

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

POST OFFICE BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

**Testimony of**  
**SUZANNE D. CASE**  
**Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committee on**  
**JUDICIARY**

**Wednesday, February 24, 2021**  
**9:45 AM**  
**State Capitol, Via Videoconference**

**In consideration of**  
**SENATE BILL 347, SENATE DRAFT 1**  
**RELATING TO LITTER CONTROL**

Senate Bill 347, Senate Draft 1 proposes to prohibit the intentional release of balloons inflated with a gas that is lighter than air. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (“Department”) supports this bill and provides the following comments.**

The Department recognize the deleterious impacts that marine debris, including balloons, has on wildlife and their habitats, leading to an alarming natural resource concern throughout the state. Marine debris harms land and ocean-based habitat through smothering and abrasion and impacts a variety of wildlife through ingestion and entanglement.

A study conducted by the University of Tasmania (research conducted outside of Hawaii) found that 1 in 3 birds out of a sample of 1,733 sea birds, representing 51 different species, had ingested plastic marine debris. Balloons, as soft plastics, posed the highest risk for the sea birds since they can cause fatal obstruction. Sea turtles, as well, were susceptible to mortality from soft plastics, due to experiencing a blockage through the gastrointestinal tract lasting anywhere between 4 to 6 months. Gut-content studies from Australia have indicated that turtles may selectively ingest balloons and other soft plastics due to their similar appearances to a species of jellyfish consumed by all species of turtles.

The negative impact of ingestion is compounded by the fact that plastics of all sizes absorb and release Persistent Organic Pollutants, toxic chemicals which adversely affect the health and longevity of marine organisms.

**SUZANNE D. CASE**  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

**ROBERT K. MASUDA**  
FIRST DEPUTY

**M. KALEO MANUEL**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES  
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION  
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT  
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS  
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT  
ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

Although a large amount of marine plastic debris arrives from the ocean, it is all of our responsibility to reduce the amount of plastic debris entering and re-entering our ocean and beaches. Senate Bill 347, Senate Draft 1 would help reduce the balloon waste load entering Hawaii's waters and shorelines and contribute to the improved health of our wildlife and their habitats.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

**SB-347-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/22/2021 10:47:35 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/24/2021 9:45:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Hawaii Reef and Ocean Coalition	Testifying for Hawaii Reef and Ocean Coalition	Support	No

Comments:

To: The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair,

The Honorable Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair, and Members of the

Senate Committee on Judiciary

Re: Hearing SB 347 SD1– RELATING TO LITTER CONTROL

Wednesday February 24, 2021, 9:45 a.m., by videoconference

Position: **Strong Support!**

The HAWAI'I REEF AND OCEAN COALITION – HIROC – was formed in 2017 by coral reef scientists, educators, local Hawaii environmental organizations, elected officials, and others to address a crisis facing Hawaii's coral reefs and other marine life. Plastic marine debris is one of a handful of topics HIROC is testifying on that affect the health of coral reefs and other aquatic life.

One type of marine debris that is especially lethal to marine life is balloons filled with gases lighter than air, which often end up in the ocean in Hawaii. Sea birds, turtles, and marine mammals are often killed by ingesting balloons they think are food or by getting tangled on attached ribbons. Balloons, like other plastics, absorb and release persistent organic pollutants, toxic chemicals that adversely affect the health and longevity of marine organisms. In short, these gas-filled balloons are toxic to marine life and should not be released in Hawaii. Other states, including California, Connecticut, Florida, New Jersey, Tennessee, and Virginia have prohibited the release of balloons inflated with lighter-than-air gases.

Please pass this bill! Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Hawaii Reef and Ocean Coalition (by Ted Bohlen)



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY**  
OF THE UNITED STATES

**To:** Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Members of the Committee on Judiciary

**Date:** February 23, 2021

**Re:** Support SB 347, Relating to Litter Control

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary,

The Humane Society of the United States, representing our members and supporters in Hawaii, strongly supports SB 347, legislation aimed at ending environmentally unsound balloon releases in Hawaii.

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 track 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.

Hawaii's unparalleled extensive coastline, fields, and waterways 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 things.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. We respectfully urge the committee to advance SB 347.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Vierheilig  
Hawaii State Director  
[lvierheilig@humanesociety.org](mailto:lvierheilig@humanesociety.org)

# Beach Environmental Awareness Campaign Hawai'i

P. O. Box 25284 · Honolulu · Hawai'i · 96825

(808) 393 2168 · [www.b-e-a-c-h.org](http://www.b-e-a-c-h.org)

DATE: Tuesday 23rd February, 2021

TO: Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Keohokalole and Members of the Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Suzanne Frazer, Co-Founder, Beach Environmental Awareness Campaign Hawai'i

RE: **TESTIMONY IN VERY STRONG SUPPORT OF SB347 SD1**  
Relating to litter control. Prohibits the intentional release of balloons.  
Committee meeting on Wednesday 24th February, 2020 at 9:45AM via videoconference

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Keohokalole and Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of Beach Environmental Awareness Campaign Hawai'i (B.E.A.C.H.) in very strong support of SB347 SD1 which will ban intentional balloon releases throughout Hawai'i.

This is an important and necessary bill. Just last year there was a mass balloon release on O`ahu at Nanakuli Beach Park (please see attached photos). Releasing balloons is littering. This type of litter is one of the most harmful there is to marine life. Sea turtles, albatrosses and other marine life that eat squid and jellyfish can mistake a balloon in the ocean for food (see photos). When balloons are ingested they cause blockages of the gastro-intestinal tract that then leads to starvation and death. The plastic ribbon attached to balloons is also a danger as it can cause injury or death to marine life that become entangled in it or ingest it.

