



Friends of Casco Bay Casco BAYKEEPER

March 23, 2021

Senator Stacy Brenner
Representative Ralph Tucker
Environment and Natural Resources Committee
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333
ENR@legislature.maine.gov

Re: Friends of Casco Bay Testimony in Support of LD 618 and 1023

Dear Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and Esteemed Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

Please accept this letter as Friends of Casco Bay's testimony in support of LD 618: An Act Regarding the Outdoor Release or Abandonment of Balloons and LD 1023: An Act to Define Intentional Balloon Releases as Litter.

Friends of Casco Bay is a marine stewardship organization formed in 1989 to improve and protect the environmental health of Casco Bay. We monitor the health of Casco Bay, and use that data to inform our advocacy and engage our communities in efforts to protect and restore our coastal waters. Our volunteers clean the shores of Casco Bay and remove thousands of pieces of plastics each year. That plastic can include balloon debris.

Birds, turtles and marine mammals commonly mistake balloons for food. The tattered ends and floating pieces of balloons may resemble jellyfish or other prey of sea turtles, fish, and dolphins. When these bits and pieces are mistaken for food and ingested, they can lodge in the digestive tract of turtles, fish and marine mammals, causing a slow and painful death by starvation. Marine animals and coastal birds can become entangled in balloon strings, which can strangle or hurt them.¹

At least five states and two dozen municipalities, many of these coastal communities, have already banned outdoor balloon releases to eliminate the unintended but harmful consequences of these releases on wildlife.² Maine should follow suit and protect our valuable marine and coastal wildlife.

Friends of Casco Bay respectfully requests that this Committee review both LD 618 and 1023 and recommend that one of them or an amended bill that consolidates elements of each OUGHT TO PASS.

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¹ <https://www.onegreenplanet.org/animalsandnature/balloon-releases-are-killing-animals/>.

² <https://balloonsblow.org/balloon-laws/>.

Thank you for considering our testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ivy L. Frignoca', written in a cursive style.

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