



ASSEMBLY MEMBER

Laura Friedman

DISTRICT 43

AB 1371 – Reducing Single-Use Plastic Packaging in E-Commerce

Summary

Single-use plastic packaging is often added to a packaged good for shipment of a product ordered by consumers online. The vast majority of this plastic packaging becomes waste immediately after a package is opened, littering the environment and increasing disposal costs for local jurisdictions, their residents and businesses. AB 1371 will reduce harmful environmental, health, and economic impacts of unnecessary single-use plastic by phasing out the use of most single-use plastic films and expanded polystyrene in e-commerce packaging for online retail purchases.

Background

Plastic films (including mailers, bubble wrap, and inflatable air pillows) and expanded polystyrene (including loose fill packaging and molded foam) are rarely recycled. Most municipal recycling programs in the California do not accept plastic film or expanded polystyrene and this waste has little residual value.

Plastic is also harming human health through every stage of its life cycle, from extraction and production to consumer use – making its way into our food, water, and air. Plastics are a significant source of global greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change, sea level rise, and ocean acidification. The environmental consequences and public costs of cleaning up and mitigating plastic pollution are staggering and continue to grow.

Globally, the e-commerce industry used nearly 2.1 billion pounds of plastic packaging in 2019 and of that, e-commerce businesses in the U.S. generated 469 million pounds of plastic packaging waste. And in 2020, consumers spent \$861 billion online with U.S. merchants, up 44% over 2019. With almost a third of the world's population now buying online, the amount of plastic packaging generated is estimated to double by 2025. This staggering growth – expected to outlast the pandemic – is creating a wave of single-use packages and packaging, almost all of which is headed for landfill, incineration, or the environment where it pollutes waterways and oceans. Additionally, some single-use plastic can jam equipment at recycling centers

endangering workers who can be seriously injured when trying to remove plastic films that clog heavy machinery.

Alternatives to single-use plastic film and expanded polystyrene packaging are available and substitutes are already being used by e-commerce markets to ship products in and into California.

AB 1371 (as proposed to be amended):

- Phases out the use of plastic film – including shipping envelopes, void filler, and cushioning in e-commerce packaging to transport products in or into the state;
- Phases out plastic cushioning including expanded polystyrene packaging (including loose fill or molded foam) in or into the state;
- Requires online retailers with at least one physical storefront in the state and/or that provides lockers for the secure pickup of purchased products at a store to take back plastic film and to recycle or re-use that material during a specified phase in period; and,
- Extends sunset on existing requirement that establishments that provide carry out plastic bags and durable plastics bags to customers provide a collection bin for the purposes of collecting and recycling those bags.

Support:

Oceana (Sponsor)

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