

Testimony of

Louis Rosado-Burch
Connecticut Education Association

Before the
Environment Committee

Re:

HB 6229 An Act Concerning the Reduction of Single-Use Plastics and Polystyrene Waste

March 17, 2025

Honorable Committee Chairs, Vice Chairs, and members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important legislation.

My name is Louis Rosado-Burch, and I am the legislative coordinator at the Connecticut Education Association (CEA). CEA is the state's largest association of certified public school teachers, representing over 43,000 active and retired teachers across 158 school districts in Connecticut. CEA is dedicated to improving the lives of our teachers, the success of our students, and the overall quality of public education in our state.

CEA supports HB 6229, which seeks to phase out wasteful and environmentally harmful single-use plastics and expanded polystyrene (EPS) food service products used by state and local agencies, including schools, beginning in 2026. Low-grade, single-use plastic and EPS plateware, takeout containers, packaging peanuts, plastic cups, cutlery, and drinking straws are ubiquitous sources of pollution that frequently find their way into our open spaces and waterways. These materials can last for generations or longer, are not easily recyclable, and are notorious for having devastating impacts on aquatic wildlife.^{1,2}

The more we learn about the impacts of our behavior, the greater our collective responsibility to act. Our students are learning every day to be better-educated consumers and more

¹ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eda91260bbb7e7a4bf528d8/t/674f56482360216cb1c253c0/1733252686279/10-30-23_Chemical-Recycling-Report_web.pdf

² <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abh0945>

responsible stewards of our shared environment. This is why it's important that the adults in the room lead by example and that students learn by practice. We do this by promoting sustainability, embracing innovation, and abandoning practices that perpetuate outdated ways of thinking, living, and doing business. Our schools are laboratories for innovation and sustainability; it is time our policies reflect this reality in practice.

The good news is that a growing number of Connecticut municipalities have already taken bold steps toward eliminating plastic waste in our schools and food service establishments, including the towns of Guilford, Groton, Hamden, Middletown, Norwalk, Stamford, and Westport, which have all approved local ordinances restricting single-use plastics and polystyrene waste.³ Eleven states, including neighboring New York and Rhode Island, have already adopted policies restricting or prohibiting the sale and distribution of these wasteful materials.^{4, 5}

CEA applauds the Environment Committee for putting this commonsense legislation forward. It represents a bold step toward better stewardship of our coastal and aquatic resources, and it promotes a mindset of sustainable practices among adults and young people alike.

³ <https://byoct.org/byoct-ordinances>

⁴ <https://www.packagingdive.com/news/farewell-to-foam-act-congress/702218/>

⁵ <https://www.packagingdive.com/news/tracker-packaging-state-policy-epr-pcr-pfas-recyclability/647362/?policy-area=foam>