

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6229
AN ACT CONCERNING A REDUCTION OF SINGLE-USE PLASTICS AND
Title: POLYSTYRENE WASTE.
Vote Date: 3/24/2025
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 3/17/2025
File No.: 679

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, 41st Dist.
Sen. Jan Hochadel, 13th Dist.
Rep. Hector Arzeno, 151st Dist.
Rep. Dominique Johnson, 143rd Dist.
Rep. Cristin McCarthy Vahey, 133rd Dist.
Rep. Sara Keitt, 134th Dist.
Rep. Kadeem Roberts, 137th Dist.
Sen. Saud Anwar, 3rd Dist.
Rep. Anne M. Hughes, 135th Dist.
Rep. Anthony L. Nolan, 39th Dist.
Rep. Brandon Chafee, 33rd Dist.
Rep. James Sanchez, 6th Dist.
Rep. Nicholas Menapace, 37th Dist.
Rep. Kate Farra, 20th Dist.
Sen. James J. Maroney, 14th Dist.
Rep. Frank Smith, 118th Dist.
Rep. Eilish Collins Main, 146th Dist.
Rep. Joseph P. Gresko, 121st Dist.
Rep. Michael D. Quinn, 82nd Dist.

Rep. John-Michael Parker, 101st Dist.
Sen. Christine Cohen, 12th Dist.
Sen. Jorge Cabrera, 17th Dist.
Rep. Geraldo C. Reyes, 75th Dist.
Rep. Jennifer Leeper, 132nd Dist.
Rep. Lucy Dathan, 142nd Dist.
Rep. Jonathan Jacobson, 148th Dist.
Rep. Mary M. Mushinsky, 85th Dist.
Rep. Laurie Sweet, 91st Dist.
Rep. Trenee McGee, 116th Dist.
Rep. Aimee Berger-Girvalo, 111st Dist.
Rep. Kai J. Belton, 100th Dist.
Rep. Nick Gauthier, 38th Dist.
Rep. Gary A. Turco, 27th Dist.
Rep. Michael "MJ" Shannon, 117th Dist.
Rep. Jonathan Steinberg, 136th Dist.
Rep. Kerry S. Wood, 29th Dist.
Rep. Mary Fortier, 79th Dist.
Rep. William Heffernan, 115th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Plastics and polystyrene waste present dangers to the health of humans, wildlife, and marine life, particularly when not disposed of properly. The production and disposal of plastics and polystyrene waste contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and their disposal also contributes to solid waste issues.

Substitute Language LCO 6798

The substitute language makes numerous changes, as follows: it changes the date by which entities must comply with the single-use plastics and polystyrene requirements from January 1, 2026 to July 1, 2027; it removes the requirement that DEEP annually submit a report to the Environment Committee concerning plastic and polystyrene reduction measures; it removes a requirement that DEEP conduct a study on assessing strategies for implementing a circular economy within the state and adds in the task force to study the reduction in single-use plastics in the state; it requires the Department of Consumer Protection and DEEP, in their enforcement plan for the prohibition on certain plastic products, to create a fair compliance timeline; and it adds subsection e.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection**

DEEP supports the goals of HB 6229. The reducing single-use plastic and polystyrene use and consumption is a priority. DEEP's concerns are with the resources necessary to implement some elements of the bill including the enforcement aspects of Section 1, the guidance to be developed in section 2, and the study requirements in Section 3. Section 1 has language that would require DCP and DEEP to develop a plan that provides guidance to businesses and institutions about elimination their reliance on single use plastics and establishes enforcement requirements including penalties. DEEP does not have the ability to develop this plan or enforce penalty provisions within available resources and does not have the expertise to evaluate the economic impact of reduction measures on businesses and consumers. Section 2 DEEP does not have the expertise or resources to develop guidelines requiring all state and municipal buildings to install and maintain bottle filling stations and then maintaining them. Section 3 DEEP does not have the Resources to conduct a study and submitting a report assessing strategies for implementing a circular economy in the state.

Charles M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner, CT Department of Education.

The Department of Education opposes HB 6229 because the Department estimates that the unbudgeted expenses required to conform to this bill would be significant for all districts, including CTECS. If 70% of the state made a switch to eliminating foam and using compostable trays, cutlery and 5.5 oz. cups, the impact would be \$18.7 million. Based on federal criteria, costs may not be allowable. Schools will also have to incur the cost of separate composting bins as well as carting fees to remove the composted material.

