



sanitation

Edward Grayson Commissioner

Testimony of Edward Grayson, Commissioner New York City Department of Sanitation

Hearing on the FY 2023 Preliminary Budget and FY 2022 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report

New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

Wednesday, March 23, 2022
2:00 P.M.

Good afternoon Chair Nurse and members of the City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. I am Edward Grayson, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Sanitation. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Department's portion of the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget and our current programs and operations. With me this afternoon are Deputy Commissioner Gregory Anderson, Deputy Commissioner Bridget Anderson, Chief of Cleaning Operations Stephen Harbin and Assistant Chief of Enforcement Ricky Cyrus. I will present brief testimony, after which I am happy to answer your questions.

Before I begin, I want to thank once again Speaker Adams, Chair Nurse, and the Members of this Committee for passing resolution 55-A today. This important measure supports the Governor's EPR proposal to create transformational change in waste reduction and recycling, by requiring upstream manufacturers and retailers to take some financial responsibility for the end-of-life of the products they produce and sell. The program could bring as much as \$100 million or more to New York City each year, which could free up funds for investment in recycling outreach and education, new waste diversion programs and other vital sanitation services. As the State budget process winds to a close, I urge you to continue speaking with your colleagues in the State Legislature regarding the importance of this proposal. Now let me turn to the FY23 Preliminary Budget.

Preliminary FY 2023 Expense Budget

The Fiscal Year 2023 (FY 2023) preliminary expense budget reflects cost savings associated with the Program to Eliminate the Gap and provides funding for the Department to continue to deliver core, essential services necessary to keep New York City healthy, safe and clean. The Preliminary Budget includes \$1.78 billion in expense funds for the Department in FY 2023.

Our FY 2023 budgeted headcount is 9,359, a decrease of 144 positions from the FY 2022 preliminary budget. In FY 2023, the Department's budgeted headcount includes 7,391 full-time uniform and 1,968 full-time civilian positions.

The preliminary budget includes additional funding in FY 2022 to close deficits in uniform overtime (\$50 million), motor fuel costs (\$5.6 million), and heating fuel costs (\$0.9 million), as well as additional funding related to collective bargaining agreements for Department personnel.

In terms of program areas, the budget is broken down as follows:

- \$808.3 million for Refuse and Recycling Collection and Street Cleaning;
- \$470.1 million for Waste Export;
- \$97.3 million for Motor Equipment Maintenance;
- \$96.7 million for Snow Removal;
- \$51.2 million for Recycling and Sustainability initiatives, not including the cost of collection;
- \$31.7 million for Building Maintenance;
- \$25.6 million for Solid Waste Transfer Station Operations;
- \$21.9 million for Enforcement;
- \$18.9 million for other Waste Disposal costs;
- \$16.8 million for Landfill Closure; and
- \$136.5 million for General Administration and support functions, including facility leases, fuel, utilities, telecommunications, public information, engineering, and legal affairs.

The Department's budget is largely funded by city tax levy funds (\$1.76 billion in FY 2023), but it also includes \$5.7 million in capital IFA funds, \$9.7 million in intracity payments and \$7.6 million in federal funds.

Program to Eliminate the Gap

The preliminary budget includes savings of \$38.0 million in FY 2022 and \$47.8 million in FY 2023 as part of the Administration's Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG). These savings include reforecasts of certain costs, adjustments based on increased revenue, and the elimination of certain roles through attrition. The PEG initiatives do not include any direct cuts to services.

In particular, the PEG includes the following savings:

- \$15.5 million in annual recurring savings related to the elimination of 188 currently-vacant civilian positions, reflecting an 8.4% reduction in overall civilian headcount at the agency;
- \$9.4 million in FY2022 and \$18.2 million in FY 2023 due to the suspension in expansion of the opt-in curbside organics program;
- \$5.6 million in FY 2022 and \$5.0 million in FY 2023 in lower projected costs for Fresh Kills landfill closure and post-closure maintenance;
- \$4.6 million in FY 2022 and \$5.0 million in FY 2023 due to the reduction of 71 Garage Utility staff posts per day, equivalent to a reduction in uniformed headcount of 107 lines;
- \$1.6 million in FY 2022 and \$2.7 million in FY 2023 due to the reduction in uniformed staff assigned to administrative and support roles, a reduction in uniformed headcount of 37 lines;
- \$1.3 million in FY 2023 related to adjusting the frequency of defensive driving training courses;
- \$0.7 million in FY 2022 in prior year State revenue; and

- \$0.7 million in FY 2022 in reusable bag fee revenue.

The recurring savings related to the PEG initiatives in the preliminary budget increase to \$51.7 million in FY 2026.

Preliminary Capital Budget for Fiscal Years 2022-2026

The Department's capital commitment plan for FY 2022 through 2026 is \$2.01 billion. This includes \$1.01 billion for collection trucks and other equipment, \$902 million for garages and other facilities, \$75 million for solid waste management, and \$36 million for information technology and telecommunications.

In FY 2023, the Department's capital budget totals \$362 million, including \$171 million for equipment, \$151 million for facilities, \$27 million for solid waste management infrastructure, and \$12 million for information technology projects. The Department also advanced some equipment funding into the FY 2022 capital budget to take advantage of lower pricing for collection trucks in the current contract, which expires this fiscal year.

2022-2023 Winter Season

Snow-fighting is a core component of the Department's mission, and this winter has had its fair share of snowstorms. To date this winter, the Department has responded to 17 winter weather conditions and 5 storms, with a total accumulation of 17.5 inches as measured by the National Weather Service in Central Park.

Every snowstorm and season bring its unique challenges. This year, as the Omicron wave swept through New York City and DSNY, the men and women of this Department, as always, rose to the occasion during each of these snow events to ensure our streets remained safe and passable. I thank them for their service. This season we also had nearly 1,000 new hires, our largest cohort in over a decade, and their training and preparation have served them well.

This year, we expanded the number of mini-plows on hand to service protected bike lanes and other narrow areas, leasing a total of 30 units citywide. For the first time, we have not only pre-treated bike lanes with anti-icing brine but also deployed these mini-plows during the snowstorm to provide real-time snow-fighting for our expanding network of protected bike lanes. We hope to continue and expand this approach in the future.

To date this winter season, the Department has used 340,000 tons of road salt, 449,000 gallons of calcium chloride, and 230,000 gallons of liquid brine to treat New York City's roadways. While we hope that we have seen the last of snow this winter and have begun to see the first buds of spring, we remain prepared for whatever Mother Nature has in store for us.

The preliminary FY 2023 snow budget is \$96.7 million and is calculated based on a rolling five-year average of previous year actual spending per the New York City Charter.

Commercial Waste Zones

Commercial Waste Zones will create a safe and efficient collection system for commercial waste that provides high quality service to New York City businesses while advancing the City's zero waste and sustainability goals. The new system is expected to reduce commercial waste truck traffic by more than 50 percent, eliminating millions of miles of truck travel, cutting air pollution

and reducing the time it takes workers to complete their routes. It is also expected to nearly double the commercial diversion rate for recyclables and organic waste.

The Department released Part 2 of the request for proposals (RFP) for Commercial Waste Zones in November 2021, and responses are now due on July 15, 2022. This second and final part of the RFP requests detailed plans and pricing proposals from the 50 responsive companies that responded to Part 1 of the RFP last year. We have extended the response deadline by 90 days to ensure that carters have enough time to submit high quality proposals are up to the standards that fully meet DSNY's goals for the program.

DSNY is currently staffing up a new Bureau of Commercial Waste to continue the implementation of this program, including outreach staff, technical experts, and contract administrators. We expect to finalize the contracts by the end of the year and begin customer transition in 2023. The zones will be transitioned in phases over a period of up to two years.

In closing, I wish to thank Chair Nurse and all members of this committee for your dedication and support as we continue to deliver our essential services. You are all an important part of our work to keep New York City healthy, safe and clean. My colleagues and I are now happy to answer your questions.



Wednesday, March 23 2022

**Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
Testimony Before the New York City Council
Committee on Sanitation**

Good morning. My name is Mark Levine and I am the Manhattan Borough President. Thank you to Chair Nurse for holding this hearing and for allowing me the opportunity to testify.

As we come out of the height of this pandemic, the FY23 budget will lay the groundwork for much of the difficult recovery work that lies ahead for our city. We cannot afford to simply return to the status-quo of 2019. Instead, we must aggressively invest in the New York City of the future. The uniformed men and women of the Department of Sanitation did exceptional work helping to support our neighborhoods throughout the pandemic, despite funding reductions and worker shortages. Now, we must fund this agency at a level that will ensure that we can keep our city clean and modernize our solid waste infrastructure.

I applaud the work that Commissioner Grayson and DSNY have done during the last 12 months but I am concerned about the lack of funding in the Mayor's preliminary budget for important programs that would help modernize our waste collection system, including funding for the city's curbside composting program and containerization. While the programs have admittedly been imperfect, the solution should be increasing funding, not reducing it.

New Yorkers across Manhattan have expressed their outrage and disappointment for the City's decision to cut the composting program, and the FY23 budget should make clear the City's commitment to these types of programs that will help make our city's waste-cycle more sustainable. Similarly, the City should increase funding to support the containerization pilot program, also known as 'Clean Curbs', in Manhattan and across the City. While we understand that this pilot is necessary to test the concept and operations needs of a containerized waste system, we believe that it should be piloted in multiple neighborhoods in Manhattan, and funded at a level that will ensure it's success while also allowing for robust community engagement and partnership. The benefits of the 'Clean Curbs' program – clearer sidewalks, more room for pedestrians, easier control of rodents and other pests – should not be delayed.

Beyond these programs that need to be fully funded, I remain concerned that we are not adequately funding the fundamental operations of the department.

In January, New Yorkers were reminded yet again that the City continues to inadequately clear intersections and bus stops of snow following snow storms. Though the City continues to expect landlords to clear the sidewalk, we need better coordination and responsibility at these locations. After sending a letter to DSNY and DOT about this issue, we were told that the issue ultimately, came down to staff capacity. It's time that we truly address this problem, and staff DSNY so that we can ensure that every bus stop and every intersection is expeditiously cleared of snow and

every New Yorker can access our streets. And on the capital side, DSNY needs to expeditiously purchase smaller street sweepers to allow them to properly maintain the City's bike lanes and to allow DOT to better design lanes moving forward.

Lastly, DSNY's street wastebasket collection funding should be returned to pre-pandemic levels and should be baselined. Wastebasket collection is a fundamental responsibility of the City, but neighborhoods across Manhattan are not receiving adequate service. A full recovery from the pandemic must include serious investment in waste collection and quality of life issues that were exasperated by the pandemic. Small businesses, residents, workers and tourists alike all expect our streets to be clean, and this service should not need to be negotiated every year by DSNY, the Mayor and the Council. Fully funding and baselining this service is common sense, and is needed to ensure our City is stronger, healthier, and cleaner in the future.

Thank you again to Chair Nurse for holding this hearing. I look forward to working with my elected and agency partners to ensure a successful, efficient, resilient and clean New York City.



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

**Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
Preliminary Budget Hearing, March 23, 2022**

Good afternoon and thank you to Chair Sandy Nurse and the Sanitation Committee for the opportunity to speak today. I am very excited to see Council Member Nurse stepping into my former role as Chair of this committee. She has been a strong ally in efforts to make the City's waste management more sustainable and more equitable, and I know she will continue to lead on these issues.

I am here today to express a number of concerns about this budget. Unfortunately, it represents a rollback of many of the gains we made over last eight years. While we already had a long way to go toward sending zero waste to landfill by 2030, this budget gets us even further from that goal instead of moving us toward it. I want to focus on a few specific areas of concern, including organics, commercial waste, trash on our streets, and the District 13/15 sanitation garage.

Organics: About one third of New York City's waste stream is organic waste – food, soiled paper, and yard waste. If we are serious about diverting waste from landfill – and we should be, because when this material goes to landfill, it produces harmful greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change – we must have a functioning organics collection program. The Mayor has called the existing program “symbolic” because of low participation. It's true that if the program only exists on a small scale, it is not cost efficient. However, the answer is not to scrap the program. Last year, a study by the Independent Budget Office found that increasing participation in the curbside program would reduce per-ton collection costs significantly, and that any increase in emissions from additional trucks would be more than offset by diverting the organics from landfill. The answer is a citywide, mandatory, curbside collection program paired with robust outreach and education to maximize participation.

Until we get there, it is critical that we support our community-based compost dropoff sites. Making cuts to these programs is an equity issue. When the budgets are cut, the City tends to support the dropoff sites with the highest utilization rates, which often leaves low-income communities of color, who also don't have the option to participate in the curbside program, with no options for keeping their food scraps out of landfill. Even the existing program leaves out much of Central, East, and South Brooklyn. In the Council, I advocated for a more equitable approach requiring at least one community-based dropoff site per community district, and I will continue to do so until we have a universal curbside program.



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

Commercial Waste Zoning: I was recently disappointed to learn that implementation of a zoned collection system for commercial waste has been delayed three more months, after a two-year delay due to the pandemic. This plan will be transformative for our city in so many ways: it will further environmental justice, make our streets safer, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and increase worker safety. I know that Chair Nurse intends to hold a hearing just on this next month, so I won't go into too many details here, but I do want to say that it is critical that DSNY and the Business Integrity Commission have all the staff they need to ensure that this program is implemented as soon as possible.

Trash Collection and Quality of Life: We are all experiencing the issues caused by our inefficient approach to trash storage on our streets and sidewalks. Our city can and must do better than the ugly piles of trash and rats that we all have to dodge everyday. I was very dismayed to see cuts proposed to DSNY's waste containerization pilot before it has even had a chance to start. Other countries and cities have no problem using rat-proof containerized waste systems on their streets and sidewalks. It's time to admit that we have limited space in this city, and prioritizing waste storage over parking would make our streets and sidewalks significantly cleaner. (Separating organics in rat-proof containers for a curbside program would also help.)

Brooklyn District 13/15 garage: While I thank DSNY for including upgrades to Brooklyn District 3 and 17/18 facilities in the Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan, I am disappointed to see that a new garage for Brooklyn Districts 13 and 15 remains unfunded. DSNY has told me that these garages are currently operating from among the worst physical plants in their inventory, with BK 13 located in a dilapidated building and parking its trucks on an HPD-owned site slated for affordable housing development, and BK 15 using trailers in an area plagued by flooding. New York's Strongest already have some of the toughest jobs out there, and they shouldn't be forced to work in these conditions. A new garage was proposed at Coney Island Creek decades ago, and City Council approved site selection in 2006, but implementation has been delayed so long that now the lot is on the market and may be sold to a private developer. I want to ask the administration to please reconsider, to negotiate with National Grid to acquire the site before it's too late, and to move forward with this garage as soon as possible.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today. I am looking forward to working very closely with Chair Nurse and the City Council to ensure that DSNY is adequately supported to keep our city clean and to consistently update our approach to waste management to further equity and combat climate change.



**Comments to The Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Committee
Preliminary Budget Hearing**

March 23, 2022

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*Director
New York Communities
for Change*

My name is Lynda Nguyen and I am the Senior Research and Policy Analyst at [ALIGN, the Alliance for a Greater New York](#). ALIGN leads the [NY Transform Don't Trash Coalition](#), a citywide partnership of environmental justice communities, unions, and safe streets advocates working to create good jobs and clean, safer communities for all New Yorkers.

Sanitation plays a crucial role in enhancing public health and safety. Since the start of the pandemic, sanitation services have been one of the first to experience budget cuts or even total suspension, despite impacting every neighborhood across the city. We saw this during the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic when critical programs like Commercial Waste Zones (CWZ), basket service, and community composting were deprioritized and underfunded, resulting in dirtier streets, a dramatic rise of litter and rodent complaints, and lower quality of life for New Yorkers. Our city is in a sanitation crisis and we cannot wait any longer for action.

The proposed budget cuts to the Department of Sanitation (DSNY) will exacerbate this crisis. While the NY Transform Don't Trash Coalition is heartened to see the establishment of the Commercial Waste Division in the preliminary budget, we are urging the city to implement the CWZ law as soon as possible, and to restore and expand DSNY's budget to ensure vital sanitation services are able to operate at pre-pandemic levels. Doing so will allow the city to reach its zero waste goals, address legacies of environmental racism, and tackle the public health and sanitation crises we are met with today.

Our city faces a unique opportunity to transform our waste management systems, and investing in proven strategies is the first step. Implementing CWZ is exactly what the city should be doing to support local economic recovery efforts. CWZ optimize the current open-market system, in which private carting trucks crisscross all over the city, often going through multiple boroughs on long and overlapping routes, contributing to excess truck traffic, noise, and air pollution. Under the far more efficient CWZ system, private carters and businesses meet the obligations of NYC's recycling and composting rules. In addition to taking 18 million diesel truck miles off NYC streets, the City's Environmental Impact Statement for Local Law 199 found that CWZ would offer at least [\\$14 million in system-wide cost savings](#).

The CWZ system will create safer, green career jobs in the private waste industry. Private sanitation work remains [one of the most dangerous jobs in the nation](#). CWZ

address this by requiring carters to meet robust vehicle safety measures, and invest in cleaner trucks and facilities, and conduct safety trainings– measures that will be critical to ensuring both worker and pedestrian safety.

CWZ will also expand opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in waste auditing, zero-emissions micro hauling, and waste reduction. CWZ incentivize awardees to partner with recyclers, manufacturers, micro haulers, and auditors to reduce the massive commercial waste stream. Delaying the implementation of CWZ means the continued exclusion of many current and future women of color innovators from an industry dominated by legacy companies.

Lastly, expanding New York's curbside organics recycling program stands to be the largest opportunity for the city to invest in jobs in the waste industry. Organic waste makes up one-third of the city's waste stream, and has a significant impact on climate, jobs, and revenue. Expanding organics recycling will divert a significant amount of waste away from landfills, create more good, local jobs for New Yorkers, and has the [potential to earn over \\$20 million in revenue each year](#). In fact, other cities like [Seattle](#) have found success in incorporating incentives and regulations to: 1) steadily decrease disposal per household; 2) produce cost savings for ratepayers; and 3) substantially reduce environmental impacts.

The NY Transform Don't Trash Coalition urges the city to implement CWZ as soon as possible, and to restore and expand DSNY's budget to ensure vital sanitation services are operating at pre-pandemic levels. We appreciate the steadfast efforts of DSNY staff to engage all stakeholders and to advance vital sanitation programs like the CWZ system over the past several years, and look forward to working with the new Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management to continue this important work.

CENTER FOR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

FY23 Preliminary Budget Hearing Sanitation Committee

March 23, 2022

My name is Derick Bowers, and I'm the Director of Social Enterprise in New York City for The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO). Thank you to Chair Nurse and the members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony about our program model and work across New York City, and how innovative sanitation initiatives intersect with our work in the reentry space.

CEO's mission is to provide immediate, effective, and comprehensive employment services to individuals recently returning home from incarceration and young adults who have had interactions with the criminal legal system. As the largest provider of reentry employment services in New York, our intentional focus is to serve individuals facing the most significant barriers to gaining and maintaining employment, while also returning \$3.30 for every \$1 of public investment.

Background on CEO

Our four stage program has two core components: transitional employment, which we provide through partnerships with city agencies like DCAS and NYCHA, and vocational services to help participants attain long term employment outside of CEO. Since its inception, CEO has made nearly 39,000 unsubsidized job placements for formerly incarcerated individuals, over half of which benefited New Yorkers.

Funding Priority: Sanitation

CEO believes that increased investments into additional sanitation services that also support employment and training, such as the NYC Cleanup Initiative, are essential to organizations like CEO that utilize transitional work as part of our model. Improving public spaces and economic prosperity goals for New York City go hand in hand. Specific work crew enterprises can be paired with sanitation opportunities; for example, CEO's work crews focus on supplemental sanitation efforts throughout the city, and this work helps our participants gain stability and motivation so that they can ultimately succeed in long-term employment. This has been made possible year after year through funding from the City Council's NYC Cleanup Initiative.

A funding increase in the innovative NYC Cleanup Initiative would provide an opportunity to direct funds toward expanding our work crew opportunities throughout the 5 boroughs, thereby increasing the number of justice-impacted individuals we can serve annually and the amount of immediate paid employment available for thousands of New Yorkers who are often underserved

and overlooked. It would also provide the city with a diverse labor pool of individuals who are screened, trained, and motivated to work during a time where the job market is experiencing a downturn – and maybe even create a municipal hiring pipeline into city agencies like DSNY.

These are sound investments the city can and should adopt through the budget. At CEO, we don't just put individuals to work; we help keep them out of prisons and jails.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations.

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Testimony of the Center for Zero Waste Design, March 23rd, 2022

New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2023, The Preliminary Capital Plan for Fiscal Years 2023-2026 and The Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report

I am Clare Miflin, from the nonprofit [Center for Zero Waste Design](https://www.centerforzerowastdesign.org), and part of the [Save our Compost](https://www.saveourcompost.org) advocacy group.

