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# HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO INVESTIGATE HEALTH RISKS  
AND POTENTIAL ENERGY USES OF POLYSTYRENE FOOD CONTAINERS  
AND TO ESTABLISH STANDARDS FOR BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC FOOD  
CONTAINERS AND GROCERY BAGS.

1           WHEREAS, many types of everyday household products and  
2 materials are manufactured from various types of plastics; and

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4           WHEREAS, polyethylene is a thermoplastic polymer used in  
5 common plastic products; and

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7           WHEREAS, grocery bags manufactured from low density  
8 polyethylene do not biodegrade naturally in landfills and when  
9 improperly disposed may enter the environment as litter and pose  
10 a hazard to marine wildlife, including entanglement and  
11 ingestion; and

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13           WHEREAS, styrene is the pre-cursor to polystyrene, and is a  
14 clear colorless liquid that is derived from petroleum and  
15 natural gas by-products, but which also occurs naturally; and

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17           WHEREAS, styrene is used in the manufacture of many types  
18 of plastic materials, including food containers and packaging,  
19 computer parts, insulation, and automobile components; and

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21           WHEREAS, styrene can enter packaged foods by migration from  
22 polystyrene food containers and packaging materials, and test  
23 results are unclear as to whether the amount of styrene leaching  
24 increases when foods are heated in polystyrene containers; and

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26           WHEREAS, human data from tests are insufficient to conclude  
27 that styrene, when ingested, is toxic to normal human growth and  
28 development; and  
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1 WHEREAS, Expanded Polystyrene Foam (EPS) has air inclusions  
2 (5% polystyrene/ 95% air) which give it moderate flexibility, a  
3 low density, and a low thermal conductivity, and due to its  
4 insulation properties, it can be used as a construction  
5 material, e.g., insulation, structural insulation panels, and  
6 non-weight-bearing architectural structures; and  
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8 WHEREAS, the cost of EPS is approximately 2-3 times less  
9 that of an equivalent disposable paper container and 4-5 times  
10 less than comparable reusable food service items when all  
11 costs (equipment, labor, water, electricity and detergent) are  
12 included; and  
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14 WHEREAS, incinerated EPS converts to carbon dioxide, water  
15 vapor and a small amount of non-toxic ash; and  
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17 WHEREAS, EPS that is converted from waste to energy at  
18 facilities, such as H-Power, generates large quantities of  
19 energy, approximately 16,000 BTU/pound, which is roughly twice  
20 the amount of energy generated from coal; and  
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22 WHEREAS, Honolulu may be the only county in the state  
23 currently capable of converting EPS from waste to energy; and  
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25 WHEREAS, improperly disposed polystyrene that enters the  
26 environment as litter can create health hazards for marine  
27 wildlife; now, therefore,  
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29 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the  
30 Twenty-fifth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session  
31 of 2009, the Senate concurring, that the Department of Health  
32 (DOH) is requested to adopt rules requiring polystyrene food  
33 containers sold in the State to display a label that warns of  
34 the potential dangers of heating food in the container; and  
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36 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the DOH is requested to conduct  
37 a study, based on available research and data, that assesses the  
38 safety of polystyrene food containers; and  
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40 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the DOH is requested to form a  
41 task force to establish minimum statewide standards for  
42 biodegradability for plastic grocery bags and food containers;  
43 and  
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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the DOH is requested to conduct a study regarding the feasibility of diverting EPS from landfills to use as an energy resource for the State of Hawaii;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the DOH is requested to submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Legislature no later than 20 days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2010; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Health.

