



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY**  
OF THE UNITED STATES

**Testimony in Support of  
LD 618, An Act Regarding the Outdoor Release or Abandonment of Balloons and  
LD1023, An Act to Define Intentional Balloon Releases as Litter  
Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
March 29, 2021**

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

My name is Katie Hansberry and I am the Maine State Director of The Humane Society of the United States. On behalf of the Humane Society of the United States and our Maine supporters, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony sharing our strong support for LDs 618 and 1023 which seek to end environmentally unsound balloon releases in Maine.

While releasing a helium balloon into the atmosphere during a celebratory event or a solemn memorial may be visually pleasing, it is extremely detrimental to the environment and the pain and suffering experienced by animals as a result of these releases is staggering. Discarding a balloon into the atmosphere is simply littering. Once released, balloons can travel for hundreds of miles before they burst or deflate and become litter. Seabirds, sea turtles, seals and other marine mammals are injured or killed after ingesting or becoming entangled in balloons and their strings. Animals on land such as horses, cows, and other farm animals are also at risk.

Balloons are commonly made of latex or mylar materials and present a danger to animals who perceive them as food, or they may get caught in the ribbons attached to them, hindering their ability to move around and feed. For example, when balloons burst, they resemble jellyfish, the natural prey of sea turtles, and subsequently block their digestive tract when ingested. Seabirds are at particular risk, as a [recent study](#) found that balloons are the leading marine debris risk of mortality for seabirds.

Both the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) and the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) warn against the practice. Even so-called ‘biodegradable’ balloons take years to break down in the environment. Therefore, wildlife and marine animals will continue to ingest them. A study found more than [18,000 balloons](#), strings, and other pieces were picked up along the Great Lakes shorelines in Detroit from 2016 to 2018.

Maine’s beaches, mountains, and fields are resources worthy of the greatest standards of protection. There are eco-friendly alternatives to balloon releases that are appropriate for celebratory or solemn events including lighting a candle, creating a charity fundraiser, planting a tree, or organizing a service day. As we become aware of the harmful implications of balloon releases, we need to change our behavior accordingly and ensure we are compassionate not only towards humans, but toward all living beings.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. We respectfully ask you to support LD 618 and LD 1023.

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