We are never going to get rid of the litter, rats and trash bags piled up on our sidewalks without a comprehensive plan to change things. The Streetsblog article out yesterday "[Trash City – New York is Filthy and the Fault is Government Inertia](#)" is a good primer. Also [Freeze Food Waste Collection Again? We've Got to Do Better Than That!](#) on Urban Matters blog.

We all know, heaping trash bags on sidewalk causes litter, odors and rats. In some neighborhoods building and BID staff clean up, but not in under-resourced ones. As many councilmembers have said, one of the solutions is containerization. I know Greg and Bridget support that – but they need more funding and the support of the mayor to get there.

The city needs a comprehensive plan to containerize waste, transition to the circular economy and collect all organic waste affordably. We've outlined many of the design, planning and logistics strategies necessary in our [Put Waste to Work: For Vibrant Streetscapes, Green Jobs and Healthy Neighborhoods](#) vision plan. I hope the upcoming Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) will include many of them and be led by the [Mayor's Climate](#) team, who can ensure collaboration across agencies and sufficient funding.

Right now, DSNY needs to be properly funded over multiple years to do extensive pilots, at least 10 million, so the SWMP can be based on solutions that work, for every building and neighborhood, including those with few staff. They could pilot clean curbs enclosures across the city, food waste processing equipment in big buildings, and collection of containers that can be rolled straight from a building to the truck. Because in high density neighborhoods Clean Curbs enclosures are too small. In many buildings staff bring up bags in wheeled hampers, then emptying them all on the sidewalk to attract rats all night, and then DSNY pick up one by one in the morning, lifting 5 tons per shift. Instead DSNY could retrofit their trucks, for about 10-15 thousand a truck, to tip those containers directly in the back! Still 2 workers a truck, fewer injuries. No parking spaces, no maintenance agreements, no rats, no litter.

And lastly – increase funding for community scale composting and micro-haulers. At least \$10 million, baselined for multiple years. These amazing hard-working organizations should not be spending most of their time on advocacy rather than composting. Community composting is part of reaching resilience, climate and livability goals. It brings together communities, makes the city greener and cooler and reduces flooding. It should be ramped up to rejuvenate all City parks and landscaped spaces, and then could use about half of the city's residential food waste. Local distributed solutions like these reduce trucks and large infrastructure with their inequitable impacts.

As part of NYC's recovery, we need to make all of our streets safer, cleaner, and greener – and cutting the funding to do that makes no sense.



**NYC Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Budget 2022 Hearing**

**Testimony Submitted by
Gabrielle Blavatsky, Policy Director of Equity Advocates**

Hello, my name is Gabrielle Blavatsky and I am the Co-Founder and Policy Director of Equity Advocates. Thank you to Chairperson Nurse as well as the staff and members of the NYC Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management for holding today's hearing and the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Equity Advocates builds the capacity of nonprofit organizations to address the underlying causes of food inequity through policy and systems change. We partner with New York-based organizations working to alleviate hunger and poverty, and provide them with the tools they need to be more civically engaged—including policy education, advocacy training and coalition building services. Through this work we also launched and facilitated the NYC Food Policy Alliance, a coalition of over 40 food systems nonprofits here in the city engaging in collective advocacy. The Alliance's mission is to identify and advocate for public policies and funding that not only respond to today's crisis, but also address the ongoing vulnerabilities and injustices of the food system. We approach this work through an anti-racism lens to ensure communities of color and other systemically under-resourced communities benefit from the recovery.

We find the Administration's plan to suspend the expansion of the City's composting program deeply troubling. According to the DSNY, since August 2021, tens of thousands of New Yorkers have signed up for Curbside Composting—showing their support of this voluntary program.¹ Yet under the new Preliminary budget, only seven community board districts will have curbside composting this year. We're very concerned about the sanitation and quality of life inequities created by the limited availability of this program. As Chairperson Nurse noted in a recent New York Times article, "the consequences of not equitably expanding the organics program are more rats ripping open our trash bags and thus more litter on our streets" especially in low income communities of color where curbside composting is largely unavailable.

During his campaign, Mayor Adam's committed to expand curbside composting to every neighborhood in New York City, noting that the methane gas being emitted from food scraps in our trash are contributing to climate change. If NYC is to meet its goal of reducing greenhouse gases by

¹ <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/site/services/food-scraps-and-yard-waste-page/bydistrict-curbsidecomposting>



equity advocates

40%² and achieving zero waste by 2030³, the City Council must restore funding for the planned and promised expansion of the current opt-in Organics Curbside Composting program, ensuring that environmental justice communities are included and prioritized.

Budget cuts to the city's composting program over recent years have meant that the burden and responsibility of collecting and processing resident's food scraps has largely fallen on nonprofits and community gardens who are largely uncompensated for this difficult work. To help support the organizations that have stepped up to fill the gap in composting services, we urge the City Council to also fully fund the Department of Sanitation (DSNY) Community Composting programs which provide over 200 Food Scrap Drop Offs throughout the city and local composting sites that produce compost for our Parks and community gardens. The Community Composting should not only continue to be funded at the current level of \$7 million, but also be expanded to meet the increasing demand for these programs with additional funding to equitably locate community composting sites in communities that do not have one.

I thank members of this committee for your valuable time and for holding this important hearing on the Mayor's Preliminary Budget. We look forward to working with you on your budget efforts and policy solutions that will help make our food system more equitable and sustainable.

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https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/sustainability/downloads/pdf/publications/New%20York%20City%27s%20Roadmap%20to%2080%20x%2050_Final.pdf

³ <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/sustainability/initiatives/zero-waste-challenge.page>



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NYC Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing

Testimony Submitted by Equity Advocates' Youth Food Justice Organizers Program

Hello, our names are Joshua Delgado, Noumou Diallo, Vera Grossman, Mehdi Rahmani, Julio Salcedo and Messiah Timmons, and we are New York City residents ages 14-22 who are participating in Equity Advocates' Youth Food Justice Organizers Program. Thank you to Chairperson Nurse as well as the staff and members of the NYC Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management for holding today's hearing and the opportunity to submit this testimony.

The Youth Food Justice Organizers Program is a cohort of young New York City residents learning about food policy and engaging in advocacy to advance food justice in our communities. During our 8-month program, we meet biweekly to learn about urban agriculture policy and local food governance, New York City budget cycle and food funding, how to provide testimony at a city council hearing, and best practices for meeting with policy makers. We have also completed individual research projects, where we researched a current food systems-related bill, and presented our research to our peers. Our program is run by Equity Advocates, which builds the capacity of nonprofit organizations to address the underlying causes of food inequity through policy and systems change.

As New York City youth, we believe that a citywide compost pickup service is an important solution to our growing problem of waste disposal in New York City. As young people, we have an important and unique stake in this discussion, because the issues of climate change, environmental degradation, and food waste impact the future generations the most. Noumou believes that "composting affects the youth because the actions we take now will have an impact on future generations. For instance, if we didn't compost as much then pollution would probably get worse progressively." Mehdi adds that composting "affects the youth because future generations will grow up and take care of the environment so it's good for the youth to know effective composting."

Benefits of Composting

As Teens For Food Justice student and alumni advocates, we have all also worked on NYC urban or hydroponics farms and many of us have participated in composting programs directly, so we can attest to the benefits to the community. Messiah explains that "if we compost more, it would get rid of trash on the floor in our communities, make people want to pick up other trash, and create an environment where we care for our environment and communities." Urban gardeners benefit from the soil created in the composting process and can in turn provide fresh produce for our



equity advocates

communities. Joshua believes that “just like we recycle our metal waste and make new things, we should do the same with compost. It’s less popular and not as well understood, but it’s important to use it to make soil. It should be done just like recycling. Waste has to go somewhere and we’d rather use it.” Moreover, waste often builds up in landfills or is incinerated near low-income communities of color, creating racialized public health disparities. Creating a robust compost program is critical to addressing issues of environmental racism in New York City.

Fund and Promote the City’s Composting Program

We urge the City to restore funding for the planned and promised expansion of the City’s Organics Curbside Composting program as well as for community composting programs. We also know that while fully funding this program is necessary, it is not enough on its own without an awareness of how to effectively compost. While Julio believes this is an important issue, he does not have a lot of personal experience with composting. He feels that “one of the issues is lack of awareness around how to compost, why it is important, and how it helps the community.” We are interested in learning more about composting and its benefits. To address this, the City must also educate communities on the benefits of composting. As Vera explains, “composting is important and relevant because we have so much waste and this is a great solution for that issue. If all the families in my community start composting, we can reduce the total waste which in exchange would benefit the earth.” Ultimately, a City-Wide composting program is important to the young people of New York City who want to live with a clean environment, racial equity, and a sustainable future.

We thank members of this committee for your valuable time and for holding this important hearing on the Mayor’s Preliminary Budget. We look forward to working with you on your budget efforts and policy solutions that will help make our food system more equitable and sustainable.

Joshua Delgado, 20, Bronx
Noumou Diallo, 14, Bronx
Vera Grossman, 15, Manhattan
Mehdi Rahmani, 15, Bronx
Julio Salcedo, 22, Bronx
Messiah Timmons, 20, Bronx

For more information, you can reach out to Jeremy Berger, Equity Advocates’ Youth Food Justice Organizer, at jeremy@nyequityadvocates.org.



Statement of GrowNYC to the New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Budget and Oversight Hearing on the Preliminary Budget for FY23, The Preliminary Capital Plan for FY23-26 and The Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report

March 23, 2022

Good morning, Chairperson Nurse and members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of expanding funding for composting and composting education in the Fiscal Year 23 preliminary budget. My name is Daneille Foster-Russell, Assistant Director of Zero Waste Schools at GrowNYC, a nonprofit that for 50 years has played a pivotal role in improving the environmental quality of life of New Yorkers.

Like my colleague, Emily Bachman, I am here to express our disappointment and deep concern that the preliminary budget slashes, once again, funding for curbside compost programming, including no allocation for important educational programs that support NYC public schools achieving their Zero Waste goals.

Since 2011, GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools (ZWS) has partnered with DSNY and the DOE Office of Sustainability to provide education and operational support to PreK – 12 public schools across all five boroughs. Our programming has been instrumental in increasing recycling and curbside compost collection rates in the largest school system in the United States. We prepare the next generation of New Yorkers, providing them with the tools to understand the importance of waste reduction, composting and recycling and effectively practice these critical behaviors.

GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools Overall Impact

Our work has a measurable impact. From Fiscal Year 2015 to Fiscal Year 2019, the first 100 ZWS receiving support from GrowNYC improved their organics tonnages 103%, compared to a 22% improvement along other school compost collection routes during that same time. MGPC tonnages improved by 74% at schools receiving our support, while decreasing 7% along other routes.

Currently, about half of the 1,876 (924 out of 1,876) New York City public schools receive DSNY curbside compost collection. To reach the city's (NYC) zero waste goals, all schools must be enrolled in curbside compost collection services while receiving the necessary support to do so successfully. GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools provided that support to all 130 schools included in the curbside composting expansion in Fiscal Year 19. At the time of the school closures on March 16, 2020, these schools were

performing well: sorting stations were set up consistently and serviced by staff and 80% of schools had less than 25% compost and MGPC contamination – a remarkable achievement which would have improved had we been able to finish out the year.

Fiscal Year 2022 Impact

After a year of paused organics collection, hybrid learning for students and meal service happening throughout the school—in classrooms, auditoriums and even hallways, we have found it critical that schools receive our support to get back on track with zero waste practices. Since August, we have supported more than 300 schools through site visits and remote training.

On-the-Ground Impact

Most recently, our support of PS 8 in Manhattan has led to a vast improvement in waste separation that is evident in the school’s curbside set out, which is now orderly and separated by waste stream. With our hands-on support, PS 8 was able to re-establish sorting infrastructure in their cafeteria and classrooms and apply our proven best practices to guide students during mealtime sorting. We provided composting and recycling workshops for teachers and technical assistance to the kitchen and cleaning crews. Our support has enabled the kitchen staffer, Sergio, to consistently set up and service the sorting stations daily – a practice that continues to enable students to strengthen their composting and recycling behaviors which ultimately made a noticeable difference at their curb. We provide the structure and support schools need to make these advancements.

Our programming also improved the school’s student leadership. With our help PS 8 created a 4th grade green team; the members have been meeting since February and are now planning other waste reduction projects, including a “trashion” show, a park clean-up, and recording a composting and recycling 101 video! These leaders will be able to continue the work of keeping the school on track to reach zero waste goals and will take their experience with them as they transition to middle and high school.

For example, this winter one of our outreach coordinators was reacquainted with a young man they first met when he was a member of his middle school Green Team. Three years and one pandemic later, our staff member was thrilled to see that this student is now a leader of his high school green team. The student, Marquis, especially appreciates learning about compost and seeing decomposition in action. When asked the reason he keeps coming back to the Green Team, he responded, “Because it helps me with my mental stress and helps make the environment safer”. Each day we



encounter New York City students like Marquis who are eager to learn how they can make a difference. As climate change awareness increases, so does climate distress and anxiety – a real and concerning issue for our youth. By providing opportunities for students to express their ideas, create change in their schools, and participate in citywide programming that aim to reduce climate impacts, we're offering students an outlet for action, which has been essential in reducing their climate anxiety. The preliminary budget cuts threaten all of this work and all of this layered impact.

Our Budget Request to City Council & Mayor

It is vital that City Council takes action, demonstrating to students across the city that adults in leadership are serious about tackling the climate crisis which directly impacts their future by increasing access to curbside compost collection in schools and in the community.

In the absence of the ideal of mandatory citywide curbside composting, we must at a minimum continue to support and expand the programs that are successfully operating FSDO sites as well as provide for strong, proven support for schools - so that the city can continue to increase equitable access and grow awareness of organics diversion that will expand the base of participants.

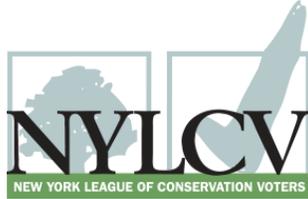
We respectfully request that City Council allocates \$10 million in the FY23 budget for the NYC Compost Project, GrowNYC Zero Waste Programs including the Compost Program and Stop 'N' Swap program, and funding for GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools, a high-impact program that builds environmental leadership among NYC public school students and diverts school waste along DSNY organics routes. Further, we encourage the Council to provide funding for an implementation plan for mandatory, citywide curbside compost collections because, like recycling, it takes time to build a successful program. This is the only way for composting to become both cost effective and equitable to all New Yorkers. Without these programs, the city will fall short of its 0X30 goals.

Our programming makes a difference at the curb.

Thank Chairperson Nurse and the Committee for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Respectfully submitted,
Daneille Foster-Russell
Assistant Director, GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools
dfRussell@grownyc.org; 646-856-2449





**Testimony of Carlos Castell Croke
Associate for NYC Programs
New York League of Conservation Voters**

**City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
Hearing on the Preliminary Budget
March 23rd, 2022**

Good afternoon, my name is Carlos Castell Croke and I am the Associate for New York City Programs at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV represents over 30,000 members in New York City and we are committed to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier and more resilient. I would like to thank Chair Nurse for the opportunity to testify today.

At NYLCV we firmly believe that a comprehensive and eco-friendly waste management system is essential to the cleanliness and health of our City. With one third of the waste that New Yorkers produce being organic materials, a citywide organic recycling program is long overdue. If we are to achieve our City's goal of eliminating all waste sent to landfills by 2030 and improve quality of life for our residents, we must be investing in expansions and comprehensive overhauls to our waste management systems and programs.

Clean streets are undoubtedly a public health issue, but a comprehensive composting collection program would do even more for our environment and our quality of life. By collecting food waste we can drastically reduce emissions from transporting waste and decomposition in landfills. Secure brown bins can also help us manage our growing pest problem in NYC, protecting our trash from rats.

It is worth noting that [neighborhoods near polluting facilities like garbage-collecting stations and incinerators, most often low income communities of color, are the ones whose environments, public health, and social justice, could benefit heavily by improved composting systems.](#) The higher rates of pollution in these communities cause disproportionately higher cases of asthma, cancer, and other health issues and compound already existing environmental and racial inequities.

This is why we were disheartened to see the composting program expansion cut in the Mayor's preliminary budget. We know from previous recycling suspensions that the City struggles to regain lost ground and people often lose good habits they build, leading to confusion and regression on our climate goals. We must seek to not only fund the expansion of the curbside program, but also additional initiatives, such as the Core Act and Skip the Stuff, to further reduce waste.

Furthermore, it is also incumbent upon the Council and Mayor to swiftly implement Commercial Waste Zones, which was delayed again this month. We need this system in place to further reduce unnecessary truck traffic, dirty emissions, and redundancies that halt expansion of services.

I also want to note that if the State Legislature adopts an extended producer responsibility program for packaging waste in this year's State budget, it would both reduce the amount of waste that we have to deal with in the first place and require waste producers to help cover the City's costs related to collection, recycling, and disposal of packaging waste.

We hope that when the Council releases their budget response it will be true to the commitments many made around expanding composting. We look forward to working with the Council and this committee towards our zero waste goals and on truly investing in sanitation.

Thank you.

**Testimony of Justin Wood
Director of Policy at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
New York City Council Sanitation Committee Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 23, 2022**

Thank you, Chair Nurse and members of the Sanitation Committee for the opportunity to speak at today's Preliminary Budget hearing.

As our world faces an escalating climate crisis, New York City continues to struggle with rats, piles of garbage bags in streets, and a grossly unequal waste system that disproportionately dumps and incinerates waste in environmental justice communities. We are deeply concerned that the cuts to recycling programs and the lack of investments in the proposed FY23 sanitation budget are taking us in the wrong direction while perpetuating existing inequities.

On the residential side of our waste system, this budget once again [proposes cuts to community compost programs, education, and outreach](#), and freezes the planned expansion of the very limited curbside compost collection program, even as our diversion rate declines and is far from on track to achieve our zero waste and greenhouse gas reduction goals. We urgently need legislation and a long-term budget plan for a universal, mandatory composting program in which all New Yorkers can recycle their food and yard waste, and in which building owners and managers are required to enable their tenants to participate.

Universal food scrap recycling should go hand in hand with investments in sealed, easily accessible containers to deny food to the hordes of rats we now see feasting on mixed garbage in black bag piles throughout the city. We thank the members of this committee for fighting for composting, rat mitigation, and containerization programs that will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, improve public health, and finally bring common sense waste management strategies to our nation's largest city after far too many years of stalled half-measures and delays.

We have been equally concerned by delays implementation of the commercial waste system. DSNY recently moved the deadline for responses to the comprehensive Commercial Waste Zones RFP by three more months – a landmark

reform which will, for the first time, bring rationality, efficiency, and real accountability to a sprawling private waste industry that recycles far too little, trucks far too much waste through environmental justice communities, and creates far too many hazards for workers and the public.

From a budget perspective, the new commercial waste zone system will be self-sustaining via administrative fees, but only once the contracts are negotiated and go into effect later this year. Further delays to implementation would also be bad for our economy. According to the environmental impact study for this law, the millions of truck miles avoided, and savings realized in the transition to rational zones and routes should enable private waste companies to make major investments in composting, recycling, and clean truck infrastructure and local green jobs. Without these efficiencies and the accountability provided by the commercial waste zones system, we fear the private sector will continue to fail to provide affordable, accessible, and safe composting and recycling services to businesses that generate millions of tons of recyclable waste annually.

Moreover, DSNY is [scheduled to begin](#) enforcement of commercial organic waste recycling rules in July, after similar delays attributed to the pandemic. This major recycling initiative cannot come soon enough, as NYC grocery stores and restaurants are once again generating substantial quantities of usable and/or recyclable food waste, the vast majority of which continues to go to landfills and incinerators.

We urge the council and the agency to ensure there is an ample budget for dedicated enforcement personnel to ensure that businesses are properly source-separating unsold food for donation or composting, and that the private waste industry is providing transparent, easily accessible, and affordable composting services to all businesses covered by the law. Once again, the full implementation of Local Law 199 is required to ensure availability and affordable pricing for these recycling services, especially for small businesses that cannot obtain compost service on the open market.

We also urge the Council and City Hall to ensure that the Business Integrity Commission (BIC) and DSNY have sufficient staff to rigorously enforce safety and environmental laws in the trade waste industry. The recent tragic death of a pedestrian hit by a private sanitation truck in Brooklyn was a stark reminder that, according to [data published by BIC](#), only 27% percent of these dangerous large trucks have basic sideguards, meaning that many companies in the industry are not

in compliance with Local Law 108 of 2021, which requires sideguards on all heavy trucks by 2023.

Finally, we urge DSNY to move forward as quickly as possible with the long-delayed barge-based transfer station for recyclables on the Gansevoort Peninsula - one of the important infrastructure projects of the 2006 Solid Waste Management Plan that would avoid 13,000 diesel truck trips carrying Manhattan recyclables to environmental justice communities including the South Bronx. It is troubling that we are now seeing [announcements of new amenities](#) on the Gansevoort Peninsula and Hudson River Park without progress on the plan to build a cleaner and more equitably sited facility to handle waste currently trucked out of Manhattan.

