



April 9, 2023

Representative Pam Marsh  
Chair, House Committee on Climate, Energy & Environment

Re: SB 543 (Support)

Chair Marsh and Honorable Members of the House,

On behalf of our entire Oregon chapter network, our greater membership and our thousands of Oregon supporters and volunteers, the Surfrider Foundation would like to express our strong support for SB 543, a bill to eliminate expanded polystyrene foam within food vendors and take-out establishments. EPS (also known as Polystyrene or Styrofoam™) take-out food and beverage containers are normally used once for a very short time before they become waste, and often ocean litter, with enduring negative impacts to our environment. Single-use EPS is problematic because it is an especially light form of plastic that breaks apart and blows into our environment, persists in our oceans never biodegrading, absorbs toxins and is often mistakenly consumed by marine animals.

Surfrider Foundation is a non-profit, grassroots environmental organization dedication to the protection and enjoyment of our ocean, waves and beaches. We operate through a powerful chapter network lead by volunteers and members here in Oregon and we offer a unique coastal perspective as stewards of our beaches, waterways and ocean. Since the first time we testified on this bill in 2019, Surfrider volunteers have engaged nearly **5,000 Oregonians** in over **300 cleanup events** removing approximately **30,000 pounds of debris**. Through these cleanup programs along our coast, EPS foam is consistently one of the top 3 items found and is extremely challenging to remove from the environment.

As coastal residents, we live adjacent to one of our state's most valuable economic and ecological resources, the beach and ocean. We live on this rural edge and witness the degradation of our marine life and beaches and experience this problem much differently than those in inland communities. This time of year we call "plastic debris season" due to the massive volumes of plastic and foam that washes ashore with large storms and tide events. It requires what we call "rapid response cleanups" where volunteers mobilize overnight to tackle large swaths of beach areas that are completely inundated with plastic - often extensive "foam fields" as some volunteers call them. Can you imagine having a debris season wash over your child's ball field, your local park or school playground so thick you couldn't see the ground beneath your feet? For coastal residents, this is the plastic reality of our beach winter season.

For many birds, fish and many other forms of marine life, foam particles can resemble plankton and even eggs of other animals and are mistaken for food. From the very bottom to the top of the food chain foam particles are all too often ingested, carry toxins up the

ocean food chain, toxins that can also be found in humans. Plastic marine debris persists in our oceans for lifetimes and as such Oregon's Marine Debris Action Plan includes recommended statewide actions to support source reduction of plastic pollution.

While we continue to hear "inland" recycling aspirations, our rural waste management reality on the coast is much different than that of the metro area. For our coastal communities that do have some strong recycling and waste management options, EPS foam is still and has never been one of them. Despite promises to extend collection opportunities to rural Oregonians during the 2019 and 2021 legislative session when this bill was previously introduced, we still have no options in 2023 and the plastic pollution on our beaches has only worsened.

For these reasons and the pervasive nature of EPS foam on our beaches and in our oceans, we urge your support of SB 543.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charlie Plybon".

Charlie Plybon  
Oregon Policy Manager  
Surfrider Foundation  
[cplybon@surfrider.org](mailto:cplybon@surfrider.org)  
541-961-8143