



American
Sustainable
Business
Network

Date: May 10, 2026

To: Chair Jesse Bjorkman
Senate Labor & Commerce Committee
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

cc: Senator Kelly Merrick, Vice Chair
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson, Member
Senator Forrest Dunbar, Member
Senator Robert Yundt, Member

From: Martin Wolf
Advisor, Safer Chemicals & Circular Economy
American Sustainable Business Network
712 H Street NW
Washington, DC

RE: Testimony in support of HB.25 - An Act relating to disposable food service ware and containers provided by customers

Dear Chair Bjorkman:

On behalf of American Sustainable Business Network (ASBN), thank you for this opportunity to testify **in support** of HB.25 - An Act relating to disposable food service ware and containers provided by customers. In presenting this testimony I will bring to the Committee's attention six facts about polystyrene food containers:

- *Polystyrene is a polymer made from the monomer styrene, a human carcinogen*
- *Polystyrene is not widely recycled and contributes to plastic waste*
- *Polystyrene forms microplastic particles that have spread throughout our environment*
- *Polystyrene persists in the environment*
- *Cost-effective replacements for polystyrene food packaging are widely available*

Therefore, there is no credible reason to manufacture, sell, offer for sale, or distribute in the State of Alaska food product packaging that contain polystyrene.

Importantly, businesses have packaging solutions that do not contain polystyrene and there are additional opportunities to incentivize economic opportunities with safer alternatives.

American Sustainable Business Network (ASBN)

ASBN is an organization of businesses and investors, including the Sustainable Business Network of Massachusetts. We are committed to sustainability and regenerative policies like transitioning from fossil fuels to clean energy, from extractive farming to regenerative agriculture, from chemicals of harm to safer chemicals, from a single-use economy to a regenerative, circular economy. ASBN and its member associations collectively represent over 200,000 businesses across the country, including Alaska, spanning all industries and sizes. Through strategic partnerships, ASBN continues to champion education, advocacy, and systemic economic transformation, proving that sustainable business is smart business.

In presenting this testimony, I come before you as a chemist, which science I have studied and practiced most of my adult life, as an Advisor on Safer Chemicals & Circular Economy to ASBN, and as a citizen of the United States who values the health of its people, its natural beauty, and the delicate balance we are striving to achieve between maintaining its health, its beauty, and its economic vitality.

POLYSTYRENE CONTAINS STYRENE, A HUMAN CARCINOGEN

The styrene monomer (from which polystyrene is made) is "reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen".¹ Styrene monomer and styrene oligomers (molecules that consist of a few styrene units) in polystyrene containers used for food packaging have been found to migrate into the food.^{2,3}

¹ [National Toxicology Program \(10 June 2011\). "12th Report on Carcinogens". National Toxicology Program.](#)

² Guazzotti, V.; Hendrich, V.; Gruner, A.; Fiedler, D.; Störmer, A.; Welle, F. Styrene Migration from Polystyrene for Food Contact: A Case Study on the Processing Chain of Yoghurt Pots. *Appl. Sci.* **2024**, *14*, 9056. <https://doi.org/10.3390/app14199056>

³ Sakamoto, Hiromi; Matsuzaka, Ayako; Itoh, Rimiko; Tohyama, Yuko (2000). [Quantitative Analysis of Styrene Dimer and Trimers Migrated from Disposable Lunch Boxes]. *Journal of the Food Hygienic Society of Japan* (in Japanese). **41** (3): 200–205. [doi:10.3358/shokueishi.41.200](https://doi.org/10.3358/shokueishi.41.200)

Polystyrene microparticles have also been shown to impact male reproductive health, negatively impacting sperm production and erectile processes.⁴

Therefore, styrene migrating from food packaging into food presents a risk of harm to human health.⁵

POLYSTYRENE CONTRIBUTES TO PLASTIC WASTE

Polystyrene foam is not widely recycled because its low density (polystyrene foam used in food packaging is over 90% air) makes it uneconomical to recover. As a consequence, polystyrene is one of the largest sources of plastic pollution in the environment. Due to its low density, polystyrene foam blows in the wind and floats on water

POLYSTYRENE FORMS MICROPLASTIC

Polystyrene has become a widespread microplastic pollutant in oceans globally via the degradation of construction waste, food packaging, landfill runoff, and other sources.⁶ Polystyrene breaks down via weathering and photodegradation into nano- or microplastic particles, which can enter the food chain and harm living organisms.⁷

