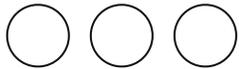

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Council To Vote On Ambitious Disposable Foodware Ordinance

Jan. 22, 2019



BERKELEY (BCN)

The Berkeley City Council is scheduled to vote Tuesday night on a disposable foodware and litter-reduction ordinance that backers say is the most ambitious municipal legislation in the U.S. aimed at reducing the use of single-use disposable foodware.

"Single-use disposable foodware is a local and global problem, one with enormous financial and environmental costs," City Councilmember Sophie Hahn, the ordinance's lead author, said in a statement.

Earlier iterations of the ordinance allowed recyclable disposable foodware, but the final draft omitted it altogether. Supporters said that's because global plastic recycling markets are foundering.

If the City Council approves the ordinance it would mean restaurants, cafes and other businesses would be forced to charge customers 25 cents for each disposable

cup.

However, customers could avoid paying the extra fee if they bring their own cup.

The ordinance also would require all dine-in foodware to be reusable and takeout foodware to be compostable by January 2020.

In addition, disposable compostable straws, stirrers, cup spill plugs, napkins, and utensils for take-out would be provided only upon request by customers or at a self-serve station.

Supporters say the ordinance is supported by a coalition of more than 1,400 local, national, and international organizations participating in the global Break Free From Plastic Movement, including UpStream, The Story of Stuff Project, the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, the Plastic Pollution Coalition and the Surfrider Foundation.

Martin Bourque, the executive director of Berkeley's Ecology Center, a nonprofit that has collected Berkeley's recycling since 1973, said in a statement, "Most of the single-use plastic foodware has no value in today's recycling markets. With China's ban on importing plastic scrap, cities are actually paying to get rid of it."

Bourque said, "We cannot recycle our way out of the disposable foodware problem. We have to focus on reduction."

Upstream Policy Director Miriam Gordon said, "Our throw-away culture is leading to a proliferation of plastics in our food, air, and drinking water, which threatens human health and all ocean life. Disposable food packaging is the biggest contributor to the problem."

Gordon said, "Globally, we've seen that charging consumers for plastic bags is the most effective way to shift people from disposables to reusables. The disposable-free dining ordinance builds on that strategy."

The City Council meeting is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. on Tuesday at the Berkeley Unified School District's boardroom at 1231 Addison St.

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