

# Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6481

AN ACT CONCERNING THE INTENTIONAL RELEASE OF CERTAIN

**Title:** BALLOONS.

**Vote Date:** February 17, 2023

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 1/30/2023

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Environment Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

To protect the waters of Connecticut from pollution and to protect the animals who digest the balloons.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None Expressed

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Lori Brown, Executive Director, Ct League of Conservations Voters:**

Lori Brown and the Ct. League of Conservation Votes highly supports this bill.

### **Christine Cummings, Director, A Place Called Hope:**

As one of the few states licensed Wildlife Rehabilitation center the release of balloons is one of the consequences that we deal with constantly. APCH has rescued numerous animals entangled in the strings/ribbons that come back down. Robin Copperthwaite, Nancy Morand, Deanna Broderick and others also testified in support for A Place Called Hope and this bill.

**Patrick Comins, Executive Director, Connecticut Audubon Society:**

Our staff frequently encounters the remains of balloons and the string that entangles many species of birds and marine organisms. Patrick submitted this <https://balloonblow.org/impact-on-wildlife-and-environment> so that you could see the impact the release of balloons has on the wildlife.

**Amy Blaymore Patterson, Executive Director, Ct Land Conservation Council:**

The intentional release of balloons has become a common source of litter in the landscape and waterways as well as a threat to the environment. Mylar balloons are not biodegradable and latex balloons can last in environment for years and when they do breakdown, they become microplastic that pollute our waters and are eaten by fish and invertebrates.

**Jason Patlis, President, The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk:**

This bill will stop plastics from entering our environment that are pervasive and can be forever. More and more are showing up in fish, seabirds and shellfish killing millions each year. Prohibiting the release of helium is one small way to make a big impact on the environment.

**Scott Smith, Friends of Animals:**

Connecticut's waters are home to four species of sea turtles who often mistake latex balloons for jellyfish. These sea turtles often are found to have their intestines clogged with latex balloons which leads to their death.

**William Lucey, Long Island Soundkeeper, Save the Sound:**

William Lucey testified about his traversing Long Island Sound and all the encounters of balloons floating in the waters. Balloons become sucked into water intakes causing engine overheating and damage.

**Annie Hornish, Connecticut State Director, Humane Society of the U.S.:**

So many birds and other animals are killed or harmed each year because of helium balloons and their strings. She submitted testimony that scientists have estimate that 90% of all seabirds alive today have ingested plastic and marine litter harms over 600 species. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation with the World Economic Forum predicts that by 2050 plastic in the ocean could weigh more than the fish.

**Robert LaFrance, Director of Policy, National Audubon Society:**

The plastic pollution and how it poses a major threat to our birds. Ingesting the balloons and the string claims the lives of countless birds each year.

**Ann Gadwah, Sierra Club Connecticut:**

The Sierra Club recommend amending this bill to include a total prohibition on the release of helium balloons and a public education component at the point of sale to inform consumers about the policy and their responsibilities.

**Julie DesChamps, Waste Free Greenwich:**

Julie DesChamps testified that her organization supports the bill but would like to see the language strengthened by replacing "within a twenty-four period or more" with a clause prohibiting the intentional release of any balloon.

**Jeanine Behr Getz, BYOCT:**

BYOCT approves waste reduction, and this bill would protect the environment, reduce litter and reduce the extremely dangerous risks from explosions and power outages that occur when these balloons come in contact with power lines.

**Nancy Alderman, President EHHI:**

Nancy Alderman testified about how all these balloons are filled with helium and on Earth Helium it is relatively rare. Only a limited number of countries produce helium and that is needed for MRI scans, scientific research, medical technology, high-tech manufacturing, space exploration and national defense. It should not be wasted on balloons.

**Michael Corcoran, Captain:**

Michael Corcoran testified about the estimated 600 plus balloons he has removed from Long Island Sound. He also testified that only a few weeks ago he found a cluster of 15 balloons and each balloon in that cluster had 50 or more nickel size mylar confetti disks inside. The public needs to be educated and maybe subjected to a fine.

**Michael Dwyer:**

Michael Dwyer requested the committee consider strengthening the bill to prohibit the release and sale of any lighter than air balloons.

**Jeffery Allison, The Balloon Council:**

As an organization of retailers, distributors and manufacturers we have on our web site a Pledge. Connecticut should follow our pledge as other states have and become a non-release state.

**Linda Adams:**

As a vet tech and wildlife volunteer she has seen what balloons do to our wildlife. It is imperative we ban the release of balloons for the safety of our wildlife, pets and children.

**Darcy Ahl:**

Balloons are a mortal threat to Long Island Sound wildlife, which ingest them, become entangled in their strings and they are sucked into boat water intakes causing engines to overheat.

**Devin and Tom Maloney:**

Devin and Tom submitted testimony of their support of the bill. We would like the committee to strengthen the bill and prohibit the release of any balloon or prohibit the sale of any lighter than air balloon.

**Eric Schultz, Professor, University of Connecticut:**

Eric Schultz testified that as a marine ecologist this bill is long overdue. Released balloons are unsightly, damaging and deadly trash.

**Donna Meadors:**

As a West Haven resident, I enjoy nature walks along our shore ways and rivers, but I find an abundance of garbage that includes balloons. Prohibiting balloons will help save our wildlife and clean up our environment.

**Dave and Cate Rauch:**

Dave and Cate Rauch submitted testimony and would like to see no balloons sold that are lighter than air unless limited to an enclosed area.

**Brenda Rich:**

Brenda Rich testified that a recent study found that balloons are the leading marine debris that kills our wildlife. Several other states have begun to enact total balloon release bans. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has requested we ban balloon releasing.

Over 40 people also submitted testimony in favor of the bill.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed

**Reported by: Pamela Bianca**

**Date: February 21, 2023**