
Environment & Energy Committee

HB 2656

Brief Description: Reducing waste associated with single-use food service products.

Sponsors: Representatives Gregerson, Dye, Doglio, Peterson, Mead, Fitzgibbon, Thai, Senn, Goodman, Ramos, Pollet and Macri.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Restricts the sale or provision of polystyrene food service products, beginning January 1, 2021.
- Restricts the sale or provision of plastic food service products beginning January 1, 2022 in certain cities and counties, and beginning as late as January 1, 2030 in other cities and counties, while providing for delayed effective dates and waivers for certain categories of restricted plastic food service products.
- Establishes a fee of 1 cent per single-use nonrecyclable or noncompostable food service product, and of up to 1 cent per single-use recyclable or compostable food service product.
- Requires customers to request single-use straws, utensils, and plastic condiment packaging in order for a retail establishment to provide those items to a customer.
- Requires local governments to assess in their solid waste management plans the logistical and economic feasibility of developing and using infrastructure that would allow commercial composting of organic materials, including food-service products, by a target deadline of 2030.

Hearing Date: 1/27/20

Staff: Jacob Lipson (786-7196).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

A number of municipalities in Washington have adopted ordinances addressing certain plastic products used in the provision or consumption of food, including plastic utensils, straws, and containers.

Under the state's solid waste management laws, local governments are the primary government entity responsible for implementing state solid waste management requirements. County and city comprehensive solid waste management plans must contain certain elements, including a waste reduction and recycling element, and must consider source separation of recyclable materials and organic materials from other solid wastes. Cities and counties determine which materials may be accepted for curbside recycling in each jurisdiction, and whether organic materials are collected separately from other solid wastes. The state, through Department of Ecology (Ecology) grants and loans, makes financial assistance available to local governments to develop and implement solid waste plans and programs.

As a result of Legislation enacted in 2019, city and county solid waste plans must begin to contain a contamination reduction and outreach plan. In lieu of creating their own plan, jurisdictions may adopt an Ecology-developed state contamination reduction and outreach plan. In 2019, legislation was also enacted requiring Ecology to submit a plastic packaging report to the Legislature by October, 2020, that includes recommendations for meeting plastic packaging reduction goals through industry initiative or product stewardship programs, or both.

Under legislation enacted in 2019, products that are labeled as compostable and sold, offered for sale, or distributed for use in Washington by a manufacturer or supplier, must:

- either be comprised of only wood or fiber-based substrate, or must meet the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards for products designed to be composted in municipal or industrial facilities that are made of plastic or that incorporate plastic coatings onto paper or another substrate;
- meet Federal Trade Commission green guide labeling requirements;
- and feature labeling that uses a logo indicating that the product has been third-party certified as meeting ASTM standard specification, displays the word "compostable," and meets industry standards for being distinguishable upon quick inspection.

Compostable products with the above requirements must be considered compliant if they have green or brown labeling, are labeled as compostable, and use other distinguishing colors or marks.

As part of the chemical action plan for per- and poly- fluoroalkyl chemicals (PFAS chemicals), Ecology is carrying out an alternatives assessment to specific types of paper-based food packaging. Restrictions on food packaging that contain PFAS chemicals take effect only after Ecology identifies safer alternatives during the alternatives assessment.

Summary of Bill:

Customer Requests for Single-Use Straws, Utensils, and Plastic Condiment Packaging.

Beginning January 1, 2021, food service businesses:

- that provide opportunity for the on-site consumption of food may provide single use utensils, straws, and plastic condiment packaging only upon the request of a customer;

- that do not provide opportunity for the on-site consumption of food or that serve customers via a drive-through may only provide single use utensils, straws, and plastic condiment packaging after asking if a customer would like to obtain the item and receiving an affirmative response;
- may make utensils available to customers using cylinders, bins, or similar containers;
- may not provide single-use utensils that are bundled or packaged in plastic so as to prevent customers from taking only the type of utensil desired without taking other utensils; and
- may make condiments available to customers using bulk dispensers or containers that do not package condiments in individual portion sizes.

Beginning July 1, 2020, cities, towns, counties, and municipal corporations may not enact ordinances to reduce pollution from single-use plastic food service products by requiring a request of plastic food service products by a customer. Local ordinances in effect as of July 1, 2020, are not preempted or repealed.

Polystyrene Foam Service Product Restrictions.

Beginning January 1, 2021, retail establishments may not sell or provide polystyrene foam food-service products.

Single-Use Plastic Food Service Product Restrictions.

