



BAN EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE

Ban expanded polystyrene food service containers

Senate Bill ### | House Bill ###



DID YOU KNOW? Single-use foam containers made from expanded polystyrene (EPS) are a serious environmental problem. Inexpensive and nearly indestructible, it degrades into increasingly smaller pieces, absorbs toxic chemicals, and marine animals easily mistake it for food.

People litter EPS more than any other waste product. In some locations, it makes up the majority of waste found in streams, and is the second-most form of debris on many beaches. A World Economic Forum study estimates there will be more plastic in the oceans than fish by weight in 30 years if nothing is done to stop this crisis.

Two Maryland counties already have banned EPS food service products with little or no impact on consumers and businesses. Foam products are easily replaced with a wide variety of recyclable and compostable food ware which is constantly improving as demand grows for more environmentally-friendly containers.

In 2018, Maryland should join the growing number of communities worldwide who have banned single-use EPS.

WHAT IS EPS?

Polystyrene is a petroleum-based plastic derived from styrene and benzene. Single-use food service containers and loose-fill packaging “peanuts” are made from *expanded* polystyrene (EPS). EPS is made from polystyrene beads stretched out through a steaming and molding process, then cut into a wide variety of products. EPS is often incorrectly called Styrofoam®, a trademarked name for a blue, dense foam mostly used as a construction product.

WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF THE EPS FOAM CRISIS?

Unfortunately, the lightweight durability of EPS makes it one of the most pervasive forms of trash pollution on Earth. Easily broken up and carried by wind and rain into storm drains and waterways, EPS degrades into increasingly smaller bits known as microplastics that absorb contaminants such as oil, and other toxics such as PCBs and hydrocarbons. Microorganisms such as plankton consume these foam bits, integrating EPS into food webs in ever-increasing concentrations that include fish eaten by humans.

The sheer amount of EPS used worldwide is staggering: in the U.S. alone, we use 25 billion foam cups every year.

WHY NOT RECYCLE EPS?

While EPS theoretically may be recycled, the cost to do so is higher than producing it in the first place. Its fragility makes it difficult to clean, and transporting a product that is 95% air is not economically feasible. Consequently, it ends up in the environment or in landfills, where it takes up as much as 30% of diminishing space. Finally, burning EPS creates toxic pollutants and ash residue.

The best solution is to dramatically decrease our use of EPS by banning single-use products NOW!

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

For more information or to volunteer, contact us:

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