In sum, if we are serious about building a cleaner, healthier, more equitable, and more livable city after two years of austerity, we cannot afford to continue putting sanitation, climate, and environmental justice programs on the chopping block.

We appreciate the efforts of this committee and dedicated agency staff to carry out the programs and reforms that will benefit so many New Yorkers, and call on the council and the mayor to pass a budget that invests in diversion, equity, and public health measures in our solid waste sector.

Thank you,

Justin Wood
Director of Policy
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
jwood@nylpi.org
212.244.4664



**COMMUNITY BOARD 6, QUEENS
FOREST HILLS & REGO PARK**

RE: Queens Community Board 6 Testimony to the New York City Council Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Committee Budget Hearing 3/23/2022

Good Afternoon Chair Nurse and fellow committee members. My name is Heather Beers-Dimitriadis and I am the Chair for Queens Community Board 6. Community District 6 includes the neighborhoods of Rego Park and Forest Hills. Today I am here to advocate for not only the continuation of composting in Community District 6 - but also ask for an expansion.

This district, unlike some others in the city, has not benefited from the implementation of curbside composting in any form. Instead they relied on local efforts to dispose of their food scraps. The Compost Collective for example has been in our community for over 10 years. They serve over 1,375 families and have volunteers/participants as young as 4 and as old as 84 yrs old. They collect 1,350 to 1500 pounds of compost a week. (For a total of 64,000 - 72,000 a year) They were one of the few sites that remained open during the lockdown and they had people coming from as far as Brooklyn and Rosedale to drop off their food scraps. Any reduction in funding for composting/organics recycling will cut their capacity in half.

As the lockdown eased the Forest Hills Green Team started a volunteer-led food scrap collection site at the Forest Hills Greenmarket that would serve 250-300 people/week. It started with 2 containers and doubled over time. They would collect 256 pounds every Sunday and at times have to turn people away as they had reached capacity. At times they had a team of 20 volunteers managing the process. We now have GrowNYC managing the compost collection efforts and the participation is going strong. Any reduction in funding for composting/organics recycling will cut this program altogether.

Community Board 6 recently learned that over 15,000 households requested curbside composting through the Department of Sanitation of New York campaign. This is not surprising to us given the amount of engagement our community has had with the Compost Collective, Forest Hills Green Team and GrowNYC. Community Board 6 in our recent filing of budget requests to the OMB prioritized the implementation of curbside composting and the expansion of additional composting efforts throughout the district. Had we any notion that this program could be scrapped entirely we might have ranked it higher.

Community Board 6 not only sees composting as a productive way to recycle food scraps but also understands its impact on the reduction of landfill waste. We are also tremendously concerned at the number of jobs that will be lost when this program loses its funding. It is our hope that the City Council can find a way to not only keep this program but to also expand the program. We understand that the implementation of programs such as this requires a lot of community engagement and education. Community Boards are well positioned to help with that huge lift. Thank you for your time this afternoon.

**Testimony to the City Council Committee on Sanitation
Wednesday March 23, 2022**



Dear Chair Nurse and Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Mayor's Preliminary Budget. We are concerned to see the cuts proposed to the Department of Sanitation. We should be expanding frontline sanitation services and efforts to meet our City's climate justice goals, not reducing them.

Previous cuts to the sanitation budget were disproportionately felt in our community. United Community Centers is a multi-service intergenerational community-based organization. We operate a daycare center, urban farm, farmers market, and other community programs at New Lots and Schenck Avenue in East New York, Brooklyn. We are situated across from the New Lots Library branch and Sanfoka Park.

In the past two years, illegal dumping has become rampant on Schenck and Livonia Avenue. The pictures below were from this summer, and the trash had still not been removed more than a week after it was reported. This was not a one-time occurrence - it happened weekly throughout the year. This was again on a block where a park, daycare, youth-run urban farm, and community farmers market operate. The committed young interns in our *East New York Farms!* program, who operate the farm and farmers market, ended up having to clear the trash. The city must do better than that. It is incredibly discouraging for them when they are already doing the hard work of running a community farm to first see this kind of dumping happen, but even more so to know that the city will not respond promptly to address it.

It feels particularly unjust because these young people have for years been cleaning up their neighborhood - revitalizing vacant lots, and helping the city move toward zero waste. UCC Youth Farm provides compost drop off for the East New York community, which hasn't been offered curbside organics collection. *The ENYF Compost Project has hauled over 5,000 lbs of food scraps and produced 2,500 lbs of compost in 2021.* This year they are in the process of expanding the process to private and public housing, community gardens and farmers markets. Due to the city's lack of equitable sharing of resources ENYF is forced to add additional workload to its already overworked staff in order to support the community. What we clearly see is that our community cares about sustainability and wants to be part of climate justice efforts. Curbside organics collection should be expanded to East New York, and citywide.

Last, there is a clear but often overlooked connection between sanitation and public safety. When loads of trash are illegally dumped, it is sanitation workers, not the police, who may eventually come to clear them. When they don't, it contributes to a feeling of disorder that we felt directly last year. At the time the illegal dumping started occurring, we started to notice an increase in drug use and prostitution in the nearby park and in the alleyway of our next door neighbor apartment building. There is ample evidence of the impact environmental factors have

on public safety. In Philadelphia,¹ the removal of trash, the grading and seeding of land, and the planting of trees in vacant lots to create a park-like setting was associated with a 17 percent decrease in violent crime and a nine percent decrease in crime overall. This is the kind of public safety intervention that our community needs and our young people deserve - not increasingly aggressive policing. United Community Centers has been in existence for more than 65 years, and we have seen the devastating effect that tough-on-crime approaches and stop-and-frisk have had on our community. Our youth interns consistently share experiences with police where they feel targeted, disrespected, and unsafe. How can our City justify exposing them to more of this trauma in the name of public safety, when failing to pursue proven (and less costly) solutions like picking up trash?

We thank you, Councilmember Nurse and committee members, for your attention to this issue, and we ask your help in fighting to restore cuts to the Department of Sanitation budget.

Sincerely,

Ana Aguirre
Executive Director

Iyeshima Harris
East New York Farms! Project Director



Entrance to Sankofa Park/Schenck Playground, June 2021

¹ <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1718503115>



Sidewalk adjacent to UCC Youth Farm, Schenck Avenue, June 2021



March 25, 2022

Founders

Vernice Miller-Travis
Peggy M. Shepard
Chuck Sutton

**Testimony of Lonnie J. Portis, Environmental Policy and Advocacy
Coordinator at WE ACT for Environmental Justice**

**To the New York City Council Committee on Sanitation & Waste
Management**

Board of Directors

Chair

Jeff Jones

**Regarding the Mayor's Preliminary Budget for 2023 and Financial
Plan through 2026**

Secretary

Nancy E. Anderson,
Ph.D.

Dear Committee Chair Sandy Nurse and Committee on Sanitation & Waste
Management:

Treasurer

Ken P. Mak

WE ACT for Environmental Justice, an organization based in Harlem, has
been fighting environmental racism at the city, state, and federal levels for
more than 30 years. We have used collaborative problem solving techniques to
address the problems of inappropriate garbage disposal and rampant rodent
and roach infestation in Northern Manhattan in order to reduce negative health
impacts from garbage and pests in this community.

Members

Lakeisha M. Aquino
Peter Bokor
Dennis Derryck,
Ph.D.
David Evans, Ph.D.
Abiola Fasehun, Esq.
Eric A Goldstein, Esq.
Neetin Gulati
Christy Loper
Sarangi Iyengar
Marielle Villar
Martiney
Crystal Romeo
Upperman
Vernice Miller-Travis
Phillip Morrow
Dart Westphal

I am Lonnie J. Portis, Environmental Policy and Advocacy Coordinator at WE
ACT. I routinely analyze New York City policies and programs for equity and
climate justice and co-lead a group of community members mobilized around
waste and sanitation problems in Northern Manhattan.

**WE ACT wants the Mayor's office and City Council to recognize that
sanitation and waste management is essential to fighting climate change
and environmental health hazards in NYC by making sure the FY 2023
budget includes:**

- **The Community Composting and DSNY Zero Waste partner programs continue to be funded at the current level of \$7 million**
- **Funding restored for the planned expansion of the Curbside Composting program to additional community boards**
- **Mandatory curbside composting for all of NYC**
- **Increase staffing to pre-pandemic levels and adding additional staff and funding to increase street and sidewalk cleanliness services**

Executive Director
Peggy M. Shepard

In 2017, food scraps accounted for 21 percent of the city's residential waste, a
larger portion than any other type of waste. Much of this goes to landfills,



where it releases methane, contributing to climate change. In 2020, then-Speaker Corey Johnson released a comprehensive City Council [plan](#) to combat climate change. That plan recognized that a "key strategy" for the city was to "mandate citywide curbside organics separation and collection."

WE ACT was disappointed to hear that The City plans to suspend the expansion of its composting program. Food attracts rats that tear open bags – leaving litter on streets. Improved sanitation has significant impacts not only on health, but on social and economic development. Residents of Northern Manhattan need more sanitation pick up, better receptacles for trash and compliance by owners that they keep the sidewalks clean. We urge the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management to:

- **assess the city’s previous pilot curbside composting programs** for what went right and what went wrong and consider lessons from successful mandatory curbside composting programs in other jurisdictions;
- **develop an equitable, comprehensive plan** to get organics out of trash bags and pilot solutions for all types of buildings, especially under-resourced buildings with insufficient labor or space and;
- **address the inequities in street and sidewalk cleanliness** throughout the city.

Our members have consistently mentioned the stark difference between the cleanliness of the streets and sidewalks of the Upper East and West Sides and Northern Manhattan (Harlem, Washington Heights and Inwood). As one member put it, **“Enough is enough and totally unfair that Harlem is neglected when many other parts of Manhattan are provided better sanitation services”**.

Thank you again, Committee Chair Sandy Nurse and Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management for holding this hearing and allowing WE ACT to testify on such an important topic.

Lonnie J. Portis

Environmental Policy and Advocacy Coordinator

WE ACT for Environmental Justice

1854 Amsterdam Avenue, 2nd Floor

New York, NY 10031

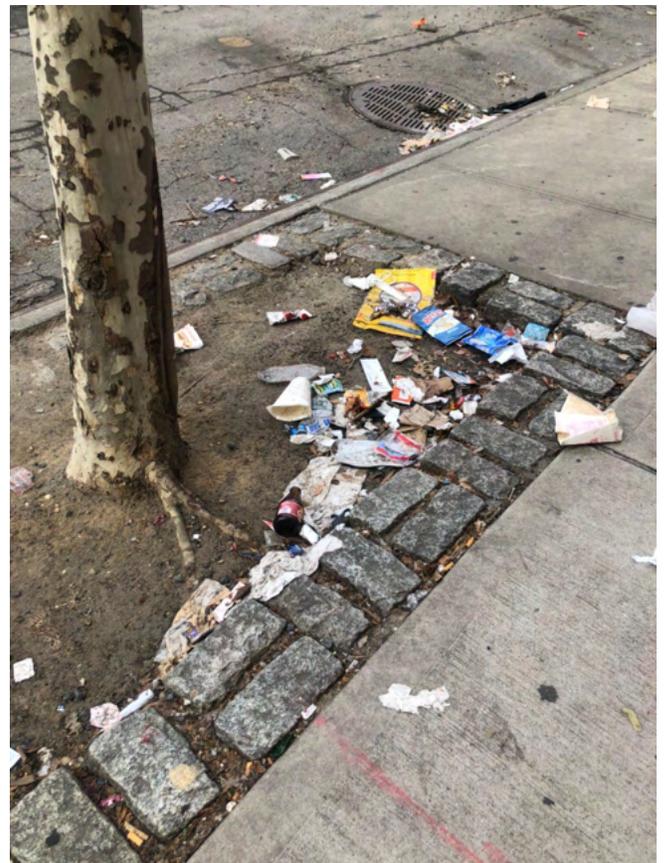
646-866-8720 | lonnie@weact.org

Honorable Members of City Council,

It is imperative that we push back against the mayor's proposed sanitation budget cuts. The purpose of my testimony is to illustrate how dire the situation is. I live in east Brooklyn, but I travel to different parts of the city due to work and for leisure. I started an Instagram page, TasteofWasteNYC, in 2021 to document the litter and illegal dumping I have witnessed. Through my social media activities, I have met other like-minded individuals who shared their stories and pictures. I have also participated in several cleanups since starting the page and organized my own. I am becoming disheartened with cleanups because as much as volunteers work, there is always more trash to collect. The City of New York has to do more to combat litter and illegal dumping, as well as take more steps to educate citizens about sanitation and hygiene. After documenting particularly egregious examples of litter, it is clear our consumption habits, sanitation policies, and relationship to the immediate environment need a complete overhaul.

During walks around the city, I tend to see single-use plastics the most. Take-out containers, chip bags and bottles are amongst the items we find the most during cleanups. Consumers are not educated about the effects of litter and many corner baskets have been removed since the onset of the pandemic. Furthermore, New Yorkers are compelled to buy cheap food that becomes garbage. This is a multifaceted health crisis. New Yorkers are buying food of poor quality, leading to poor health outcomes. The packaging of this cheap food is being disposed of improperly, providing scraps for pests, clogging storm drains and endangering native wildlife. It is an ambitious notion, but we need to hold the producers and vendors of these foods accountable, for

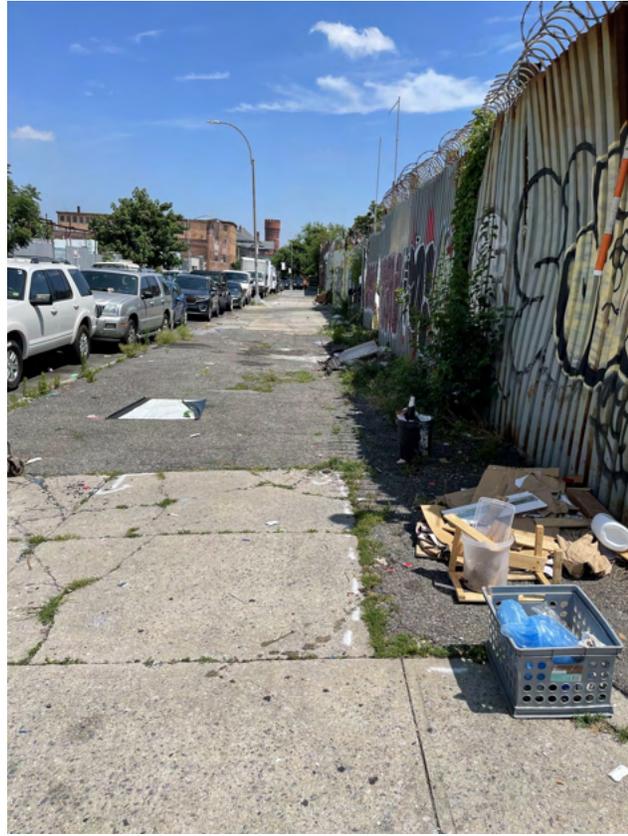
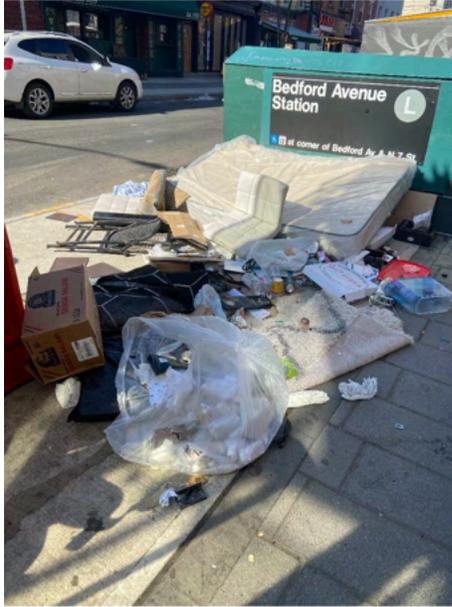
misleading consumers and creating excessive waste. For instance, when you buy a bag of chips, you buy mostly air, yet you end up with waste that cannot be recycled because shiny snack bags are made of mixed materials. According to naparecycling.com, “recycling plants cannot separate the plastic outer layer from the aluminum inner layer.” Considering how many used snack bags are strewn across the city, steps must be taken to curb their sales in the city and introduce people to healthier options.



Right photo taken in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn. Left photo taken in the Bronx near Yankee Stadium.

There are specific areas that are particularly attractive to dumpers. The pictures below were taken adjacent to Canarsie Cemetery. Although there are no residential buildings, people nearby choose to leave garbage here. The proposed budget cuts will only make this situation worse. We need resources to surveil areas where particularly egregious dumping and littering take place. Inspectors need to issue citations for littering. A cut to the sanitation budget makes these areas more vulnerable.



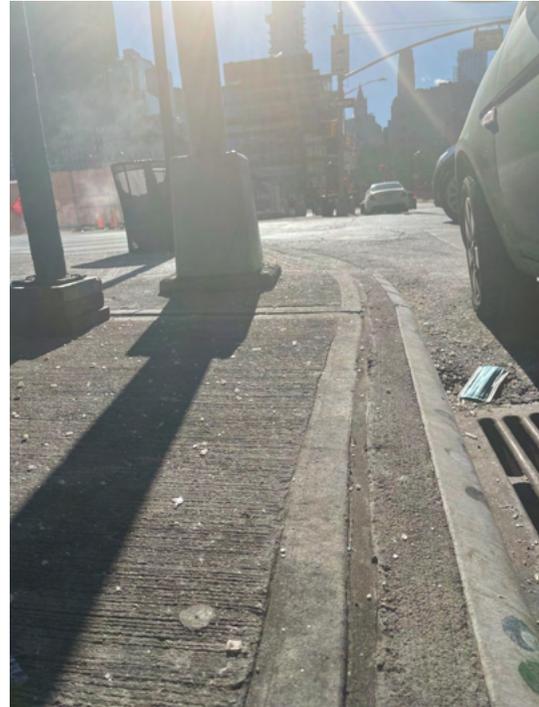


Although I have noticed more litter and dumping in lower and middle income neighborhoods, more affluent areas are not spared. The photo on the right was taken in Bedford-Stuyvesant, where according to some statistics, rent has risen 21% in the last year.



Busy roadways are also areas of concern when it comes to sanitation. The above photo was taken on Shore Parkway in Brooklyn. The photo on the right is Linden Boulevard in Brooklyn. In these instances, trash was

disposed improperly, perhaps by businesses or entities that don't want to pay for private carting. We can only speculate until systems are put into place to punish people who illegally dump and investigate problematic areas where it is a continual occurrence.



The pandemic has worsened sanitation problems. The photo on the left was taken in Riverdale in the Bronx near the Henry Hudson Parkway. The photo on the right was taken on the corner of Varick and Grand streets in Manhattan.

Masks and gloves protect us from infectious disease but they are also single use items that people litter. These photos make it evident that public education is lacking. If the city can air public service announcements about using masks, it should also be able to include messaging to discourage improper disposal of disease-preventing implements.

Recreation areas are not spared by those who disregard our natural surroundings. There is frequent dumping in and around parks and they are the perfect areas for sanitation inspectors to investigate.



Top photo is Marine Park. Left photo was taken on the road approaching Marine Park's entrance in Gerritsen Beach.



Left photo was taken on Louisiana Avenue alongside Fresh Creek Natural Reserve in Brooklyn.





Photos taken at Plumb Beach last summer. I organized a cleanup here in November 2021, but months later, the area has been littered again.



This photo was taken in May 2021 at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Furniture disposal is also very problematic in the city. We find mattresses, dressers, sofas and

toilets in strange places, leading us to believe they were dumped by people illicitly. People are not well informed about furniture disposal. We need more disposal sites and to designate specific days for furniture removal so that people don't find dumping alluring.

I started taking photos of garbage to raise awareness about how poorly our environment is treated in a city where there are million dollar transactions on a daily basis. I think my photos make it evident that our sanitation budget is inadequate and now is not the time to cut funding. We need more corner waste bins, a public education campaign to change our culture, and a strategy for finding the people who illegally dump. We also need more resources and education for recycling electronics, possibly more locations for drop-offs so that people don't leave them on the street. New York is drowning in garbage and current consumption habits will need to change if we are to meet our zero waste goals and send fewer things to the landfill. People need to be taught the value and benefits of protecting our environment. Sanitation needs a budget increase and more resources to implement sustainable practices.

afiahenriques@gmail.com

To the members of the Sanitation Committee,

I am a Brooklyn resident and I have been keeping my compostable food waste out of landfills for about 5 years.

Since I live on a commercial street, my building was not eligible for brown boxes, so every Sunday I have been dropping my compost at the drop-off site near Carroll Park. Composting makes sense on so many levels I don't know where to begin.

From a budget perspective it puts a dent in the scandalous amount of garbage that is sent to landfills in other states. Not only are there direct costs paid to destination states, but the transportation costs and the related climate costs point to the inefficiency of shipping compostable materials to landfills. Since I started separating my food waste from my other garbage, the weight of what I send to the landfill is minimal, since it consists mostly of packaging material that can't be recycled.

