Bridget Anderson, Deputy Commissioner Bureau of Recycling and Sustainability

Public Hearing
New York City Council Committees on Sanitation & Solid Waste
Management and Public Housing

Wednesday, November 30, 2016 1:00 P.M. City Hall – Council Chambers

Oversight Hearing on Recycling at New York City Housing Authority Housing Developments and Intro No. 820

Good afternoon Chair Reynoso, Chair Torres, Public Advocate James, and members of the Committees on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management and Public Housing. I am Bridget Anderson, Deputy Commissioner for the Bureau of Recycling and Sustainability at the New York City Department of Sanitation. With me today is Chief Steven Costas, the Director of the Department of Sanitation's Bureau of Cleaning and Collection. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the status of recycling in New York City housing complexes and the types of recycling services and support supplied by the Department to NYCHA buildings and residents. I have some opening remarks and thereafter we are happy to join our colleagues at NYCHA in answering your questions. For more than two decades the Department has provided NYCHA with hands-on assistance to implement recycling in NYCHA housing, and there has been substantial inter-agency cooperation between the Department and NYCHA on all aspects of waste management. While there are challenges, we believe NYCHA developments can successfully implement the City's recycling program.

Improving the recycling rates in low diversion areas of the City and specifically among NYCHA residents is an important priority for DSNY. We continue to support NYCHA's efforts to enhance residents' access to recycling infrastructure, and staff management of the material, so that more recyclables make it to the curb for DSNY collection. Doing so requires intensive outreach and close operational coordination between DSNY, NYCHA, and its residents. As detailed in NYCHA's testimony, Phase I of the "NYCHA Recycles!" program, includes the installation of new designated recycling bins, training for NYCHA staff, letters to all residents, new signage and educational materials, and "kick-off" meetings where residents play a recycling game to properly place materials in the right bins, residents' recycling questions are answered by experts, and residents are provided with Sort-N-Store bags to contain their recyclables inside their home. DSNY is providing recycling collection service to all developments where the program has launched. We expect that Phase I will be rolled out to all of NYCHA by the end of this year.

To support resident recycling education, DSNY has committed the time and expertise of its non-profit partner, GrowNYC to train resident engagement staff, and to directly engage with residents. In addition, we have ensured that NYCHA residents and developments have access to information regarding how to recycle. Specifically:

- DSNY and NYCHA sent a joint mailer to all NYCHA households announcing the new recycling program and included a recycling checklist, which describes what and how to recycle;
- DSNY provided all NYCHA developments with an initial supply of recycling decals for bins, and a customized chute decal to be placed in hallways to inform residents what materials can be placed in the garbage chute and what should be taken to the recycling bins;
- DSNY provided recycling checklists, comic books, coloring books, and other pamphlets to each NYCHA management company for distribution to residents in common areas; and
- DSNY has set up an online order form for NYCHA staff to order additional decals and education materials for free.

We've worked with GrowNYC to create the Environmental Ambassadors program in order to support and increase NYCHA recycling. Environmental Ambassadors are NYCHA residents who are trained by GrowNYC in two recycling workshops and thereafter conduct 12 hours of community service outreach at their development to encourage their neighbors to participate in the NYCHA Recycles program. In FY 2016, 23 Environmental Ambassador candidates completed both workshops. Nine of these individuals have already completed their volunteer hours and the rest are in the process of completing their hours. This program will begin again in spring 2017.

To provide feedback to NYCHA on this program, DSNY conducts a curbside setout survey each week on recycling day. We send an activity report that summarizes the data collected every 2 weeks. The activity report flags any issues encountered by DSNY collection staff, and encourages NYCHA staff to follow proper curbside setout procedures. Based on these activity reports, DSNY deploys supplemental outreach to NYCHA sites to help resolve issues and support NYCHA staff.

In addition to DSNY's activities to support increased recycling at NYCHA housing developments, the Department has targeted low diversion districts more generally as a focal point for additional outreach. DSNY is conducting community meetings, super trainings and public education events in these districts; additionally, DSNY is exploring barriers to recycling in these districts to inform future outreach efforts. As NYCHA moves into Phase II of NYCHA recycles, DSNY looks forward to continuing to support NYCHA staff and residents to ensure that our efforts translate into a successful NYCHA Recycles program with measurable improvements in diversion.

Turning now to Intro 820, DSNY is interested in exploring the use of incentive programs in order to increase recycling and favors this concept. However, DSNY is not prepared at this time to operationalize a program as outlined under Intro 820. First, DSNY has operational concerns with some aspects of the bill. For example, while the

bill specifies that incentives are provided on the amount of recyclable material collected from the building or public housing development on a weekly basis, DSNY simply does not measure weights collected for individual households or buildings.

DSNY feels that some time needs to be spent first engaging with NYCHA, non-profit and grassroots organizations, and businesses to examine incentive strategies and to determine what would be an effective and feasible approach. We would want to test a few concepts to determine their viability and sustainability, and then scale up as appropriate. We will be happy to engage in meaningful discussions with the Public Advocate and the Committee Chairs as we move forward in developing such incentive programs.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify here today. We're now happy to answer any questions you might have.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Letitia James

Testimony on Behalf of the New York City Public Advocate, Letitia James Before the Committees on Sanitation and Public Housing November 30, 2016

Good afternoon. My name is Jason Fuhrman, Legislative Director for New York City Public Advocate Letitia James, and I am here today to submit testimony on her behalf.

We would like to thank the Chairs, Councilmembers Reynoso and Torres, and their staffs, as well as the committee staff, for holding this hearing on these vitally important issues. I would also like to personally thank them for graciously allowing me to read testimony the Public Advocate's testimony into the record.

NYCHA is the single largest public housing authority in the country. It has given generations of working families in New York the stability they need to make it in this city.

