Board members, thank you for your time. I am speaking to you today to urge Houston ISD to transition away from Styrofoam lunch trays, which are horrible for the environment, and switch to biodegradable lunch trays.

I know that this issue is not your number one priority. Environmental sustainability always gets pushed aside for the hot button issue of the day. However, this is a real problem. The production of Styrofoam trays contributes to global warming and puts Houston at greater risk of future flooding. After their use, Styrofoam trays take hundreds of years to decompose. In that time, they break into smaller pieces and get into our food and water supplies. Styrofoam is linked to health issues ranging from cancer to neurological disorders. Our use of Styrofoam is making Houstonians sick.

Luckily, many school districts have already transitioned away from this awful product. Dallas ISD and Austin ISD have done it, and there is a coalition of 18 school districts called the Urban School Food Alliance that can help Houston ISD with the transition. As I did last month, I will email the name of the company that Dallas ISD now uses for biodegradable lunch trays to all board members when I am done speaking. Dallas’s transition cost less than a penny more per tray.

So far, 2 board members have expressed interest in this transition, as has HISD Nutritional Services. With a 3rd board member, we could make this official agenda item and more fully explore the feasibility of this change.

All of us in HISD work so hard to build good futures for our students. Please, let’s not contaminate that future by worsening the environment and health of our students.