Each October 1 between 2021 and 2029, the Department of Ecology (Ecology) must determine which counties and cities preparing independent solid waste plans are serviced by facilities that provide for the composting of compostable food-service products.

Retail establishments may not sell or provide single-use plastic food service products in jurisdictions that are serviced by facilities that provide for the composting of compostable food service products. These restrictions begin January 1, 2022, for most categories of food service products, except:

- plastic catering tray and product bag restrictions take effect July 1, 2022; and
- Ecology must determine the start date for clear plastic food wrap and shrink wrap, plastic containers for uniquely shaped foods, flexible plastic packaging used to preserve moisture and freshness, and hot meat plastic item containers. Ecology must review the availability of compostable alternatives to these products by July 1, 2022, and if it determines two suitable and readily available alternatives exist and two vendors make a suitable alternative available, Ecology must establish an effective date of restrictions on plastic versions of the product one year later. If there are not a sufficient number of suitable alternatives, Ecology must annually review the availability of alternatives each year until 2030.

Upon application, Ecology may issue renewable waivers from restrictions on categories of plastic food service products of up to one year to specific applicants, statewide, or under specified circumstances. Waivers may only be granted by Ecology when there are not at least two suitable and readily available alternatives, there are not at least two vendors making suitable alternatives readily available, or the enforcement of restrictions would cause undue hardship.

Beginning January 1, 2030, retail establishments may not sell or provide single-use plastic food service products, regardless of which jurisdiction they are located in. Categories of single-use plastic food service products may still be subject to waivers issued by Ecology.

Retail establishments may sell or provide durable, reusable food service products, recyclable fiber-based, glass, or metal food service products, recyclable plastic bottles and other beverage containers made from HDPE or PET plastic, prepackaged foods in plastic, and compostable products that are free of per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances.

Compostable products are those that meet the compostable product labeling requirements established in 2019 in state law.

Single-Use Food Service Ware Fees.

Ecology must establish a single-use food service product fee per item sold by producers to customers for final sale in Washington, beginning January 1, 2022. The fee must be 1 cent per item that is not recyclable or compostable, and up to 1 cent for recyclable or compostable items, based on the average cost of recycling or composting those items. The fee may not be imposed upon a product that is subject to a statewide plastic packaging stewardship program that provides for the collection, transport, and end-of-life management costs of the product. Ecology must annually adjust the amount of the fees for inflation, beginning in 2030. Ecology may adopt rules to implement the fee. Ecology must coordinate with the Department of Revenue to arrange for the collection of fees. Fees must be remitted by retail establishments and deposited in a newly created Plastic Waste Reduction Account (Account). Money in the account may be used for administering, implementing and enforcing requirements related to single-use food service products, and for local government solid waste financial assistance, including for the development of plans and infrastructure to support the statewide provision of composting infrastructure by 2030.

Local Government Composting Infrastructure.

When updating solid waste management plans after 2020, counties and cities must include an assessment of the logistical and economic feasibility of the development and use of infrastructure that would allow for the widespread commercial composting of organic materials, including compostable food service products, by a target deadline of 2030.

By November 1, 2022, and every two years afterwards, Ecology must submit a report to the Legislature. The report must address the status of composting infrastructure available to serve local jurisdictions in preparation for the 2030 statewide restriction on plastic food service products, based on information in local government solid waste plans. The report must also assess whether it is appropriate to update the definition of products that are considered to be compostable for purposes of food service product requirements.

Enforcement and Other Provisions.

Retail establishments in violation of food service product requirements are subject to a fine of up to \$100 dollars per violation if the retail establishment is a small business independently owned and operated with less than 50 employees, or up to \$5,000 per violation if the retail establishment is not a small business. Penalties are deposited in the Account.

Ecology may adopt rules for purposes of implementing, administering, and enforcing food service product requirements. Ecology must emphasize education and outreach rather than enforcement to achieve compliance with food service product requirements. Ecology must provide education and carry out outreach activities to inform retail establishments and consumers about food service product requirements, including education and outreach programs suitable for small business owners and the state's diverse ethnic populations. Ecology must prioritize outreach, including technical assistance with waiver applications, to small businesses and women- and minority-owned businesses. Nothing in the single-use food service fees or requirements changes or limits the authority of the Utilities and Transportation Commission.

A severability clause is included.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 20, 2020.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except section 8, addressing restrictions taking effect in 2030 on the sale or provision of plastic food service products by retail establishments, which takes effect July 1, 2030.