



City of Baltimore

City Council
City Hall, Room 408
100 North Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Legislation Text

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*** Warning:** This is an unofficial, introductory copy of the bill.
The official copy considered by the City Council is the first reader copy.

Introductory*

City of Baltimore Council Bill R (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Cohen

A Resolution Entitled

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. It's persistence as it accumulates through the food chain allows it 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, th 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. It's 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.

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

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the Council calls 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.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor, the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City House and Senate Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly, the President of the Maryland Senate, the Maryland House Speaker, the Mayor, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.