STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

AN ACT

RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- BALLOONS

Introduced By: Senators Sosnowski, Lynch Prata, Ruggerio, McCaffrey, and McKenney
Date Introduced: February 04, 2020
Referred To: Senate Environment & Agriculture

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Title 23 of the General Laws entitled "HEALTH AND SAFETY" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

CHAPTER 95

PROHIBITED RELEASE OF BALLOONS

23-95-1. Legislative findings.

(a) It is hereby found and declared as follows:

(1) That the release of balloons inflated with lighter-than-air gases pose a danger and nuisance to the environment, particularly to wildlife and marine animals;

(2) That many animals are attracted to the bright colors of balloons and mistake them for food which may cause an animal severe injury or death;

(3) That many animals have become entangled in balloon strings and are injured or strangled to death as a result thereof.

(b) The general assembly has determined that prohibiting the release of balloons inflated with lighter-than-air gases, statewide, is the most effective means of achieving a significant reduction in balloon debris and the environmental harm this debris causes.


(a) No person or entity shall intentionally release, intentionally organize the release of, or otherwise intentionally cause the release of a balloon inflated with a gas that is lighter than air, except for:
(1) A balloon released for scientific or meteorological purposes, on behalf of a governmental agency or pursuant to a governmental contract;

(2) A hot air balloon that is recovered after launching; or

(3) A balloon that is released and remains indoors.


Any person or entity who violates this section shall be subject to a civil penalty of up to five hundred dollars ($500) for each offense. The release of multiple balloons at one time shall be considered a single offense for the purposes of this section.

23-95-4. Regulations.

The department of environmental management shall promulgate rules and regulations as may be necessary to implement and carry out the provisions of this chapter.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect on November 1, 2020.
This act would prohibit the intentional release of a balloon inflated with lighter-than-air gas. The prohibition would not apply to: a balloon released for scientific or metrological purposes on behalf of a governmental agency or pursuant to a governmental contract; a hot air balloon that is recovered after launching; or a balloon that is released and remains indoors. A person or entity that violates this provision would be subject to a civil penalty of up to five hundred dollars ($500) for each offense. The release of multiple balloons at one time would be considered a single offense. This act would take effect on November 1, 2020.