Memorandum of Support
Prohibiting the Intentional Release of Helium Balloons

HB 5339- AAC the Release of Helium Balloons

BACKGROUND
Helium balloons that escape into the atmosphere eventually fall back to the Earth’s surface, where they can pollute the environment and threaten marine wildlife. Latex and Mylar balloons can travel for thousands of miles before they return to the Earth’s surface.

Like other items made of plastic, balloons do not biodegrade, but instead break up into tiny microplastics. These microplastics are frequently mistaken for food and ingested by marine species including fish, birds, whales, sea turtles, and many others—often leading to a slow and painful death. Additionally, microplastics attract and accumulate toxic chemicals present in water, which can work their up the food chain, threatening wildlife and human health.

JUSTIFICATION
The States of California and New Hampshire both have laws on the books prohibiting the intentional release of any number of “lighter-than-air” balloons into the atmosphere. While Connecticut already prohibits the release of 10 or more helium balloons in a 24 hour period, this does nothing to ensure that individually sold or distributed balloons will not create a pollution hazard.

By enacting a complete prohibition on the release of balloons into the atmosphere, Connecticut can raise public awareness about the dangers of plastic ocean pollution while helping to protect our marine environment and aquatic wildlife.

RECOMMENDED CHANGES
- Include a public education component to inform consumers of the new policy at the point of sale.