

February 19, 2025

The Honorable Ashley Carrick, Chair
Members, House State Affairs Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Subject: HB 25 – An Act Related to Disposable Food Service Ware - OPPOSE

Dear Chair Carrick and Members of the House State Affairs Committee,

The Plastics Industry Association (PLASTICS) is the only organization that supports the entire plastics supply chain, including Equipment Suppliers, Material Suppliers, Processors, and Recyclers, representing over one million workers in our \$519 billion U.S. industry. PLASTICS advances the priorities of our members who are dedicated to investing in technologies that improve capabilities and advances in recycling and sustainability and providing essential products that allow for the protection and safety of our lives.

On behalf of the PLASTICS Industry Association, I am writing to express opposition to House Bill 25 (HB 25), which seeks to prohibit the use of polystyrene foodservice containers and mandate the use of biodegradable or compostable alternatives. This legislation would have significant negative impacts on consumer choice, small businesses, and environmental sustainability, while failing to provide viable alternatives for foodservice packaging.

Impact on Consumer Choice and Business Viability

HB 25 effectively eliminates a widely used and cost-effective packaging option for foodservice businesses and consumers. A free-market approach allows businesses to determine the most effective foodservice packaging based on performance, cost, and environmental considerations. Polystyrene foodservice containers are preferred by many businesses due to their durability, insulation properties, and affordability. Limiting this choice will impose unnecessary financial burdens on restaurants, particularly small and family-owned establishments, many of which operate on narrow profit margins.

Studies have shown that alternative packaging materials can cost significantly more. A report from the Pennsylvania Independent Fiscal Office highlighted that replacing polystyrene clamshells with alternative materials increased costs by up to 193%, while trays, plates, and bowls also saw dramatic cost increases¹. These costs will ultimately be passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices for food and beverage products.

¹ <http://www.ifo.state.pa.us/releases/381/Economic-Impact-from-Regulation-of-Single-Use-Plastics/>

Environmental and Practical Limitations of Alternatives

Several states that have implemented similar bans have faced unintended consequences. For example, in California, restrictions on polystyrene led to a surge in paper and molded fiber alternatives, which require more water and energy to produce. New York City's ban resulted in higher costs for businesses, with some small restaurants struggling to afford compliant packaging. Additionally, compostable packaging in Seattle often ended up in landfills due to inadequate composting infrastructure.

While HB 25 encourages the use of biodegradable or compostable packaging, it fails to address the practical limitations of such materials in Alaska. The reality is that biodegradable and compostable containers require specific industrial composting conditions—temperatures exceeding 140 degrees for multiple days—to properly break down. Currently, Anchorage's Solid Waste Services Curbside Compost Program and Community Compost drop-off sites do not accept foodservice containers labeled "compostable" due to processing limitations. Without adequate composting infrastructure, these materials will end up in landfills alongside polystyrene, undermining the bill's stated environmental goals.

Additionally, lifecycle analyses have demonstrated that many alternative materials, such as paper-based and molded fiber containers, have higher overall environmental impacts in terms of water and energy use, carbon emissions, and resource extraction. Simply replacing polystyrene with another material does not reduce overall waste; rather, it changes the composition of the waste stream, often increasing the environmental footprint.

Missed Opportunities for Effective Waste Management Solutions

Rather than implementing a ban that restricts consumer and business choice, Alaska should explore policies that promote waste reduction through improved recycling and recovery initiatives. The plastics industry has made significant investments in recycling programs, such as the Foam Recycling Coalition, which has expanded foam recycling access to millions of people in the U.S. and Canada. Advancing these initiatives would provide a more effective and sustainable solution than banning a single material type.

Conclusion

HB 25 imposes unnecessary costs on businesses and consumers, limits choice, and fails to provide viable alternatives given the current infrastructure. We urge the Alaska Legislature to reject this legislation in favor of policies that promote recycling and innovation while maintaining affordability and functionality for businesses and consumers.

Thank you for considering our concerns. We welcome the opportunity to work with policymakers on pragmatic, science-based solutions that advance environmental sustainability without imposing undue economic hardship. Please feel free to contact me for further discussion.

Sincerely,

Danielle Fortunato

Regional Director, State Government Affairs
Plastics Industry Association