

Maryland lawmakers approve bill to become first state in the country to ban foam food containers

April 5 2019, by Luke Broadwater



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

The Maryland General Assembly gave final approval Wednesday night to a bill that would make Maryland the first state in the country to ban polystyrene foam food containers and cups.

The House of Delegates voted 100-37 to approve the legislation sponsored by Del. Brooke Lierman, a Baltimore Democrat.

It was Lierman's third attempt to pass the bill.

"After three years of hard work, I'm thrilled to see Maryland be a leader in the fight to end our reliance on single-use plastics that are polluting our state, country and world by passing a bill to prohibit foam food containers," Lierman said. "The health of the Chesapeake Bay, our waterways, our neighborhoods and our children's futures depends on our willingness to do the hard work of cleaning the mess that we inherited and created."

The legislation had already passed the state Senate by a 31-13 vote. The Senate bill was sponsored by Sen. Cheryl Kagan, a Montgomery County Democrat.

The measure now advances to the desk of Republican Gov. Larry Hogan, who has not taken a position yet on whether he would sign the bill.

The bill passed both chambers with more than enough votes to override a veto should the governor issue one.

The legislation contains some exceptions. For example, foam products packaged outside Maryland—such as cups containing ramen noodles—could still be sold. Also exempted are foam products used to package raw or butchered meat and foam products not used for food service.

The ban would take effect July 1, 2020. County officials would be in charge of enforcing the ban, and could issue \$250 fines.

The measure is among the priorities of Democratic leaders of the General Assembly.

Several [local governments](#) in Maryland, including Prince George's and Montgomery counties and most recently Anne Arundel County, have already banned foam products.

Critics of the statewide legislation expressed concern that a ban would cause difficulty or increased expenses for farmers, small businesses and nonprofit organizations. They said alternatives to foam are more costly.

At a hearing on the [bill](#), Josh Young, a lobbyist for the American Chemistry Council, the industry's trade group, called the ban a "harsh action" and said Maryland would be the "only state to ban an entire class of safe and effective products."

Supporters countered that [foam](#) products are not easily recyclable and don't break down in the environment, making them a particularly difficult form of litter to deal with.

To emphasize that point, the Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore had celebrated House passage of the ban by announcing that Mr. Trash Wheel, the garbage and flotsam collector at the mouth of the Jones Falls in the Inner Harbor, has scooped more than 1 million bits of polystyrene since it was launched in 2014.

©2019 The Baltimore Sun
Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Maryland lawmakers approve bill to become first state in the country to ban foam food

containers (2019, April 5) retrieved 21 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-04-maryland-lawmakers-bill-state-country.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.