Legislation Details (With Text)

File #:	Res 1227-2012	**Version:**	*	**Name:**	Dep't of Education to phase out and eliminate the use of polystyrene food trays within two years through the use of biodegradable food trays or biodegradable food containers instead.
Type:	Resolution			**Status:**	Filed
				In control:	Committee on Education
On agenda:	2/29/2012				
Enactment date:				**Enactment #:**	
Title:	Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to phase out and eliminate the use of polystyrene food trays within two years through the use of biodegradable food trays or biodegradable food containers instead.				
Sponsors:					
Indexes:					
Attachments:					

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
2/29/2012	*	City Council	Introduced by Council	
2/29/2012	*	City Council	Referred to Comm by Council	
12/31/2013	*	City Council	Filed (End of Session)	

Res. No. 1227

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to phase out and eliminate the use of polystyrene food trays within two years through the use of biodegradable food trays or biodegradable food containers instead.

By Council Members Levin, Brewer, Chin, Crowley, Dromm, James, Koppell, Koslowitz, Lander, Rose, Williams, Wills, Mark-Viverito, Palma, Rodriguez and Vacca

Whereas, According to the New York City Department of Sanitation, each day, the school meal program uses 830,000 polystyrene trays; and

Whereas, This means that, over a one year period, New York City's school system uses more than 150 million polystyrene trays; and

Whereas, Polystyrene, also known as styrofoam, is a thermoplastic material made from petroleum-derived styrene, which is made into both foam and rigid products, such as food trays; and

Whereas, New York City's recycling program does not accept styrofoam for recycling; and

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Whereas, There are few recycling plants in the United States that will take styrofoam; therefore, the materials must be shipped to distant factories, and the transport and processing is expensive, unsustainable, and not environmentally friendly; and

Whereas, According to the Department of Sanitation, styrofoam contributes approximately 16,500 tons of waste to the city's waste stream annually; and

Whereas, According to the City's Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling within the Department of Sanitation, the city is the largest consumer of polystyrene due to the City Department of Education's (DOE) school food program, which serves its meals on polystyrene trays; and

Whereas, According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, there are concerns that toxins can leach from polystyrene when it comes into contact with hot foods; and

Whereas, Polystyrene is made with styrene, a chemical which can affect the central nervous system, according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); and

Whereas, According to the EPA, chronic exposure to styrene in humans can cause headache, fatigue, weakness, depression and other problems; and

Whereas, The Department of Education has already taken steps to reduce the use of polystyrene trays, on "Trayless Tuesdays," when the polystyrene trays are replaced with paper boats, products which can be recycled when clean; and

Whereas, The introduction of "Trayless Tuedays" by the DOE reduces polystyrene tray use by twenty percent, diverting 2.4 million trays from landfills each month; and

Whereas, "Trayless Tuesday" also helps raise awareness among parents and students of the issues involved with polystyrene use; and

Whereas, Another biodegradable alternative to polystyrene trays are sugar cane trays; and

Whereas, Sugar cane trays break down within 45 days in a landfill, are good for the environment and reduce waste; and

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Whereas, Although polystyrene trays are less costly than sugar cane trays, the costs of disposal have not been factored into the overall price that the non-recyclable trays have on New York City and the environment; and

Whereas, Sugar cane trays are not the only compostable alternative to polystyrene trays, as low cost trays made from corn waste or recycled cardboard are also available; and

Whereas, Other alternatives to recyclable trays include reusable trays, which can be washed, and some schools in other jurisdictions have set up volunteer programs which allow parents and students to help wash the trays; and

Whereas, Polystyrene food trays are not the only option, as there are numerous low cost alternatives which are not only biodegradable, but also safer for students and the environment; and

Whereas, Phasing out the use of polystyrene trays from schools and choosing other alternatives would be beneficial for the City as a whole, from an environmental perspective and from a potential health perspective; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York City Department of Education to phase out and eliminate the use of polystyrene food trays within two years through the use of biodegradable food trays or biodegradable food containers instead.

LS# 2502
JA/GP
2/21/2012

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