Helium balloons pollute everywhere, because they are the only type of single-use item whose very use defines its intended goal—the intentional release of this item into the environment. When released, there can be no expectation of proper disposal, as they travel many miles into the atmosphere and up to thousands of miles from the point of release, often ending up in our coastal and marine environments as deadly marine debris. **If we were to design a method to spread hazardous trash as far and wide as possible, we would fill it with helium and release into the air.**

Balloons are not biodegradable. Balloons made from latex, Mylar, and foil contain elements of trees, plastic sheeting, and metals. It is important to note that while one of these types, latex, is marketed as a biodegradable product, the natural latex has chemicals, plasticizers, and artificial dyes that change its composition to become what we know of as a commercial balloon that is no longer biodegradable. Additionally, saltwater acts as a preservative, further inhibiting the decomposition of the chemical compounds in balloons and ensuring they remain deadly in the marine environment for long periods of time.

Balloons are a human hazard and a waste of valuable helium. It is not uncommon for balloons to ensnare and impact power lines, where they can cause fires and power outages. And, the non-renewable element of helium can be better conserved for its vital use in medical life-saving equipment such as MRIs and Spectrometers.

Balloons are the most hazardous form of trash to wildlife. Latex balloons are the most common form of balloon found in the stomachs of deceased animals. Because balloons float on the currents, where so many marine animals look for food, they are deadly to the entire marine ecosystem. This includes marine mammals, sea turtles, sea birds, and a host of other fish and invertebrates **who actively select to consume this trash**, because they cannot distinguish a food item like jellyfish or squid from floating balloon fragments. Studies have shown that unlike hard plastics, these soft plastics can be deadly upon one incidence of ingestion, as the material conforms to internal organs, cause gastrointestinal



Safe Skies Maryland

Dedicated to a Sustainable Future

blockages, is not passed through the body like hard plastics, and can cause the animal to starve. In one recently published study, researchers called **balloons, “the highest-risk debris item; 32 times more likely to result in death than ingesting hard plastic.”** (Roman, et al. 2018. A quantitative analysis linking seabird mortality and marine debris ingestion. Scientific Reports.) This current study supports similar prior findings in sea turtles. In addition to ingestion, entanglement in the items used to tether balloons prior to release, like strings and ribbons, create more opportunity for these wayward items to become deadly pollutants, as it is estimated that upwards of 100,000 marine animals annually become entangled and die as a result of being prevented from traveling and feeding normally.

We are drowning in trash. Communities everywhere are confronted with the realities of too much trash in the environment, in landfills, not enough of the trash produced being recycled, and there is the sad reality of huge floating islands of garbage in our oceans. Simply put, we are all living with too much trash. One of the deadliest and farthest traveling forms of this trash comes from the intentional release of balloons. What takes mere seconds to do creates an ongoing trail of damage, destruction, and death for which the environmental toll has been costly. The solution is both reasonable and responsible. It can no longer be argued that the intentional release of trash into the environment is acceptable given all that we know now and the hope we all have to save of our natural world. For so many reasons, we support the intended outcome of this welcomed legislative effort.

We thank the you for its consideration of this bill and respectfully ask for its passage.

Mark Southerland, Ph.D.
Legislative Director
Safe Skies Maryland

SB716 - Ban on Intentional Balloon Release - EHEA

Uploaded by: Tulkin, Josh

Position: FAV



7338 Baltimore Ave
Suite 102
College Park, MD 20740

Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Testimony on: SB 716 “Solid Waste Management – Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon into the Atmosphere”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 24, 2021

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports SB 716, a bill to prohibit the intentional release of balloons into the atmosphere. SB 716 is a simple, yet meaningful way to eliminate a source of harmful litter. Three Maryland counties (Queen Anne’s, Frederick, and Montgomery) have already passed similar legislation. A statewide ban makes sense given that once released, balloons may travel great distances before returning to Earth and thus are a type of litter that does not recognize county boundaries.

A bouquet of colorful balloons floating up into the blue sky can be a beautiful tribute to a loved one or a way to celebrate an important event. Unfortunately, these balloons eventually return to Earth as litter, often tangled in trees or floating in waterways, sometimes many miles from where they were originally released.

In a research report funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, five states in the coastal northeast and mid-Atlantic recognized that balloons are a dangerous type of marine debris that deserve attention.¹ Balloons that end up in waterways pose a serious threat to birds and marine life. Much like plastic bags, when balloons float in the water turtles mistake them for jellyfish and consume them. Balloons and their attached ribbons can be ingested and cause serious injury and death to birds and fish as well. Even on Assateague Island, where balloons are banned, National Park Service officials recently witnessed a wild horse choking on a balloon.²

There are many other ways to honor a loved one or mark a special occasion. Commemorative alternatives to balloon releases include planting a native tree or flower garden, floating flowers or flower petals down a stream, lighting candles, and drumming. Celebratory alternatives include using ribbon dancers, kites or pinwheels, and blowing bubbles.

We are pleased that SB 716 has bipartisan support and hope its passage will encourage a wider conversation about the alarming problem of single-use plastic pollution. We respectfully request a favorable report.

Cindy Dillon
Chapter Zero Waste Committee
Cindy.Dillon@mdsierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@mdsierra.org

¹ Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean, *Assessment of Marine Debris in the Mid-Atlantic, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York and Virginia*, 2015.

² Shawn Soper, *Assateague Horse Incident Highlights Balloon Dangers*, Ocean City Dispatch, May 29, 2019.

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 75,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.