Paul Aresta, Executive Director, CT Council on Environmental Quality

The Council supports HB 6229. Polystyrene and single use plastic materials are not compostable or easily recyclable and contribute to the state's solid waste problem. The Council suggests that the proposed legislation identify a date by which the proposed plan should be developed and that additional resources be provided to DCP and DEEP to implement the provisions of the proposed bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

David Aldridge, Executive Director, Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resources Recovery Authority

Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resources support HB 6229. Their testimony is about the waste issue in the state and the financial implications that go along with all the environmental concerns. The state has a significant waste disposal shortfall. According to DEEP's Comprehensive Materials Management Strategy published in 2023, the state was processing 3.3 million tons of municipal solid waste with a per ton cost of \$81, resulting in an annual expenditure of \$267 million. The volumes have remained steady but the average per ton has risen to \$115 per ton, or an annual expenditure of \$379 million. The projection by 2030 is a per ton cost of \$130 per ton for an additional \$50 million.

Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, 41st District

Rep. Bumgardner was the lead introducer of HB 6229 because of his work at the local level in Groton as a member of the Groton Town Council. In January 2020, Groton's Town Council voted to ban single-use plastic checkout bags, plastic straws, and polystyrene food containers. Groton has been successful in transitioning to reusable plastic trays in their schools. Groton's ordinance highlighted the need for a statewide policy. Doing it municipalities, one at a time with a patchwork of regulations can create uncertainty for businesses and inconsistencies in enforcement. There are numerous concerns and questions coming from the Connecticut Public Schools, Grocery stores, Restaurants, and the farming community. Rep. Bumgardner has stated that he is committed to working with all stakeholders to make this bill workable for them and protecting our environment.

Robert LaFrance, Director of Policy, Audubon Connecticut

Audubon Connecticut supports HB 6229 because the actions that we take in Connecticut to reduce pollution from plastics can make a meaningful difference for birds and wildlife. Reported by the Ocean Conservancy, plastics affect more than 700 marine species. 180 bird species ingest plastic from oceans and beaches and the rate of consumption is only increasing. It's not just the tangible remnants of plastic items that cause problems. As they degrade into smaller bits, they often become virtually invisible, but are still toxic to the birds, fish, and sea turtles that unknowingly ingest them.

Randall Mel, Jr., Director of Food, Nutrition, and Wellness Services, Middletown Public Schools

Mr. Randall supports the intent of HB 6229. In Middletown, they have made significant strides in transitioning away from disposable food service items. Through a combination of targeted grants, city partnerships, and donor support, they have been able to replace single-use plastics with durable, reusable alternatives. Their schools are equipped with commercial dishwashers, allowing them to wash and sanitize reusables. Mr. Randall recognizes the reality is that most school districts in the state do not have access to the external funding sources that made their transition possible. Middletown's progress shows that moving away from single-use plastics is possible, but it requires thoughtful investment and long-term planning.

Wayne Pesce, CT Food Association

CT Food Association believes this legislation represents a meaningful step toward reducing single-use plastics and promoting responsible alternatives. Their concern is ensuring that there is an exemption for certain polystyrene products that are prepackaged before arriving at a retail establishment, used for raw meat or seafood, or fully encased in another material. These exemptions acknowledge consumer safety concerns and industry realities.

Many Organizations and Groups submitted Testimony in Support of H.B. 6229.

These groups, as enumerated below, believe that single-use plastics and microplastics pose significant threats to both the environment and human health, with microplastics infiltrating food, water, and air, potentially causing various health issues, while plastic production and waste contribute to landfill issues and climate change.

Betty Ball, Board Member, Skip the Plastic, Norwalk

Jeanine Behr Getz, BYOCT

J. Sterling Bobbitt, Third Act & Sierra Club

Louis Burch, Legislative Coordinator, CEA

Susan Chapin, CT Co-Coordinator, Citizen's Climate Lobby

Aziz Dehkan, Executive Director CT Roundtable on Climate

Larry Dunn, Chair Town of Groton Conservation Commission

Susan Eastwood, Chapter Chair, Sierra Club CT

Michael Finley, Sr. Director Government Affairs, Mystic Aquarium

Marc Gonzalez, Program Coordinator, Conservation Law Foundation

Michele Klimczak, Marine Debris Coordinator, Fishers Island Conservancy

Kim McIntyre, Executive Director, Aquarium Conservation Partnership

Alex Rodriguez, Environmental Justice Specialist, Save the Sound

Domenic Romanello, Associate Director of Conservation, Maritime Aquarium Norwalk

Louise Washer, President, Norwalk River Watershed Association

Jim Williams, Government Relations Director, American Heart Association

Virginia Walton, Mansfield Recycling Coordinator, Town of Mansfield

Connor Yakaitis, Deputy Director, CT League of Conservation Voters

Samuel Gold, Executive Director, River COG

Rhea Drozdenko, River Steward, Connecticut River Conservancy

116 Residents of Connecticut sent in Testimony in Support of H.B. 6229

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Lewis Dubuque, Vice President, National Waste & Recycling Association

NWRA represents a coalition of companies that engage in waste collection, recycling, and processing in Connecticut. They oppose HB6229 because, in Section 3 of the bill, DEEP is directed to conduct a study "assessing strategies for implementing a circular economy" in Connecticut without first completing an updated waste characterization study. A data-driven approach is crucial for making informed decisions for Connecticut's waste and recycling system. DEEP has agreed to conduct an updated waste characterization study, and NWRA has provided input on key parameters and metrics that should be included in this assessment. NWA believes that moving forward before DEEP's waste characterization study puts the state at risk of enacting policies that increase cost, disrupt existing infrastructure, and fail to achieve long-term environmental and economic benefits.

