

Submitter: Stella Williams

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure: SB543

The Honorable Senators Woods, Sollman, Dembrow, Patterson, Taylor, and Representatives Dexter,

I am writing in support of SB 543 regarding the banning of food containers made of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl, and banning the sale of containers and packing peanuts containing polystyrene.

I have had many experiences with these materials in take-out food packaging and in goods I order online and receive in the mail.

Regarding the use for food, I have had bad experiences with food melting packaging made from polystyrene, so I had to assume that plastic was introduced into the food and I had to dispose of it. That has made me avoid restaurants that I know use polystyrene so I avoid any potential consumption of plastic. If restaurants in Oregon are no longer using these materials, then I would give more of them my business (I get take-out meals 1-2 times per week).

There is an economic angle to supporting this bill - I seek out businesses that align with my values. And as suggested by my above statement, my concern for use of these materials is environmental - a large part of that being human wellbeing and safety.

Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl - also known collectively as PFAS - are widely used chemicals that we are exposed to on a daily basis. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, people can be exposed to PFAS from contaminated drinking water, fish, air, from working in PFAS manufacturing and firefighting. Per the EPA, peer-reviewed studies have shown that PFAS exposure can cause reproductive and hormonal issues, developmental effects or delays in children, reduced vaccine response and other immune system effects, and increased risks of some cancers.

Alongside information from the EPA, the U.S. public is becoming more aware of the potential harm caused by PFAS through local news reports and mainstream programs. Last Week Tonight with John Oliver's episode "PFAS" is one such example. Posted to Youtube.com on October 3, 2021, it currently has over 5.4 million views (it is also streamed to viewers subscribed to HBO).

Once PFAS and polystyrene materials are manufactured, they have done potential

damage to the people manufacturing them, and their presence continues after consumer use. I have experienced the frustrating consumer side of trying to dispose of these materials ethically. I reuse packaging that cannot be recycled curbside as much as possible. I have also paid for costly mail-in recycling programs (and signed up for limited free versions of the same program). Unfortunately, even with the additional steps I have taken to reuse and recycle, a lot of the plastics I use, including the materials listed in this bill, end up in landfill if they are not permitted in curbside recycling pickup for Tigard.

Even with ethical recycling of PFAS and polystyrene materials at the end of consumer use, our exposure to them throughout their manufacturing, use, and disposal process is a significant risk, as demonstrated by information from the EPA. This is why I support banning and significantly limiting the use of these materials as described in SB 543.

Thank you very much for considering my testimony.

Resources:

<https://www.epa.gov/pfas/our-current-understanding-human-health-and-environmental-risks-pfas> (Accessed 2/16/2023)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9W74aeuqsiU> (Accessed 2/16/2023)