



CET LAW

June 6, 2016

Dear Members of the Miami-Dade County Commission,

We, the undersigned organizations, write in full support of the ordinance banning polystyrene foam from areas operated by the Miami-Dade Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department, including recreational areas, marinas, and parks. This amendment of Chapter 26, Article I of the Code of Miami-Dade County will help to alleviate numerous human health and environmental concerns related to the use of polystyrene foam (“Styrofoam”).

Styrofoam is light-weight and easily degrades into small pieces, which can be widely dispersed in the environment. It is not biodegradable and therefore will not be naturally removed from the environment. Most marine-based foam debris comes from land-based

litter that degraded into small pieces, traveled down the storm drain, and ended up in the ocean. Storm drains clogged by debris also contribute to flooding and can cause infrastructure damage that require costly maintenance and repairs.

Tourism is critical for the clean water economy of Miami-Dade, and foam litter -- almost impossible to clean up -- damages the vitality of our beaches and waterways. Marine debris litters our waterways and underwater environments and has had a huge impact on ecosystems in Biscayne Bay and Biscayne National Park. Removing this litter is also costly for Miami-Dade, and nearly impossible to do effectively due to the rapid degradation of the foam into small pieces. Furthermore, foam is expensive and difficult to recycle and therefore has an extremely low recycling rate.

Birds, filter feeding organisms, and fish often mistake foam particles for food. For example, many sea birds are found dying of starvation with their bellies full of plastic particles. Foam is also made with styrene, which has recently been determined to be a “reasonably anticipated human carcinogen” which can migrate from containers to food when heated.

Due to the human health and environmental impacts of polystyrene foam on our waterways, wildlife, and national parks, we ask that the County Commission ban polystyrene in Miami-Dade County recreation areas, marinas, and parks. This polystyrene ban represents visionary leadership and stewardship for the future of our County and follows on similar, successful and highly supported bans at the municipal level.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

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