

# Environment Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** HB-5524 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE'S MATERIALS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM.

**Vote Date:** 3/18/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/13/2026

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

### Co-Sponsors:

Rep. Aundre Bumgardner, 41<sup>st</sup> Dist.

Rep. Geraldo C. Reyes, 75<sup>th</sup> Dist.

Rep. Nick Gauthier, 38<sup>th</sup> Dist.

Rep. Joseph P. Gresko, 121<sup>st</sup> Dist.

Rep. Steven Winter, 94<sup>th</sup> Dist.

Rep. Josh Elliott, 88<sup>th</sup> Dist.

### REASONS FOR BILL:

To expand the number of entities required to source-separate organic materials from the solid waste stream, prohibit the use of polystyrene containers by restaurants, prohibit the provision of single-use food service items unless requested by a consumer, prohibit the distribution of single-use straws that contain PFAS at restaurants, require certain entities to prioritize surplus food donation over other means of disposal and establish eligible costs for material management grants issued by the state.

### SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

This language strengthens Connecticut's materials management system by requiring large food generators, institutions, and schools to separate and recycle source-separated organic materials, prioritize food donation, and report their organics recycling activities. It also bans expanded polystyrene food service ware, limits single-use items unless requested, and allows state grants to fund equipment and infrastructure supporting waste reduction, organics diversion, and food recovery.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

#### **Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection**

DEEP supports the goals of HB 5524. Sections 2 and 3 would prohibit, with some exception, single-use plastic and expanded polystyrene service items. Technically these items can be recycled, but the infrastructure does not exist in Connecticut.

Sections 1 and 4 would expand the universe of entities subject to existing Commercial Organics Recycling Law and add a requirement for those covered entities to prioritize donation of surplus edible food for human consumption prior to the use of recycling, composting, aerobic digestion, anaerobic digestion or disposal and adopt and maintain a written policy for the safe storage, handling and transfer of such food for donation. DEEP asks that you clarify the intent of the term “entity” in sections 1 and 4 as this is a term not defined in Connecticut General Statutes Section 22a-226e and could be interpreted generally as inclusive of any commercial or residential generator of food waste. DEEP has concerns regarding the language in Section 5 which proposes to identify eligible project costs for any municipal or regional materials management grant program administered by DEEP, including but not limited to materials management infrastructure or sustainable materials management grant programs. DEEP is supportive of the intent to provide incentives to expand food donation infrastructure in Connecticut and would work with the committee to refine the language.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

##### **James Desantos, Director of Legislative Affairs, CT Green Bank**

CT Green Bank strongly supports HB 5524. The experience of financing Quantum Biopower, Fort Hill Ag-Grid, and Bright Feeds makes clear that feedstock supply is an enabling condition for organics processing investment. These facilities require reliable, consistent volumes of source-separated organic material to operate efficiently and service debt. HB 5524 broadens the universe of entities required to divert organic materials from the solid waste stream, growing the feedstock base that makes facilities viable and sending market signals that attract private capital to composting and digestion solutions statewide. HB 5524 also prioritizes edible food donation before recycling or disposal is equally important and reflects the EPS Food Recovery Hierarchy’s highest impact priority. Donation prevents food from becoming waste while directly combating food rescue and creating the conditions for continued private investments in organics solutions.

##### **John Andrew Ely, Executive Director, Project Oceanology**

Project Oceanology supports HB 5524. The proposed prohibition on expanded polystyrene food service ware used by restaurants and other prepared food establishments addresses a material that is frequently observed as marine debris in coastal environments. Actions that prevent waste from entering the environment upstream are among the most effective strategies for protecting downstream water quality. These goals align closely with the Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan, which emphasizes reducing pollution entering the Sound, improving watershed stewardship, and protecting the ecological health of the estuary.

##### **Madison Spremulli, Communication Director, CT Coalition for Economic and Environmental Justice, CT Zero Waste Coalition**

CT Zero Waste Coalition Supports HB 5524 because it takes great steps to advance waste reduction but would like to see the bill strengthened by including: Funding for waste reduction initiatives. Lower the tonnage threshold in the Commercial Organics Recycling Law. Addition of “animal feed” to the categories of food donation.

**Robert LaFrance, Director of Policy for CT, National Audubon Society**

The CT National Audubon Society Supports HB 5524. Ingestion of plastics by birds is an ever-expanding problem. Researchers are using the term “plasticosis” to describe stomach damage related to ingesting trash. The word refers to a newly describe disease, marked by server stomach damage from eating little bits of plastic, in a large population of Flesh-footed Shearwaters. While the name currently applies to one population of species on one island, the risks reach much farther. There are 170 trillion pieces of plastic floating on the ocean surface, and they’re ingested by thousand of marine species.

**Julianna Larue, Organizer, Sierra Club Connecticut**

Sierra Club Connecticut supports HB5524 but recommends lowering the tonnage threshold in the Commercial Organic Recycling Law to expand the number of entities required to separate organic materials from other sold waste. Recommends strengthening section 4 by allowing food not suitable for human consumption to be donated as animal feed, benefiting farms and wildlife rescue facilities while further diverting waste from the disposal stream and urges funding for expanded materials management grants so they can invest in waste reduction initiative now.