Unfortunately, from the Upper East Side to Brooklyn, NYCHA often epitomizes the inequitable divide that still plagues this great city: pockets of extreme poverty literally surrounded on all sides by some of the wealthiest people in the country.

But we cannot allow the hundreds of thousands of people who live in public housing to be left behind in our City's march toward progress. They are our brothers and sisters, and we are all inextricably tied together. They must rise as we rise, or we will all be poorer for it.

There is perhaps no issue that better illustrates this truism than environmental justice. Every New Yorker, no matter where they live, must have the ability to recycle or we will never achieve our shared goal of a greener New York.

In fact, it's low-income communities that are hardest hit by environmental factors. It's residents of the South Bronx and North Brooklyn that have the highest rates of asthma because of decades of unfair policies, overwhelming children with pollution from dirty, high-emission garbage trucks, long haul trucks, and highways. It is low-income children in public housing and neighborhoods across the country who are being poisoned by polluted water, while wealthy families drink filtered and bottled water. Access to recycling is just one symptom of a far larger problem, but it is one that we can and should solve, once and for all.

New York City law requires landlords of buildings with four or more units to provide recycling services to all their residents. Unfortunately, NYCHA, the City's largest landlord, has historically failed to comply with this law. This is a disservice to both the residents of NYCHA, who deserve a full complement of sanitation services, and New

Yorkers as a whole, who share in the monetary and environmental costs of substandard recycling programs in public housing.

Part of the issue lies with infrastructure challenges: It is harder to encourage recycling in buildings that have trash chutes and often lack a designated area where residents can deliver recyclables. However, there is still more we can do, even given these constraints.

To be clear, this administration deserves a great deal of credit for its work towards reversing decades of disinvestment from the state and federal governments and prior administrations. We look forward to getting more information about the progress of the NYCHA Recycles! Program and working with the relevant agencies to create new policies to engage residents and speed the process along.

While we understand the administration has concerns about the Public Advocate's legislation in its current form, we are grateful for their willingness to work with our office to make the substance of the bill under consideration a reality. It is clear that this administration shares the Public Advocate's goals for a greener New York and true equity for NYCHA residents.

The Public Advocate's bill that you consider today, Int. 820, would bring to New York a model that has worked wonders in more than 300 municipalities and communities across the country. The model is simple. It recognizes that, unlike other city services like water, electricity and gas, residents do not directly internalize the costs associated with their recycling practices. Therefore, it provides an incentive program to encourage increased recycling.

Recycling incentive programs allow participants to earn points for their recycling efforts. These points, in turn, can be redeemed on rewards through participating retailers, restaurants, and other commercial establishments - including discounts and deals from local businesses. Such incentive programs have proven to be successful in large cities throughout the country. If this exact model is not deemed to be the best fit here, we are also ready and willing to work with the Council and Administration on other potential incentive programs best suited to the unique features of NYCHA and this City as a whole.

We are all justifiably concerned by what November's election may mean for the environment. But we must remember that significant environmental change can be effectuated at the local level here in New York, and locally throughout the world. There is much work to be done, but we believe that making recycling more accessible and commonplace is an important step in the right direction.

Thank you for inviting our office to this hearing today and for giving me the opportunity to testify on the Public Advocate's behalf.



New York City Environmental Justice Alliance testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, and Committee on Public Housing, Regarding Intro 820-2015.

November 30th, 2016

Good afternoon Chairpersons Reynoso and Torres, and Members of the City Council. My name is Priya Mulgaonkar, and I am here to testify on Intro 820-2015, which established a pilot program to provide incentives to recycle for residents of public housing, on behalf of the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA). Founded in 1991, NYC-EJA is a non-profit citywide membership network linking grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in their struggle for environmental justice. NYC-EJA empowers its member organizations to advocate for improved environmental conditions and against inequitable environmental burdens. Through our efforts, member organizations coalesce around specific common issues that threaten the ability of low-income and communities of color to thrive, and coordinate campaigns designed to affect City and State policies – including solid waste policies that directly affect these communities.

NYC-EJA has been a leader in advocating for a more equitable and sustainable solid waste system for over 20 years. NYC-EJA led efforts for comprehensive policy reforms to address solid waste and the impacts of dozens of transfer stations on a handful of low-income communities of color throughout New York City. Because a number of NYC-EJA's member organizations come from communities overburdened by garbage, we advocate for strong policies that minimize the impact of truck traffic in our neighborhoods, which leads to public health and safety concerns for residents.

Public housing near waste transfer stations and along prominent truck routes are especially vulnerable to excessive truck traffic associated with trash pickup. This includes Grant Houses, Lehman Village, Carver Houses, and Thomas Jefferson Houses in northern Manhattan; Ingersoll Houses, Farragut Houses and Red Hook Houses in Brooklyn; and Mott Haven Houses in the South Bronx. As recycling increases in these buildings and surrounding communities, over time the city should be able to reduce the number of traditional trash trucks as more materials are diverted to efficient recovery facilities.

Higher diversion rates also reduce the amount of recyclable waste exported to landfills and incinerators via the land-based transfer stations clustered in a handful of communities of color. Also, about 1400 tons per day of Manhattan's waste is burned at the Essex County incinerator – just across the river in New Jersey. Due to prevailing southeasterly wind patterns in New York

• City, it is likely that toxic pollution from that facility blows back into lower Manhattan and Brooklyn.

While we commend the City's effort to initiate recycling in public housing, we are concerned that such efforts rely too heavily on a top-down, incentives-based approach, while eschewing comprehensive recycling education and engagement. Simply adding recycling bins to NYCHA properties does not necessarily lead to higher rates of recycling. One of NYC-EJA's members, the Morningside Heights-West Harlem Sanitation Coalition, pioneered an innovative approach to recycling education with the tenants of Grant Houses, which resulted in recycling rates higher than the city average. It is community-based programs such as this that can maximize the efficacy of recycling bins in public housing.