From a sanitation perspective it makes sense to store compost in a sealable container to minimize garbage-strewn sidewalks and the number of hungry rats looking for an easy meal.

Environmentally, the understanding the value of composting is a no-brainer. Farming cannot reuse agricultural land without replenishing the soil with nutrients that are consumed by food crops. Rather than use fertilizer, it makes sense to nourish the soil with the same organic material that was harvested.

I sincerely hope that these and other arguments will convince the Committee, other Council members, and the Mayor that reducing the composting budget is a step backwards. I strongly encourage you to expand composting across the city to save money, to keep our streets cleaner, and to support sustainable agriculture.

Alan Grotheer

Cutting the sanitation budget is a mistake. We already have too much garbage to handle. In Hell's Kitchen, volunteers come through regularly to clean up the streets and the overflowing waste bins because there aren't enough people in the sanitation department to keep up. We need to be investing in sanitation workers, equipment, and modernization. Experts in waste management and environmental groups have been urging for modernization for some time. If our goal is zero waste, cutting sanitation is not the way to do it. Also, if sanitation is cut, communities that are already underserved are going to be the hardest hit and that is not acceptable.

I've included these photos of just some of the garbage on the street I saw when I went to get groceries this past week. These photos are from 58th and Broadway, and yes this is normally how dirty it is here. This area will have lots of tourists as New York and other places continue to reopen. If this is how our attractions look, how filthy are our neighborhoods and communities going to be? Thank you for your consideration.



Allison Rossetto

Alyssa Postman Putzel, March 25, 2022

After anxiously awaiting compost collection to be expanded to my neighborhood for over a year, I was disappointed to hear that in fact the opposite would be happening. According to the Museum of the City of New York, on Earth Day 2018, NYC set a goal to send 0 waste to landfills by 2030¹. This goal will be virtually impossible to achieve without diverting compostable items from the landfill. Environmental justice and environmental concerns should be at the forefront of our city's agenda. As a coastal city, we stand only to lose by ignoring policies that would be good for the planet, such as composting. In addition, low-income communities of color in New York City will be disproportionately affected because they are most likely to live near landfills. Mayor Adams - keep your campaign promise to expand NYC's composting program. In the fight against climate change, all or nothing thinking is dangerous. Every little bit helps, and the program is not just symbolic. There are many more residents just like me, who would gladly take advantage of it if it were expanded.

¹ (<https://www.mcny.org/story/earth-day-2018>)

I oppose cuts to composting programs!

My 5 and 7 year old children have been learning about the many benefits of composting. If they are clear on this, shouldn't all of us be?

Here are some facts:

- One million tons of organic waste are generated annually from residents in New York City and thrown into a landfill.
- I grew up in Staten Island, before the landfill was covered over. I know first-hand that when organic material decomposes in the anaerobic environment of a landfill, it produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas that literally **stinks**.
- Curbside composting diverts 83,812 tons of waste while saving \$610,800 per year.
- The Sanitation Committee Chair, CM Sandy Nurse, opposes the cuts.
- Composting creates good jobs in NYC communities. Composting operations create twice as many jobs as do landfills per ton of trash disposed of.

NYC is still the greatest city in the world. If cities like San Francisco, Portland, Oregon and Boulder can figure out how to collect and compost food scraps, surely, ours can too.

Please keep our composting program going strong.

Sincerely,
Ami Paradise

Wednesday, March 23, 2022

Dear Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management:

Our communities in Southeast Queens are just getting back to normal. Please do not take us back to horrible quality of life conditions that we experienced during the lockdown, and sanitation's reduced service.

As I write this, Sanitation is still struggling to keep up with nasty New Yorkers treating our public streets like their private trashcan.

My volunteer group is only one of many examples of citizens trying to stay ahead of the chronic littering and illegal dumping plaguing our streets. We have collected over three tons of trash from the sidewalks in front of the Hollis LIRR entrance. Because of our consistency, the area does not look like a forgotten slum.

Increase Sanitation's budget and support more on-the-ground outreach and education efforts to teach or remind New Yorkers to respect and care for their neighborhood. Cleaning is reactionary - it does not matter how much trash we collect if the leading mindset is to treat our city like trash.

We need to change people's behaviors and invest in solutions that give back to the earth. Make food scrap collection mandatory for the whole city. Support extended producer responsibility bills. Educate people from pre-k to high school about their role and responsibility for caring for our planet. Teach zero waste and focus on reducing waste and repurposing more.

Mayor Adams, you want to cut the budget for Sanitation, yet in your economic blueprint, you proposed to create "unionized city jobs" to help with the quality of life issues. Isn't sanitation jobs "unionized city jobs"?

Mayor Adams, you talk about creating equitable solutions. Yet, you propose spending millions of dollars on developing a "center for climate solutions" in Governor's islands - which will primarily benefit already over-funded neighborhoods by the water like Battery Park and FIDI. People in Hoboken, NJ will have an easier time getting to the island than your constituents in the outer boroughs. We will have to travel hours from our homes in Queens to Governor's Island to use this facility. How is that equitable? Can you instead build the center inside a CUNY school? or near a transit hub that is reachable by all boroughs?

You talk about creating green jobs, and yet you are defunding composting efforts, which already produces green jobs.

Mayor Adams, please stop contracting yourself and worry less about showy solutions and more about using and expanding existing resources.

Respectfully,

Angela Miskis

My name is Ariana Tzanos, and I am a member of TREEage and the NY Youth Climate Leaders. I am in the 11th grade at the Academy of American Studies in Queens.

Our city has seen the devastating impacts of the climate crisis on our frontline communities, and we understand that city government cannot afford to renege on our climate commitments. The magnitude and intensity of the climate crisis make it easy for students like me to feel powerless and nervous about what is to come. But many young New Yorkers have taken the opposite approach and become some of the most vocal advocates for taking action on climate, including through being a part of the Zero Waste Schools Program. This initiative has been a huge step in ensuring our city achieves its goal of zero waste by 2030, and cutting funding for Zero Waste Schools is simply backtracking on the commitment the city made to students.

The city should honor the work and advocacy of young people and public school communities through expanding the program instead of cutting its funding. The Zero Waste Schools Program teaches students the importance of environmental justice and creates a culture of sustainability throughout the school community. It gives young people an invaluable opportunity to take action in their schools, learn about the ongoing issues, and help the city reach its climate targets.

We need to center student voice and the health of our communities by fully funding Zero Waste Schools Program, and reinstating \$50 million back into the sanitary department budget.

Thank you.

To whom it may concern,

I have recently heard about the Mayor's announcement that he does not plan to expand the composting options in New York City. I think this is a very short-sighted decision.

Many other cities around the country and world enable all citizens to compost. Initially, this program did not have enough coverage based on the neighborhood or the nature of the building (larger apartment buildings are less willing to take this on). That has artificially signaled to the mayor that this is not a needed or wanted service.

As a resident of a building that did not offer to composting services, I would save up our food scraps to deposit at the local farmer's market collection. I did this because I knew of the environmental impact of not composting and wanted to do my part. I was not alone, there were lines of people who would do the same. This should be seen as an indication that many would gladly appreciate the convenience of dropping off their compost in a bin vs saving it up for a week and carting it blocks away from their home for disposal.

Composting helps us manage the amount of trash created, make good use of this waste, as well as limit a primary food source for rats. Recently, I have noticed that rats are opening these bags which results in food and trash waste on the sidewalks. Not only that, but this waste helps disease-carrying vermin to have a reliable and plentiful food source.

Composting is good on a local and global level. Think of ways to encourage participation and grow this to limit our waste around the city.

Thank you,

Ashley Allen

I worked for a year doing outreach for NYC's compost program. Over the course of my work, I've talked to thousands of NYC residents. Giving up on this program would be a true failure of our city. People can understand pausing the program due to covid, and can understand a program being far from perfect in its initial stages. But cutting it out of the budget would be a blow to our city's morale. Those residents who were skeptical of the program will be validated in their impressions of the city as a dysfunctional entity. Those residents who were enthusiastic and hopeful about the program will feel disillusioned and deflated, as I am. There is no excuse to go backwards in our efforts at sustainability, when the climate crisis has already gotten so acute. I hope anyone involved in this decision takes a moment to consider the judgments of future generations.

Baruch M Blum

Statement to Oppose Cuts to Composting Programs

Beth Slepian

Ocean Parkway

Brooklyn, NY 11218

bethslepian@gmail.com

March 24, 2022

To the Sanitation Committee:

I am writing to express my deep opposition and concern over proposed cuts to the city's composting programs. Composting is an easy way for New Yorkers to cut our landfill waste by one third and ultimately achieve the city's Zero Waste goals. Furthermore, by expanding curbside composting citywide, we have the opportunity to contain our organic waste in tamper-proof containers, and ultimately decrease the number of rats and other pests while making our streets cleaner for all.

In my neighborhood (Kensington, Brooklyn), with the proposed budget cuts, we will no longer have the potential of curbside composting as our Community Board (12) did not receive enough sign-ups to begin this service prior to the proposed cuts. However, the number one complaint to the city from our community board (which includes the neighborhoods of Kensington, Borough Park, and parts of Midwood) is that the Department of Sanitation is not effectively picking up trash, especially in Borough Park. A simple solution here would be to expand composting, which would divert organics into vermin-proof containers and decrease the amount of trash on our streets going to landfill, while preserving our city and our planet for future generations.

Unfortunately, many New Yorkers have misconceptions about composting – including our mayor, apparently. People do not realize how easy it is to participate, and the extreme positive effects composting can have. But we need a *citywide initiative* to make an impact – an initiative that will require all New Yorkers to compost and include education on how simple it is to participate – and how composting can truly make our streets and air cleaner. For example, in San Francisco, composting and recycling programs have been diverting more than 80% of waste away from landfills, allowing it to avoid emissions equivalent to that of 20,000 passenger vehicles every year for 10 years.

If we are to preserve our city's Zero Waste goal to reduce our landfill use by 90% by 2030, we need to act fast. Landfilled trash from New York City alone generates about 1 million tons of emissions per year, in large part due to the portion of organic waste in the system. The loss of curbside composting as a citywide initiative will ultimately put us all in danger as the effects of climate change loom over us. For the sake of all New Yorkers, I, for one, would like to see our city remain above water in both the near and distant future. Reversing the effects of Climate Change may seem like an overwhelming task, but with the city's full participation and commitment to composting, we have an easy and real opportunity to take a huge step. Let's not waste our chance to preserve our future. Thank you.

Dear Chairperson Nurse and Members of the Sanitation and Solid Waste Committee,

The City of New York must not delay the citywide expansion of residential curbside composting. We all know that climate change poses an existential threat to New York City. By making organics collection available to all New Yorkers the city can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and landfill, and help keep the rats away, produce good soil for food production, and conserve water.

The benefits of residential composting are legion and well-documented, but one often-overlooked benefit of composting is that it eliminates the need for households to use plastic liners for their kitchen trash. My wife and I are among the few New Yorkers who have composting available in our building. Separating our organic “wet” waste from our other rubbish means we can use paper bags for our kitchen trash. We can also see firsthand how dramatically less waste our household is sending to landfill. We take out the trash a lot less often, not just because there is a lot less of it, but with our organics tightly sealed away, our trash is significantly less smelly.

Mayor Adams promised to get things “done.” Now he is breaking his promises and making excuses. The City Council must take action on this vital issue.

Bradley McCormick & Marion Katz
Bleecker Street
New York, NY 10012

My name is Calista. I'm 17 years old, and I attend Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan. I'm here to ask that we reinstate \$50 million back into the sanitary department budget, fully funding the zero-waste school program.

Stuyvesant has over 3,000 students, and so, the amount of waste we produce is a lot: from paper worksheets, plastic coffee cups, cafeteria food and food packagings, pens, -- the list can go on. And this is just one school. Now imagine the sheer amount of waste that comes from all the public schools in the city. They go to landfills to rot, polluting and hurting the nearby habitat, animals, and residents.

Climate change is one of the most dire issues facing us today; it's an existential crisis, and we all need to do our part in curbing it. It starts with regular people and families; it starts with small communities and organizations; it starts with schools. This is the reason we need to continue investing in these these sanitation and composting programs. They are ways that schools can foster an eco-friendly and environmentally conscious atmosphere, so students can recognize how simple it can be to help our planet.

Now is NOT the time to stop the Zero Waste initiative and composting programs. I truly hope that the \$50 million cut from the Department of Sanitation is reconsidered, for the benefit of me, my fellow peers, teachers, and the environment.

Thank you.

March 23, 2022

To Mayor Adams and the NYC Sanitation Committee:

I am writing to plead with you to please reinstate our composting program. As a mother of a young child in Ridgewood, Queens, I fear for the my child's future if we do not take immediate action on climate change. As outlined in the most recent IPCC report, the science is crystal clear: We have less than 10 years to cut global greenhouse emissions in half, or face terrifying consequences.

I have found composting to be one of the only ways for individuals to take immediate, effective climate action. Moreover, as anyone who composts knows, once you've tried it it's impossible to go back! Not only does it reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but it virtually eliminates odor and rodents from your household trash.

Landfilled trash from New York City alone generates about 1 million tons of emissions per year, in large part due to the portion of organic waste in the system. And it is a relatively meager portion of the overall city budget.

We cannot afford to cut funding & reduce composting accessibility when we desperately need to be expanding it.

I implore you! Please fully fund the composting program.

Thank you,

Chandra Bocci, concerned parent, artist, and educator
Gates Ave.
Ridgewood, NY 11385

I am disheartened to hear of the drastic cuts proposed to the Department of Sanitation's budget for FY23. Part of what makes a city livable, vibrant, and productive is the condition in which it is kept. If trash cans aren't emptied, compost isn't widely available, the streets aren't swept well, and people aren't educated in keeping the city clean and functioning properly, it becomes less welcoming, less pleasant, less conducive to positive human interaction and economic growth. Please add my name to the list of people who want:

- Restoration of litter basket truck funding to pre-pandemic levels
- Expansion of the curbside composting program along with robust public education and enforcement
- An increase of NYC Cleanup Initiative funding from \$280,000 to \$300,000 per council district to expand supplemental cleaning services city-wide

These are essential services for a modern, safe, vibrant, and dynamic city.

Sincerely,
Chris Heuberger

March 24, 2022

Damian Calvo
Cortelyou Road
Brooklyn, NY 11218

Mayor Adams,

I am writing because I strongly oppose the budget cuts aimed at the compost programs. Doing anything but expanding composting programs in NYC is unacceptable.

Composting is very important to me, my entire household, and all the residents of my building. My garbage can never smells anymore and that alone is worth fighting for! Our garbage is majorly reduced since we started composting. The whole process helps me remain mindful of my responsibility to do my part in fighting the climate crisis. I refuse to throw my compost in the landfill.

Landfilled trash from New York City alone generates about 1 million tons of emissions per year, in large part due to the portion of organic waste in the system. As the mayor of NYC, a leader in this country, you cannot defund composting. You cannot ignore this urgent need for climate action. New Yorkers are depending on you.

Thank you for your attention to my concerns,

Damian Calvo

I live in the East Village in New York City, and I'm writing to testify that I am opposed to the city ending its curbside composting program. As I understand it, this program was paused during much of the pandemic, and the city is citing low enrollment as a reason for cutting it, but hardly anyone was made aware that the program was restarted! This is a great service that I and many of my neighbors would be sorry to lose. Here are some of the reasons it's important to keep:

PUBLIC HEALTH: Keep organic waste from attracting disease-carrying pests!

- **When organic waste is mixed with trash and sealed in bags, it putrefies—attracting rats.** In under-staffed, badly maintained buildings, it can lead to cockroach and vermin infestation, overuse of poisonous pest-control chemicals and high levels of asthma.
- Setting organics aside into latching containers makes it inaccessible to rats and other vermin. **To safely and hygienically accommodate pedestrians, vendors, diners, bikes and playing kids, NYC needs to stop using the sidewalk as a repository for putrefying waste.**

BUDGET/ECONOMY: Save money, create jobs!

- Food scraps and other organic materials make up one-third of residential waste—**curbside composting diverts 83,812 tons of waste while saving \$610,800 per year.**
- Composting creates good jobs in NYC communities. **Composting operations create twice as many jobs as do landfills per ton of trash disposed of.**

CONSERVATION/CLIMATE CHANGE: *A really easy, already-in-place system* for meeting our goals.

- Methane released by landfilling organic waste accounts for [17.4% of US methane emissions](#).
- **Landfilled trash from New York City alone generates about 1 million tons of emissions per year**, in large part due to the portion of organic waste in the system.
- **Composting is effective at storing carbon in the earth**, rather than letting it pollute our atmosphere.
- New York City's composting program is part of the [Zero Waste](#) initiative, which aims to achieve a 90 percent reduction in landfill use by 2030 - **virtually impossible without diverting organics away from landfill.**

- Pre-pandemic the city ran a curbside composting program that was the largest of its kind in the country. For a decade, San Francisco's composting and recycling programs have been diverting more than 80% of waste away from landfills, allowing it to avoid emissions equivalent to that of 20,000 passenger vehicles every year for 10 years. **If cities like San Francisco, Portland, Oregon and Boulder can figure out how to collect and compost food scraps, surely, ours can too.**

Sincerely,
Dan Wilson

City Council members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,

I am writing to urge you to support local public organics recycling. The mayor is proposing to cut the organics program in half to \$3.5 million. Please restore the \$7 million annual funding for Community Composting. Food scrap drop-off sites and local community scale composting sites empower NYC residents to fight climate change on an individual level and support local communities through rebuilding healthy soil. Please support this public service and the green jobs it provides.

Sincerely,
David Klein

My name is Deborah Johns, and I live in BxCB8 where we recently were able to resume curbside composting. This was a great relief, but we are not even halfway back to the levels of participation that we had prior to the May 2020 suspension. Local FSDO sites increased during the pandemic and need to continue to be expanded for neighborhoods not yet receiving curbside service. Cutting the budget for expanded composting is a step backward, we need to be moving forward, with increased participation and eventual mandatory separation of organics. Thank you, Mayor Adams, for being a visionary for New York City, the rest of the country, and the world, and for keeping your promise of expanding composting.

My name is Elizabeth Lu and I'm a student at Forest Hills High School. I attend a school filled with thousands of students; thus I am aware of the mass amounts of trash and garbage littered throughout my school. I ask that you reinstate \$50 million back into the sanitary department budget, fully funding zero-waste school programs. NYers deserve the right to clean air, clean streets, and clean schools.

New York City is facing a huge sanitation crisis. With the ongoing pandemic this crisis has only been exacerbated. Overflowing trash bags pollute the streets, waste is thrown into landfills, and mice roam the sidewalks. With a large cut from the Sanitary Budget low-income communities face the brunt of these issues affected by environmental disasters. The cut significantly affects the curbside composting program which collects trash and scraps to turn it into compost or renewable energy.

More than 400,000 tons of waste is generated each year in New York City's public schools. This is an alarming amount and why we must fund the Zero Waste Schools. We must promote sustainability through the use of recycling programs and implementing more composting materials in our schools.

It is time we strive for change by investing in our city and our schools.

Thank you.

Please find below written copy of verbal testimony given on 03/23 at the Sanitation Committee budget hearing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and a big thank you to DSNY and our city's sanitation workers for all their hard work. I won't claim to have deep knowledge of the budget process but as a resident and a mom I am testifying to defend our city's composting programs - programs I thought the city was committed to expanding, but that are now on the chopping block yet again.

When my partner and I first moved to Brooklyn in 2014 we didn't have kids yet. We kept our compost in a plastic bag in the freezer that we would drop off at a greenmarket on the way to work. We loved having that option, an option that works for many New Yorkers and gives access to composting to people who live outside of the limited curbside zones.

Now we are a family of four. If I were to use this method my freezer would be full to bursting with organic waste every two days!

When we moved to Park Slope I was excited to find that curbside composting was available to me. Suddenly composting was easy. Every time my kids didn't finish a meal, I could scrape it in the compost bin and know it was going back to the earth as nutrients - not into the atmosphere as greenhouse gas. I think every parent should get that peace of mind!

I felt pride in my city - doing what's right for its people and their futures. But here we are two years later and not only has progress

in composting not been made, we have gone backwards. Composting is not to be expanded, it is to be cut. Yet the more we limit the composting program, the more inefficient it becomes and I am speaking out today because I fear that our city's curbside composting program - once the largest of its kind in the country - will die a death by a thousand cuts. The composting programs are such tiny line items in the overall city's budget, yet they have an outsize impact on greenhouse gas emissions. Not to mention providing green jobs, and bringing us much closer to our Zero Waste goal. We owe it to our city's residents to invest in these programs so composting can reach its full potential.

Ella Ryan

Hello, my name is Emily Cheung, and I'm a member of TREEage, a youth organization fighting for climate justice in NYC. I am writing to ask that the \$50 million be reinstated back into sanitary department budget, fully funding the zero-waste school program. According to the NYC Department of Sanitation, organic waste made up 34% of the city's household garbage in 2017. The proposed budget cuts would greatly reduce the sustainable waste management and climate solution practices we hope to continue within our schools. We've made much progress in the past five years through the zero-waste school program with the implementation of recycling programs and sanitation education programs. We're all working towards a brighter, more sustainable future, and this practice starts with our youth. Thank you.

