



Reducing Plastic Foam Pollution

Support: LD 289

An Act to Prohibit the Use of Certain Disposable Food Service Containers

Sponsored by: Rep. Stanley Zeigler of Montville

Co-sponsored by: Sen. Justin Chenette of York, Rep. Robert Alley of Beals, Rep. Lydia Blume of York, Rep. Michael Devin of Newcastle, Rep. Victoria Doudera of Camden, Rep. Michelle Dunphy of Old Town, Rep. Nicole Grohoski of Ellsworth, Rep. Allison Hepler of Woolwich

This bill would save cities and towns money while protecting the health of Maine's people, wildlife, and environment.

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This law would prevent the sale and distribution of plastic foam food containers in Maine. In doing so, the law would save cities and towns money while protecting the health of Maine's people, wildlife, and environment.

Plastic foam is a pervasive, dangerous source of pollution.

- Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) foam is the common material used in food and drink to-go containers, which far too often become litter. The material is lightweight and thus, easily carried into the environment by wind. Exposed to the elements, EPS foam quickly breaks into very small plastic particles called microplastics.
- Microplastics are a growing threat to the health of people, wildlife, and the environment. Endocrine disruptors and carcinogens can leach from the plastic, and microplastics can cause physiological problems like starvation in some animals. Styrene, a neurotoxin and probable carcinogen, is a primary building block of polystyrene and this bill would help limit our exposure to this toxic compound.
- Studies have shown that a variety of toxic chemicals attach to microplastics in the ocean, including polystyrene. When these harmful chemicals are eaten by smaller animals, they can quickly accumulate through the food chain, showing up in alarmingly high levels in larger fish, birds, or other ocean species.
- Microplastics have been found in human stool, and more and more scientific studies are raising concerns about how these particles are affecting human health.

Plastic foam can't be easily recycled and it is expensive to deal with.

- Litter costs businesses, municipalities, clean-up groups, and schools \$11.5 billion each year in the U.S. alone.
- Plastic foam is a common contaminant found in Maine's recycling programs because people mistakenly put it in their bins. This increases costs for cities and towns and brings down the value of our recycled commodities.
- Since it's impractical to recycle EPS foam in our municipal recycling programs, all of Maine's plastic foam that doesn't end up in the environment as litter is instead burned, which could result toxic chemicals sent into our air; or it is buried in a landfill, where the plastic foam products take up lots of space as they break down over several hundred years.
- The negative effects of polystyrene are felt most by low-income and minority residents who are underserved by municipal waste systems.



Plastic foam doesn't belong in Maine's environment. Bans on foam foodware have been passed in 14 Maine towns and several major U.S. cities, including New York, San Francisco, and Oakland, California, and in countries like China and Taiwan. Compostable paper and locally recyclable materials are viable and affordable alternatives to any plastic foam product.



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