We recommend that as the City moves forward in implementing this plan to meet its recycling goals, that the Council look to groups like the Morningside Heights/ West Harlem Sanitation coalition and their comprehensive efforts to create a successful, engaging recycling program at Grant Houses, and consider putting more resources into community and tenant groups that can devote on-the-ground expertise educating tenants.

NRDC

STATEMENT OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

Before The

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

and

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Re: Oversight of

RECYCLING AT NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY PROPERTIES

November 30, 2016

Good afternoon, Chairman Torres and Chairman Reynoso and members of the committees. My name is Eric A. Goldstein and I am New York City Environment Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council. ("NRDC"). As you know, NRDC is a national non-profit legal and scientific organization active on a wide range of environmental, public health and quality of life issues internationally, around the nation and right here in New York City, our home town. We have long been engaged on solid waste issues in the nation's largest city and have sought to transform city waste programs from primary reliance on landfilling and incineration to making waste prevention, recycling, composting and environmental justice the cornerstones of New York waste policy in the 21st century.

We are pleased to testify today regarding the longstanding efforts to jumpstart recycling for the residents of New York City Housing Authority's developments throughout the five boroughs.

The New York City Council took a big step down the road to making our city more sustainable when it passed the New York City Recycling Law of 1989. That statute held out the promise that all New Yorkers would have access to convenient and effective recycling services. And it required that all landlords take steps to achieve those objectives. The New York City Housing Authority is the city's largest landlord, with more than 400,000 residents living in its 328 public housing developments. And the City's mandatory recycling law has been on the books for more than twenty-five years. Nevertheless, and despite recent steps by NYCHA to add recycling bins at many of its developments, NYCHA has failed thus far to implement an

NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

effective recycling program for the vast majority of its residents. The agency's shortcomings in this area are inconsistent with the letter and the spirit of the landmark 1989 City Council statute.

Effective compliance by NYCHA with the 1989 recycling law and its implementing regulations is important for numerous reasons. Most obviously, unless NYCHA takes additional action, hundreds of thousands of NYCHA residents will continue to be denied convenient access to participate in the city's recycling program. As a result, more than one thousand tons a week of recyclables generated at NYCHA developments will continue to bypass recycling facilities and be sent to landfills and incinerators, where they contribute to air pollution problems and increased generation of climate-altering methane emissions. In addition, NYCHA's lack of participation in the city's recycling program continues to drag down citywide recycling rates; this reduces the cost-effectiveness of the city's recycling operation and makes it much more difficult to achieve the Administration's admirable and ambitious OneNYC goals for getting waste out of landfills and reducing global warming emissions.

The precise steps that NYCHA is mandated to implement have been clear for decades. Like all landlords, NYCHA must, among other things:

- "separate from other materials designated recyclable materials that are required to be recycled and ... place such separated materials in the appropriate containers."

 R.C.N.Y. 16 Section 1-08(g)(1);
- "remove non-designated materials from the containers of designated source separated recyclable materials before such containers are placed at the curbside for collection and ensure that the designated materials are placed at the curbside." R.C.N.Y. Section 16-305(f)(3);
- "designate a storage area or areas ... that is reasonably accessible to building residents for the pre-collection storage of designated recyclable materials." R.C.N.Y. Section 1-08(f)(2)(i);
- maintain such storage areas "so as not to create a nuisance or sanitary problem." R.C.N.Y. Section 1-08(f)(2)(ii);
- provide a "sufficient number of recycling containers so as to prevent spillover from containers and to avoid the improper disposal of designated recyclable materials." R.C.N.Y. Section 1-08(f)(2)(iii); and
- provide residents with educational materials, including prominent signage and a recycling guide for new tenants, so that residents understand "what materials are required to be source separated, the location of the buildings' designated recycling

area ... and how to dispose of such materials in that building." R.C.N.Y. Section 1-08(f)(1).

To be sure, we understand that NYCHA faces numerous financial, logistical and management challenges. And we recognize that over the past 18 months, NYCHA has taken steps to install recycling bins in many of its developments. That is an encouraging sign.

But the mere installation of bins does not bring NYCHA into compliance with the city's recycling law. And the mere installation of bins does not mean that NYCHA is implementing an effective recycling program in the more than 2,500 buildings under its jurisdiction.

We believe that NYCHA's residents should not have to choose between getting their elevators repaired, or their hall lights fixed, or the mold in their apartments removed, or their recyclable and non-recyclable wastes properly and effectively removed from the premises. These are all basic services to which they are entitled. And indeed, it was residents from NYCHA buildings themselves and their community groups, including the Morningside Heights West Harlem Sanitation Coalition, Mothers on the Move, and We Act for Environmental Justice, who reached out to NRDC more than three years ago to complain that NYCHA residents were being denied their right to recycle and asking for help in moving the bureaucracy. And today, despite NYCHA's progress in installing bins, many of the activists who have wanted to work with NYCHA to advance recycling and improve sanitation services feel frustrated by the lack of cooperation.

Despite the installation of bins at many NYCHA developments, it is safe to say that NYCHA management does not yet have an effective recycling program in place at the vast majority of their buildings. This was true when NRDC first wrote to NYCHA detailing the shortcomings in the recycling area back in May 2015 and it is true today.

Over the past week, in anticipation of this hearing, NRDC visited a number of the NYCHA developments that lacked effective recycling services back in May 2015, and we found little to celebrate, other than the installation of some recycling bins at some sites. For example, at the Manhattanville Houses on West 126th Street, for example, bins have been installed at several locations outside of the buildings. But these bins are inconvenient for residents and insufficient in number. Indeed, most of the bins we observed were filled to the brim with recyclables. They had apparently not been emptied for days and there was no space for residents to deposit additional recyclables. The lesson we drew from that visit was that it is false to claim that NYCHA residents do not want to recycle. If given half a chance, recycling can work at NYCHA properties for NYCHA residents. Meanwhile, at other developments we visited, like the Harlem River Houses, NYCHA had not yet even installed recycling bins.

