

CONNECTICUT  
Land Conservation Council

Testimony on House Bill No. 6481  
Environment Committee  
Submitted by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director  
January 30, 2023

Co-Chairs Lopes and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Hochadel and Palm, Ranking Members Harding and Callahan, and members of the Environment Committee:

*The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) is the state's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, including its ~130 land trusts. We advocate for land conservation, stewardship and funding, and work to ensure the long-term strength and viability of Connecticut's land conservation community.*

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony in support of **House Bill No. 6481, An Act Concerning the Intentional Release of Certain Balloons** which would prohibit the intentional release of certain helium balloons.

Land conservation is as much about the perpetual care of the habitats and other conservation values of the land as it is about securing the legal protection of the property to begin with. Land stewardship is a huge responsibility of land trust and community park and open space volunteers and staff. Their daily work includes everything from implementing management plans, building and maintaining trails, battling invasives, monitoring for violations of conservation easements, encroachments and other illegal activity, to picking up trash.

In addition to becoming a common source of litter in the landscape and waterways of the state, helium balloons pose serious threats to the environment. Mylar balloons are not biodegradable and latex balloons can last in the environment for years. Helium balloons pose a threat to birds, fish, and other wildlife through ingestion and entanglement. Furthermore, like other forms of plastics, those balloons that do break down, become microplastics that pollute our waters and are eaten by fish and invertebrates.

Although we acknowledge enforcement challenges, we contend that HB 6481 would help to raise public awareness of the hazards these balloons pose to the environment, support stewardship of conservation lands and waters, and protect wildlife and their habitats throughout the state.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our testimony, and for all you do. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