POLYSTYRENE PERSISTS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Polystyrene is not biodegradable. Polystyrene is inert to hydrolysis, preventing rapid degradation. Therefore, polystyrene can exist in the natural environment for long periods. One study showed that polystyrene degradation was less than 1% after 90 days in cultivated soil containing a variety of fungi, microorganisms, and invertebrates, with no significant increase in degradation thereafter. Indeed, polystyrene may require several hundred years for complete degradation.⁸

⁴ Bhandare, S. D., et al. (2024). Exploring the impact of polystyrene microplastics on human health: unravelling the health implications of polystyrene microplastics (PS-MPs): a comprehensive study on cytotoxicity, reproductive health, human exposure, and exposure assessment. *Toxicology Research*, 13(2). <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11033556/>

⁵ M.I. Banton, J.S. Bus, J.J. Collins, E. Delzell, H.-P. Gelbke, J.E. Kester, M.M. Moore, R. Waites & S.S. Sarang (2019) Evaluation of potential health effects associated with occupational and environmental exposure to styrene – an update, *Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health, Part B*, 22:1-4, 1-130, DOI: 10.1080/10937404.2019.1633718

⁶ Kai Zhang, Amir Hossein Hamidian, Aleksandra Tubić, Yu Zhang, James K.H. Fang, Chenxi Wu, Paul K.S. Lam, Understanding plastic degradation and microplastic formation in the environment: A review, *Environmental Pollution*, Volume 274, 2021, 116554, ISSN 0269-7491, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envpol.2021.116554>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ho BT, Roberts TK, Lucas S. An overview on biodegradation of polystyrene and modified polystyrene: the microbial approach. *Crit Rev Biotechnol*. 2018 Mar;38(2):308-320. doi: 10.1080/07388551.2017.1355293. Epub 2017 Aug 1. PMID: 28764575.

Animals do not recognize polystyrene foam as an artificial material and may often mistake it for food.⁹ It can have serious effects on the health of birds and marine animals that swallow significant quantities.¹⁰ Juvenile rainbow trout exposed to polystyrene fragments show toxic effects in the form of substantial histomorphometrical changes.¹¹

COST-EFFECTIVE REPLACEMENTS FOR POLYSTYRENE FOOD PACKAGING ARE WIDELY AVAILABLE

Food establishments have been substituting polystyrene for decades now. McDonald's stopped using polystyrene packaging in 1990. More businesses have made and are making the transition to alternative materials in response to their customers who are concerned about the negative health and environmental consequences of polystyrene. Businesses are afforded a competitive advantage to make the change because it enhances revenues that come from a growing customer base of people who want safer alternatives. Consumers are increasingly demanding biodegradable, compostable service ware. Some businesses in Alaska are seeing up to a 15% increase in repeat customers after making the transition, reporting higher customer satisfaction and loyalty. Costs of compostable service ware are cost-neutral or cost positive because of the wide and growing availability of alternatives to polystyrene, bulk purchasing discounts, and higher sales volumes from consumers who prefer safer alternatives.

Over a dozen states including California, Oregon, Colorado, New Jersey, and New York have restricted the use of polystyrene food packaging. These bans have not burdened restaurant or retail establishments, and have not resulted in increased costs of food in these states.

In Conclusion

American Sustainable Business Network corporate members and other responsible businesses already exclude polystyrene foam from their food and other packaging. They do not use, and there is no need for them to use, substances that are known or likely to cause cancer, to express reproductive toxicity, or to be persistent and toxic in our environment.

⁹ Hofer, Tobias N. (2008). *Marine pollution: new research*. New York: Nova Science Publishers. p. 59. [ISBN 978-1-60456-242-2](#).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Karbalaeei, Samaneh; Hanachi, Parichehr; Rafiee, Gholamreza; Seifori, Parvaneh; Walker, Tony R. (September 2020). "[Toxicity of polystyrene microplastics on juvenile *Oncorhynchus mykiss* \(rainbow trout\) after individual and combined exposure with chlorpyrifos](#)". *Journal of Hazardous Materials*. **403** 123980. doi:10.1016/j.jhazmat.2020.123980. PMID 33265019. S2CID 224995527



By prohibiting the use of polystyrene foam in food packaging, Alaska would be protecting the public health of its citizens and its environment and fulfill the aspiration of the state to reduce exposure of its citizens and vulnerable populations such as children, to toxic chemicals, particularly when safer alternatives exist.

We urge legislative support for HB 25 because it is an important step toward addressing the plastics crisis that threatens Alaska's oceans and waterways, food sources, and health.

Thank you for your attention to, and consideration of, these comments.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin Wolf
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American Sustainable Business Network