In short, we are encouraged by NYCHA's willingness to install bins at its developments. But without a much greater commitment from management, recycling at NYCHA will continue to be a failure – to the detriment of both residents and overall city interests.

NYCHA must take additional steps in the short term to build on the momentum it has sought be generate by the installation of recycling bins at its developments. We have three recommendations that we summarize here, all of which we believe should be considered for legislative action by this Council in 2017.

First, what is needed is a change of culture among NYCHA building managers. They must hear from NYCHA's highest authorities that making recycling work at their buildings is a priority and that their performance assessments will be based in part on an evaluation of whether designated recyclables are effectively being placed out for collection at the buildings under their control.

Second, NYCHA must adopt new mechanisms to track the implementation of its recycling program and to measure the results of its efforts. Up until now, very little data have been available to the public on the success of NYCHA's recycling and absent any reliable data collection it is safe to assume that very little if any of the recyclable trash generated at NYCHA buildings is making its way to the city's Sims recycling facility at Sunset Park. What gets measured gets done. And it is up to NYCHA's top management to begin a comprehensive data collection and monitoring system for recycling at each and every one of its 328 developments.

Finally, and of utmost importance, NYCHA leadership must get concerned residents and community groups much more involved in making recycling work at each NYCHA property. This program will never succeed if it is only a top down operation. Tenant groups must be given some authority and incentive to get their co-tenants to participate in the program. NYCHA must start with a handful of demonstration projects that empower tenants to design programs that will boost collections and incentivize participation. We and our community group colleagues have ideas for demonstration projects at Grant Houses, at Mott Haven Houses and at the Polo Grounds Houses as a first step in moving forward from here.

We would be pleased to outline those proposals to NYCHA if it is willing to seriously discuss them. Additionally, we believe it makes sense for the City Council to enact legislation that would propel such recycling actions at NYCHA properties by: directing NYCHA to fund three modest, tenant-based demonstration projects; requiring NYCHA to collect systematic data on recycling at its properties; and seeking inclusion by NYCHA of recycling as a key benchmark in performance evaluations of NYCHA building staff.

We thank Public Advocate Tish James for her long-time advocacy on this issue and for getting the ball rolling by drafting proposed legislation that would establish pilot recycling programs. And we stand ready to work with you, with the members of your committee and with Public Advocate James to advance these important programs. Thank you very much.

TESTIMONY FROM NYCHA PROJECT MANAGER ELENA TENCHIKOVA RECYCLING IN NYCHA

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING WITH THE COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2016 – 1:00 PM COMMITTEE ROOM, CITY HALL, NEW YORK, NY

Chairs Ritchie Torres and Antonio Reynoso, members of the Public Housing and Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Committees, and other distinguished members of the City Council: good afternoon. I am Elena Tenchikova, Project Manager in NYCHA's Management Services Department. Joining me today are Kilsys Payamps-Roure, Chief of Staff to the General Manager, and my colleagues from the New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY): Bridget Anderson, Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Recycling and Sustainability, and Chief Steven Costas, Director for the Bureau of Cleaning and Collection.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the historic progress NYCHA has made in recycling as part of *NextGeneration NYCHA*, the Authority's 10-year strategic plan. *NextGeneration NYCHA* is guiding the Authority to create safe, clean, and connected communities and transform NYCHA into a more sustainable organization.

Mayor de Blasio made the bold commitment for New York to become the most sustainable big city in the world, through the *OneNYC* plan and its goal to send zero waste to landfills by 2030 via a series of initiatives, including recycling. Through the leadership of Mayor de Blasio, NYCHA Chair Shola Olatoye, and DSNY Commissioner Kathryn Garcia, and the strong partnership with collaborators, which includes both Chair Torres and Chair Reynoso, this administration is doing something no other administration has been able to accomplish in nearly three decades. Our effort differs from past attempts because of the partnerships we formed with government entities, residents, and non-profits such as Green City Force, GrowNYC, and the Robin Hood Foundation. These partnerships give us confidence that we will succeed, as it takes buy-in from the entire community to change culture. And that is what we are doing. By

the end of 2016, we will have made recycling available at public housing for more than 400,000 residents living in nearly 2,600 buildings across the five boroughs.

Our Commitment to Recycling

As the country's largest public housing authority in the nation's largest city, NYCHA has an important part to play in preserving the land we live on, the water we drink, and the air we breathe for this and future generations. As Mayor de Blasio puts our city on a path toward long-term waste reduction and greater sustainability, NYCHA is fostering leaders on environmentally conscious practices like recycling.

The Authority understands that proper waste disposal is a quality of life issue for our residents. For too long, conversations focused on NYCHA's challenges with basic garbage issues – litter, dumping, pests, and improper waste disposal – and recycling got left out of the equation. Under this administration, recycling is an important piece of NYCHA's overall waste management strategy and operational plans, and our work with residents to feel ownership and empowerment to love where they live.

Thirty Years in the Making

NYCHA has made some efforts to recycle since 1989, but it was not a systemic approach. Recycling is a challenge for any landlord of scattered, multi-family dwellings, where you have a concentration of people and minimum space. It was clear to us that overcoming infrastructure challenges specific to our developments and educational outreach was necessary to achieving a successful and comprehensive program at NYCHA. Our buildings – the majority of which were built prior to the 1960s – were not designed with recycling in mind. In many cases, our developments lacked a dedicated space where recyclables can be stored until they are picked up. And a variety of development configurations required more than one infrastructure solution. Also, the Department of Sanitation had to

incorporate NYCHA developments into its existing collection routes. In addition, education of residents and training of staff was needed to make recycling part of the new paradigm. Finally, it was historically difficult to identity and allocate funds to remedy the issues, in a landscape of scarce federal funding for public housing.

Our Solutions

Our improved and more comprehensive approach was tailored to address the obstacles to a successful, system-wide recycling program.