Dear Sanitation Committee,

Please do not cut funding for curbside compost pick up. Composting is an extremely important tool to reduce waste being sent to our already overflowing landfills and creates a useful product. Composting is more efficient and produces fewer greenhouse gases than other means of producing fertilizer. As is often the case with important social programs, it is incumbent on New York City to demonstrate to the rest of the country what is possible when government works well, listens to its constituents, and thinks big. This program is one more way New York can be a leader in finding solutions to big problems no one else has the courage and will to combat.

In my location, we are not yet served by curbside pickup. My wife and I take our compost to sites that this Committee has established as pick up sites on a weekly basis, and we are happy to do so considering the importance of this issue. However, we also look forward to a day when curbside pickup for compost is widely available everywhere in the city and the country. Only when it is convenient to do so will everyone separate their compost to tackle this problem.

Thank you,

Eric Arbizo

Brooklyn Resident

*Erica Reade
Photography*

Erica Reade, Franklin Avenue Brooklyn NY, 11238
ericareadephotography.com/ / hello@ericareadephotography.com// [@coupleswhocommit](https://www.instagram.com/coupleswhocommit)

Dear NY City Council,

As a long time NYC resident, I'm deeply concerned about the lack of city-wide composting and talks of cutting funding to a desperately needed service, both for individual citizens' and for the City's ability to mitigate and fight climate change. NY sits on huge bodies of water and having been here for Hurricane Sandy, we know that we are not immune to massive storms and flooding.

Composting is an easy proven way to fight climate change. Food waste in landfill contributes directly to greenhouse gas emissions being released. Landfilled trash from New York City alone generates about 1 million tons of emissions per year, in large part due to the portion of organic waste in the system.

As someone who has composted for years, it is easy, it decreases the rest of individual household garbage from smelling, it reduces infestations of vermin and roaches. It produces healthy soil for community gardens.

If we have any chance at curbing the dire effects of climate change, composting is a necessary one. If cities like San Francisco, Portland, Oregon and Boulder can figure out how to collect and compost food scraps, surely, ours can too.

Please seriously consider not cutting any funding to this much-needed program, and adding funding to it as well.

Sincerely,

Erica Reade

To whom it may concern,

Please resume curbside composting and continue to expand access to compost for the public! It's an incredible resource and such an easy step for people to take to reduce CO2 emissions. Since Covid-19 I have been collecting neighbor horse food waste and taking it to GrowNYC compost drop off. I have many friends doing this same system in their neighborhoods to keep people composting. It is incredibly time consuming and exhausting.... Please just bring back curbside compost so every single New Yorker can participate without having to sacrifice time!! I work at a post event composting service and divert TONS of flower waste that otherwise would go in the garbage every month!!!! We need to expand our composting resources in the city and not limit them. We need to expand the residential and commercial composting programs, as we are a city that creates a ton of food and plant waste. If you make it easy for people to participate, they will. Whenever I speak to people about the importance of composting they are always so excited to learn more! if this plea isn't enough I have attached some further information below.

-One million tons of organic waste are generated annually from residents in New York City and thrown into a landfill.

-Food scraps and other organic materials make up one-third of residential waste.

-The average household throws out about 11 pounds of organic material per week, including food waste, soiled paper, and yard waste.

-New York City's composting program is part of the Zero Waste initiative, which aims to achieve a 90 percent reduction in landfill use by 2030 - virtually impossible without diverting organics away from landfill.

-When organic material decomposes in the anaerobic environment of a landfill, it produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas that literally stinks.

-Methane released by landfilling organic waste accounts for 17.4% of US methane emissions.

-Compost is a form of carbon sequestration.

-Landfilled trash from New York City alone generates about 1 million tons of emissions per year, in large part due to the portion of organic waste in the system.

-Budget cuts would save the Department of Sanitation just \$18.2 million, which amounts to 0.35% of the proposed NYPD budget.

-Curbside composting diverts 83,812 tons of waste while saving \$610,800 per year.

- Extremely expensive to export trash to faraway landfills.
- The Sanitation Committee Chair, CM Sandy Nurse, opposes the cuts.
- Pre-pandemic the city ran a curbside composting program that was the largest of its kind in the country - on a paltry budget of only \$28 million.
- Setting organics aside into latching containers makes it inaccessible to rats and other vermin.
- To safely and hygienically accommodate pedestrians, vendors, diners, bikes and playing kids, NYC needs to stop using the sidewalk as a repository for putrefying waste.
- When organic waste is mixed with trash and sealed in bags, it putrefies—attracting rats. In under-staffed, badly maintained buildings, it can lead to cockroach and vermin infestation, overuse of poisonous pest-control chemicals and high levels of asthma.
- Landfills are disproportionately situated next to low-income communities of color.
- Composting creates good jobs in NYC communities. Composting operations create twice as many jobs as do landfills per ton of trash disposed of.
- For a decade, San Francisco's composting and recycling programs have been diverting more than 80% of waste away from landfills, allowing it to avoid emissions equivalent to that of 20,000 passenger vehicles every year for 10 years.
- If cities like San Francisco, Portland, Oregon and Boulder can figure out how to collect and compost food scraps, surely, ours can too.

Best,
Erin Mahone

Dear New York City Council,

The climate crisis is turning out to be even worse than predicted. Both poles are currently melting at alarming rates when they should be in opposite seasons. New York City especially is vulnerable to the rise in sea level this could cause, as well as the more extreme weather and flooding we're already seeing. If the whole city could be composting it would make a huge difference in our emissions.

At this point we must be doing literally everything we can to attempt to curb and undo the damage we've done to the environment or there will be no future for this city at all. Composting is one of the few ways that individual people can have an impact every day. It also helps keep our city cleaner and leaves less for rats and other pests to get into, which would be great since they've made their way into every car and apartment I've ever had in this city and I don't particularly want to see where the next plague comes from.

I love to cook, and I love gardening when I have the space to do it. But I absolutely despise throwing organic waste in the trash when I know that it could make a real difference to compost it instead. I do everything I can to reduce my waste in general but as a person with a chronic illness I don't always have control over being able to eat everything before it goes bad. Please help me to be less wasteful, please allow me to make a positive impact in my city, and for the environment at large. Don't cut funding for composting. Please don't move us backwards. We're supposed to be one of the best cities in the world. The only possible future is a green future. And that has to include composting.

Sincerely,
Estelle

Felicia Seidel
63rd Drive
Rego Park, NY 11374
scriptyone@aol.com

March 25, 2022

RE: Community Dropoff compost sites

To Mayor Adams – I find it hard to believe that such an important program is facing severe budget cuts!

Personally my family alone takes about **25 pounds** of food scraps to the compost weekly! It is amazing to see how our trash is drastically reduced! I live in an apartment and keep the compostables in the precious space in my refrigerator, and I drive twice a week to the Queens Botanical Gardens to drop it off! That's how strongly I believe in this!

I run a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program in Forest Hills for the past 12 years and so many of our members compost on a regular basis and would really like to see this program grow instead of it being cut!

Just a few facts:

- One million tons of organic waste are generated annually from residents in New York City and thrown into a landfill. Food scraps and other organic materials make up one-third of residential waste.
- The average household throws out about 11 pounds of organic material per week, including food waste, soiled paper, and yard waste.
- New York City's composting program is part of the Zero Waste initiative, which aims to achieve a 90 percent reduction in landfill use by 2030 - virtually impossible without diverting organics away from landfill.
- Also it is extremely expensive to export trash to faraway landfills.

This is not only an important program environmentally, it enhances the quality of life for many New Yorkers, which is greatly needed at this time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Felicia Seidel



TESTIMONY TO RESTORE FUNDING FOR COMPOSTING IN FY2023 BUDGET AND FOR STRICTER OVERSIGHT OF REFRIGERANT COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL

March 24, 2022

My name is Jane Selden, and I'm writing on behalf of 350NYC, a grass-roots environmental activist group focusing on NYC climate issues. Because we recognize the vital role organic waste recycling plays in confronting the climate crisis, we are deeply opposed to the proposed budget cuts to the community-based and curbside composting programs. Another area of concern is the DSNY's lax oversight of the laws and regulations regarding residential and commercial refrigerant collection and disposal, as these refrigerants contain "super-polluting" greenhouse gases far more destructive to the planet than CO₂.

With the recent catastrophic flooding from Hurricane Ida, the record-breaking heat waves in the Pacific Northwest, and wildfires on the West Coast that sent toxic smoke into our area last July, we know we are already experiencing the deadly effects of the climate crisis. And, the latest IPCC report has once again sounded the alarm about the urgency of quickly and drastically reducing greenhouse emissions if we are to avert climate catastrophe in the future.

Yet, the proposed DSNY budget cuts disproportionately impact the very programs that would reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions. The current proposal would slash funding in half for the 200 highly successful food scrap drop-off sites currently available across the city and halt the expansion of the curbside compost program. This means that our city will continue to send the 1/3rd of its waste-stream that could be composted to landfill and incinerators. Organic waste in landfill emits methane, a greenhouse gas with 80X the global warming potential as CO₂; landfills are, in fact, the third largest source of methane emissions in the country. And, because of its high moisture content, when organic waste ends up in incinerators, the process of burning it results in higher levels of local pollution.

Organic waste really shouldn't be viewed as waste at all, but as a valuable resource; in fact, in composting circles, it's often referred to as "black gold." Instead of ending up in the giant trash bags that crowd our sidewalks, attracting rats, it can be used to nutritionally enrich the soil of local parks, community gardens, street trees, and urban farms. And, as we face rising sea levels and more frequent torrential downpours, compost can play an important role in flood mitigation because compost-enriched soil is able to retain many times its weight in water. Finally, instead of trucking organic material to the city's waste transfer stations, thereby spewing more greenhouse gas

emissions and other toxins into the atmosphere, it can be processed locally, providing good green jobs for young people in underserved communities.

Another important area of DSNY jurisdiction that 350NYC is concerned about is the current situation regarding the safe collection and disposal of refrigerant gases, namely chlorofluorocarbons, CFCs, and hydrofluorocarbons, HFCs, used in residential freezers and air conditioners. These are potent greenhouse gases, up to 12,000 times more potent than CO2.

Despite the passage of Local Law 69 in 2016, which holds responsible parties (manufacturers) and the DSNY responsible for collection, disposal and tracking of refrigerant gases, data from the **Dept of Recycling and Sustainability, Refrigerant Recovery Program**, supplied to us in 2020, indicated that only 15% of disposed residential appliances (approximately 25,000 per year) are processed by the DSNY. We currently have not been able to determine the fate of the other 85% of appliances and the gases they contain or why enforcement is so low.

Approximately 40% of freezers and A/Cs are commercial and DSNY has never had oversight of these large appliances. With the imminent introduction of the Commercial Waste Management regulations, we urge the Council to investigate and recommend strict regulations and enforcement of disposal of commercial refrigerant systems.

We are **asking for additional staffing at the DSNY Dept of Recycling and Sustainability, Refrigerant Recovery Program**, to augment the staff responsible for enforcing the collection for refrigerant gases and tracking the collection and safe disposal of these potent GHG gases. This is in accordance with new EPA guidelines on Refrigerant Management, which are in the process of being released.

New York City's waste management policies play an important role in achieving its greenhouse gas reduction goals. We must prioritize the programs and the enforcement of laws and regulations that will mitigate the worst effects of climate change. Therefore, we urge the City Council to ensure that the DSNY provides the staffing for effective oversight over the disposal of refrigerants and work with the Mayor to restore funding for community composting and the expansion of curbside organics pick-up, and begin moving towards the goal of mandatory city-wide composting.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jane Selden
Local Solutions Committee
350NYC

Please keep the food scrap drop off/collection. It's been years to get people used to it and it would be a shame to lose that. It also reduces trash collection and waste. We should encourage more recycling, not less.

Jeanne Boyarsky

Greetings. I am a resident of Brooklyn and a mother of two children, ages 7 and 4. As any parent knows, raising a child gives you a new perspective on the way in which present decisions affect our future world. As soon as that beautiful, precious baby comes into the world, you want a beautiful world for them to inhabit. You want that world to extend not just as far as the limits of your own lifetime, but beyond - for your children's children, and for all of the future generations to come.

For me, composting is both personal and forward-looking in this sense. Does it come with a cost? Yes - but not an outrageous one. Pre-pandemic, the city ran a curbside composting program that was the largest of its kind in the country, on a relatively paltry budget of \$28 million.

What is the alternative? We save a drop in the bucket, budget-wise, in exchange for unsustainable levels of methane emissions in our atmosphere - landfilled trash in NYC alone produces about 1 million tons of emissions each year, in large part due to the amount of organic waste in the system. We mar the sidewalks of our neighborhoods with bags of putrefying organic waste, instead of separating out organics into latching containers so that it is inaccessible to rats and other vermin. We say no to green jobs, failing to appreciate that composting operations create twice as many jobs per ton of waste as do landfills. We fail in our promise to future generations to reduce landfill use by 90% by 2030 (NYC's Zero Waste initiative) - a goal that is virtually impossible to achieve without diverting compost.

This is not the future I want for my children, and I will be ashamed to look them in the eye when they ask me why cities like San Francisco and Portland, Oregon can figure out composting, but we can't do it here in New York City. New York City should be a proud leader on this issue. Please stand with me in opposing cuts to our composting programs. Thank you.

J. Zant

Josh Thomases
Washington Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11205
March 25, 2022

To the City Council of NYC,

I am writing to urge you to lead on the issue of composting. We are at a crossroads for the world: we will either find ways to take care of our planet or it will fail us in our lifetimes. To take care of our planet we need to act locally *and that means composting*. NYC should lead on this issue – you should lead on this issue. Please do so!

The average household throws out about 11 pounds of organic material per week, including food waste, soiled paper, and yard waste. This means one million tons of organic waste are generated annually from residents in New York City and thrown into a landfill. New York City's composting program is part of the [Zero Waste](#) initiative, which aims to achieve a 90 percent reduction in landfill use by 2030 - virtually impossible without diverting organics away from landfill.

Fundamentally, this is an issue of equity. When organic waste is mixed with trash and sealed in bags, it putrefies—attracting rats. In under-staffed, badly maintained buildings, it can lead to cockroach and vermin infestation, overuse of poisonous pest-control chemicals and high levels of asthma. Landfills are disproportionately situated next to low-income communities of color. Composting creates good jobs in NYC communities. Composting operations create twice as many jobs as do landfills per ton of trash disposed of.

When organic material decomposes in the anaerobic environment of a landfill, it produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas that literally stinks. Methane released by landfilling organic waste accounts for [17.4% of US methane emissions](#). Compost is a form of carbon sequestration. Landfilled trash from New York City alone generates about 1 million tons of emissions per year, in large part due to the portion of organic waste in the system.

Budget cuts would save the Department of Sanitation just \$18.2 million, which amounts to 0.35% of the proposed NYPD budget. Curbside composting diverts 83,812 tons of waste while saving \$610,800 per year. The Sanitation Committee Chair, CM Sandy Nurse, opposes the cuts.

Take the moral, ethical and far-sighted stand – preserve composting!

Sincerely,
Josh Thomases

I am writing on behalf of my entire family in support of expanding NYC's composting program. We live on a block in Brooklyn that participates in curbside pickup. With a family of 4, including two children who aren't always the most efficient eaters, the composting program allows us to divert fully half of our waste that would otherwise go to the landfill. We also used to have a rat problem on our block; with the compost program in place, there has been a noticeable reduction in that problem - itself a major benefit.

I would like to know how Mayor Adams intends to meet NYC's Zero Waste goal without putting more money, not less, into composting. Composting is not a luxury; it's essential for our future and our kids' future, and we need to treat it as such. NYC needs to expand the program, educate the public about it, and eventually require it as we do with recycling.

Julie Hollar
Brooklyn, NY 11217

To Whom it May Concern,

Please preserve and expand composting and educate the public on it better.

Organic waste is a large source of the city's waste and should not go to landfills to create more methane. It is a perfect source for creation of soil. The city should be moving in the direction of waste reduction, and composting is an important part of that.

There are improvements that can be made to decrease the contamination of the compost. Let's invest in that. Public education must continue to support successful composting. Going backwards hurts us in the long run.

We are in a climate crisis. Increasing landfill content and methane is not the answer!

Thank you,
Kajal Below
Brooklyn

Hi, my name is Lauren Teichner, and I am a Brooklyn, NY resident (Ditmas Park - 11226). I have a three year old daughter named Pepper and a baby on the way. Composting is such an easy and essential step we can take to guarantee our kids a safe and healthy future on Planet Earth. When organic material decomposes in the anaerobic environment of a landfill, it produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas - but when it's composted in an aerobic environment, 90% of those gases are not released. Instead beautiful healthy soil is created. This is the renewable world we need to move into to save our planet and ourselves. Hopefully NYC can pave the way for the rest of the country! Thank you!!

To: NYC City Council Sanitation Committee, % Committee Chair Sandy Nurse

From: Leonel Lima Ponce

Re: NYC FY2023 draft budget hearing (March 23, 2022), in favor of increased allocations to support sustainable solid waste and resource management in the city.

Dear esteemed Councilmember Nurse and NYC City Council Sanitation Committee members

I am a concerned NYC resident, residing at 187 East 4th Street, in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. While my position as Academic Director of Pratt Institute's MS in Sustainable Environmental Systems, my role as Board Member for Lower East Side Ecology Center, and my engagement with grassroots and government agency stakeholder in solid waste management in NYC and beyond give me some insight into the systems and processes in discussion below, I am submitting this testimony as a private individual and denizen of The City of New York.

I am writing to ask for a scaling up of investment in sustainable waste reduction, reuse, diversion, and management strategies in support of DSNY and community-based organizations tirelessly supporting this work, for the health, economic prosperity, and climate change adaptation of The City, its people, neighborhoods, and waste management partners within and beyond its geographical borders.

On a personal level, I have witnessed the growing calls for more infrastructural support for environmental education toward waste reduction, organics and recyclable diversion, and circular economic and technical resource recovery models go unheard for far too long. Stellar organizations and coalitions such as Transform Don't Trash, Big Reuse, Bk Rot, Save Our Compost, LES Ecology Center, Green Feen Organix, the Sanitation Foundation, and the borough SWABs continue to fill gaps in service with volunteerism and dedication, to provide a public service that should be part and parcel of city government's budget. Well paid jobs in a closed-loop, resource and nutrient cycling system that reduces environmental and public health harm and brings restorative justice to our low income, black and brown communities is not some far fetched dream. Seeds for these systems already exist, but they need the support of city government through DSNY's budget.

Namely, I would like to raise up the concerns and recommendations of the Save Our Compost Coalition and other organizations across the city, as outlined below:

We ask that you reverse the harmful cuts to our community composting program and announce a plan to scale up to a citywide, universal compost collection program that enables *all* New Yorkers to compost their food scraps. The Mayor's proposed cuts would save little (less than 1.3% of the overall Sanitation budget) but would do serious damage to public confidence in the City's recycling and climate change programs.

The climate crisis cannot wait. Methane from landfilling organic waste accounts for 17% of US methane emissions. Methane has more than 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide over 20 years.

It is unjust for NYC to continue landfilling and burning our waste in low-income communities and communities of color, when much of it can be composted, recycled, or donated.

We call on the City to include the following in the FY2023 budget:

1. Fully fund Department of Sanitation (DSNY) Community Composting programs which provide over 200 Food Scrap Drop Offs throughout the city and local composting sites that produce compost for our Parks and community gardens. The Community Composting should not only continue to be funded at the current level of \$7 million, but also be expanded to meet the increasing demand for these programs with additional funding to equitably locate community composting sites in communities that do not have one.
2. Restore funding for the planned expansion of the current opt-in Curbside Composting program, ensuring that environmental justice communities are included and prioritized.
3. Require the City to develop a plan for developing a citywide curbside compost program by 2025. Provide mandatory citywide curbside composting so New Yorkers in all residential buildings and schools can compost as easily as they can recycle.

These are but minor steps, and baled-in compromises, from this broad coalition. Their concerns must be heard and accounted for in New York City's FY2023 budget, but they are the bare minimum. We must be bolder and more creative in the city budgeting process, and understand and build on the value of community-based, systems-based solutions that have multiple benefits across social and racial justice and health equity, local economic development, sustainable resource management, and reduction of climate impacts and externalities. Poorly funded, geographically and otherwise limited pilot programs will never bear fruit.

It is my hope, and that of many others, that the incredible advocates on this Committee push for broader and more intensive investments in the city's climate readiness, just economic development, and core health and - and keep and expand the DSNY's organics collection programs and other recycling, environmental education, and sustainable and circular resource management programs.

