

# Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** SB-452 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING THE RELEASE OF LIGHTER-THAN-AIR BALLOONS.

**Vote Date:** 3/18/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/13/2026

**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:**

Environment Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill would prohibit the sale of helium intended for use in lighter-than-air balloons. The reasoning for this bill is because when released or improperly discarded, balloons can pose a significant threat to wildlife by causing choking or entanglement, as animals often mistake these balloons for food.

## **SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):**

Substitute language prohibits anyone in Connecticut from intentionally releasing any helium or lighter-than-air balloons into the atmosphere and requires retailers to attach weights to such balloons to prevent accidental release. Violations would be treated as infractions.

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

### **Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protections (DEEP)**

Commissioner Dykes, states that DEEP supports the intent of the bill, which is to protect wildlife, but have concerns since the bill would prohibit the sale, import, or distribution of helium intended for use in filling lighter-than-air balloons. As well as, require DEEP to enforce this prohibition within available resources DEEP generally lacks the expertise to enforce this provision. DEEP's Environmental Conservation (EnCon) Police do not have the experience, training, or staff required to enforce a ban on the sale, import, or distribution of helium and fall outside EnCon's primary responsibilities. She notes that current law, pursuant to Section 26-25c of the General Statutes, already prohibits the intentional release of ten or more balloons into the air. Overall, they argue that enforcing a prohibition on the sale, import, or distribution

of helium would be difficult and fall outside typical environmental enforcement activities, the proposal as written is unlikely to meaningfully reduce the number of balloons released or provide substantive additional protection for wildlife.

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

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

Lori Brown argues that Connecticut's wildlife commonly mistake deflated balloons for food, and animals can choke or suffer grave internal injuries, eventually killing them when they swallow them. Another issue is that helium balloons only take moments to release but they can take hundreds of years to biodegrade, polluting our waterways and shorelines. Passing this legislation will help bring attention to this problem, protect marine life, and reduce litter.

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

Cummings states that helium filled balloons pose unnecessary threats to marine life, and wildlife when they ingest the debris or become entangled by it. Many animals have lost their lives or their freedom because of balloons. As an example, she states how Pharoah, a resident Peregrine Falcon, lost his left wingtip to a balloon entanglement. He hung in a tree desperately struggling to free himself as the balloon ribbon only wrapped tighter sealing his fate. This is why she urges the passing and support of this bill- one, being the overdue protection of wildlife and marine life and two, the conservation of a finite critical resource necessary for life-saving medical use and supporting scientific innovation.

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

Susan Eastwood, an environmental advocate and parent from Ashford, submits testimony supporting S.B. 452, a bill to ban the sale of helium for filling lighter-than-air balloons. She argues that helium balloons contribute significantly to plastic pollution, often ending up tangled in trees or waterways, where they harm wildlife and break down into microplastics that can be ingested by animals. As well as, because helium allows balloons to travel long distances, the environmental impact is widespread. Eastwood also emphasizes that helium is a finite, non-renewable resource essential for critical uses like medical equipment (e.g., MRI machines), scientific research, and technology. With global demand rising and supply shortages increasing, she argues it is irresponsible to use helium for non-essential purposes like balloons. She suggests strengthening the bill by: allowing local governments to adopt stricter regulations and adding public education at the point of sale.

### **Michael Finley, Senior Director of Government Affairs, Mystic Aquarium**

Michael Finley of Mystic Aquarium supports Senate Bill 452, which would ban the sale of helium for filling balloons starting in 2028. He argues that balloons are a significant source of marine debris, frequently harming animals like seals and sea turtles. Once released, balloons can travel long distances and end up in oceans, where wildlife may mistake them for food, leading to injury or death. He cites a 2025 case where a harp seal ingested balloon fragments, illustrating the real danger. Finley notes that beach cleanups help but are only a temporary, reactive solution. Preventing balloon pollution at the source is more effective. He also highlights that many balloons, including "biodegradable" ones, persist in the environment for long periods. Overall, Mystic Aquarium strongly supports the bill as a proactive way to reduce marine debris, protect wildlife, and improve coastal ecosystem health.