First we looked at the issues. We discussed the challenges with staff and residents, who provided their recommendations. Then we formed a Waste Management Working Group, where NYCHA staff and industry experts discussed how we could implement a safe and effective program, based on the best practices of other landlords. We looked at user-friendly bin design and designated areas for collection that are accessible to staff and residents and that encourage proper waste disposal.

We then conducted an assessment of all our sites to determine the infrastructure needed, such as concrete pads to support bins and instructive decals to facilitate sorting of recyclables. During the site assessments, we also informed residents at the site about the recycling program and, in concert with residents and staff, we identified appropriate locations for bins. Then we installed the necessary infrastructure, including signage, in coordination with DSNY.

Following the infrastructure additions, we launched an extensive outreach campaign to educate residents on what, why, and how to recycle – in partnership with DSNY, we've engaged more than 11,600 residents in all 328 developments at about 350 kick-off meetings and special events, including those geared to youth and seniors. We publicized the recycling program and its protocols in a dedicated

website and in *The NYCHA Journal*, our newspaper for residents. Chair Olatoye and Commissioner Garcia starred in an educational video shown in taxis that highlighted the recycling initiative. We distributed informational materials, such as mailings and flyers in multiple languages, to every NYCHA household. We trained more than 1,400 employees, from front-line staff to borough management, on recycling procedures, in collaboration with DSNY and GrowNYC. Finally, we've been working with DSNY to arrange recycling pick-ups at our developments.

We have spent almost \$3 million of the \$13.5 million allocated over five years for our recycling initiative, installing the necessary infrastructure and educating residents at nearly all of our developments. NYCHA worked with Jamestown Advanced Products, a woman-owned business in upstate New York, to manufacture each 250-pound bin, which was custom-designed with input from staff and residents. By buying local, NYCHA saved on shipping costs and reduced carbon emissions associated with transport, since the other suppliers are based in California and Canada. NYCHA employees performed the site work in-house, laying the concrete pads for each bin, which involves about 3,000 pounds of material. In total, we installed nearly 800 pads and 1,500 bins.

NYCHA's current recycling efforts started at two developments in February 2015, and our program has grown considerably since then. I'm pleased to report that as of October 2016, recycling is active – meaning that DSNY collection routes have also been initiated – at 1,960 buildings. That means that nearly 370,000 residents, 91 percent of our population, currently have access to recycling.

Next Steps

The second phase of the initiative, which is currently underway, is continued outreach and education at every single development to significantly increase resident participation. These educational activities, workshops, and events will be conducted in collaboration with DSNY and GrowNYC, our non-profit partner.

Staff training will also continue; with support from DSNY, staff will be retrained annually on recycling procedures. As we continue to raise awareness about recycling, we will assess whether developments require additional infrastructure. To monitor the effectiveness of the program, we will conduct recycling inspections, communicate regularly with DSNY, and submit periodic reports to the Mayor's Office of Sustainability.

Effective Partnerships

As I mentioned, the partnerships we developed with the City, non-profits, residents, and employees are crucial to our success. Now I'd like to describe some of these efforts.

Resident engagement and education have been a central part of our implementation. Thanks to vital support from partners like Green City Force, GrowNYC, and DSNY, we've encouraged thousands of residents to make recycling a mindset and a daily practice. Residents are collaborating with us to foster the program's success. Fifty Green City Force Energy Corps Members – young NYCHA residents preparing for "green-collar" careers – are promoting recycling at the developments participating in the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, a collaborative effort to make communities safer and healthier. GrowNYC is training residents to become volunteer Environmental Ambassadors who share their knowledge and enthusiasm for recycling with the community.

Eighty staff in our Resident Engagement Department have been trained on recycling outreach and education, tailored to constituencies like youth, adults, seniors, and resident leaders. They take every opportunity to incorporate instruction on recycling into their daily interactions with residents. As part of a Robin Hood-funded program that trains residents to become caretakers, participants learn about recycling best practices in a day-long training and also

visit a local recycling facility, thanks to support from DSNY; this is an effective opportunity to engage both residents and future NYCHA staff.

Inspiring Leaders, Inspiring Success

Our recycling community events have been well attended, such as the one held at Cooper Park Houses, where elected officials like Speaker Mark-Viverito and Chair Reynoso participated. This outreach is inspiring a new generation of leaders to dedicate themselves to a greener city. Joy Junious, a young resident of Brownsville Houses, is one of NYCHA's Environmental Ambassadors. About her work, she said that: "My goal is to make [my neighborhood] a better place, make it cleaner and more visually appealing for current and future generations. Recycling and healthy environments go hand in hand, and with proper trash disposal, you see the benefits immediately."

Another Ambassador, Pamela Azore of Pomonok Houses, said that the blue and green recycling bins at her development are a beautiful sight, and she hopes to become "really proficient in delivering the message to residents and neighbors that we're going green...they care about the planet and want their children and grandchildren to grow up in a healthy environment." Both of these amazing Ambassadors are with us today.

The enthusiasm for recycling is evident at Marlboro Houses, where recycling has truly become part of the development's culture, thanks to collaboration between residents and staff. Marlboro was one of the first sites to become active, and DSNY collection reports show consistently good recycling rates. Other successful developments include Baruch and Woodson Houses. NYCHA staff were excited when they heard that we would be discussing our recycling initiative at a City Council hearing; you'll have the opportunity to read the comments that several employees submitted for the public record about their role in the launch.

Conclusion

Recycling is a challenge across our city, but we believe we have developed a program that will be successful at NYCHA and help move the City toward its zero waste goal. To overcome the major obstacles, our comprehensive approach includes resident involvement, staff education, appropriate infrastructure that's based on best practices, and collaboration with DSNY and other partners.