Thank you,
Leonel Lima Ponce

March 24, 2022

Linda Pugliese
Cortelyou Road
Brooklyn, NY 11218

Mayor Adams,

I am writing because I strongly oppose the budget cuts aimed at the compost programs. Doing anything but expanding composting programs in NYC is unacceptable. We must prepare for the city's future, and the future of this earth, and composting participation of all city residents is imperative. Your constituents are counting on you to give everything you've got to reach our climate goals— this starts with expanding composting programs throughout the entire city.

Composting is very important to me. It makes me feel like I am doing something, ANYTHING, to help us out of this climate mess we've gotten ourselves into. It may not feel like a lot, but it adds up. I take two large buckets to the compost drop near me every week. And when the city stopped composting all together in the heart of the pandemic, I'd bike 30 minutes each way to drop it in another neighborhood. I refuse to throw my compost in the landfill.

One million tons of organic waste are generated annually from residents in New York City and thrown into a landfill. We can reduce this waste by 1/3 if all residents composted. ONE THIRD! New York City's composting program is part of the [Zero Waste](#) initiative, which aims to achieve a 90 percent reduction in landfill use by 2030 - virtually impossible without diverting organics away from landfill. Budget cuts would save the Department of Sanitation just \$18.2 million, which amounts to 0.35% of the proposed NYPD budget. Pre-pandemic the city ran a curbside composting program that was the largest of its kind in the country - on a paltry budget of only \$28 million. New York City is a leader, let's get back to leading, and let's start with getting composting back on track!

Thank you for your attention to my concerns,

Linda Pugliese

March 25, 2022

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to oppose cuts to budgets for community food scrap drop-off sites and for curbside composting collection by DSNY. I have made good use of both since March of 2018 and have found that participating in these projects strengthens community ties both within my Bronx co-op and in the wider Bronx and NYC community.

These projects also cut down on charges for landfill use and can reduce up to 17% of US methane emissions. At the same time, the use of latching containers to dispose of organics make this material inaccessible to rats and other vermin. For 10 years, composting and recycling programs in the city of San Francisco have been diverting more than 80% of city's waste away from landfills. We should aim to do the same.

Sincerely,

Loretta Ryan
Van Cortlandt Park South
Bronx NY 10463-2925

Luned Palmer
March 23, 2022

Dear Mayor Adams,

Composting is really important to our city. I hate to think of all the food waste going into a landfill when we have the technology and infrastructure to make a closed loop system.

Currently I pay a non-profit to take my compost, but this is clearly not an equitable system. All New Yorkers are entitled to compost services, just as we are entitled to trash and recycling.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Luned Palmer
Bed-stuy homeowner

I am a concerned citizen, residing in Flushing, Queens. I am extremely upset that the mayor plans to cut back on the community composting program funding.

The program is a wonderful way to support the environment - turning food scraps into compost instead of garbage that would cost New York City money to ship away to a Pennsylvania landfill.

Think of all that waste - literally thousands of tons of garbage - that could be diverted from having to truck and dump what would be reusable materials that could be used to grow plants and improve our public parks.

Plus all the methane emitted from the decomposing food scraps are very dangerous to the air and highly contributes to climate change (methane traps more heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide - making our planet hotter, faster). The climate crisis cannot wait. Methane from landfilling organic waste accounts for 17% of US methane emissions. Methane has more than 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide over 20 years.

The proposed budget cuts would save little (less than 1.3% of the overall Sanitation budget) but would do serious damage to public confidence in the City's recycling and climate change programs.

It is unjust for NYC to continue landfilling and burning our waste in low-income communities and communities of color, when much of it can be composted, recycled, or donated.

We call on the City to include the following in the FY2023 budget:

- 1) Fully fund Department of Sanitation (DSNY) Community Composting programs which provide over 200 Food Scrap Drop Offs throughout the city and local composting sites that produce compost for our Parks and community gardens. The Community Composting should not only continue to be funded at the current level of \$7 million, but also be expanded to meet the increasing demand for these programs with additional funding to equitably locate community composting sites in communities that do not have one.
- 2) Restore funding for the planned expansion of the current opt-in Curbside Composting program, ensuring that environmental justice communities are included and prioritized.
- 3) Require the City to develop a plan for developing a citywide curbside compost program by 2025. Provide mandatory citywide curbside composting so New Yorkers in all residential buildings and schools can compost as easily as they can recycle.

The mayor claims that food scrap composting is a failure. I say New York City needs to do more to publicize the service and encourage the residents to do more and help out the program for the sake of the environment. I'd suggest public service announcements or a citywide awareness

campaign about the program - especially a multilingual effort including information in Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Korean, French, Haitian Creole, Arabic, Hindi and Bengali - the most widely spoken languages in our city besides English. There are so many public service announcement on television, train and bus advertisements sharing information on the COVID-19 vaccine, senior citizens services and other important city resources and efforts (like stopping anti-Asian American violence). Why not develop campaigns to encourage people to help the environment and city by compost their food scraps or stop pollution from car idling? Or a marketing campaign for city-made compost as a great local product for gardeners and people who would like to start indoor gardens? Education is a crucial aspect of this program and I believe more public education campaigns can bring about more participation and support.

If more people do their part, this program can be even more successful and make New York City less wasteful, less polluted and more green and environmentally-friendly.

Please save this important composting program from short-sighted, stupid cuts that only harm the city at large, our planet and will only hasten climate change/global warming.

Respectfully,

M. Lee

Flushing, Queens

Sanitation Testimony

On behalf of Bushwick community members from Clean Bushwick Initiative (CBI) and Bushwick Emergency Relief Fund (BERF), we are writing to communicate our opposition to the 47.8 million dollar cut to the sanitation budget.

Council member Sandy Nurse has made it exceptionally clear that cutting the sanitation budget will have negative impacts on the streets and cleanliness of our communities. Within Black and Brown neighborhoods, specifically Bushwick, equity in sanitation has been an ongoing issue. For example, our community never received access to compost bins from the city. The pandemic has exacerbated issues related to lack of proper sanitation services including rodents, physical health, mental health, and waste. Cutting the sanitation budget will continue to make these problems worse, specifically rodents which have become increasingly present due to improper disposal of waste and lack of sanitation.

This fall, Hurricane Ida hit New York City and negatively impacted parts of the city, specifically flooding the streets of Bushwick. The flooding on September 2nd was partly due to the infrastructures not being built to handle such significant amounts of water. However, the waste in the streets heavily clogs the drains and rain gardens causing more significant damage. In response to the flood, Bushwick Emergency Relief Fund (BERF) hosted a cleanup the morning after the flood and collected over 30 bags full of trash due to flood related debris and trash. Clean Bushwick Initiative (CBI) is a community organization who has had their feet on the ground combatting the litter issue in Bushwick for the past 6 years. In the past year alone, CBI has hosted over 35 cleanups supported by volunteers from the community. Over the past 5 cleanups, CBI has collected approximately 1,695.7 pounds of trash. This alone shows the sanitation deficit that is present within our community, even before another significant cut to the budget. While organizations like CBI and BERF proudly support our community, it should not be on organizations or community members to shoulder the burden of improper sanitation.

Community Members:

Madi Weber

Nicole DeSantis

Madi Weber

Conor Douglass

John Desmond

Dor Sagi

Written NYC Sanitation Budget Testimony

3/26/22

Maggie Clarke, Ph.D.

Maggie@maggieclarke.com

I am Maggie Clarke, Ph.D. speaking on my own today, but I am chair of the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board's long range planning committee and its waste prevention and reuse committee. As well I have been on the National Recycling Coalition's Board of Directors for almost 10 years, and on the New York State Association for Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle (legislative committee) for over 25 years.

What are the problems to solve and how to solve them?

1. Funding has been slashed for organics collection (and processing?)
2. Why? The Mayor said it cost too much (per ton - over \$700) to collect organics and this is because trucks come back almost empty. (This happened decades ago with recycling collection costs through the roof and for the same reason - inadequate public participation.)
3. The current organics collection program is uneconomic because of its design (voluntary, opt-in, difficult to access, expensive for DSNY to operate, hand-holding individual buildings). A redesign is necessary (--> mandatory, universal, curbside).
4. The current organics collection program is also uneconomic because the education and enforcement are significantly underfunded and the basics of a successful educational program are not being followed.
5. The current program is not being enforced well enough. Where about half of recyclables are placed in trash cans, enforcement should be straightforward.

All three of these must steps be maximized to approach zero waste for organics (or any recyclable)

(also close to 100% of reusables, recyclables and organics must be targeted for collection to approach zero waste)

<p>Participation rate must approach 100%</p> 	<p>Collection Efficiency Must have full trucks</p> 	<p>Sufficient composting sites for all organics generated</p> 
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In order to have a well-functioning, successful, and economic organics system, we need to maximize all three of these steps.. Now the participation rate is low and the trucks come back nearly empty; it's not a workable system. The key to turning this around is understanding how to structure educational approaches that will work for all and ensuring there is enough funding to implement these every year.

How can public participation be redesigned, understanding what constitutes a successful set of approaches?

Strategy for Maximizing Public Participation in Government Programs -

- a. There are several steps for individuals to transition from nonparticipation to participation. Ignoring any in the education/outreach process reduces participation
- b. understanding that the population has 5 components, and each needs a separate educational approach
- c. different demographics get information on programs in different ways; these must be addressed
- d. multi-prong educational campaign program design (optimize and implement all approaches - print, media, social, peer ads, bribes, convenience, enforcement),
- e. campaign elements consistently applied and optimized (one and done doesn't work - the advertising industry spends billions and repeats and changes messaging to change behavior),
- f. public participation pilots (to test, tweak and optimize what works),
- g. attention to having pilots in districts with the range of housing densities in the City (single-family to ultra dense high rises),
- h. sufficient funding with City Council direction to DSNY to ensure that education and enforcement are done effectively.

All of these are described in more detail, below.

The Keys to Increasing Public Participation: Behavior change / educational programs: Important themes:

1. Changing behavior involves a number of steps:

Awareness of the program	Comprehension of program purpose and elements	Motivation to participate	Attitude towards recycling	Intention to participate	Convenience, Ease, of participating	Continuing to participate
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If any of these steps is not optimized, the participation rate will suffer. DSNY focuses on the first two with its brochures, but not so much on motivating or changing attitudes of those who are questioning, disinterested or resistant. And those who had a bad experience recycling will cause them to not continue to participate. In the case of organics collection, the opt-in system makes it difficult for most to participate (and engenders negative feelings by those who cannot get into the opt-in system). We learned that when DSNY creates negative feelings towards its recycling program (as it did in 2002 when glass and plastic recycling stopped for 1-2 years), the diversion rate suffers long-term. In 2001 diversion rate was 21%. We are still a few percentage points below this 20 years later. Causing negative feelings against your recycling program is at odds with motivating and changing attitudes, and is the opposite of what is needed. Now the City needs to remediate the damage done and generate positive feelings towards recycling. Universal curbside collection and maximized convenience as well as sufficient, well-designed education and outreach for the recycling/organics program are required for maximized participation and therefore, optimal cost/benefit for recycling/organics collection.

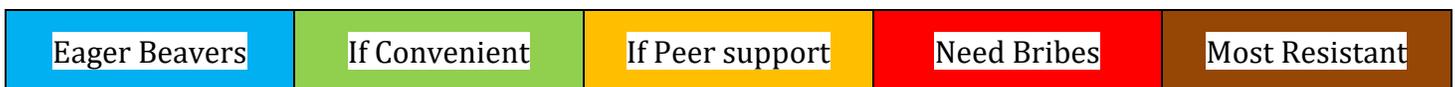
2. The universe of people is divided into 5 groups in terms of readiness to participate - Each requires a different set of educational approaches to reach them successfully. These groups are:

1. those who are eager to do the behavior change,
2. those who will do it if it's convenient and won't cost them
3. those who will do it if their peers are doing it,
4. those who will only do it if they receive monetary incentives, and
5. those who will only do it if it will cost them (e.g., money, job, freedom) not to do it.

DSNY applies a one size fits all approach. Those who are more resistant have not been reached. If we are serious about zero waste, participation rate must also be near 100%. If we are not planning ways to achieve that, we will not reach zero waste. There are west coast cities that have achieved near and over 75% diversion rates. We should be learning from them. The Mayor recently said he wanted to learn from other cities (like Chicago / crime). In the past, DSNY has been suspicious of other cities, not trusting their data. Very convenient.

Insufficient funding has been a hallmark of recycling education and outreach since the beginning. In the 1990s recycling was threatened with cancellation more than once on the basis of the per ton cost of collection being so high. But DSNY did not understand that in order to fill the trucks and make the economics work, everyone needs to participate all the time. In order to have that there must be sufficient, targeted outreach. We spend 86 cents per capita per year. Both Seattle and San Francisco spend over \$3 per capita per year. Since DSNY is only reaching those most ready to participate, we should not be surprised that the capture rate is rarely above 50%.

Readiness to participate



Eager Beavers: Tell them what to do, and how to do it, and if it's possible, they will participate.

Convenience: For recycling participation this means curbside collection on a sufficiently frequent basis. It also means that the program has to be easy to follow. It has been shown that dropoff programs are not nearly as effective as curbside since a fraction will not put themselves out to use dropoff locations. Opt-in programs will also not optimize participation.

Peer support: To participate, people in this group need to be assured that members of its demographic group, neighborhood, family and friends are participating. In the vaccine campaign, TV ads featured people of different ethnic and demographic groups, including various immigrants, pregnant mothers, young men, among others who changed their mind and explained why they now wanted to participate (get the vaccine). Ad campaigns have infrequently been used by DSNY. One memorable TV recycling ad in the late 1990s included Mayor Giuliani and Yankees manager Joe Torre – opinion leaders for some. But the City rarely has had TV and radio ads to encourage recycling participation.

Bribes: As resistance increases, mere knowledge, convenience, and peer acceptance of a program are insufficient to convince the last two groups. In the vaccine campaigns free metrocards and even \$100 cash were offered to members of this group. Nothing has been offered to incentivize participation in recycling in New York City. In many thousands of cities and towns the equitable system of billing (Pay as you Throw) incentivizes residents to participate by charging for waste management based on weight, while allowing recyclables to be picked up for free. As recently as a couple of years ago the City had planned to study “Save as you throw” and even had RRS subcontracted to SERA (the experts in Pay as you throw), and then suddenly pulled out. In 2000 USEPA Region II put on a day long conference in part to encourage NYC to use Pay as you throw, to no avail. In 1997 I nearly got a \$250,000 grant from NYSERDA to build and test in NYC infrastructure to measure weight of garbage with scales and barcode reading systems installed in chutes in apartment buildings, but DSNY refused to attend the first meeting, and the grant died.

Most Resistant/Hard to reach: When bribes don’t work, then the only thing left is providing sufficient disincentives for continuing to not adopt the new behavior must be employed. In the vaccine campaign, we saw people losing their jobs, and similar. DSNY has not done a good job of enforcing its mandatory participation requirement. With half the recyclables still in the trash, it should be very easy to find bags of garbage with recyclables. Fines is the only mechanism that the City has at its disposal to disincentivize not participating, but it must be done sufficiently and equitably across the city and the different housing types. Apartment buildings should be fined as often as single-family homes and universities and other institutions. The enforcement record (who/when/how much) should be available online and in studies so that we can see how the program needs to be improved.

What forms of education and outreach are best suited to motivating each of the above groups to participate? The Department of Health campaign to overcome vaccine hesitancy/resistance is instructive. They have outreach designed for each of the five groups. It would be Very useful to compare the individual elements of the DOH campaign vs. DSNY’s campaign over a year’s time including costs. We are usually flying blind not knowing these kind of data.

3. Different demographics get their information from different sources. Some read (brochures, newspaper articles, websites). Some get their info from TV and radio. Others get info from their children learning it in school and bringing it home. Some get info from subway ads and billboards. Some use Google. And as the advertising industry shows us, repetition of the message using different approaches is what works, not one and done (e.g Liberty Mutual, Geico). But DSNY never has enough money to design and implement multi-prong, consistent, targeted approaches to education, usually focusing on print, so the capture rate is only half effective, only reaching those who are most interested in recycling to start with. Decades of under-funding has caused great damage to the program’s participation.

4. Pilot organics collection, by district, and other studies are needed to optimize Public Participation - As of early 1988, the City operated a number of pilot programs. The first two programs included one that collected newspapers at curbside in five neighborhoods and another that picked up papers in large containers in 97 apartment buildings. Then the other recyclables were studied. Pilots for different housing density districts and testing the different recyclable materials continued for four years until the citywide rollout of mandatory, universal, curbside collection. DSNY piloted the recycling program in the different housing density districts starting 1988. One other pilot was done in Park Slope in 1996 by Center for Biology of Natural Systems (consultant), and included organics.

Unfortunately, DSNY forgot the success of these early recycling pilots. The first curbside district in Staten Island many years ago and the few that followed in Brooklyn, were not studied for optimization nor followed up for an eventual Citywide curbside organics rollout. In order to optimize participation the

pilots need to take place not only in single-family dwelling districts. High rise apartment buildings, mid- and low- rise apartment buildings as well as brownstones, and duplexes need to have pilots. All demographics need to be included. If any of these housing densities or demographics are missed in the pilot program, the participation rate will suffer. The data need to be public, in real time.

DSNY needs to conduct more survey studies to get to know the City's population better. I've conducted surveys (2 pages filled out in person) for my Ph.D. dissertation in the mid-1990s and from 2003 to 2005 and have published reports on them. One of many facts learned in 2004-2005 is that 60% of the respondents didn't recycle every time because they either forgot or were confused. Clearly DSNY's education program failed.

5. Sufficient cost per person per year of an effective public education/ participation program:

How can we know how much funding is needed to address all the types of people and housing density districts? We can compare collection routes in New York City with other jurisdictions that have the same range of housing density districts; there are many. We should be looking at those large jurisdictions that are successfully diverting a large majority of recyclables and organics from disposal. If there are collection truck routes in dense urban areas, smaller apartment districts, brownstone districts and single-family homes, say in San Francisco, we can learn lessons from those. It's best to compare the efficiency and design of NYC programs with successful, zero waste cities that have the same range of housing density districts as NYC (ultra high rise, mid-, low- level apartments, brownstones, duplexes, single-family), for example San Francisco, Seattle, Toronto, Vancouver.

A. Comparisons: In 2019 **both San Francisco, and Seattle spent over \$3/person/year** on education programs and staff and have achieved far greater diversion rates than NYC. They have collected organics and recyclables for many years and divert most material from disposal. **NYC, by comparison, spends 86 cents/person per year.** (Interviews conducted in 2021) These cities have 70-80% diversion rates compared with ours (17-18%). You get what you pay for.

B. **The Example of Covid-19 Vaccinations vs. NYC recycling education campaigns:** NYC's motivation campaign to get people vaccinated should be very similar to the campaign to motivate an increase in participation in recycling. Both programs want behavior change for the entire population. But because there are 5 kinds of people (less and more resistant to behavior change requests), both campaigns have not been equally successful at convincing those who are hardest to convince. Vaccinations have been made convenient, located in many places; curbside collection is the most convenient, but DSNY persists in the opt-in program and dropoffs which are only convenient for those in the most accepting of recycling. The vaccination campaign uses a wide variety of people and their stories of learning/accepting behavior change in their TV ads to effect peer encouragement; the recycling education campaign hardly addresses this. The vaccination campaign bribes New Yorkers with transit cards, \$100, etc; the recycling campaign does not pay New Yorkers to recycle. The vaccination campaign requires vaccination to travel, to work, to go to school, etc taking jobs etc from those who refuse vaccination; the recycling campaign has a badly enforced program with low penalties for not recycling. If the City were to design, fund, and implement the multi-prong, targeted approaches that the vaccination campaign has done, focusing on resistant individuals, to increasing recycling participation, more would participate and costs would go down.

C. How much does the City's vaccination behavior change campaign cost NYC compared with the recycling education campaign? How many ads are on TV, radio, etc per month? What is the advertising budget, which media are used?, How many staff are required? How much does it cost to set up and

maintain vaccination locations, how much to bribe people to get vaccinated? How does this compare to the campaign to encourage recycling behavior?

6. Mandatory is more effective than voluntary (opt-in) or dropoff collection programs.

Unlike their counterparts in many other localities, New York City residents do not pay directly for garbage collection. New Yorkers would only benefit indirectly by their participation in recycling. New York City was once planning to study Save As You Throw, an equitable billing system which rewards prevention, reuse, and recycling behaviors. Since the 1990s USEPA has recommended this system as the single most effective method to incentivize public participation. Since incentives are not in place and no direct benefit accrues to New York recyclers, mandatory compliance proves effective over voluntary participation. A 1979 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency study found that 50 percent of mandatory programs had participation rates equal to or exceeding 50 percent. The National Solid Waste Management Association, in a study of 26 voluntary and 13 mandatory programs, found average voluntary participation to be 34 percent and average mandatory participation to be 55 percent.

7. How to optimize diversion rate? Participation is related to Capture Rate (percent of targeted materials collected). Across the 59 community districts the capture rate ranges from less than 25% to 60% for the recycling program. It is far less in those districts where organics are collected. This is the metric that must rise towards 100% as educational programs improve.

