

**TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARC ELRICH
ON BILL 6-20, SOLID WASTE (TRASH) – RELEASE OF BALLOONS – PROHIBITED**

July 28, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Adam Ortiz. I am the Director of the Department of Environmental Protection. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of County Executive Marc Elrich regarding Bill 6-20, which would prohibit the release of balloons into the environment except under certain limited circumstances.

The Department does not receive many complaints about this issue. Nonetheless, it is consistent with our desire to prevent waste from entering the environment rather than cleaning it up after it does. As noted in the introduction of the bill, the release of balloons can harm farms, water bodies, and wildlife.

The proposed outreach to businesses and organizations that can convey the message that the release of balloons is illegal should help minimize the instances when this does occur. While enforcement of this bill may be challenging, the Department's Environmental Compliance Group will investigate situations where balloons are released provided evidence is available to determine the source of the release.

One amendment we would propose to the bill relates to the definitions. As drafted, the bill exempts government and government agencies from regulation. There is an exemption for the release of balloons "used for scientific or meteorological purposes." Other than for this stated exemption, there is no reason the law should not apply to government and government agencies.

I would be happy to address any questions the Council may have.