This is a historic initiative: By January 1, every single NYCHA resident will be able to recycle. We are installing innovative infrastructure at every development, and the extent of our resident engagement is unprecedented. We will continue reaching out to residents over the next few years to educate them about the need for recycling and the process. With DSNY, the City Council, our non-profit partners, residents, and staff all working together, we know we will succeed in boosting our City's environmental health and awareness, reducing NYCHA's carbon footprint, and improving the quality of life at our developments.

Thank you for your continued support. Your presence in the community, standing with us at our recycling events, inspires staff and residents alike.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

TESTIMONY FROM EDMOND LANEVILLE RECYCLING IN NYCHA

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING WITH THE COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2016 – 1:00 PM COMMITTEE ROOM, CITY HALL, NEW YORK, NY

As a supervisor of caretaker at Marlboro Houses in Brooklyn, I'd like to provide you with my perspective on the recycling initiative here.

Since the launch of recycling at Marlboro Houses, we have seen: 1) a cleaner community; 2) the prevention of waste machine malfunctions; and 3) more hands-on cooperation between the Department of Sanitation and our front-line employees, along with a more clear and cohesive dialogue on how we can achieve our goal of providing residents a cleaner and greener environment.

We will continue educating residents on the proper procedures for recycling to ensure the program's success.

I would like to add that we here at Marlboro find our experience and cooperation with the Department of Sanitation on recycling to be beneficial to all concerned.

FOR THE RECORD

TESTIMONY FROM AARON SCHREATER RECYCLING IN NYCHA

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING WITH THE COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2016 – 1:00 PM COMMITTEE ROOM, CITY HALL, NEW YORK, NY

My name is Aaron Scheater, and I am an arts consultant with NYCHA's Sustainability Unit under the Department of Resident Engagement, my task was to introduce residents to an arts-based approach to recycling and reuse. The Resident Green Committee (RGC) at Pomonok Houses was very interested in my two-month project proposal. Through play and creative problem solving using discarded materials, participants would gain a new perspective on how they can reuse materials they would ordinarily throw in the trash. The project assignment was simple: use only found materials or recyclables to create fully functional puppets. To facilitate, I provided a sample (a puppet I created), a trip to Materials for the Arts (a City-sponsored "reuse center") for materials, and various resources to help participants piece their objects together or cut them apart (tools, adhesives, etc.).

My students soon forgot that the materials they were using could have been viewed simply as trash. When they completed their puppets, all of them functioned well and looked fantastic. The atmosphere in our makeshift workspace was so positive that even our most skeptical participants went all in on the project, creating some amazing work. When I assigned the second part of the project – writing a script for a sustainability-themed puppet show – the Pomonok RGC realized that the concept of the project was even more important than the finished products. They recognized that they did more than simply reuse materials or recycle (or "upcycle"). They completely changed their views on what constituted "trash" versus useful resources. I also came to the realization that our recycling program has potential far beyond just simply enhancing capture rates or decreasing trash output. We have an opportunity, through the right partnerships and programming, to create a long-lasting change to how our residents view everyday disposable materials as renewable and reusable resources.

TESTIMONY FROM CHISTOPHER SANDS RECYCLING IN NYCHA

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING WITH THE COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2016 – 1:00 PM COMMITTEE ROOM, CITY HALL, NEW YORK, NY

My name is Christopher Sands and I'm a Property Maintenance Supervisor at NYCHA's Pelham Parkway Houses. I was selected to be part of NYCHA's Waste Management Working Group. Our team of managers, superintendents, architects, and safety and security staff recommended that NYCHA adopt a centralized infrastructure model in order to achieve a successful recycling program. To be honest, I was initially unsure that people would use the centralized bins. My development at the time, Bronx River Houses, was one of the first in the Authority to spearhead the newly designed recycling program. Once recycling rolled out, I saw that residents liked the new recycling bins, they were indeed using them, and staff were comfortable with the new procedures.

As with any venture, everyone must be on board, which means that both residents and staff must be engaged and educated. With the guidance of the Waste Management Working Group, we're well on our way to reach our goal of a successful, system-wide recycling program at NYCHA. I now tell anyone who will listen that every little bit recycled contributes to a cleaner environment and that "Recycling is everyone's responsibility, so just do it."

FOR THE RECORD

TESTIMONY FROM NYCHA EDDIE MENDEZ RECYCLING IN NYCHA COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING WITH THE COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2016 – 1:00 PM COMMITTEE ROOM, CITY HALL, NEW YORK, NY

My name is Eddie Mendez and I am a Regional Asset Manager for Brooklyn and the Recycling Borough Liaison. I've been involved with NYCHA's recycling program since the start. In the beginning, it was unclear whether residents would use the bins. However, as we move forward, I see the bins being used more and more. A lot of residents are already participating, and participation is only growing. Residents are getting involved because their children are involved -- and they see that recycling will help their children and grandchildren, by helping to ensure a cleaner, healthier environment for them.

The biggest obstacle was getting started. As we move forward, I believe that positive reinforcement is key to increasing participation rates. I emphasize to the Property Maintenance Supervisors, Managers and other staff that recycling is important, and I always thank them for their commitment. To reinforce proper procedures, I take pictures of proper recycling set out and share them with the leadership and all of the team. When I see residents using the bins, I also thank them for their commitment to the program. A thank you goes a long way.



TESTIMONY OF SARAH MARTIN Into 820 November 30, 2016

Good Afternoon. My name is Sarah Martin. I am Co-Chair of the Morningside Heights/West Harlem Sanitation Coalition. I lived in General Grant Houses for 57 years. In 2006, the Sanitation Coalition took on the task of helping the residents of Grant do real recycling. By that I mean education such as what to recycle and why. After completion of floor by floor hands on workshops in all of our 9 buildings, we were recycling ABOVE the City average. Along the way, we helped train the coordinators of GrowNYC who adopted our hands on approach — calling it the "Recycling Game".

