

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6502

AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF CERTAIN POLYSTYRENE PRODUCTS,
THE AVAILABILITY OF SINGLE-USE STRAWS, THE RELEASE OF CERTAIN
BALLOONS AND THE COMPOSTABLE NATURE OF SINGLE-USE PRODUCE

Title: BAGS.

Vote Date: 3/12/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/3/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.
Rep. Christine Conley, 40th Dist.
Rep. Mary M. Mushinsky, 85th Dist.
Rep. Dorinda Borer, 115th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Polystyrene products, single use plastic straws and helium balloons are products that contribute to pollution, cause harm to the human health and the environment, and take thousands of years to disintegrate in a trash pile.

Prohibition of these products provide a sustainable path forward with reusable and recyclable products.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Education

Department of Education (DoE) supports the concepts of environmental initiatives. The practical idea of banning polystyrene products is challenging. Connecticut PK-12 serves 46 million lunches and 18 million breakfasts, the aggregate cost is between \$2.75M and \$3.25M. Current resources do support alternative products to include recycled trays or reusable

products. It is estimated that 90% of reusable products need to be replaced annually and does not include the infrastructure to support cleaning reusable products.

If no funding is provided to PK-12 school districts to assist with implementation of HP6502, then DoE requests exemption of PK-12 school from HB6502.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Representative Irene Haines

Connecticut's general statutes prohibit the intention release of more than ten balloons. The current general statues should be amended to prohibit the release of balloons. Balloons that end up in the environment cause damage to wildlife through entanglement or ingestion.

Balloons have been entwined in infrastructure, inclusive of power wires, can cause fires and power outages.

Ann Gadwah, Advocacy and Outreach Organizer, Sierra Club CT

Several Connecticut towns have banned Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) food containers as due to its environmental impact. EPS does not break down in the natural environment but breaks down in to microplastics in the marine environment. Sierra Club recommends strengthening the EPS section of HB6502, to remove polystyrene lunch trays from school districts and higher education prior to July 2023.

Sierra Club strongly supports the ban of single use straws. The environment is littered with tons of single use plastics. There must be an effort to eliminate single use plastic as possible.

Helium balloons pollute the environment and endanger wildlife. Like polystyrene they breakdown into microplastics. Sierra Club supports a total prohibition on helium balloon releases.

Single plastic produce bags are advertised as biodegradable or compostable. If the bags are not disposed of correctly, these bags are a danger to the environment.

Louis Rosado Burch, Citizens Campaign for the Environment

EPS recycling is not available in Connecticut. New EPS products are manufactured from virgin materials made from fossil fuels. EPS products are typically disposed of in the Municipal Waste System (MSW), contributing to the high management waste costs of municipalities.

HB6502 single use straws provide flexibility to business owners, while significantly cutting down on plastic garbage generated.

California and New Hampshire have banned the intentional release helium balloons. Connecticut currently prohibits the release of ten or more balloons in a twenty-four-hour period. Citizens Campaign for the Environment recognizes the law does not guarantee individually sold or distributed balloons do not create a pollution hazard.

Bioplastics are still plastics, a hybrid of plant-based and petrochemical products. If bioplastics are not disposed of properly, there is a significant impact on the environment.

Megan Macomber, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

Polystyrene, balloons, single use straws and single use plastic bags pose threats to wildlife and the environment. The marine environment is very susceptible to plastic contamination from microplastics to ingestion by sea life.

Bill Lucey, Soundkeeper, Save the Sound

Save the Sound conducts 70 beach cleanups every summer. The makeup of the garbage collected includes polystyrene, straws, plastic bags and balloons. The breakdown of these materials into microplastics and other chemicals are harmful to marine life in the entire food chain.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Margaret Gorman, American Council of Chemistry

American Council of Chemistry (ACC) and its members are very concerned with issue of garbage and marine debris. The ACC works with government, non-government, retail and consumers to develop means to prevent litter and marine debris.

The removal of plastics may have unintended consequences for increasing other environmental impacts.

- Alternative Litter Will Increase More than Plastics Decline
- Alternatives Likely to Increase Environmental Impacts
- Compostable Packaging Does Not Reduce Litter and Composting Infrastructure is Lacking

ACC supports reducing landfill disposal, marine debris and litter requires a variety of tools. Improving waste management and increases in recycling is key to addressing these issues.

Erica Biagetti, President, School Nutrition Association of Connecticut

The Office of Fiscal Analysis' 2019 Impact Statement on the cost of eliminating polystyrene trays in schools estimated an additional cost of between \$1.9 and \$2.7 million statewide. Child nutrition programs are the "first line of defense" against child hunger. Under normal circumstances, approximately 40% of school districts operate at a loss or break even. Without additional funding to offset the cost of critical programs, the pressure to feed Connecticut's children is immense.

Connecticut Association of School Business Officials

Paper trays cost three to five times more than polystyrene trays. The selection of paper trays is limited. Reusable trays are another suggestion, many districts do not have the infrastructure to clean or a large percentage are disposed of thus need replacement.

School districts have few alternatives. The increase to school districts is significant. School districts will have to increase the cost of meals or request increased financial support from taxpayers.

Connecticut Restaurant Association

The Connecticut Restaurant Association (CRA) represents 8,500 restaurants and 160,000 restaurant and foodservice employees. Many of CRA's restaurants have transitioned from polystyrene packaging and eliminated the use of plastic straws. Others do not have the financial resources to make the transition, as they are struggling to survive. CRA supports the ability of business owners to make the best choice.

Reported by: Steve Smith

Date: 3/17/21