



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 5384 AND SB 229
AN ACT REQUIRING THE ELIMINATION OF SINGLE-USE STYROFOAM CONTAINERS;
AN ACT PROHIBITING THE USE OF STYROFOAM TRAYS IN CONNECTICUT SCHOOLS

March 7, 2019

To: Honored Chairs Sen. Cohen and Rep. Demicco and Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee

From: Lori Brown, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **IN SUPPORT of HB 5384 and SB 229**, which would eliminate the use of polystyrene containers and trays.

Single-use expanded polystyrene containers fill up our landfills, endanger our wildlife and are easily replaced by biodegradable alternatives. Polystyrene waste accounts for approximately 30% of landfill space in the US. Once thrown away, these containers sit in landfills for hundreds of years. Polystyrene that does not end up in landfills often litter and pollute our waterways, urban areas and parks.

Polystyrene has proven to be a headache for recycling centers. Unlike plastic bottles that are generally clean when disposed of, polystyrene is often contaminated with food waste, and in many cases cannot be reused or recycled. Due to these challenges, **there is not a single recycling center which accepts polystyrene trays and containers of any kind in Connecticut.** This means new polystyrene containers must be continually manufactured. **Furthermore, polystyrene is made from petroleum—a dirty fossil fuel—and production involves significant greenhouse gas emissions.**

As polystyrene eventually degrades, it often breaks into small pieces, posing a hazard to wildlife. Animals that ingest polystyrene can suffer significant internal damage, and may even starve if they swallow a large enough amount, as the material cannot be digested.

Styrene and benzene, chemicals found in polystyrene trays and containers, have been identified as possible carcinogens by the Department of Health and Human Services. These chemicals can leak from trays when exposed to heat, potentially harming children. Even a small degree of risk is unwarranted, particularly when safer alternatives exist.

There are numerous biodegradable alternatives to polystyrene. Outside of reusable containers and reduced consumption, a litany of ecologically friendly options exist to replace polystyrene containers and tray. Starch, bamboo, and other biodegradable materials can fill the void left by banning harmful polystyrene materials.

In recent years, large companies like IKEA and Dell have transitioned from polystyrene packaging to more sustainable, biodegradable options. In addition, dozens of cities across the country have successfully adopted bans on polystyrene. In San Francisco, independent studies

observed a **41% decrease in polystyrene litter** in the first three years of the ban. Here in Connecticut, school districts such as Hamden and Guilford have adopted bans on polystyrene trays, citing many of the concerns raised above

It is important to note that **cities that have implemented polystyrene container bans have not suffered negative economic impacts**. A study of Seattle's ban found that no store or vendor went out of business due to the ban. Additionally, HB 5384 provides DEEP with the opportunity to create a hardship waiver, which would temporarily exempt certain businesses with a "demonstrated financial hardship" from the ban until they are able to transition away from polystyrene containers. Other municipalities, like Portland, Oregon, implemented this type of hardship waiver to great success.

It is time for Connecticut to join the growing wave of cities and communities saying no to polystyrene. On behalf of CTLCV, I urge you to **VOTE YES ON HB 5384 and SB 229**.

Sincerely,



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