

March 13, 2025

Representative Zack Fields
Co-Chair, Alaska House Labor and Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 24
Juneau AK, 99801

Representative Carolyn Hall
Co-Chair, Alaska House Labor and Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 434
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Oceana support for HB 25

Dear Co-Chairs Fields, Hall and Committee Members,

Oceana supports House Bill 25 (HB 25) to reduce plastic pollution 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 similar actions taken by other states, including Washington and Oregon, and reflects the growing consensus around the harm plastics cause to our environment, food safety, and human health.

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 enter the world's oceans every year from land based sources alone¹ 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

According to a February 2025 poll conducted by Oceana, 80% of U.S. voters support state and local policies like HB 25 that reduce single-use plastic foam. Our polling also found that plastics are truly a nonpartisan issue, with most Republican, Democrat, and Independent voters expressing concern about the impacts of plastic pollution on our oceans and health and supporting measures to reduce single-use plastic.

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 Communications Manager
Oceana

Brianne Mecum
Senior GIS and Policy Analyst
Oceana

Sources:

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