

# Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5294

AN ACT CONCERNING THE INTENTIONAL RELEASE OF CERTAIN

**Title:** BALLOONS.

**Vote Date:** 3/28/2022

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/14/2022

**File No.:**

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Rep. Joseph P. Gresko 121<sup>st</sup> Dist.

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

Rep. Michael A. Winkler 56<sup>th</sup> Dist.

Rep. Brandon Chafee, 33<sup>rd</sup> Dist.

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

Rep. Gary A. Turko, 27<sup>th</sup> Dist.

Rep. Anne M Hughes 135<sup>th</sup> Dist.

Rep. Geraldo C. Reyes 75<sup>th</sup> Dist.

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

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

To protect aquatic life and reduce water born litter and plastic contamination

### **Substitute Language – LCO 3847**

Exempt balloons deployed by the National Weather Service.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY**

### **KATIE DYKES, COMMISSIONER, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

This bill makes modification to Connecticut General Statutes Section 26-25c (a) would prohibit the intentional release of helium or other lighter-than-air gas balloons. The new bill makes the law much more straightforward and easier to explain to the public and to enforce.

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

### **IRENE HAINES, REPRESENTATIVE, STATE OF CONNECTICUT**

The release of balloons can cause injury to residents as with Jeffrey Alison who a few summers ago got injured by a balloon that was sucked into the wake of his jet ski. I have constituents who have shared personal testimony about the hundreds of helium balloons that they have collected along the Connecticut waters. So Many have come to me with their stories and how the current law is not working.

### **NANCY ALDERMAN, PRESIDENT, ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN HEALTH**

Across the Unites States more policies are calling for laws restricting or eliminating single-use plastics including balloons. Mylar balloons cause thousands of power outages every year as they some contact with power lines or circuit breakers. Latex balloons take years to break down and could remain in the environment indefinitely because of their composition.

### **Amy Blaymore, Executive Director, Ct. Land Conservation Council**

By prohibiting the release of helium balloons it would help community and state preserves free of debris that are unsightly and harmful to the quality of our land and water.

### **Deanna Broderick**

I work as a volunteer installing Osprey platforms along the coast of Connecticut from Stratford to Stonington. We always find balloons in the nesting material of the Osprey nests. The young osprey chicks can become entangled in the curling ribbon and end up tethered to the nest unable to fly and die or fall over the side of the nest and die. I have seen this and know firsthand.

### **Bill Lucey, Save the Sound**

I travers Long Island Sound conducting water tests, research and generally looking for pollution sources. It is uncommon not to see at least a few balloons during a day's work. Balloons get sucked into water intakes fouling impellers which can cause engine overheating and the strings are notorious for entanglement. I have included some photographs of what this does to the wildlife.

### **Ann Gadwah, Outreach Organizer, Sierra Club Connecticut**

Releasing balloons into the atmosphere is a threat to our wildlife and ecosystems. The production of plastic items contributes greatly to greenhouse gas emissions. Helium balloons pollute our environment, endanger wildlife, aquatic animals and do not biodegrade but instead break into microplastics.

### **Annie Hornish, Ct Senior State Director, The Humane Society of the United States**

Many birds and other animals are killed or harmed each year after ingestion or entanglement by helium balloons and their strings. These balloons like other plastic products take years to decompose and break down into microplastics that are ingested by marine life. Scientists estimate that 90% of all seabirds alive today have ingested plastic during their lifetime.

### **Robert LaFrance, Audubon, Connecticut**

In a 2019 study scientist found that if a bird ingests a balloon or balloon fragment it is 32 times more likely to die. These soft rubber items get stuck in the bird's digestive system.

**William Hyatt, Vice-Chair, Connecticut Fisheries Advisory Council**

Intentionally released balloons are a visual source of litter on our Connecticut waters and landscape. These balloons represent an unnecessary threat to our state's fish and wildlife. Many aquatic wildlife mistake floating balloons as jellyfish.

**The following people also submitted testimony in support of the bill.**

Jill Alibrandi  
Robert Andrews  
Mia Aron  
Joh Bonitz  
Madeline Cahn  
Lisa Finnegan  
Andrew Lopez  
Bud McAllister  
Craig Repasz  
Barbara Russo  
Karen Schnitzer  
Irene Skrybalio  
Sam Slater  
Julia Slaughter  
Bob Wall, Chair, Sustainable Fairfield Task Force  
Ann Zitkus

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed

**Reported by: Pamela Bianca**

**Date: April 1, 2020**