
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



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 Hawaii Food Industry
32 Association is requested to form a working group to investigate
33 a policy, which would require polystyrene food containers sold
34 in the State to display a label that warns of the potential
35 dangers of heating food in the container; and
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37 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Hawaii Food Industry
38 Association is requested to form a working group to establish
39 minimum statewide standards for biodegradability for plastic
40 grocery bags and food containers; and
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42 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group should
43 include: a representative from each County; the Dept. of Health;



1 producers of polystyrene and plastic bags made in Hawaii;
2 affected trade organizations; and, environmental organizations.

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4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group is requested
5 to conduct a study regarding the feasibility of diverting EPS
6 from landfills to use as an energy resource for the State of
7 Hawaii;

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

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14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this
15 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Health
16 and the Hawaii Food Industry Association.