Intro 820, introduced by Public Advocate Tris James, is based on a top down approach which will not allow the residents to feel ownership of their program. Ownership and education are the motivations they need to make recycling work, not some discount or trinket from the store as a reward. At first this reward might be of some interest to some folks, but that would soon wear off. The reason why the recycling rate for public housing is so low is due to a lack of recycling education, a safe convenient way to recycle and a feeling that this program does not belong to them.

I am against passing intro 820 because money spent on this program could be better used for recycling education and leadership training for the residents.

Thank you for allowing me to share our very successful experience at Grant. We are convinced that this kind of program, not rewards, are the answer.

Patina Heyward

TO:

New York City Council

RE:

Oversight Hearing

DATE:

November 30, 2016

NYHCA RESIDENTIAL RECYCLING PROGRAM

Hello, my name is Patina Heyward. Working with both NYCHA in their Resident Engagement Department as a Green City Force Recycling Outreach Apprentice and with the Department of Sanitation has given me a wonderful opportunity to be a part of something that has been very helpful and useful for the community. I have been on the front-end of both areas seeing both the good and the bad. I was able to see what worked and what didn't with the recycling program. I was able to get a perspective on how people felt about the program. As a recycling apprentice we determined what we as a team could do to improve the situation. That made being a part of the recycling team a joy.

Working in Resident Engagement gave me the opportunity to really interact with residents on a closer more personal level; really being able to hone in on what residents were saying and needed done. Working in the Department of Sanitation gave me the opportunity to work closely with the NYCHA's operations team their Supervisors of Grounds and Caretakers and give them hands-on support. I was able to physically assist the operations team of NYCHA with handling the recycling bins, bundling and twining up cardboard, preparing their set-outs. Etc. Having so much Involvement in both areas has been eye-opening. I believe the numbers have increased exponentially in terms of how far the recycling program has come with getting all of NYCHA developments involved in the program.

Joy Junious

TO:

New York City Council

RE:

Oversight Hearing

DATE:

November 30, 2016

NYHCA RESIDENTIAL RECYCLING PROGRAM

Hello my name is Joy Junious. As we have already heard, NYCHA Recycles is a NYCHA-wide project that has enabled NYCHA residents to take part in recycling and allowed NYCHA to become compliant with NYC Recycling law.

As a Recycling Apprentice I got to work on the Residential Recycling Program with Grown NYC, DSNY, and the Resident Engagement Department of the NYCHA. The Recycling Program is to be launched in every NYCHA development by the end of 2016. In order to launch a developments recycling there must be a site walk through, bin installation, and a kick off meeting for the residents to become aware of the bins arrival and informed on how to use them correctly. At a kick off meeting which was what I worked on organizing during my time as an apprentice, there was a slideshow, followed by a Q&A, a recycling game, and distribution of recycling sort and store totes which provided a way for residents to separate recycling in house instead of outside at the bin. Once the kick off meeting took place recycling bins are ready for use! In addition to my work as a recycling Apprentice I am also enrolled as a volunteer Environmental Ambassador.

Environmental Ambassadors is a volunteer group facilitated and organized by GrowNyc. The program has residents from NYCHA developments volunteer to be the ambassador for Recycling and other environmental projects in their development. What an ambassador does is visit GrowNyc to get information on how to recycle and how to teach others about recycling. This is called Environmental Ambassadors training, the next step would be taking that knowledge we received from training out in the field in our own development. After training Environmental Ambassadors go out in their development to do some outreach. Outreach can be tabling in lobbies and speaking to neighbors. We also go around the development cleaning up recyclable trash that is seen around the development. It's really up to each Environmental Ambassador what they'd like their project to be. The most important part is that by recycling we can create cleaner developments and neighborhoods while being kind to the environment at the same time!

Chance Brown

TO:

New York City Council

RE:

Oversight Hearing

DATE:

November 30, 2016

NYHCA RESIDENTIAL RECYCLING PROGRAM

My name is Chance Brown and I am the former team leader for the GCF and NYCHA Recycling Apprenticeship program. I had an amazing time being an apprentice; it was as if I was a part of the resident engagement team. There are a lot of challenges when it comes to trying to get NYCHA residents to attend meetings. To reach residents we put up fliers. We went as far as putting fliers in local bodegas and laundry mats.

It was a very challenging job, but I really enjoyed every minute of it. I enjoy working around the green economy, I currently Work with Harlem Grown where I manage Wagner houses farm in East Harlem. We are partnered with NYCHA as Well as Green City Force were we bring healthy options to the community and help build relationships inside the community. I work closely with children as well as adults and seniors teaching them proper and affective ways to plant and help grow different vegetables. Just like Recycling we have challenges with getting residents to be a part of this movement, but every day we try to engage someone new.

Barbara McFadden

TO:

New York City Council

RE:

Oversight Hearing

DATE:

November 30, 2016

NYHCA RESIDENTIAL RECYCLING PROGRAM

My name is Barbara McFadden and I'm the resident leader at the Nostrand Housing Development. Nostrand Housing was the first development to kick start the recycling program. I am very pleased that my children, parents, and overall community at large are utilizing the recycling bends. My reason being is that when you recycle certain companies depend on recycling programs to provide them with raw materials that they need to make new products. Also, recycling promotes economic growth because job recycling in the United States is approximately \$236 billion a year industry. The good thing is NYCHA is making progress on this issue. Our residents were given training on numerous occasions on how to recycle their waste items. Also our residents engagement team has been very resourceful because they had provided each development with recycling literature and materials to hang in each buildings. They did a lot of demonstrations and they included the children too. Our recycling program is working because I witnessed the tenants and children recycling their waste.

Last but not least, I'm part of the Next Generation NYCHA 10 year plan. One of our first priorities is making sure each resident have a better quality of life because recycling helps us to promote a healthier environment for our residents.