It is unnecessary to release balloons into the air for celebration or commemoration of events. There are many other non-lethal ways to celebrate such as planting a tree, giving a lei or lighting a candle. B.E.A.C.H. has found that balloon litter on beaches increases particularly around May and June which is graduation time. One of our B.E.A.C.H. members was saddened to see a group of people celebrating graduation come out of a restaurant and release balloons into the air.

A number of states have passed laws related to balloon releases including California, Connecticut, Florida, Tennessee and Virginia. Several cities have also passed laws including San Francisco and Baltimore. The industry supports bans on releasing balloons (please see attached statement from the Balloon Council) because it doesn't hurt their industry as the law will not ban balloons outright - only the release is banned.

Hawai'i is a state surrounded by water and therefore it is imperative that action is taken to prevent one of the most hazardous types of litter from getting into the ocean and becoming marine debris. SB347 SD1 will achieve the goal of preventing balloon litter. More than 1500 people support this ban (please see attached petition).

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony in very strong support of SB347 SD1. Please pass this bill. Mahalo!



Suzanne Frazer.  
B.E.A.C.H. Co-Founder.





Photos this page and next page:

Over 2000 yellow and black balloons along with plastic ribbons were released (littered) into the air on 8th June, 2020 at Nanakuli Beach Park. The event was shown on the TV news.





Over 2000 balloons littered at Nanakuli Beach Park, O'ahu - June 8th, 2020

Balloon floating in ocean at Kahuku.  
After undergoing brittle fracture, it has the  
appearance of tentacles and therefore can be  
mistaken for a squid or jellyfish by sea  
animals.

photo: Thomas Engstrom



Balloons along with plastic ribbons  
collected from shoreline. The ribbons  
as well as the shredded balloons give  
the impression of jellfish.

photo: B.E.A.C.H.







## Worth the Weight: The Balloon Council says balloons should not be released.

After years of thoughtful consideration, monitoring national and international trends and getting feedback from our diverse audience of balloon related businesses and balloon friends, TBC has decided to revise our stance on balloon releases.

"In the past TBC didn't advocate for or against balloon releases, we advised people on the best practices to minimize environmental impact such as only using latex and not adding strings," said TBC Chairman Dan Flynn. "Over the years, as the social and political climates have changed, our position has also evolved. This change in stance fully recognizes the need for everyone to be as 'green' as we possibly can be to protect our planet."

The revised Balloon Release stance reads:

***Worth the Weight: The Balloon Council says balloons should not be released. Americans love balloons, but for many reasons no longer support balloon releases. Balloon makers have worked hard to share and inspire the use of Smart Balloon Practices to keep balloons available for every occasion.***

***We stand with communities by encouraging that balloons be weighted, not released outdoors, and disposed of properly when broken or deflated. Whether it's a single balloon or hundreds, let's keep them from flying away.***

***Don't let go: Inflate. Weight. Enjoy.***

TBC's goal for the past thirty years has been to support the success of the balloon industry and to ensure the continued use and enjoyment of balloons now and in the future.

TBC will continue to monitor industry trends and work closely with balloon related businesses and the communities where they reside to actively review and revise balloon release language and oppose bans on the sales and use of balloons.

We strongly encourage all balloon-related businesses to help us educate the public and the media about the importance of using Smart Balloon Practices.

Please visit our website [www.Balloonsliftup.com](http://www.Balloonsliftup.com) or contact us at (800) 233-8887, if you would like more information about the "Meet Faraday: Smart Balloon Practices" campaign.

**SB-347-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/21/2021 8:52:54 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/24/2021 9:45:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Sherry Pollack	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please pass this very important legislation.

**SB-347-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/22/2021 4:45:36 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/24/2021 9:45:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Anne Marie Jacintho	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am in support of SB 347 prohibiting balloon releases will also help those with a latex allergy as they maneuver through the many lay ax obstacles in our environment

thank you

**SB-347-SD-1**

Submitted on: 2/22/2021 6:03:43 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/24/2021 9:45:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Andrea Quinn	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

Please support SB347. So many marine animals see balloons as food, and consequently there are often reports of animals starving to death because their stomachs are filled with plastic. Balloons travel great distances, particularly those filled with helium.

Thank you,

Andrea Quinn

DATE: 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2021

TO: Chair Rhoads and Members of the Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Dean Otsuki

RE: **TESTIMONY IN VERY STRONG SUPPORT OF SB347 SD1**  
Relating to litter control  
Committee meeting on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2021 at 9:45:00AM

Aloha Chair Rhoads and Committee Members,

I am in very strong support of SB347 SD1 which would prohibit the intentional release of balloons inflated with a gas that is lighter than air.

Balloons are flying trash. They end up as pollution wherever they land. They are a threat to marine and land animals because they are colorful and are mistaken for their food. The plastic ribbons are also an entanglement hazard for animals. I've done many beach clean-ups and find dead balloons on the beach.

In addition, metallic balloons can cause a short circuit that can knock out power to thousands of residents. According to Hawaiian Electric, in 2016 there were 25 power outages on oahu affecting 37,221 customers, 3 power outages in Maui County affecting 3977 customers and 2 on Hawaii Island affecting 963 power outages. "Graduation Balloons Present Power Outage Concern", May 16, 2017, ([bigislandwatch.com](http://bigislandwatch.com))

There are other alternatives to balloons to celebrate such as blowing bubbles, writing in chalk, giving flowers or lei, having a nice meal, or planting a tree/garden.

Please pass SB347 SD1 to end the harmful practice of releasing balloons in the environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dean Otsuki". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "O".

Dean Otsuki