

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS GABRIELA COLETTA ZAPATA, RUTHZEE LOUIJEUNE, BENJAMIN WEBER, DURKAN, FITZGERALD, MEJIA, MURPHY, PEPÉN, SANTANA, WORRELL AND FERNANDES ANDERSON



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO ASSESS A BAN ON POLYSTYRENE PRODUCTS IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

WHEREAS, The City of Boston has committed to the reduction of waste through the 2018 Zero Waste Boston Initiative, which dictated that the City “will reduce, reuse, recycle, and compost at least 80 to 90 percent of its solid waste”, which has resulted in projects such as our Curbside Food Waste Collection program; *and*

WHEREAS, Polystyrene is made from fossil fuels, meaning that it is not only a non-reusable form of plastic and contributes to the amount of waste in our landfills, but also is not accepted by curbside recycling in the City of Boston; *and*

WHEREAS, The City of Boston is lagging behind 60 municipalities across the Commonwealth that have banned a form of polystyrene, with ordinances in towns such as Cambridge, Newton, and Melrose and members of the Massachusetts Legislature have attempted to ban polystyrene products statewide; *and*

WHEREAS, In 2020, Newton banned single use polystyrene products in restaurants and retail establishments including both food packaging and packing materials with a progressive fine model, which has transformed into a sustainable food service, packaging and single use items ordinance that bans the use of single use containers; *and*

WHEREAS, 11 states and dozens of cities across the country have enacted polystyrene bans including Seattle, Santa Cruz, and New York City that have passed polystyrene bans over the course of the last decade; *and*

WHEREAS, Seattle, Washington has had their polystyrene ban in place for 15 years that was implemented in two phases: a styrofoam container ban and then progressed into a ban on non-recyclable and non-compostable food packaging ban six months later with support from the state of Washington; *and*

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WHEREAS, New York State has implemented one of the strongest statewide ordinances that bans both food containers and packing material and emphasizes the use of alternative reusable recyclable and compostable containers, and also provides a 12-month financial hardship waiver for non profits and smaller businesses; *and*

WHEREAS, The states and cities that have a polystyrene ban implemented a grace period and exemptions to the ban to provide an adjustment period to not burden the companies and small businesses in the area; *and*

WHEREAS, Over 5 billion pounds of styrofoam ends up in landfills and waterways each year including foam containers, cups, and packing materials, since they are not biodegradable and do not break down in the natural environment; *and*

WHEREAS, Styrene, which is the chemical used to create polystyrene, has the potential to be harmful in all parts of its lifecycle including manufacturing, consumer use, and disposal of the product and has been detected in food samples that have packaged in polystyrene containers; *and*

WHEREAS, The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has identified that styrene in some forms is “reasonably anticipated” to be a carcinogenic and moreover is highly toxic resulting in potential impacts to the central nervous system and upper respiratory tract; *and*

WHEREAS, The toxic byproducts that are produced by discarded polystyrene products in landfills or incinerators disproportionately impact low income and Black and Brown communities, since landfills and incinerators have a far higher likelihood of being located in environmental justice communities; *and*

WHEREAS, There are numerous alternatives to polystyrene products including compostable, reusable, and recyclable containers that are chemical free and less harmful for our environment, which are readily available and can be produced for our businesses in the City and have been reported to be much more cost effective in the long run in comparison to plastic products; *and*

WHEREAS, The Municipality of Honolulu produced a Polystyrene Ban Impact Study that suggested that did note that the price for customers would increase with the ban, however, only a minority of customers reported a negative reaction to price increases, and the majority of participants expressed a deeper desire to keep the environment clean and healthy; *and*

WHEREAS, The City of Boston has a responsibility to protect its environment and the health and safety of its residents, which includes harmful plastic products that are being sold and utilized in our municipality; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss the feasibility of a ban of polystyrene products in the City of Boston, and individuals and organizations including the Mayor’s Office of the Environment, Sierra Club of Massachusetts, advocacy organizations and the public be invited to testify.