

# Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-1154  
AN ACT CONCERNING THE SALE OF CERTAIN LIGHTER-THAN-AIR  
**Title:** BALLOONS.  
**Vote Date:** 2/28/2025  
**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute  
**PH Date:** 1/31/2025  
**File No.:**

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**SPONSORS OF BILL:**  
Environment Committee

**CO-SPONSORS:**

Rep. Joseph P. Gresko, 121<sup>st</sup> Dist.  
Rep. Tom O’Dea, 125<sup>th</sup> Dist.  
Rep. Laurie Sweet, 91<sup>st</sup> Dist.  
Rep. Brandon Chafee, 33<sup>rd</sup> Dist.

Rep. Kenneth Gucker, 138<sup>th</sup> Dist.  
Rep. Hector Arzeno, 151<sup>st</sup> Dist.  
Rep. Greg S. Howard, 43<sup>rd</sup> Dist.

**REASONS FOR BILL:**

To prohibit the sale of certain lighter-than-air balloons to protect marine life and protect the environment from litter.

**SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE LCO 5454**

DEEP shall engage representatives of the helium industry, to develop a schedule for the phase out of helium utilized to fill lighter-than-air balloons not later than October 1, 2025, and to end such use in the state by December 31, 2027. The Commissioner shall submit a report to the joint standing committee relating to this matter no later than February 1, 2026.

**RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**Katie S. Sykes, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection**

DEEP appreciates the intent of SB 1154 but they have concerns with this bill:

1. Biodegradable balloons can persist in the environment for years before fully degrading. The term “biodegradable” may create a misleading public perception that such balloons are safe for the environment and wildlife. We need to clarify the definition of “biodegradable” for this bill.

2. Tethered, non-biodegradable, lighter-than-air balloons can be tools for non-lethal wildlife deterrence and weather-related research. Therefore, the bill should exempt these categories from the prohibition.
3. While the bill does not make enforcement by DEEP mandatory, they also note that DEEP currently lacks the authority or expertise to enforce prohibitions on the sale of balloons, having only jurisdiction only to prevent their release.

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

##### **Rep. Irene Haines, 34<sup>th</sup> District**

Rep Haines Supports SB 1154. Even though Connecticut's current laws prohibit the intentional release of ten or more helium or other lighter than air ballons, Rep. Haines feels that SB 1154 will further protect wildlife from the release of any balloons into the air because they are still trash and a hazard unless instantaneously biodegradable.

##### **Lori Brown, Executive Director, CT League of Conservation Voters**

CTLCV Supports SB 1154 because it will reduce the unintentional damage the intentional release of balloons causes. It will help educate the public about the threat that helium balloons pose to birds and marine life.

##### **Jessica Dickens, President, Cetacean Society International**

Cetacean Society International Supports SB 1154. Their organization urges you to ban the sale, import, distribution and release of any helium or other lighter than air gas balloon, even if they are biodegradable. This will help safeguard species of cetaceans, pinnipeds, sea birds and sea turtles.

**The following Organizations Support SB 1154 An Act Concerning the Sale of Certain Lighter-Than-Air Ballons because of their concerns about the safety of wildlife, marine life and the environment:**

##### **Tanya Bourgoin, Chair, Sierra Club CT**

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

##### **Susan Eastwood, Chair, Ashford Clean Energy Task Force**

##### **Samuel S. Gold, ACIP, Executive Director, RIVER COG**

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

##### **Captain Patrick Huban, Wandering Albatross Fly Fishing**

##### **Bill Lucey, Long Island Soundkeeper, Save the Sound**

##### **Susan Linker, Board Member, CT Votes for Animals**

##### **Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director, CT Land Conservation Council**

##### **Madeline Raleigh, Bridgeport Environmental Advocates**

**107 Connecticut Citizens sent in Testimony in Support of SB 1154**

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Maria Stockham, Executive Director, Coalition for Responsible Celebration**

CRC Opposes 1154. They are an organization that promotes environmentally sustainable and economically viable alternatives for public and private celebrations. Since Connecticut already has a ban on balloon release, they suggest an alternative to a ban on sales. They believe in educating the public on the existing balloon release laws, encourage responsible disposal practices and implement weighting measures for all balloon sales. A ban on balloon sales would significantly impact local businesses. This economic hardship would extend beyond retailers, affecting suppliers and service providers connected to these celebrations. Its important to note that over 60% of balloons are used indoors.

**Reported by: Judy Ganswindt**

**Date: March 5, 2025**