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Testimony of Rep. Stanley Paige Zeigler

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

In support of LD 103, An Act to Prohibit the Use of Certain Disposable Food Service Containers

Good morning Senator Saviello, Representative Tucker and distinguished members of the Environment and Natural Resource Committee. I am Representative Stanley Paige Zeigler, and I represent House District 96, which is Belmont, Liberty, Lincolnville, Montville, Morrill, Palermo, and Searsmont. I am here today to introduce **LD 103, An Act to Prohibit the Use of Certain Disposable Food Service Containers.**

The use of polystyrene in disposable food service containers continues to be in debate. However, there have been new technological advances pioneered at the University of Maine that offer new opportunities. Traditionally, paper hot cups have been lined with plastic. The University of Maine, using nanotechnology, has been able to use soft wood pulp to line the paper cups so that they don't leak. The engineering department is in the process of getting their first cup machine and will be able to develop a cost analysis of producing these cups. They are optimistic about replacing polystyrene. These new products can be made here in Maine using Maine renewable resources. They will be biodegradable, and by using nanotechnology they have no added chemicals that would make burning these items a danger.

I support this bill because polystyrene is not easily recycled. I am on the board of Unity area recycling center where there are 10 towns involved. Polystyrene is not cost effective to recycle. There is no market in the Northeast, and after the costs of compression and shipping it will not be cost effective.

In a previous debate of this issue there was an argument that polystyrene substitutes produce methane on decomposition. Methane produced by landfills is, like CO₂, a greenhouse gas. However, we now have startups in our state that are harnessing the methane to heat homes. That methane will be used to heat the University of Maine.

Perhaps the manufacturing of polystyrene is less energy intensive in its manufacturing, but energy is the one factor that can be mitigated by smart, clean technologies. Chlorofluorocarbons are still used in the production of polystyrene, and they are 1,000 times more detrimental as greenhouse gases than methane.

Of all the reasons that polystyrene should be prohibited, the most important is for the effect it is having on our waterways and fisheries. Single use cups and food packages that enter the ocean break down into microscopic parts that are ingested by our wildlife. Although the FDA has said that polystyrene is safe for the packaging of food, the amount of plastics that are entering the ocean continues to accumulate.

While the FDA states that polystyrene is safe for the packing of food, the analogous Canadian bureau has stated that polystyrene is not safe for human consumption and the EPA has released a paper stating that polystyrene is a risk. For humans, there is new information saying that oils, alcoholic beverages, heat, tea with lemon, coffee with dairy creamer, and fruit juices in products with polystyrene cause leaching. In some studies they are finding that the level of neurotoxins of polystyrene are at levels at one-third of the amount that causes irreversible damage. If the levels continue to rise then polystyrene would be hazardous to our health.

When I was in grad school studying logistics, the CEO of LL Bean spoke to us. He said that they were willing to take a loss on the manufacturing of LL Bean boots. They would do that to be able to put the label "Made in Maine" on those boots and make all their other products worth more. And that cache is what can drive our economy and that cache is tied to the bucolic quality of our state. We have had to deal with pollution in our rivers from log drives, mill effluvium and acid rain from the Midwest. Now we need to tackle pollution in our waterways, bays and gulfs and the unpleasant looking trash on our roadways that will never go away. We have a chance to initiate new products using our forests. We can join the hundreds of towns and cities that have already banned polystyrene.

This could be as simple as a jobs bill. If we lose our fisheries we lose jobs. But if we can make new products from our forests we gain jobs. If we protect the health of our citizens we will make Maine a place that people will move to, to live and work. Let's get in front of this and make Maine a strong brand for the future.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you have for me.