



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1510

Resolution calling on the New York City Department of Sanitation and the Department of Parks and Recreation to continue to engage and collaborate with local communities to encourage and allow community composting to be carried out on parkland that is safe for residents.

By Council Members Reynoso, Van Bramer and Kallos

Whereas, Compost is organic material consisting of materials such as leaves, grass, food scraps and non-recyclable paper that can be added to soil to assist in the growth of vegetation, and is often used to beautify parks, gardens and also used for landfill developments; and

Whereas, The average New York City resident disposes of approximately 15 pounds of waste at home per week, which combined totals more than three million tons of residential waste altogether per year for the entire City, not including waste from commercial establishments; and

Whereas, Approximately 31 percent of what New Yorkers dispose of in the trash is food scraps, yard waste and soiled paper that cannot be recycled; and

Whereas, When these materials are sent to landfills to decompose, they release methane gas, a greenhouse gas that is highly more potent than carbon dioxide; and

Whereas, Instead of sending these materials to landfills, they can be composted and be used to benefit the environment and the City by enriching soil, retaining moisture and suppressing plant diseases and pests, reduce reliance on chemical fertilizers and reduce methane emissions from landfills; and

Whereas, Historically, the vast majority of composting that occurred in New York City was conducted at the community level, through the City's green markets, at non-profits and at neighborhood composting sites in locations, such as community gardens and certain parks; and

Whereas, In prior years, the New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY) and the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding that DSNY collect leaves and yard trimmings separately from solid waste so they can be recycled as mulch and compost at parklands under DPR where composting and mulching sites could be established; and

Whereas, The City created the NYC Compost Project in 1993, which provided education on composting, as well as fostered community level composting initiatives throughout the City; and

Whereas, In 2013, DSNY began offering curbside organic waste collection services to residents of Westerleigh, Staten Island in a pilot program to test the feasibility of collecting such waste from people's homes; and

Whereas, This program was deemed a success and later expanded to over 100,000 households across the City; and

Whereas, On May 4, 2020, DSNY announced the suspension of the curbside composting program through June 30, 2021 due to budget cuts, however residents can make their own compost and are encouraged to do so; and

Whereas; The suspension includes the closures of food scrap drop-off sites due to social distancing mandates and budget cuts to GrowNYC's zero waste programs and the NYC Compost Project; and

Whereas, In addition, DPR is expected to close composting facilities at certain sites and does not have plans to renew licenses with non-profit groups, such as Big Reuse, who operate the composting facility under the Queensboro Bridge, and the Lower East Side Ecology Center, which bases its composting facility in East River Park; and

Whereas, Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center collect nearly two million pounds of food waste annually, which is used by community gardeners and city agencies; and

Whereas, Climate advocates have expressed concerns that these closures and budget cuts will have negative impacts on the City, including potential for more greenhouse gases affecting the environment, and also

puts necessary environmental and social services at a low priority; and

Whereas, These composting closures on parkland, along with budget cuts and suspending the curbside composting program puts the City in jeopardy of losing nearly half of its composting capacity which will not benefit the City in reducing its greenhouse gases and potentially further delay the City's goal of sending zero waste to landfills by 2030; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the New York City Department of Sanitation and the Department of Parks and Recreation to continue to engage and collaborate with local communities to encourage and allow community composting to be carried out on parkland that is safe for residents.

PM
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