**Nathan Frohling, Director of External Affairs, The Nature Conservancy in CT**

The Nature Conservancy supports S.B. 452, a bill to ban the sale of helium for filling balloons, as part of its mission to protect biodiversity and the environment. The organization argues that balloons cause significant environmental harm, contributing to plastic pollution and microplastics, and posing serious risks to wildlife through entanglement and ingestion. Balloons can also create hazards for infrastructure, causing power outages, fires, and damage to watercraft. Additionally, helium is a limited, nonrenewable resource essential for medical, scientific, and industrial uses, and global shortages are a growing concern. The Nature Conservancy supports stricter regulation of helium balloon use and views this bill as an important step to reduce environmental damage and conserve resources.

**Annie Hornish, CT state Director, Humane World for Animals**

On behalf of Humane World for Animals, Hornish supports SB 1154, which would ban the sale of helium for balloon use, and urges strengthening the bill by also banning intentional balloon releases and adding meaningful penalties. She notes that balloon releases are a form of littering that harms wildlife animals such as seabirds, turtles, seals. Even land animals can ingest or become entangled in balloon debris, often leading to injury or death. She also highlights research showing balloons are a major cause of marine animal deaths and contribute to the growing plastic pollution crisis.

**Robert LaFrance, Policy Director, CT national Audubon Society**

Robert LaFrance of the National Audubon Society supports Senate Bill 452, which would ban the sale of helium for filling balloons. He argues that balloons are especially dangerous to wildlife—particularly birds—because they contribute to plastic pollution through ingestion and entanglement. While not the most common type of plastic waste, balloons are described as the most deadly. A cited study found that birds that ingest balloon fragments are 32 times more likely to die than those that ingest hard plastic. LaFrance urges lawmakers to pass the bill, noting that similar efforts have been proposed for years. He emphasizes that doing so would help protect bird populations and support conservation efforts central to Audubon’s mission.

**Nicole Rivard, Government Relations Manager, Friends of Animals**

Rivard, supports SB 452, arguing that banning helium for balloons would prevent them from floating away and becoming harmful litter. She argues the bill may be easier to enforce than banning releases outright, though both approaches are supported. Evidence from other states suggests that similar laws reduce balloon litter over time. Finally, Rivard emphasizes her disagreements with the statement that balloons biodegrade quickly, stating that even “biodegradable” balloons can persist for long periods due to chemical additives.

The following individuals and organizations also expressed support for this bill for similar reasons stated above.

**Joshua Levin, Advocacy Manager, CT Votes for Animals**

**Shirley McCarthy, Md PhD, Professor, Yale Medicine**

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

**Over 65 Citizens expressed support for the bill.**

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

### **Gloria Carrasquillo, Sophie's Party Supplies LLC**

Owner of Sophie's Party Supplies, Gloria Carrasquillo opposes banning helium for balloons, arguing it would harm small businesses in Connecticut that rely on balloon sales and decorations for income. She emphasizes that helium balloons are a long-standing part of celebrations and bring joy to people. Carrasquillo contends that responsible businesses should not be penalized for the actions of individuals who improperly release balloons, and call for alternative solutions instead of a full ban.

### **Christopher Edwards, Owner, Beach Party Balloons**

Christopher Edwards, owner of Beach Party Balloons in Milford, opposes SB 452, arguing that banning helium sales would harm local businesses without effectively solving balloon pollution. He warns that customers may simply buy helium or balloons from other states or online, hurting Connecticut businesses while doing little to reduce debris. Instead, he proposes a "responsible-use" approach—such as banning intentional releases, requiring balloon weights, and providing clear "do not release" messaging—to address environmental concerns while preserving business activity and consumer choice.