Diversion rate (percent of all discards diverted from disposal) should not be confused with capture rate. Diversion rate is the main metric for overall evaluation of a program's success and progress towards zero waste.

Collection Efficiency (truck routes need to be optimized to allow trucks to fill up during a shift; high participation is also a requirement to maximize collection efficiency).

8. What else is needed to achieve zero waste? NYC is far from targeting 100% of the materials discarded by New Yorkers for collection and processing programs.

Reuse. Consumer items that can be repaired, refurbished or otherwise reused, are dealt with in the private sector to some extent, but there is much left at curbside as garbage for disposal. The City must study reuse capacity at curbside as part of its waste characterization studies. Not only is it important to measure the volume and type of reusable items plus subcategories, but also the condition (i.e. repairability, salvageability for parts). The Manhattan SWAB has asked repeatedly since 1989 that DSNY include all durables/consumer products categories in its waste characterization studies. It's important to know all the many sub-types of packaging so that those that are bad for the environment can be targeted. Likewise, nondurables categories need to be studied and quantified.

Other Recyclables. The City has sometimes hired vendors to collect textiles at dropoff sites (e.g. Wearable Collections), but has never collected used textiles and clothing curbside; it's always been drop off or opt-in. DSNY's waste characterization studies should make clear which other recyclable items should be targeted. And its almost 30% "Other" category should be studied so that we know specifically what is included there.

Conclusion

So Public Participation needs to approach 100% utilizing best practices for well-designed and well-funded education programs outlined above, as well as a goal of 100% targeting of materials in order to approach zero waste. With participation less than 50% and targeting of materials now just the 34% that is recyclables, the result is the roughly low 17% diversion rate. If the City were to also target organics (coincidentally, another 34% that is organics) could double the diversion rate from 17% to 34% when a

collection program becomes mandatory, universally available, and at curbside with current education and enforcement programs. Adding programs to reuse and recycle more materials would further increase diversion. Improving the education and enforcement programs, even by 50%, would have a significant positive impact on the diversion rate and potentially on economics. It is not a foregone conclusion that recycling or organics programs in New York must be unaffordable.

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Testimony before the [Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management](#), March 23, 2022.

Hon. Chairperson Sandy Nurse and Committee members,

My name is Marc Shifflett, resident of Central Harlem and member of the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board. I appear before you today as a concerned citizen so my remarks today do not necessarily reflect the views of the MSWAB Board and its members. I will be highlighting some areas to reflect on when considering the DSNY budget as it relates to residential curbside organics also known as the brown bin program.

First, The Climate Connection

In the United States, landfills contribute upwards of 30% of the atmospheric methane each year. Methane released into the atmosphere is ~82 times more potent a greenhouse gas than CO₂. Only by diverting food waste resources away from landfills and incinerators can we begin to make an immediate and measurable impact on the well-being of our local and global communities as well as the resiliency of our own fragile coastal ecosystem. By doing this we can rest a little easier knowing we're positively addressing the long-term climate threats that face us.

Secondly, Environmental Justice

Of all food wasted in the United States a large amount ends up hauled to landfills and incinerators, often situated in economically disadvantaged communities. Covanta, in Newark, NJ, is one such incinerator negatively impacting the air quality and long term health of a nearby neighbor. Reversing this paradigm of dump and burn is crucial. From Food Recovery programs to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) laws to mandatory waste resource diversion to composting we now have the means to divert some of the untold millions budgeted for landfills and incinerators towards reinvestment in food insecure families and communities, potentially providing improved healthier options outside of traditional and often inaccessible supermarket supply chains. Changing consumption habits will slow the upstream generation of processed food and packaging waste much closer to the production sources.

Third, Education

Children are without question our most important human resource. Investing in K-12 and emphasizing the relationships between our natural and built environments as well as collaborating on solutions to the world's most intractable problem — our appetite for waste — we'll begin to steer future generations away from the environmental brink.

Fourth, Composting

Upwards of 40% of commingled black bag trash is organic and today can be diverted to large-scale commercial composting, medium to small-scale community composting, and finally to anaerobic digestion/waste-water treatment facilities. We could significantly reduce black bag trash on our sidewalks and immediately improve access for seniors and the disabled by reforming a system that diverts hundreds of millions of dollars towards dump and burn and replacing it with an integrated resource management system that enforces mandatory source separation and diversion of organics to composting.

And finally, Rats

In NYC, rats are as complicated as they are controversial. It's estimated 2 million rats live within NYC or a quarter of the human population. The evidence of any connection between containerized food waste and rats is at best anecdotal but it's also fair to conclude that a mandatory curbside organics program will begin the process of getting household food scraps into sealed containers, improving the degrading quality of life the stacks of black bags bring to our neighborhoods, make our sidewalks safer for the most vulnerable residents, but most importantly provide a metric to measure the impact of containerized organics on rat populations. DSNY's brown bins are indeed strong and effective deterrents but only if used properly. Realistically, proper use is always going to be a challenge and the ubiquitous brown rat will likely remain a generational problem partner in the urban ecosystem regardless.

In conclusion, business as usual just isn't sustainable. We have run out of time to debate the climate realities we are facing.

The funding for composting program must be not only not reduced, but increased in the coming months and years. I live in the Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn in an apartment building, and my zip code (11226) has been in the potential expansion plan for as many years as I can remember. I have been dragging my compost to the local volunteer drop-off locations, but it is heavy and inconvenient. I have no idea why you think it is ok to keep the residents of large apartment buildings living in such conditions, with vermin ripping through bags of trash trying to get at organics that could be composted. I have petitioned my building management to enroll the building into the composting program, but of course they said no, since that would involve setting up something that most neighbors won't use (due to their ignorance, laziness, etc. – just being human). This shows that the composting program needs to be expanded to the entire city and made mandatory, not as an on/off affair that rich privileged people do for fun.

Maria GAVRUTENKO

To whom it may concern,

Writing a short note to voice my support of a fully funded and expanded NYC Composting Program. There is no compost pick up in my neighborhood so many of my neighbors and I do the work of organizing compost drop offs at our community garden – not everyone has the time and energy to do this. Compulsive composting – just as funded and enforced as recycling – is the only way to ensure our city does not fail our current climate goals and future selves. It's no wonder city participation is low if most of the city doesn't have curbside pickup and management companies and landlords aren't responsible for ensuring tenants dispose of waste correctly. City-wide composting cannot be simply for those wealthy neighborhoods that already have curbside pickup.

Composting operations create twice as many jobs as do landfills per ton of trash disposed of and the proposed budget cuts would save the Department of Sanitation just \$18.2 million, which amounts to 0.35% of the proposed NYPD budget.

marija

Save Composting in NYC!

Collection of organic waste in NYC for composting, just restarted after the pandemic, is now in danger. Mayor Adams [has proposed cutting the budget](#) for community composting programs by 50%, and halting the planned expansion of the curbside composting program. That's a mistake, as expanding organic waste composting is one of the easiest ways that NYC can [reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change](#). We urge the City Council to oppose the cuts, and enact legislation that sets out a sensible path toward citywide, mandatory organics collection.

The city's waste – nonrecyclable trash mixed with organic waste - is now mostly sent to out of state landfills or incinerators. This current system has financial, climate, and public health impacts. First, the cost of shipping trash to landfills is steadily increasing as landfills fill up and fuel prices rise.

Food scraps and yard waste make up about a third of the trash that New Yorkers generate – about 4,000 tons daily. When left to rot in landfills, organic waste generates methane gas. Methane has [more than 80 times](#) the warming power of carbon dioxide in the first 20 years after it reaches the atmosphere. Methane released by landfilling organic waste accounts for [about a fifth of US methane emissions](#). According to the [Citizens Budget Commission](#), trash sent to landfills by NYC Dept. of Sanitation generates about 1 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year, largely due to the organic portion of the waste stream.

Food scraps are also a major food source for rats, easily accessible in standard black plastic bags. We can stop feeding them! Effective compost collection programs can assist residents and building managers in setting out organics at curbside in resealable and animal-proof containers. This will reduce the rat population.

Alternative processing of organic waste reduces what must be landfilled or incinerated, and creates valuable end products. Composted food waste is safe, clean and beneficial to add to soil. Organics can also be sent to anaerobic digesters. Unlike direct composting, the breakdown of organics

in enclosed tanks produces methane gas that can be captured and cleanly burned for energy. The remaining volume of waste, now sharply reduced, can still be composted.

Mayor Adams cited these factors in his online campaign plans, which supported moving toward composting all of NYC's organic waste. The cuts are a [complete reversal for the Mayor](#). After the election, Adams deleted all his online campaign plans, fortunately still [archived by Gotham Gazette](#).

The composting cuts would supposedly save only \$27.5 million out of a \$2 billion cost cutting package. To justify them, Adams calls the current food recycling system broken because of low participation. That's partly the result of the city repeatedly cutting back on funding for the program. When de Blasio suspended the city's already languishing food waste pick-ups at the start of the pandemic, Adams described the decision at the time as a "mistake." Now, he wants to do it again. Yes, participation in voluntary organics collection is low, but that's only to be expected when most New Yorkers don't know it exists, don't know why it's beneficial, and have never done it before. Instead of breaking the program more, we should fix it.

Councilmember Sandy Nurse, chair of the Council's sanitation committee, [opposes the cuts](#). "This is a disappointing move from the Mayor, who committed many times to expanding organics collections. Simply put, we cannot have clean streets or meet our Zero Waste goals if we do not fund this program."

Eric Goldstein, head of the NYC chapter of the Natural Resources Defense Council, says composting is being treated an after-school clarinet program. Instead, it should be a fundamental piece of the sanitation department's budget, just like regular trash pick-ups and snow removal.

The cuts would impact central Queens. When food scrap drop off (FSDO) services stopped because of the pandemic, Forest Hills Green Team, a community volunteer green group, set up its own volunteer-run FSDO site in 2021 at the MacDonald Park greenmarket on Sundays, in collaboration with Queens Botanical Garden and Big Reuse, until GrowNYC restarted the service after the pandemic. This newly reopened FSDO site will be shut down again after June 30, as well as the new Commonpoint FSDO that

FHGT has been organizing with QBG, expected to start on April 3.

Urge the Council and the Mayor to Reverse the Cuts

The immediate thing to do, if you support composting in NYC, is to call [your City Council member](#) and the [Mayor's office](#). Use the Save Our Compost coalition's [online letter writing campaign](#). Ask them to reverse the cuts, and restore full funding for existing community composting programs and food scrap drop off sites, and for the planned expansion of the curbside composting program.

NYC must start moving toward mandatory composting

Looking to the future, there is a clear path forward. Goldstein urges the Council and the Mayor to pass legislation that would phase in [mandatory organic waste collection and composting](#). It would build on the example of NYC recycling of paper, glass and plastic, which started as a voluntary effort in 1986 before [it became mandatory](#) in 1989.

He sets out [a step-by-step agenda](#). In the first year, the legislation should direct the Sanitation Department to study what it has done right and wrong so far with curbside composting, and what it can learn from other jurisdictions. In the second year, the Department should be required to come up with a multi-year plan describing how the plan should be designed and implemented, and then gradually phased in, accompanied by an extensive public education campaign.

Right now, the cost per ton of composting waste is higher than the cost of landfilling it, but that will change as public participation increases. According to a study from the [NYC Independent Budget Office](#), the more compostable materials we divert from the mixed trash waste stream, the more cost efficient composting will become. If NYC government commits to taking the issue on, organics disposal costs can eventually drop to match the cost of ordinary refuse disposal.

In 2017, the IBO reported there were over 1 million tons of organics in the city's total residential waste stream. If all of that were to be collected and

processed, as much as 500,000 tons of compost could be produced each year. Based on the \$10 per cubic yard that Department of Sanitation charges for its compost, that could be worth an estimated \$12.5 million for use in landscaping and farming. If those organic wastes were used to produce biogas to generate electricity, it could produce an estimated \$22.5 million per year in revenue based on a wholesale electricity price of \$0.04 per kWh. So, there is real value in the better use of organic wastes.

But to put it in a larger perspective, we don't quibble much about the costs of removing snow from city streets. If humanity is to successfully respond to the climate crisis, methane emissions must be cut, and municipal organics composting must become standard. NYC can be a positive example for the entire world – if the Council and the Mayor step up.

But what happens if Mayor Adam's cuts go into effect and he tells his Department of Sanitation to continue landfilling and incinerating organic wastes? NY State Senator Brad Hoylman, who represents Manhattan, [has a backup plan](#). He has introduced a bill, [S 8374](#), that doesn't mention any names, but would require cities with a population greater than one million to provide composting services to all residential buildings.

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Resources

“Project Drawdown Solution Summary: Composting”
<https://drawdown.org/solutions/composting>

NYC Community Composting Sites
<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/site/our-work/reduce-reuse-recycle/community-composting>

NYC Food Scrap Drop Off Sites
<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/site/services/food-scrap-and-yard->

[waste-page/nyc-food-scrap-drop-off-locations](#)

“NYC Must Enact a Universal Food Waste Composting Law,” NRDC
<https://www.nrdc.org/experts/eric-goldstein/nyc-must-enact-universal-food-waste-composting-law>

“NYC Must Enact a Universal Food Waste Composting Law-Part II,” NRDC
<https://www.nrdc.org/experts/eric-goldstein/what-should-nycs-universal-food-waste-composting-law-say>

“Can The Organics Collection Program Be Fiscally & Environmentally Sustainable?,” NYC Independent Budget Office, 2021
<https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/going-green-can-the-organics-collection-program-be%20fiscally-and-environmentally-sustainable-fiscal-brief-october-2021.html>

“How Much Potential Revenue Are New Yorkers Wasting by Trashing Organics?,” NYC Independent Budget Office, 2019, one pager
<https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/organics-february-2019.pdf>

“Can We Have Our Cake and Compost It Too?,” An Analysis of Organic Waste Diversion in New York City Analysis of Organic Waste Diversion in NYC, Citizens Budget Commission, 2016
<https://cbcny.org/research/can-we-have-our-cake-and-compost-it-too>

fghtinc@gmail.com

My name is Marlena Fontes and I am a working mom and activist in Brooklyn. I am asking the city to not only protect, but expand the NYC composting program. This program is a vital part of the city's Zero Waste initiative and is crucial to hitting our goal of 90% reduction in landfill use by 2030. As the mother of toddler with another on the way (any day now!) I am deeply concerned about my and all childrens' futures if we do not take decisive action around the climate emergency. Protecting and expanding the composting program also had the benefit of reducing landfills that disproportionately affect communities of color, and creating good union jobs, and lowering vermin rates. We are counting on our elected officials and city leadership to do the right thing.

My name is Marta Schaaf, and I live in Park Slope, Brooklyn. I am a doctor of public health and a parent. I have been using curbside composting since it became available in Park Slope. When composting was suspended during the pandemic, I organized the households in our building to pay a compost pick-up service.

I am extremely concerned about climate change, and well aware of the pain and suffering that will result. Earlier in my career, I worked in the Sahel region of West Africa, where climate change is already fueling drought and conflict. The negative impacts on children are myriad, ranging from poor food security, malnutrition and consequent reductions in IQ, to the inability for children in especially conflict-prone areas to attend school.

What does this have to do with New York? The people of West Africa contributed zero to climate change. Same for the children in NYC who will suffer the most as climate change impacts multiply and accelerate. As compared to dumping our organics into landfills, composting reduces the emissions of greenhouse gases, especially methane, which causes great harm in the short term. In addition to being less bad than the landfill alternative, composting brings benefits, including reduced landfill, reduced rat populations, and soil improvement.

After many delays, the City of New York is poised to expand curbside organics collection citywide. But Mayor Adams plans to suspend the program as part of his plan to cut \$50 million from the City's sanitation budget.

New York City contributed more than our share to greenhouse gas emissions. We must now lead the way in charting a city of the future, where people can enjoy the benefits of a big city and live in a sustainable manner. As my ten-year-old son learns the gravity of the current climate situation and the changes to come, he expresses confusion and anger at the inability of the grown-ups to do anything. Composting is something we can and must do.

My name is Megan McMahon. I'm a sophomore at Beacon High School and I live in Long Island City. I'm a member of the political policy team at TREEage, a youth organization fighting for climate justice in NYC. I'm writing this testimony to plead that you reinstate \$50 million back into the Sanitation Department budget, fully funding the zero-waste school program.

As a member of the New York City public school system, I see the extent of excessive waste in our schools, especially in the cafeteria. The amount of food I see wasted every day is reprehensible, not to mention the packaging of those foods and the disposable plastic utensils that are used by almost everyone. Trash bins overflow because of the mass accumulation of waste. Even with composting and recycling programs, schools create tons of waste every single week. Taking these programs away would greatly increase the amount of food wasted.

Food waste from New York City alone emits more than 221 million tons of methane a year, a greenhouse gas that's 86 times more destructive than carbon dioxide. Even if this act seems small, New York is a big city with a lot of schools, and not defunding this program will have a large impact.

We don't have time to waste. There are less than 6 years left to reverse the effects of climate change. More than anything, I would like to live a normal life. Too many adults don't realize the impossibility of such a simple request. Even now I wonder about my future self, asking myself if I'm going to struggle to survive, how I'm going to die, and if I'm going to be happy, because I know for a fact that I won't live the life that my parents did. I've lost all hope in thinking we can turn back because we've already come to the edge of the cliff; we're just waiting to fall off. Even if writing this testimony is just me grasping onto pebbles hoping it'll save me, it's better than letting go. Cutting the funding to Sanitation and defunding the Zero Waste schools program is an act of letting go.

Please don't let go.

Thank you.

My family composts, carrying multiple bags of compost a week to a local drop off point. As a result of this, we only generate one small bag of actual garbage a week - as most of our waste is food scraps.

Can you imagine how much it would reduce waste in our city if composting was expanded?

Composting is good for our city, good for our economy, and a necessary investment in our future.

My 8 year old wanted me to add that he packs up the leftovers in his lunch everyday to bring home and add to our family compost.

Best,
Michelle Christenson
Brooklyn, NY

I am writing in today to advocate for the continuation of our city's composting program. It is absurd that the Mayor is attempting to cut this vital program just as it's picking up speed in popularity and overall awareness. Please find multiple relevant points relating to the importance of composting compiled by the group @saveourcompost . In these extreme times where we are seeing the true results of the Climate Crisis we MUST fight to keep our species responsible in the most basic of ways - this is one of the most minor and simplest changes we can make in our day to day lives, yet it is one of the most effective and significant. PLEASE save our compost. I am pleading with you for the sake of our City's future, our Planet's future, our Neighbor's futures, and Your Children's futures. If we continue on dismantling these ever-important green initiatives, there will be no hope.

-Nadine Regne

Organic waste

- One million tons of organic waste are generated annually from residents in New York City and thrown into a landfill.
- Food scraps and other organic materials make up one-third of residential waste.
- The average household throws out about 11 pounds of organic material per week, including food waste, soiled paper, and yard waste.
- New York City's composting program is part of the [Zero Waste](#) initiative, which aims to achieve a 90 percent reduction in landfill use by 2030 - virtually impossible without diverting organics away from landfill.

GHG emissions

- When organic material decomposes in the anaerobic environment of a landfill, it produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas that literally stinks.
- Methane released by landfilling organic waste accounts for [17.4% of US methane emissions](#).
- Compost is a form of carbon sequestration.
- Landfilled trash from New York City alone generates about 1 million tons of emissions per year, in large part due to the portion of organic waste in the system.

Budget

- Budget cuts would save the Department of Sanitation just \$18.2 million, which amounts to 0.35% of the proposed NYPD budget.
- Curbside composting diverts 83,812 tons of waste while saving \$610,800 per year.
- Extremely expensive to export trash to faraway landfills.
- The Sanitation Committee Chair, CM Sandy Nurse, opposes the cuts.
- Pre-pandemic the city ran a curbside composting program that was the largest of its kind in the country - on a paltry budget of only \$28 million.

Hygiene

- Setting organics aside into latching containers makes it inaccessible to rats and other vermin.
- To safely and hygienically accommodate pedestrians, vendors, diners, bikes and playing kids, NYC needs to stop using the sidewalk as a repository for putrefying waste.

Equity

- When organic waste is mixed with trash and sealed in bags, it putrefies— attracting rats. In understaffed, badly maintained buildings, it can lead to cockroach and vermin infestation, overuse of poisonous pest-control chemicals and high levels of asthma.
- Landfills are disproportionately situated next to low-income communities of color.
- Composting creates good jobs in NYC communities. Composting operations create twice as many jobs as do landfills per ton of trash disposed of.

Other cities compost

- For a decade, San Francisco's composting and recycling programs have been diverting more than 80% of waste away from landfills, allowing it to avoid emissions equivalent to that of 20,000 passenger vehicles every year for 10 years.
- If cities like San Francisco, Portland, Oregon and Boulder can figure out how to collect and compost food scraps, surely, ours can too.

