

Reducing Plastic Pollution and Improving Recycling (PSSB5022 Senator Das)

AN ACT Concerning the management of certain materials to support recycling and waste and litter reduction

The problem: We have a waste crisis *and* we are drowning in plastic pollution



Plastics use up resources

Plastic items are made from finite, nonrenewable natural **gas and oil resources**. We use these items for a short time and then discard them.

Plastic pollution harms wildlife

Expanded polystyrene (also known as Styrofoam™), straws, utensils, cups and condiment packets frequently wind up as litter or end up polluting our fresh and marine waters. They break up but do not readily biodegrade, lasting for years, harming wildlife.

Expanded polystyrene foam products and straws, utensils and condiments are mostly not recyclable and contaminate compost

It is very difficult to recycle these products because it is difficult to remove food waste from them. And many of these products are small and fall through recycling equipment. Further, plastics are the #1 source of contamination at our commercial composters.

The recycling system needs a demand push

We need to jump-start the market for recyclable commodities in order to increase the value of recycled content relative to cheap virgin materials: oil and gas.

What this bill does:

Minimum recycled content for plastic beverage containers

Requires plastic beverage containers to contain (on average for each manufacturer):

- **15%** postconsumer recycled plastic by weight by January 1, 2023
- **25%** postconsumer recycled plastic by weight by January 1, 2026
- **50%** postconsumer recycled plastic by weight by January 1, 2031



Expanded polystyrene (styrofoam) ban

- Beginning June 1, 2023, prohibits sale, manufacture, and distribution of these expanded polystyrene foam products into WA:

Food service products



Coolers



Packaging material (peanuts)



Exempts pre-packaged items, and packaging for raw, uncooked, or butchered meat, fish, poultry, or seafood, vegetables, fruit, or egg cartons, as well as coolers for medical items or shipping perishable commodities.

Straws, utensils, condiment packages and cup lids become optional

- Beginning January 1, 2022, restaurants and food service businesses would provide straws, utensils, condiment packages and beverage cup lids only *on request* or in self-serve bins on the counter.



Exempts need for request for cup lids for: hot beverages, beverages provided through delivery service or curbside pickup, and beverages served to customers via a drive-through.

It is time to improve our recycling system and reduce plastic pollution in WA