

To: Senate Committee on Energy and Environment  
From: Jeanne Roy, Board Chair, Eco-School Network  
Date: February 14, 2023  
Subject: SB 543, Polystyrene Foodware

The parents and students of the Eco-School Network favor SB 543, which prohibits food vendors from using polystyrene containers for prepared food.

- The City of Portland has had a polystyrene foam ban since 1990, and it has been very successful. McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken sued the City when the ordinance was passed saying that the food containers were recyclable, but that was proven false, and they lost the suit. The city sent letters to restaurants and food vendors and had very good compliance. Since then, other cities such as Newport, Ashland, Eugene, Lincoln City, Silverton, Florence have also passed polystyrene foam bans.
- Other states including Colorado, Maine, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Washington, D.C, have passed Styrofoam bans. The European Union has banned single-use plastic items, and England is about to do so.
- Single-use plastics have proliferated at an enormous pace and are ending up in the oceans where they break into fragments. Researchers have warned that there will be more waste plastic in the sea than fish by 2050 if we don't change the trajectory. Plastic fragments are ingested by wildlife and many times cause starvation because they remain in the gut.
- The fragments wash up onto Oregon's beaches. Eco-School Network families clean up plastics every year at Fort Stevens Park. We collect more than 500 pounds of plastics each year, but we hardly make a dent in the fragments above and below the sand. The non-profit Sea Turtles Forever, which attempts to remove microplastics from sand, says that the amount of plastics washing up on our beaches is increasing every year.
- I am particularly concerned about the breakdown of these single-use plastics, which become microplastics.
  - Plastic particles in West Coast waters are being consumed and passed up the food chain by tiny marine creatures.
  - Since 2000, the amount of plastic particles deposited on the seafloor has tripled.
  - Microplastics are now being found everywhere—in the air, tap water, and human stools.
- Polystyrene foam is the worst form of litter because it breaks into small pieces and cannot be gathered up. Foam food containers are likely never to be recycled. They are generally used by people on the move who will not take them home, wash them, and transport them to the one facility in Oregon that will accept them.