

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 17-0011R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmember Cohen, President Young, Councilmembers Henry, Bullock,
Scott, Dorsey, Pinkett, Burnett, Sneed, Reisinger, Clarke, Middleton
Introduced and adopted: February 27, 2017

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION CONCERNING

Request for State Action – Support SB 186/ HB 229

FOR the purpose of calling on the General Assembly to enact, and the Governor to sign, SB 186/
HB 229, or similar legislation banning the use of polystyrene foam food containers to protect
Marylanders from the unsustainable costs these containers currently impose on our personal,
environmental, and economic health.

Recitals

Polystyrene foam, commonly called Styrofoam, is well established to have disproportionate
negative impacts on our communities. Although often on paper the cheapest alternative for some
purposes, the costs it imposes on human health, our waterways, environmental sustainability,
climate stability, and our economy as a whole make it a far too expensive product for
Marylanders once these true costs are factored in.

Despite its common use as a food container, the main chemical in Styrofoam, styrene, has
been found to contain carcinogenic chemicals and is linked to increased risks of tumors,
leukemia, lymphoma, and miscarriages. Its persistence as it accumulates through the food chain
allows it to be immediately dangerous when food is heated in Styrofoam containers, and even
more dangerous when consumers eat seafood taken from styrene polluted waters.

Not only do the most dangerous chemicals in Styrofoam persist over time, the containers
themselves do not meaningfully break down for 500 years or more. This makes the impact of
littered Styrofoam containers much more severe than that of discarded paper containers used for
the same purposes. According to a recent column in the *Baltimore Sun*, “Though it’s only 1
percent of all waste, [polystyrene] makes up 10 percent to 40 percent of litter found in streams.
In our own Baltimore City, nearly 420,000 polystyrene containers have been collected in the
Jones Falls Water Wheel since May 2014. That’s more than one for every adult in Baltimore”.
And this litter will continue to clutter up our streets, streams, and landscapes for half a
millennium or more unless it is removed.

Further, Styrofoam is a petroleum product and therefore is non-renewable and
non-sustainable. Its production uses greenhouse gases that are harmful to the ozone layer,
making its contributions to global warming even more severe than for many other petroleum
products.

All of these impacts, in turn, damage Maryland’s economy by reducing health and
productivity, lowering property values, and undermining the significant segments of our
economy that depend on the health of the Chesapeake Bay and other waterways.

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

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1 Styrofoam pollutes our waterways and contains toxic carcinogens that poison our food,
2 drinking water, and air. If we continue to rely on Styrofoam, we rely on fossil fuels and
3 accelerate climate change. The costs imposed by this “cheap” packaging option are simply too
4 high to be borne. We must choose safer and healthier alternatives this year.

5 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
6 Council calls on the General Assembly to enact, and the Governor to sign, SB 186/ HB 229, or
7 similar legislation banning the use of polystyrene foam food containers to protect Marylanders
8 from the unsustainable costs these containers currently impose on our personal, environmental,
9 and economic health.

10 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor, the
11 Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City House and Senate Delegations to the
12 Maryland General Assembly, the President of the Maryland Senate, the Maryland House
13 Speaker, the Mayor, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.