



Burt Lazarin
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April 10, 2018

Hon. Corey Johnson
Speaker, City Council
224 W. 30th Street, Suite 1206
New York, NY 10001

Re: Intro 135 – Ban on Polystyrene

Dear Speaker Johnson,

Manhattan Community Board 4's Waterfront Parks and Environment Committee was pleased to receive information about the dangers of polystyrene products from Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board's Debby Lee Cohen on Thursday, March 8. Ms. Cohen raised issues of great concern for the committee's consideration. The committee by unanimous vote asked the Full Board to express its concern as well. By a vote of 34 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstaining and 0 present but not eligible to vote, Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) is asking you to very carefully look into Intro 135. Effective 120 days after it becomes law this Intro restricts expanded polystyrene items sold in food service establishments but not containers used to store raw meat, etc. Sale of expanded polystyrene loose fill packaging is also restricted. Enforcement of these restrictions includes civil penalties ranging up to \$1000.

As it relates to Community District 4 there are three areas of concern with regard to polystyrene use for our community:

Our Health

Polystyrene is made from styrene, a toxic chemical, which is linked to cancer. After seven years of research, the US Department of Health and Human Services added styrene to its list of known or possible carcinogens. The problem with styrene is that it leaches into hot, acidic and oily food from polystyrene containers. A lot of food is delivered to our neighbors in these containers and then, without knowing the danger, our neighbors may heat their food in those containers thus encouraging styrene migration into their food. As of the fall 2015, NYC Department of Education School Food Directors replaced all polystyrene trays with compostable plates in schools citywide due to both environmental and health concerns.

Litter and cleanup in our Community

Polystyrene is a light rigid easily friable material. It is a blown plastic and thus contains a lot of air. These qualities make it expensive to move as a large volume is difficult to compact and it is relatively light. And, even if collected, it is difficult to separate from other materials and easily contaminates them. Furthermore, it is a low value item in recycling markets. While New York City continues to collect it, other municipalities refuse it altogether. Nevertheless, we have all seen polystyrene blowing through our neighborhood.

Water Environment and Marine Life in the Hudson River Estuary

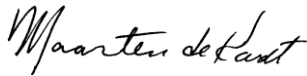
Polystyrene litter affects our neighborhood as it is difficult to clean up. When, during and after rainfall, it washes “away,” it finds its way into the Hudson River Estuary through our neighborhood’s 30 combined sewer outfalls thus adversely affecting re-burgeoning marine life in this local waterway.¹

For all these reasons we are asking you to carefully examine these issues further.

Sincerely,



Burt Lazarin
Chair
Manhattan Community
Board 4



Maarten de Kadt
Co-Chair
Waterfront, Parks &
Environment Committee



Lowell Kern
Co-Chair
Waterfront, Parks &
Environment Committee

¹ For more general information about polystyrene please see:
Former Department of Sanitation Commissioner Brendan Sexton’s 2017 testimony to the City Council
[Manhattan SWAB’s testimony against the recycling of polystyrene. May 12, 2017](#) and
<http://www.cafeteriaculture.org/nyc-foam-ban.html>