**Jennifer Heaton-Jones, Executive Director, Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority**

Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority Supports HB 5524 as a step forward in a statewide materials management system but urge the Committee to expand this effort in incorporating residential organics, restoring and funding statewide recycling education through the RecycleCT Foundation, addressing the structural market challenges that municipalities cannot solve alone, and strengthening regional collaboration through additional grant opportunities.

**Stephanie Deason, President of the School Nutrition Association of CT**

The School Nutrition Association of CT supports HB 5524 but requests: Delay implementation to 2030, Require DEEP to Provide Standardized Tools for Districts, Guarantee Dedicated Funding for School Compliance, Allow Flexibility in Meeting Organics Diversion Requirement’s, Clarify that “Upon Request’ Requirements Do Not Apply to Schools and Ensure Donation Requirements are Feasible for Schools.

**These Organizations Support HB 5524 An Act Concerning the State’s Materials Management System:**

**David Aldridge, Executive Director, SCRRRA**

**Paul Aresta, Executive Director, Council on Environmental Quality**

**Jeanine Behr Getz, BYOCT**

**Dr. Gaboury Benoit, Executive Director, EHHI**

**James Berardino, Legislative Director COST**

**Lori Brown, Executive Director, CT League of Conservation Voters**

**National Waste & Recycling Association, Connecticut Chapter**

**Susan Eastwood, Ashford Clean Energy Task Force**

**Marc Gonzalez, Program Coordinator Conservation Law Foundation**

**Kim Hargrave, Executive Director, Pequotsepos Nature Center**

**Jessie Stratton and Kris Kuhn, Groton Conservation Advocates**

**MaryEllen Mateleska, VP of Education, Mystic Aquarium**

**Alan Siniscalchi, President, CT Association of Conservation & Inland Wetlands Commission**

**Ann Stockton, VP, Food Center, United Way of SECT  
Kimberly Stoner, PhD. Director of Advocacy, CT NOFA**

## **81 Residents of Connecticut Support HB 5524**

### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

#### **Scott Dolch, President & CEO, Connecticut Restaurant & Hospitality Association**

The CT Restaurant & Hospitality Association Opposes HB 5524. The ongoing challenges of attracting employees, inflation, and the rising cost of goods, would place additional burdens on the hospitality industry and single out restaurants and hotels for new requirements if this bill were to pass. **First**, Section 1 seeks to continue expanding the number of entities required to comply with the separation and recycling of organic materials. Subsection (5) applies the requirement to “any entity” but does not clearly define who falls under that term. We do not support adding new statutory language that lacks clear definitions and could create uncertainty. **Second**, Section 2 proposes eliminating the use of expanded polystyrene by restaurants, caterers, and other food-service establishments. But in Section 2(b) it allows schools to continue using these products. Additionally, it does not address polystyrene used in pre-packaged food, packaged raw or frozen meats, or coolers and ice chests. It is important to note that expanded polystyrene is recyclable, we just need to set up the infrastructure in Connecticut. **Third**, Section 3 mandates the single-use utensils, napkins, condiment packets, and drinking straws may only be provided upon request. Their concern is about how the “except upon request of the customer” provision would be implemented and enforced in practice.

#### **Danielle Fortunato, Regional Director, State Government Affairs, Plastics Industry Association**

The Plastics Industry Association Oppose Section 2 of HB 5524 which seeks to prohibit the use of expanded polystyrene foodservice containers in covered establishments. HB 5524 will have a significant negative impact on businesses, schools, and environmental sustainability, while failing to provide viable alternatives for foodservice packaging. Connecticut is home to companies directly operating to recycle expanded polystyrene. They state that recycling cannot be fixed overnight, but it is important that laws passed don't derail the work already being done. Banning products that provide so many benefits is counterproductive.

#### **Margaret Gorman, Senior Director, Northeast Region, American Chemistry Council**

The American Chemistry Council Opposes HB 5524. In Connecticut, the chemical industry contributes 125 million in state and local taxes and is responsible for 4,880 direct jobs, 6,875 related jobs and an additional 4,985 jobs in rubber and plastic product manufacturing. The American Chemistry Council is committed to reducing litter and improving waste management, but banning a specific material will not address the root causes of waste or litter and may create unintended environmental consequences. ACC and its members take litter and marine debris seriously. But banning polystyrene foam may simply replace one disposable material with another that is also unlikely to be recycled. Polystyrene foam foodservice containers and packaging are recyclable and are increasingly being collected and processed across the country. These innovations demonstrate that polystyrene can be part of modern circular materials management system. ACC believes the most effective way to reduce landfill disposal, marine debris, and litter is through a comprehensive approach that includes: 1. Expanding recycling access, 2. Improving waste collection and sorting

infrastructure, 3. Supporting innovation in recycling technologies, 4. Encouraging responsible consumer disposal.

**Carol Patterson, Vice President, Government Relations, Foodservice Packaging Institute**

The Foodservice Packaging Institute Opposes Section 2 of HB 5524. They recognize that foodservice packaging, like all product, has environmental impacts. Expanded polystyrene, however, is composed of approximately 95% air and uses a minimal amount of resin. When evaluated across key lifecycle metric, including water and energy use, expanded polystyrene demonstrates strong performance from an overall lifecycle perspective. Expanded polystyrene is recyclable, so we encourage the development of policy to support the expansion of infrastructure to improve the recovery of all foodservice packaging.

**Reported by: Judy Ganswindt**

**Date: March 27, 2026**