



The Honorable Robert Garcia
Mayor of Long Beach
333 West Ocean Blvd, 14th Floor
Long Beach, California 90802

Re: Prohibiting the use of Polystyrene Food Service Ware

Dear Mayor Garcia,

The California Restaurant Association (CRA) is the definitive voice of the food service industry in California and is the oldest restaurant trade association in the nation. On behalf of our restaurant members within the City of Long Beach, I respectfully submit this letter to share with you our concerns over the prohibition of polystyrene food service packaging and our request for a comprehensive and transparent discussion on the issue before voting on a ban proposal.

The restaurant community shares the on-going concern over litter and routinely partners on litter abatement efforts at the state and local levels. Marine debris is a serious issue, however the discriminatory approach of selecting and eliminating a given type of food service product has proven an ineffective approach.

When litter reduction occurs on the streets within our community, the amount of material that flows through storm drains, rivers, and ultimately to the ocean is also reduced. Comprehensive efforts should be aimed at reducing ALL composition of litter, not solely individual products. This will allow an overall volume of material reaching the marine environment to be reduced.

For instance, the City and County of San Francisco banned polystyrene containers in 2008 but according to a litter re-audit conducted for the City/County, paper cup litter increased after the ban was enacted. Bans may change the composition of litter, but they do not reduce the amount of litter as those who litter do not discriminate between materials.

It is for these reasons the CRA has a long standing history of supporting and advocating for packaging mandates that require all food packaging materials to be recyclable or compostable, rather than discriminatorily picking winners and losers.

As for polystyrene foam containers, they are among the most efficient for keeping foods fresh, free of leaks and spills, and most importantly keeping the food hot or cold. Improper storage of food can cause food to spoil due to an increase or decrease in temperature which highly increases the chances of a foodborne illnesses. That is why it is standard practice for ice cream, frozen yogurt and smoothie shops, amongst others, to use

the foam packaging. In addition, many independently operated ethnic restaurants find the product to be the best functionally for their hot soups and sauce-based dishes. Restaurants are a consumer driven industry and foam packaging container for food to go makes for an overall more enjoyable dining experience.

For a segment of the economy that is characterized by razor thin profit margins of around 4% on the dollar in a good economy, cost always has to be a consideration of a product in addition to the functional value. Schools, hospitals, nursing homes, non-profit food programs, delis, and family-owned restaurants are among the many institutions that rely upon polystyrene foam for its excellent insulation at an economical price. Alternative packaging materials are often as high as 2-3 times more expensive and do not hold the food efficiently.

Many restaurants still choose to use the product because of its functional value being the best match for the type of food offered and it costs significantly less. Cost differences are felt differently by different sizes, types, and locations of restaurants and therefore have a differing impact on the local restaurant community.

The CRA supports recyclability and composability of food packaging materials and advocates for such policy statewide because we believe that attempts to ban single products undermines the greater effort of getting to a place where all food packaging can be recycled or composted. A more effective approach would be to look at current litter practices within the City and promote more litter education programs, prevention and clean-up activities, as well as create stricter enforcement and liability on the people who litter.

We hope you will allow an opportunity to work with you, the Council, and City Staff on this issue and any further issues that affect the restaurant community within the City of Long Beach. If you have any questions, please contact me at msutton@calrest.org

Sincerely,



Matt Sutton
Vice President, Government Affairs & Public Policy

Cc: Councilmembers, City of Long Beach