

175 South Franklin Street, Suite 418 Juneau, Alaska 99801 USA

February 19, 2025

Representative Ashley Carrick Chair, Alaska House State Affairs Committee State Capitol Room 406 Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Oceana support for HB 25

Dear Chair Carrick and Committee Members,

Oceana supports HB 25 to reduce plastic pollution in Alaska by prohibiting state procurement of single-use polystyrene foam food ware and eliminating its use by restaurants and food carts, with certain exceptions. This bill mirrors local actions in the communities of Bethel, Cordova, and Seward and reflects the growing consensus around the harm plastics cause to our environment, food safety, and human health.

Plastics have been found around Alaska. Plastic pollution has been found in glaciers in Southeast Alaska, rivers and lakes in Southcentral, ocean waters, and even in Arctic sea ice. Polystyrene foam is one of the major types of plastic pollution worldwide. Because it is both lightweight and brittle, it easily breaks into smaller pieces, is scattered by wind or water, and is incredibly difficult to clean up.

The oceans are facing a plastics crisis. Scientists estimate that 33 billion pounds of plastics pollute the world's oceans every year¹ and polystyrene foam contributes to the 170 trillion microplastic particles floating in our oceans.² Marine mammals, fish, seabirds, shellfish, and other ocean wildlife can mistake foam for food, consuming pieces that can carry toxic chemicals or block the digestive system, which can lead to malnutrition or starvation.

Plastics can also affect human health. Studies show plastics are in our water, beer,³ honey,⁴ salt,⁵ meat,⁶ fish,⁷ vegetables,⁸ and even in our bodies. Styrene, the building block of polystyrene foam, is a probable carcinogen^{9,10} that can increase the risk of cancer and it and other chemicals in polystyrene foam can leach into food and beverages or be released into the air.^{11,12,13,14}

Without preventative actions, plastic production is projected to triple by mid-century and the amount of plastic entering the ocean could also triple.^{15,16} Plastic production, including

polystyrene foam, must be reduced at the source. Recycling is not the answer, as only 1% or less of plastic foam waste is recycled each year in the United States.¹⁷

Policies like HB 25 that reduce the use of harmful single-use plastics are the most effective way to address the growing plastics crisis. We request your support of HB 25 to move the bill out of Committee.

Sincerely,

Jamie Karnik Pacific Communication Manager Oceana

Sources:

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