### **Patricia Jurgielewicz, Owner, Balloon Whimzy LLC**

Patty Jurgielewicz, owner of Balloon Whimzy in Easton, opposes SB 452, arguing that banning helium for balloons would harm small businesses like hers that rely on balloons for events and celebrations. She emphasizes that professional balloon businesses promote responsible use—discouraging releases and encouraging safe handling and disposal—and should not be penalized for misuse by others. She also warns that the ban would push customers to buy from out-of-state or online sellers, hurting local businesses without reducing demand or changing behavior. Instead of a ban, she advocates for balanced solutions such as public education, responsible-use practices, and enforcement of existing laws.

### **Anthony LoConte, National Sales Manager, Mayflower Distributing**

Anthony LoConte, speaking for Mayflower and Associated retailers, opposes SB 452, arguing that banning helium for balloons is too broad and would unfairly burden responsible businesses and consumers. He notes that many businesses already follow safe practices—weighting, securing, and properly disposing of balloons—and can educate customers on responsible use. A blanket ban, he argues, would mostly affect local stores and neighborhoods that provide balloons for celebrations without effectively addressing improper disposal. Instead, he advocates for practical alternatives focused on education, awareness, and collaboration with retailers to protect the environment while supporting local commerce.

### **Sonny Meza, Owner, Lux Poppin LLC**

Sonny Meza, owner of Lux Poppin, strongly opposes SB 452, he emphasizes that Connecticut already restricts intentional balloon releases, and professional balloon businesses use helium responsibly—weighting, securing, and managing balloons for events like birthdays, graduations, and community celebrations. SB 452 would unfairly punish these lawful businesses, cutting off a major service line and harming small and women-owned businesses disproportionately.

**Lucia Naar, Owner, Lucy Surprises LLC**

Lucia Naar, founder of Lucy Surprises LLC in Meriden, opposes the bill and advocates for targeted solutions—public education, reinforced rules against releases, clearer consumer guidance, and responsible-use standards—so environmental protection and support for small businesses can both be achieved.

**Tim Phelan, President, CT Retail Network**

Phelan, president of the CT Retail Network, argues that SB 452 is overly broad and not well-targeted, noting that balloon debris makes up less than 1% of litter in Connecticut. As well as, emphasizes that there are roughly 42,000 retail establishments in CT, and in total the retail industry produces approximately 14% of CT total GDP. Retail businesses are indispensable to the CT economy, supporting more than 470,000 jobs and contributing more than \$34 billion to the state's economy. He warns that banning in-state helium sales would likely shift purchases to neighboring states or online, disadvantaging local retailers and reducing their ability to promote responsible use. Instead, Phelan recommends targeted solutions—education, retailer partnerships, and enforcement of existing laws against intentional releases—to protect the environment while supporting local businesses and responsible consumer choice.

**Keith Ramsdell, President, American Compressed Gases Inc.**

The president & CEO of American Compressed Gases, Inc. & Dry Ice Corp., based in Branford, opposes sb 452, warning that banning helium for balloons would devastate their business, threaten 48 local jobs, and put nearly \$27 million in Connecticut revenue at risk. Helium balloon sales are the primary driver of their Branford facility, which also supports critical dry ice and industrial gas operations for major clients like Pfizer, Sikorsky, and LabCorp. Closing the facility would disrupt these essential supply chains. While supportive of environmental protection, the CEO argues for a balanced, responsible-use approach—zero tolerance for intentional releases, weighted balloons, and consumer guidance—rather than a broad helium ban that harms local businesses and employees.

The following individuals and business expressed opposition to the bill for similar reasons stated above.

**Michele Risso, Owner, CT Balloon Creations**

**Nicole Roy, Owner, Balloontown LLC**

**Ashley Sodipo, Founder, Pink Flamingo Party Co.**

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

**Kory LoPresto, Financial Analyst, Frame it Easy**

**Over 100 Citizens expressed opposition to the bill.**

**Reported by: Luna Romani**

**Date: 03/26/2026**