



TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT of SB 99**  
AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE AND DISTRIBUTION OF  
POLYSTYRENE PRODUCTS

February 18, 2020

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

**From:** Lori Brown, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

On behalf of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters (CTLCV), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony **IN SUPPORT of SB 99** to restrict the use and distribution of polystyrene products across the state.

**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.

**SB 99 would mandate that public school districts, institutes of higher education, and charter schools discontinue the use of polystyrene trays.** This would ensure that students are not exposed to the harmful chemicals found in polystyrene products, and would force schools to find biodegradable, cleaner alternative food trays.

Here in Connecticut, school districts such as Hamden and Guilford have already adopted bans on polystyrene products, citing both health and environmental concerns. SB 99 would ensure that all school districts in Connecticut be held to this same standard of student safety and environmental responsibility.

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.

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, SB 99 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. We at CTLCV urge the committee to **SUPPORT SB 99**. Thank you for your consideration as you deliberate on this bill.

Sincerely,

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