Mrs. Pamela Azore

TO:

New York City Council

RE:

Oversight Hearing

DATE:

November 30, 2016

FOR THE

NYHCA RESIDENTIAL RECYCLING PROGRAM

My name is Mrs. Pamela Azore, and I am the Resident Green Committee Captain for Pomonok Houses in Queens. My experience with recycling is fairly new, and I know there is a lot that has to be done in public housing. The receptacles are there and people need to use them. I know not everyone will, but some will. It's the least we could do. They were stationed at points where everyone can access them, but it's going to take time for people to get used to it. There needs to be more outreach. I'm reaching out to the TA to see what we could do. It is just terrible what's going on; I've even found coats (textiles) in the bins and it is ridiculous. The least they could do is give it to their neighbors or someone who could use them.

Our Resident Green Committee is a small group that does big things. We have addressed scaffolding issues and look forward to seeing the beautiful gardens. I am happy to participate with Environmental Ambassadors because it is an extension of the work that I have done with RGC. When I was introduced to recycling I realized it had to happen and was part of the work we were already doing. It was a natural extension and I didn't know I was going to love it. Some people don't get it or don't care. I grew up in public housing and I can talk to the people. Little by little it is working, and I want Pomonok to be a model development on recycling and it would make me very happy. GrowNYC's Stop and Swap is the ultimate in recycling, and saves items from going to the landfill. These are the things that make me love recycling. If we learn and all do this together, there is strength in our unity. The EA program is part of Next Generation NYCHA and it brings opportunities to our conscientious young people like, Joy. My daughter, my husband—we all do it in the house. I love the bins. I want to do a recycling piece in my building-I've already put up a sticker saying "the bins are here please recycle." Going to Sims taught me how important it is to separate our waste, but it is just the beginning. They could do so much more at Sims, and we could do so much here if people would just separate the waste. People just need to know.

We had to do an exercise at grow where we separated all are waste and we saw what was left it was just compost. This is a big thing we are trying to do, and seems like the best next step. I'm not an expert but the least I can do is separate my garbage.

Jared Sessum

TO:

New York City Council

RE:

Oversight Hearing

DATE:

November 30, 2016

NYHCA RESIDENTIAL RECYCLING PROGRAM

My name is Jared Sessum. Thank you for the opportunity to share my insights into NYCHA's recycling initiative. Over the past two years, I have been exposed to thousands of residents' perspectives on the program's implementation, operations, and impact in the community. My experience as the Public Housing Recycling Outreach Coordinator with GrowNYC, combined with knowledge acquired through my current role as Love Where Live Director with Green City Force, informs my unique vantage on the value of this initiative.

My primary focus related to the recycling program has been outreach and education for residents of NYCHA. In my previous role with GrowNYC, in partnership with the NYCHA Resident Engagement Department, Resident Association leaders, and various community-based organizations and city agencies, I was involved with more than 200 resident meetings and community events reaching about 4000 residents and staff between May 2015 and June 2016. GrowNYC's educational program emphasizes the sustainability triple bottom line, describing the social, environmental and economic benefits of recycling. GrowNYC teaches how proper waste disposal can improve quality of life for residents through beautification of the community, reduced rodents and insect infestation, and improved public health; explains how conservation of natural resources and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions benefits our environment; and highlights the economic benefits related to reduction of waste management costs through increased efficiency while creating employment opportunities. The overall response from residents has been positive and hopeful for success, with the greatest enthusiasm expressed towards saving money and creating jobs that provide livable wages. When stories are shared of young public housing residents who have been hired through Green City Force to work for NYCHA Resident Engagement or DSNY Bureau of Recycling and Sustainability, or other organizations dedicated to waste reduction such as BIG Reuse and GrowNYC, it legitimizes our message and encourages resident participation. When the outreach includes residents themselves, as in the case of Green City Force, who partnered with GrowNYC and NYCHA, residents are particularly responsive.

Significant progress has been made over the past few years by offering the opportunity for all residents of NYCHA communities to recycle. But there is still room for improvement, such as:

- Additional recycling infrastructure can be installed to make the process more convenient for both residents to drop off recyclable materials and staff to collect and set out the materials for Sanitation pickup.
- Continued education for both residents and staff to help reduce contamination while increasing waste diversion from landfills.
- The introduction of other zero waste initiatives such as organics recovery and programs for electronics and textiles recycling can also increase diversion rates while providing additional opportunities to increase awareness for the recycling program.
- Recycling Coordinators can be hired and deployed based on the NYCHA Zone Coordinators model to have staff dedicated to various activities such as compliance checks and waste audits, as well as education, collections, sorting, and set-out. This would support the goals of the program while creating economic opportunity for NYCHA residents.
- Implementation of an incentive program for proper recycling can encourage behavior change.
- Green City Force's Love Where You Live model, through which Green City Force AmeriCorps members all young NYCHA residents in training have reached over 10,000 residents in their homes with information and engagement around behavior changes towards energy conservation, could be a powerful model to adapt and apply to promoting recycling in NYCHA.

Collaboration between key stakeholders, community-based organizations, and city agencies has been a significant tool towards generating excitement around the recycling program and offering educational opportunities for residents to learn more about the program. Utilizing combined resources to harness the power of numbers has resulted in successful outreach initiatives. Residents are drawn to recycling events where organizations and agencies come together to provide a variety of information that is relevant to their lives.

When I went back to school to earn an advanced degree in sustainability I wasn't thinking about getting involved with recycling and the zero waste movement. But the opportunity presented itself and I embraced it. Being a part of this program has been a rewarding experience in many ways. I will always take great pride in providing people with the opportunity to learn something new while hopefully inspiring them to take action themselves to improve their community and help create a better world. It has been an honor and a pleasure to work with NYCHA staff and residents, my colleagues at GrowNYC and Green City Force, and our partners at various organizations. Together we can solve NYC's waste issues and create a prosperous future for all.

Jared Sessum
Director, Love Where You Live
347.815.3958 | jared@greencityforce.org

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