

Hawaii may become first US state to ban plastic at restaurants

Honolulu:

Hawaii would be the first state in the United States to ban most plastics at restaurants under legislation that aims to cut down on waste that pollutes the ocean.

A second, more ambitious proposal would go even further and prohibit fast-food and full-service restaurants from distributing and using plastic drink bottles, utensils, stirring sticks, bags and straws. The Hawaii efforts would be stricter than in California, which last year became the first state to ban fullservice restaurants from automatically giving out plastic straws, and broader than in Seattle, San Francisco and other cities that have banned some single-use plastics.

Activists believe the foam container measure has a better chance of passing in Hawaii. “We have this reputation of setting the example for the world to follow, and that’s what we’re trying to do here,” state Senator Mike Gabbard said to the Senate.

Tulsi Gabbard, said 95% of plastic packaging worldwide is thrown out after being used once. In the US, 500 million plastic straws are used and thrown out every day, he said.

Eric SS Wong, co-owner of two fast-food establishments on Oahu, said not being able to serve food in plastic foam containers would drive up his costs at a time when he faces rising health insurance charges for his employees and a possible minimum wage hike that lawmakers also are considering.

He said he’ll have to raise prices. “Now all of the sudden, your family’s \$30 dining experience became \$37 or \$38,” Wong said.

His Wiki Wiki Drive Inn takeout counter in Honolulu sells sandwiches, breakfast meals and Hawaii favourites like Loco Moco.

A package of 200 foam boxes costs him \$23, while the same number of biodegradable boxes would cost \$57, he said. AP



The proposal would prohibit restaurants from using plastic drink bottles, utensils, stirring sticks, bags and straws

