MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Eliminating Polystyrene Food Service Containers

HB 5384- An Act Prohibiting the Use of Polystyrene Food Service Containers in Connecticut

BACKGROUND

Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) foam also poses a threat to human health. Styrene, a chemical in EPS foam, was listed by US Department of Health and Human Services’ National Toxicology Program as “reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen.” It is known to leach from food packaging containers into food or drinks, especially when exposed to heat. There is no reason to continue using EPS containers when safer, more environmentally friendly alternatives exist.

EPS is also a significant contributor to the plastic pollution crisis choking our marine environment. EPS packaging does not biodegrade in our water; instead, it breaks up into tiny pieces which persist for hundreds of years. These pieces are frequently mistaken for food and eaten by a wide range of marine species, including fish, sea turtles and aquatic birds.

Polystyrene waste also presents a problem for municipal recyclers. EPS foam cannot be easily recycled, if at all. Phasing out EPS foam carryout containers, cups and other types of packaging at food service establishments would make Connecticut a trailblazer in eliminating polystyrene waste. Cities and municipalities that have passed similar bans in the U.S. include New York City, Washington, D.C., Nantucket, MA, Portland, ME, Freeport, ME, Portland, OR, Seattle, WA, Los Angeles Co., CA, and San Francisco, CA.

SUMMARY OF PROVISIONS

• Prohibits any full-service food establishment from providing its customers with any single-use polystyrene foam container. Does not include any container that is filled or sealed prior to distribution to a food establishment, or any container used to package raw meat;

• Establishes a fine of $250 for the first violation of the law, $500 for a second violation and $1,000 for the third and any subsequent violation of the law by the owner or operator of a food establishment;

• Requires the Commissioners of Public Health, Consumer Protection and Energy and Environmental Protection to submit a joint report to the general assembly on progress pertaining to enforcement of the law, in addition to the need for potential hardship waivers for food establishments that has demonstrated a financial hardship as a result of the law.

CITIZENS CAMPAIGN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS HB 5384- ELIMINATING POLYSTYRENE FOAM FOOD SERVICE CONTAINERS IN CONNECTICUT

Citizens Campaign for the Environment is an 80,000 member non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works to empower communities and advocate solutions that protect public health and the natural environment.

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