

From: Jen Duggan <jduggan@clf.org>
Sent: Wednesday, May 01, 2019 4:48 PM
To: Amy Sheldon <ASheldon@leg.state.vt.us>
Cc: Laura Bozarth <LBozarth@leg.state.vt.us>
Subject: Senate Bill No. 113 - Polystyrene Food Service Products

Dear Representative Sheldon:

I am writing to share an update that Governor Mills signed the Maine law banning the use of polystyrene products yesterday: <https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/news/governor-mills-signs-bill-protect-health-maine-children-prohibiting-electronic-smoking-devices>. Here is an excerpt from the press release:

Governor Mills today also signed into law [LD 289 “An Act to Prohibit the Use of Certain Disposable Food Service Containers.”](#) sponsored by Representative Stanley Zeigler of Montville, which prohibits the sale or distribution of disposable food service containers made of polystyrene – more commonly known as Styrofoam – in Maine beginning January 1, 2020.

Polystyrene food containers are a significant contributor to environmental plastics pollution. Due to their light weight, they are easily windblown during waste handling processes. They then break down into microplastics, carrying toxins when ingested by wildlife where they eventually make their way into the nation’s food supply. There are at least 14 Maine towns and cities that have banned polystyrene disposable food containers at the local level and two additional towns will see their polystyrene ban take effect at the end of this month.

“Polystyrene cannot be recycled like a lot of other products, so while that cup of coffee may be finished, the Styrofoam cup it was in is not. In fact, it will be around for decades to come and eventually it will break down into particles, polluting our environment, hurting our wildlife, and even detrimentally impacting our economy,” said Governor Mills. “That is why several municipalities across the state have already taken steps to ban polystyrene. This legislation will create consistency for businesses that operate in multiple municipalities, provide ample time to adjust to the change, promote sustainable Maine-made alternative containers, and take an important step forward in protecting our environment.”

“With Governor Mills’ signature on this legislation, Maine is now leading the nation in dealing with polystyrene pollution,” said Representative Paige Zeigler, D-Montville, the bill’s sponsor. “Polystyrene is harmful to humans, it puts strain on our fish stocks and it can’t be recycled. Thankfully, there are Maine-made alternatives ready to be used. This shift to using sustainable containers and materials is a shift to a cleaner Maine.”

Also, during my testimony, you asked whether temperature played a role in the leaching of styrene from food packaging made with polystyrene. I am attaching an article from the Journal of Environmental Sciences that summarizes a study that examined the leachability of styrene from food packaging made from polystyrene, including an evaluation of the temperature effect. Notably, the researchers concluded that “[c]onsidering the toxic characteristics of styrene and leaching in water and other products, [polystyrene] material should be avoided for food packaging. Especially [polystyrene] rigid and foam cups should not be used for hot drinks.” The study “results indicate that temperature plays a major role in the leaching of styrene and other aromatic compounds” from Styrofoam cups.

Please let me know if you have additional questions.

Best,

Jen

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