Hello, my name is Naomi Sacks. I live in Manhattan and attend Stuyvesant High School. I'm with TREEage, a youth-led New York climate organization, and I'm writing to ask that you reinstate \$50 million into the sanitary budget to fund zero-waste programs in our schools.

As a member of my school's environmental club, I do cafeteria duty to help students properly sort their waste. Thousands of students produce a lot of waste. I see the cafeteria garbage bins overflow very quickly.

Thankfully, Stuyvesant uses compostable trays, compostable utensils, and compostable napkins. This means that most of students' waste goes into the compost bin, diverting a lot of waste from landfills or incinerators.

Stuyvesant is one of the 50% of NYC public schools enrolled in the Zero Waste program. That means that hundreds of thousands of children are putting waste into the compost bin and not the trash bin, reducing the amount of garbage the city produces.

If these programs are taken away from our schools, schools will be producing a lot more general garbage waste, which we as a city will need to manage. This will increase our environmental impact as a city and cost us more in the long run. We need to be investing more into our Zero Waste programs, not less.

I urge you to reconsider the budget and add the \$50 million back into the Department of Sanitation. We need to invest in our future, and the future is Zero Waste.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Hi, my name is Noah Gallimore, I am from Coney Island, Brooklyn, and I now reside in New Brighton on Staten Island. I attend Curtis High school on the North Shore and I am a sophomore there. I am also a member of TREEage, a youth organization fighting for climate justice in New York City. I am here to request that we reinstate \$50 million back into sanitary department budget, fully funding zero-waste school program. This is very important to me and my community because lots of people aren't educated on just how much food and other kinds of recyclables are wasted in our schools. Every day, I see plastic and paper not being recycled, food being wasted, and sometimes just outright littering in our school areas with garbage and recyclable items. However, this doesn't have to be the case because if we would impart the knowledge needed to know the direct impacts that these actions have on our climate and environment, I believe that more and more people will begin to recycle and reuse things that don't have to be wasted. As someone who has seen lots of littering and people wasting food, paper, and plastic instead of finding alternative uses for them, I believe that people should become educated in order for these mishaps to be reduced.

What is the pointing of changing the entire character of the neighborhood and it's still covered in garbage? Developers and elected officials motivated by a bottom line allow the streets of Bushwick to be constantly covered in garbage with no action on litter, severely inadequate pickup schedules, and zero enforcement for those responsible to clean in front of buildings they own.

311 is negligent because the city government doesn't care to support a street that flies Puerto Rican flags It's shameful to force our neighbors to live in a dump. Adequate governance should make organizations like Clean Bushwick Initiative obsolete.

peterfwalpole@gmail.com

Dear Mayor Eric Adams,

I am disappointed by your irresponsible proposal to cut the budget for New York City composting. As a resident who has relied on community compost drop off locations in Brooklyn, I am upset by this proposal. Composting is a vital program which helps reduce waste, combat climate change, maintain hygiene in our city, and in the end saves the city money on transporting waste. The issues with rodents and vermin caused by organic material in our trash adversely affects lower income residents in poorly managed buildings. And, most often landfills are situated closest to lower income communities of color. With the composting program, we have the opportunity to support the health of our communities, the sustainability of our planet, and create more green jobs. San Francisco, Portland, OR, and Boulder have all successfully diverted organic waste from landfills to compost. This is possible for New York City. I write demanding that the budget is NOT cut for composting.

Sincerely,
Samantha Lysaght

I could give you any number of reasons why it is important to continue and expand the composting program in NYC but I choose instead to take a personal approach: The weekly trip my 7-year-old daughter and I make to the compost center to drop off our compost gives her hope that this city is committed to combatting climate change. It is a smelly task that we love! Her generation has a lot to tackle—a lot of problems that my generation and previous generations left for them. Let's give them some hope.

Sarah Douglas
Prospect Park West
Brooklyn, NY 11215

March 25, 2022

Dear Sanitation Committee,

I'm writing to express my opposition to cuts in NYC's composting program in solidarity with the Sanitation Committee Chair, Council Member Sandy Nurse, and other New Yorkers advocating for better air quality.

I first started composting in 2007 at a community garden in Clinton Hill. As a member of the garden, I had a shared responsibility to process the food scraps and contribute to the composting process in the large bins within the garden. The head of the garden, Enrique, had built the bins and taught us how the composting process works. **I never thought I would love hacking up my neighbors' food scraps with a shovel, but I did!** It made me feel connected to my neighborhood in a totally new way, like I was being a steward, quietly performing a service that would help the air quality and the quality of the produce we grew together in the garden. It was so meaningful for me to have this role and have it been a way to connect with neighbors while I was a member of the garden.

When I moved to Greenpoint in 2011, I spent a few years diligently riding the bus down to the McCarren Park Farmers Market every Saturday to drop off my food scraps—**YES, I rode the bus with a big bag of rotting food so that I could continue composting!** That was the start to my weekend. Eventually, we had curbside composting, and that made the process of composting so much easier for me, and especially for my neighbors who weren't willing to travel w/scraps but who were willing to learn how to use the brown bins :)

Now, I live in Ridgewood on a commercial street. When I first moved here three years ago, there was no curbside composting on my street, so **I posted on Nextdoor looking for someone who lived on a nearby residential street that would be ok with me adding my scraps to their bin every week** the night before pickup. And I found some people nearby who said, "Sure, I don't even know what this bin is for?!" So I explained the purpose of the bin and what could be composted, and every Thursday evening, I would take my food scraps to a neighboring street and add them to a neighbor's scraps in the brown bin they now used.

When the city shut down its food scrap collection, I had to trash my scraps for the first time in 13 years. On average, a household generates 11 lbs of food scraps/wk. By that math, **I've composted over 7,000 lbs of scraps!!** I am obviously a compost-lover/compost-nerd—I know how the process works, I know its value to the environment, and (weird as it might sound), it was an important part of how I defined myself as a neighbor and a New Yorker. **I've even gone to compost trivia nights and have a Department of Sanitation Composting t-shirt (big fan!!).**

I've converted neighbors everywhere I've lived, not to mention friends and family. My own momentum is small, but with the reinstating of the city's composting program, it joins the momentum of others and can make an exponential difference in reducing methane emissions. **Curbside composting diverts over 80,000 TONS of waste from landfills, which are disproportionately located next to low-income communities of color.** Stopping the city's composting program is inequitable and unethical!

Please take a stand to reinstate the curbside composting program so that the city can once again divert this methane-producing waste from landfills. Get the Zero Waste Initiative back on track!

Thanks for your time considering my testimony,
Sarah Dziedzic
Ridgewood, Queens

March 26, 2022

Mayor Eric Adams
Commissioner Ed Grayson, Dept. of Sanitation
Council Member Sandy Nurse

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the cuts to community composting programs proposed in the FY23 City budget. I have two little girls, and I am doing my best to leave them a habitable planet. Composting our organic waste, instead of letting it go to landfill, is a small but crucial thing we can all do to fight climate change.

When organic material decomposes in a landfill, it produces methane – one of the most significant greenhouse gases. Composting instead will help reduce methane emissions. Diverting food scraps reduces the city's landfill streams, reducing emissions from carting – and saving taxpayer dollars. And as an added bonus, removing organic waste from bagged household trash is a deterrent to rats.

Composting programs are a win for our city and our planet. Please, don't cut them.

Sincerely,
Sarah Landreth
Park Place
Brooklyn, NY 11217

Composting is SO IMPORTANT. It breaks my heart every time I have to throw compostable organic material into a plastic bag bound for a landfill. Not only do landfills create toxic greenhouse gas emissions, they also contribute to a myriad of other environmental issues. We need to revolutionize the way we handle waste, and composting is a no brainer. I desperately want to be able to compost but the city does not enable me to, the closest compost drop off facility is a 20 minute walk, and still I walk with my compost weekly to drop it off. Why do only certain neighborhoods have the privilege of compost pickup? How can communities get engaged with composting without having those barriers reduced? We need to heal our relationship with nature and increase greenspace in the city. Composting can be the foundation of any green initiative by providing us with rich and healthy soil.

Organic waste

One million tons of organic waste are generated annually from residents in New York City and thrown into a landfill.

Food scraps and other organic materials make up one-third of residential waste. The average household throws out about 11 pounds of organic material per week, including food waste, soiled paper, and yard waste.

New York City's composting program is part of the [Zero Waste](#) initiative, which aims to achieve a 90 percent reduction in landfill use by 2030 - virtually impossible without diverting organics away from landfill.

GHG emissions

When organic material decomposes in the anaerobic environment of a landfill, it produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas that literally stinks.

Methane released by landfilling organic waste accounts for [17.4% of US methane emissions](#).

Compost is a form of carbon sequestration.

Landfilled trash from New York City alone generates about 1 million tons of emissions per year, in large part due to the portion of organic waste in the system.

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To safely and hygienically accommodate pedestrians, vendors, diners, bikes and playing kids, NYC needs to stop using the sidewalk as a repository for putrefying waste.

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When organic waste is mixed with trash and sealed in bags, it putrefies— attracting rats. In under-staffed, badly maintained buildings, it can lead to cockroach and vermin infestation, overuse of poisonous pest-control chemicals and high levels of asthma.

Landfills are disproportionately situated next to low-income communities of color. Composting creates good jobs in NYC communities. Composting operations create twice as many jobs as do landfills per ton of trash disposed of.

Other cities compost

For a decade, San Francisco's composting and recycling programs have been diverting more than 80% of waste away from landfills, allowing it to avoid emissions equivalent to that of 20,000 passenger vehicles every year for 10 years.

If cities like San Francisco, Portland, Oregon and Boulder can figure out how to collect and compost food scraps, surely, ours can too.

Seth Laxman

Testimony NYC Council Sanitation Committee Budget Hearing

Submitted by Sheila O'Connor, District 3

To the members of the NYC Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. My name is Sheila O'Connor and I am a resident of Hell's Kitchen in District 3. I am speaking today to express my opposition to the proposed cuts of \$50 million to the Department of Sanitation.

I have lived here for 15 years and I have never seen the City as dirty as it is right now. As a result, we are seeing an explosion of the rat population in this neighborhood. I regularly volunteer with Catie Savage and the Hell's Kitchen Litter Legion because it is my home and I am willing to roll up my sleeves to keep it clean. While it is satisfying to be part of an effort that picks up hundreds of pounds of trash in just a few hours on a few blocks, I can't help but observe that within a few days, the trash is piling up again. Corner baskets are regularly overflowing causing trash to fall on the ground attracting rats. In addition, dirty streets establish a mindset that it's ok to litter because no one cares. I have observed a significant increase in dog poop which I think is directly connected to a general degradation of our social contract. Residents are concluding that if the city is not taking care of picking up the garbage in our neighborhood, why should I make an effort to not litter and pick up after their dog? This creates a downward spiral that will drive away tourists and office workers and ultimately kill our economy

Cutting funds to the Department of Sanitation budget at this time, will exacerbate what is already a crisis of trash and rats on our streets. I urge this Committee to oppose any cuts to Sanitation at a time when an increase in funding is required.

I am writing in fierce opposition to the budget cuts to composting programs in New York. What these programs need is expansion. Right now, composting is not catching on in my building because my neighborhood does not have curbside composting. So it requires the people in my building to store their compost in the freezer and truck it to the farmer's market every week. If they have to work on Sunday mornings, they're out of luck. Meanwhile wealthier zip codes have curbside composting – we all know why this is the case for some zip codes and not others!

An expanded and consistent city composting program would take organic waste out of the trash bags piling up on the sidewalk and put it into bins inaccessible to vermin. Most importantly, it would prevent methane emissions from landfills and instead put our waste to use.

Of course people aren't always opting in to these programs – they are new, and in many cases, not available. But we need them!

Shiloh Hodges

I moved to NYC to work at Earth Matter hosted by the NYC Compost Project. With a new MS in sustainable agriculture policy, the enthusiastic acknowledgment by the city of New York that diverting food waste was a critical component of the zero waste initiative and Oxx30 was innovative and brought me to this city.

Through my tenure working on Governors Island, I talked to and educated thousands of NYC taxpayers who were excited by brown bins and collecting their food waste to help mitigate the climate crisis — and for many, the answer to when can I get one was “fill out a survey, and soon the pilot will expand to your neighborhood.”

We cannot go backward. Landfilled trash from New York City alone generates about 1 million tons of emissions per year, in large part due to the portion of organic waste in the system. Reducing the composting budget will inevitably result in more emissions, and composting itself is a form of carbon sequestration.

The climate crisis demands NYC to be a leader, and it requires a mayor who will not be an obstacle to the biggest crisis of our lifetime. Please do not cut the budget of a critical city service that is essential to curbing food waste emissions.

Sincerely,

Tegan Gregory

3/24/22

Dear Mayor Adams,

I am deeply concerned about cutting compost collection as a way to save money in our city.

The current rat infestation would be greatly minimized if the vast majority of food waste were in the locking brown bins, separated from the rest of the garbage. The methane releases in our garbage piles would be minimized and the cost of exporting our garbage would also decrease. Green jobs would be created.

Even more important, New York City could become a national leader- a leader in green jobs, in reducing emissions, in creating a beautiful, green city that lives up to our highest selves as New Yorkers. Our young people are discouraged and dispirited by leadership that does not address the existential threat of their lifetimes. New York can continue to be a place where families grow and where young adults flock to live and work, but only if we lead on this issue.

Thank you for your time,

Teresa Elguera
Brooklyn, NY

Teresa Forgione

134th st

Jamaica, Ny, 11435

Chair Nurse and members of the Committee,

My name is Teresa Forgione and I am currently a compost intern at Queens Botanical Garden and I was born and raised in Jamaica, Queens, New York. Prior to interning here, I attended John Bowne High School and that's where my true passion for composting and urban agriculture really came into play for me. At my previous high school mentioned before, there was and still is a rather impressive agriculture program where students have the ability to learn how to grow their own fresh produce from seed both outdoors in their own garden plots and inside their beautiful greenhouse. Of course a lot of what was grown was either taken home for consumption, to feed the animals we had on our little farm or sold at our summer food sales and floral shops. But more importantly, any waste that was left over (which there's always a ton of) went into our small scale compost pile, which as we all should know turns into what many call "black soil". Compost is arguably the most important portion of your soil, for it holds all the nutrients all your favorite plants, flowers, fruits and vegetables love and strive for!

Being an intern now at Queens Botanical Garden, I've been given the opportunity to learn much more about the different types of composting on a much bigger scale compared to what I was taught in school and about how important compost really is; and for that I am completely grateful. Not only can composting positively impact us by directly affecting the environment around us but also the entire world we live in. Every day I come into work with immense joy knowing that I'm going to learn something new on how to better our environment. At my age of 23, I'm able to say that I have taken part in NYC's Compost project and had the ability to develop professionalism and strengthen my skills by working on separate projects such as building a vertical grow shelf and how to complete other tasks in an office setting. There are so many benefits to composting including, reduction of greenhouse emissions, improvement of air quality, reduction of landfill areas, water filtering capabilities, prevention of soil erosion and helps balance the PH levels of our soil. Along with all those physical impacts composting has on our environment, there's also plenty of studies that show composting and agriculture is a form of therapy/stress relief and is commonly used to treat people with anxiety/depressive disorders. As I

mentioned previously, gardening and composting is somewhat of a beautiful never ending loop that can happen locally and anywhere in NYC. Creating and managing our own compost locally to then fertilize our own local gardens with it would save money and reduce emissions just because of less importing/exporting of goods and produce. I know this because I also have experience working at a rooftop hydroponics greenhouse located right in Jamaica, Queens.

With that being said, **I think it's an absolute shame that our city doesn't provide the funding needed to educate the youth and the overall population of NYC about the importance of composting and to help dispute all the negative rumors or confusions many people have accumulated over time.** Without a significant budget increase, people of our communities and all over the city will still be questionable and have their doubts about composting. We need this budgeting more than ever, especially with global warming escalating at an alarming rate. Once all the people of NYC are on the same page and fully understand the reasoning behind composting, I'm certain many people will feel more comfortable and enthusiastic about the process, but first we need the funding. In the long run, more funding for the NYC Compost Project will most definitely make a difference that I personally believe everyone will appreciate and feel proud to partake in.

Good afternoon,

My name is Victoria Adler, and I'm a Queens resident, public school teacher, and mother. Last year I helped found the Queens Climate Project, a non-profit group devoted to promoting clean energy solutions in our city and state. We're made up of community members just like me - regular folks who want our city (and our children) to have a future. The stakes are so high, and NYC just isn't moving fast enough, or taking on the climate crisis for what it is...a crisis.

I was enraged to learn that the city plans to slash the budget for organics recycling and composting. I implore the City to protect its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and continue to support composting programs.

The city has made major progress in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills, and the Mayor's proposed budget would undercut all of this. I understand that the city needs to make budget cuts, but it also needs to make swift, bold changes to reduce its carbon emissions. Eliminating composting programs is short-sighted and has potential to have long-term implications, releasing greenhouse gas into our skies and setting the City back further from its sustainability goals. Today we urge the City Council to ensure that NYC **continues organics recycling and composting and builds upon the progress we have made in the past few years.**

We realize it is not possible for the Council to restore all \$28 million of organics program cuts. This is an austerity budget, and these unusual times demand sacrifice from all parties. Rather, we are asking that the city restore the cuts to the NYC Compost Project/partners and to GrowNYC, with a corresponding expansion of community outreach and education. My particular community - Jackson Heights - is full of avid composters, and many coops have back yards; community education would allow greater numbers of people to create their own compost bins, and ultimately save money for the city. However, for those of us who can't make private bins, the city should continue to provide weekly drop-offs.

This comparatively small amount of funding in the big picture would ensure that:

- at least eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide organics collection and processing services, as well as community education, could continue their good work;

- at least 170 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs can continue to divert this potent source of greenhouse gases from landfills;
- at least six community composting facilities can continue their work of processing the food waste to turn into usable compost to grow food in community gardens and urban farms during a time of food insecurity; and
- the City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and recycle – such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop life-time habits of sustainable living.

We cannot understate the urgency of this ask! I speak on behalf of Queens Climate Project, my Jackson Heights and Queens community, and all New Yorkers. I hope the Council ensures that composting continues to be funded in this year's budget.

Thank you!

Victoria Adler

From: Wilhelmina Peragine <wilhelmina.peragine@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 23, 2022 2:44 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Wilhelmina Peragine Testimony Text

In late 2019, I moved to Brooklyn with my husband and my one year old. On our first day here, I couldn't get "Empire State of Mind" out of my head. The lyrics just suddenly made so much sense. What an exhilarating place to live! "These streets will make you feel brand new..." By day three, I was disabused of my initial exuberance. As my toddler and I climbed over a trash mountain that had spilled over onto the sidewalk, I turned to my husband, while plugging my nose, and jokingly sang, "In New YORRRK! These streets will make you feel brand new!" Ever since then, this line has become an inside joke. Whenever we see something disgusting (methane-spewing trash features prominently) we belt this out. But the thing is, there's a pretty simple solution to this issue: COMPOSTING. And I'm not talking about 10% of the city toting their organic refuse to the farmers market. I'm talking about a widespread program for EVERYONE in this concrete jungle. Beyond the aesthetics—for eyes and noses—it just so happens to be one of the most simple and effective climate interventions, especially at the scale of a city like ours. And with just seven years to cut global emissions in half, NYC has the chance to be a use case for the world. As Alicia Keys sings, "If you can make it here you can make it anywhere." If we can make composting work here, we can prove that it's possible anywhere.

We've now lived here for over two years, and our two and four-year-old know nothing else. They're used to the grimy aspects of the city, and they love to join in on our inside joke, singing "in NEW YO_ORK!..." at the top of their lungs when we see trash bags bursting their guts onto the street. But they're also becoming increasingly aware of how this issue isn't actually funny.

It'd solvable, and solving it is a matter of life and death for their generation. That might sound hyperbolic, but it's not. The Environmental Defense Fund explains that "Methane has more than 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide over the first 20 years after it reaches the atmosphere. Even though CO2 has a longer-lasting effect, methane sets the pace for warming in the near term." Even my toddlers understand that slowing the pace of climate chaos is crucial.

My kids also starting to understand just how precarious things are. They're starting to see how interconnected everything is. They're starting to ask questions about why we've let things get so bad. So when our block was invited to join the municipal composting program, I was ecstatic that I would be able to point to composting and government support for such a robust program as evidence that there was reason to have hope! "See kids, good government can lead the way! And we can participate in a solution!" As soon as our brown bin arrived, I shared our new household procedures with the kids and their enthusiasm for composting soon outshone my own. My four year old now claims that she has magic powers because she can "make trash turn into dirt!" and my two year old sings, "Stop cwimate change!" as we wheel our compost bin to the curb together.

We have a quickly-shrinking window of opportunity right now. Yes, it's complex to get this program to scale, and it requires a significant initial investment, but it will pay off in every sense. Saving \$610,800 per year would be nice, and saving the future from climate chaos would be even better. (laugh sardonically) At a time when unprecedented and urgent change is needed around this precious planet, let's show the world that there's (sing) "nothing you can't do."