Danielle Fortunato, Regional Director, Government Affairs, Plastics Industry Association

The Plastics Industry Association oppose HB6229. This legislation would have significant negative impacts on consumer choice, small businesses, schools, and environmental sustainability, while failing to provide viable alternatives for foodservice packaging. Several states that have implemented similar bans have faced unintended consequences. 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 stay in business. Compostable packaging in Seattle often ended up in landfills due to inadequate composting infrastructure. Encouraging the use of biodegradable or compostable packaging fails to address the practical limitations of such materials in Connecticut. Those containers require specific industrial composting conditions with temperatures exceeding 140 degrees for multiple days. If there isn't the correct infrastructure, these materials will simply end up in landfills.

The Connecticut Hospital Association

The Connecticut Hospital Association submitted testimony in opposition of HB 6229 because Section 1 of the bill would be extremely difficult for hospitals and rehabilitation facilities to implement. Many patients in these facilities require various accommodations due to physical disabilities, and many require delivery of meals via tube-feeding for extended periods of time. It would be untenable, cost-prohibitive, and likely impossible in some cases to purchase the necessary supplies.

Paul Larson, President, Connecticut Farm Bureau

The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports the efforts to try and address the issue of single-use plastic, particularly polystyrene, in the state's waste stream but their concern is with the polystyrene products that are used in several agricultural applications. Most pots and trays used in horticulture are made of polyethylene, but nurseries already have in place some form of recycling or re-use program for these containers. Another form of polystyrene is Styrofoam. They are used as floating hydroponic systems. These Styrofoam blocks are an essential component because they float and are durable. The nurseries do reuse these several times.

Peter Myers, Senior Public Policy Associate at CBIA

CBIA opposes HB 6229 because of the potential challenges and negative impacts on business statewide. These include an Economic impact on businesses. Possible availability and viability of alternatives and the implementation timeline.

Ally Peck, Senior Manager, Environmental and Sustainability Policy, Consumer Technology Association

CTA supports interest in identifying and evaluating additional opportunities for reducing single use plastic but opposes Sec 3 of HB 6229. It is important to recognize the role that packaging plays in delivering a product whether it is protecting a high value electronic device from damage or preventing theft of small electronic devices from retail store shelves. CTA believes that any report conducted by a government agency on the evaluation of packaging used by manufacturers to sell products should include feedback from manufacturers.

Margaret M. Gorman, Senior Director, Northeast Region American Chemistry Council

The American Chemistry Council opposes HB 6229. All packaging leaves an environmental footprint regardless of the material type. Plastics can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, require less fuel to transport, and help significantly reduce food waste. Without a commercial composting facility to process compostable foodservice ware they will end up in landfills. Banning polystyrene food service products will increase costs for government entities, schools, the criminal justice system and programs for seniors and other groups supported by the state.

Dianne Houlihan, President, The School Nutrition Association of Connecticut

The School Nutrition Association of Connecticut oppose HB 6229 because of their concerns regarding the feasibility of implementing the proposed bill. Number one concern is for adequate funding and an appropriate timeline for districts to transition. The cost of commercial dishwashers which can cost \$30,000 and the extra labor involved in managing reusable items and the lack of space and infrastructure makes the implementation of these changes unfeasible in older school buildings. Without the appropriate funding there will be unintended consequences of having to reduce the quality of meals provided to students and high taxes to the municipalities to cover the higher expenses.

Several School Districts provided Testimony Opposing H.B. 6229 The following school districts oppose HB 6229 because of the same concerns as The School Nutrition Association of Connecticut and the CT Department of Education:

Eric Biagetti, Director of Food & Nutrition, Cheshire Public Schools

Diane Edwards, Director of Nutrition Services, Enfield Public Schools

Jessica Hill, Food Service Director, Woodbridge Public Schools

Pamala Listorti, Director of Operations, Old Saybrook Public Schools

Theresa Lumas, Director of Finance, Amity Regional School, District 5

Susan Maffe, Director of Food Services, Meriden Public Schools

Jennifer Varale, Director of Finance, Bethel Public Schools

Reported by: Judy Ganswindt

Date: April 8, 2025