

# Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5314

AN ACT PROHIBITING THE RELEASE OF HELIUM BALLOONS INTO THE

**Title:** ATMOSPHERE.

**Vote Date:** 3/8/2019

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 2/4/2019

**File No.:** 172

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Rep. Fred Camillo, 151<sup>st</sup> Dist.

Rep. Irene Haines, 34<sup>th</sup> Dist.

Rep. Jesse MacLachlan, 35<sup>th</sup> Dist.

Rep. David Michel, 146<sup>th</sup> Dist.

Rep. Mary Mushinsky, 85<sup>th</sup> Dist.

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

Although the Connecticut General Assembly passed Public Act 90-7 in 1990, section 26-25c of the general statutes, to limit the intentional release of balloons to ten, many environmental organizations and members of the boating community continue to provide testimony of the negative impact helium balloons have on the local ecosystem. Many bird and marine animals will mistake such balloons as food, and ribbons attached to balloons can entangle these animals. This bill seeks to remedy such concerns by prohibition the intentional release of all helium balloons.

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

None Submitted.

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

**Jeffrey Allison:** Shared personal testimony on how a deflated balloon seized his jet-ski engine. Both metallized nylon balloons and latex balloon pose serious public safety and environmental concerns. Metallized nylon balloons can conduct electricity and can cause

power outages if entangled in power lines. Latex balloons pose serious ingestion and entanglement hazard to marine and land animals.

**Patrick M. Comins, Executive Director, The Connecticut Audubon Society:** The Audubon Alliance for Coastal Waterbirds frequently encounter the remains of balloons along coastal beaches and marshes. Animals can mistake balloons for edible prey and strings attached can serve as an entanglement hazard for many species of birds and marine wildlife.

**Michael Corcoran:** Shared personal testimony of collecting hundreds of helium balloons on Connecticut waters last year. Current law regarding the release of balloons is not working. Testimony also provides a link to an online video of the impact helium balloons have on Connecticut waters.

**Annie Hornish, Connecticut State Director, The Humane Society of the United States:** Thousands of birds and marine wildlife are killed each year after ingesting plastic or as a result of entanglement from plastic. Scientists estimate that 90% of all seabirds have ingested plastic during their lifetime. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation reported that plastic in the ocean could weigh more than fish by 2025.

**Cynthia and William Kobak:** Although current law prohibits the release of ten or more balloons, celebratory, promotional, and memorials events and services still release many balloons into Connecticut's air.

**Bill Lucey, Long Island Sound Keeper, Connecticut Fund for the Environment / Save the Sound:** Share personal testimony as the Long Island Soundkeeper. Balloons last for years and can be ingested by marine wildlife and entangle in engine intakes and wildlife.

**Chris Megan, Owner and Publisher, On the Water Media:** Shared personal testimony picking up helium balloons on every boating and fishing trip in New England. The balloons, as well as the ribbons attached to them, are hazardous for birds and marine organisms.

**Dennis Riordan, President, Menunkatuck Audubon Society:** Balloons wreak havoc on wildlife. Many animals will mistake balloons for food or will get entangled in the ribbons attached to the balloon. When ingested, balloons can block an animal's digestive tract causing the animal to slowly starve to death. Additionally, helium depletion is also a concern as it is a finite element essential in science and technology.

**Danielle Vosburgh, Director, Balloons Blow, Inc.:** Balloon industry lobbyists falsely claim any balloon laws will hurt "mom & pop stores." However, most balloons are sold in big box stores.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None Submitted.

**Reported by: Pamela Bianca / Ussawin R. Bumpen 4/1/2019**

