

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Jointly with

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Sandy Nurse
Chairperson

Lynn C. Schulman
Chairperson

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

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Corinne Schiff
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Kazimir Vilenchik
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Justin Green
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Earth Matter

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Erik Menjivar
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Leo Kirts

Elizabeth Arcitano

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION & SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

6

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and
3 welcome to the Committee on Sanitation and Solid
4 Waste Management. At this time, please be sure to
5 silence all cellular devices. At no moment is anyone
6 able to approach the dais. This includes staff.
7 Chairs, we're ready to begin.

8 [gavel]

9 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Good morning
10 everyone. Thank you Sanitation and Health Committee
11 Members, members of the admin from Department of
12 Sanitation, and the Department of Health and Mental
13 Health, and advocates for joining us today. Today's
14 oversight hearing is on the City's rat mitigation and
15 public health efforts. I also want to acknowledge we
16 have some students here from the Brooklyn Harbor
17 School. Thanks for being here today and engaging in
18 an important civic lesson. Last year, this committee
19 focused on how to tackle the rat problem. In October
20 2022, the City Council passed the Rat Action Plan
21 that established rat mitigation zones and associated
22 reporting. It created requirements for rodent
23 abatement at construction sites, targeted
24 containerization and more, but we still have a long
25 way to go. Recently, a local pest control company

2 released a study claiming that an estimated 3 million
3 rats now inhabit in New York City. That's over one
4 rat for every three humans residing in New York City
5 with many neighborhoods disproportionately plagued
6 with their presence. Rats have become nearly
7 synonymous with living in New York City, almost a
8 cultural symbol and more often a joke, but really is
9 not a joke. The high population of rats represents a
10 disgusting and unhealthy presence for many city
11 residents. Rats are in buildings. Their nests are
12 all throughout our street trees and sidewalks.
13 They're eating through car engine wires, burrowing in
14 rain gardens, scurrying around our playgrounds. It's
15 an embarrassing fact of life here in New York City
16 and it's a serious public health situation. Rats can
17 carry diseases that can be spread to humans and other
18 animals with the highest rate of disease transfer
19 from rat to humans occurring when rats are in homes.
20 These issues disproportionately impact low-income
21 communities of color, including Harlem, Grand
22 Concourse, Bed-Stuy, and Bushwick. Rats are also an
23 epidemic in public housing and in rent stabilized
24 buildings where tenants are often relying on poor
25 management to address rodent issues in the home. In

2 response, DSNY has declared a war on rats with
3 several initiatives including waste containerization,
4 improved litter baskets, and up until recently
5 increased cleaning and the targeted neighborhood
6 taskforce. DSNY claims these initiatives have led to
7 a near 45 percent reduction in rat complaints in rat
8 mitigation zones, and 20 percent outside of zones.
9 While a reduction in complaints are positive
10 indicators that we're on the right track, it is
11 important to note that as far as this committee can
12 tell, the City agencies currently have no scientific
13 methodology by which it can really determine the
14 presence and populations of rats. We are relying on
15 outside studies as far as I know. We'd be happy to be
16 proven wrong. These initiatives have just gotten
17 underway, and unfortunately, DSNY now faces budgetary
18 constraints due to PEGs, including in its TNT, lot
19 cleaning and litter basket service. These cuts to
20 cleaning programs that improve the health and hygiene
21 of our city are very alarming, and I have no doubt
22 will decrease the quality of life for our
23 communities. We know food waste represents the main
24 food source for rats, which makes it all the more
25 important that we get our trash bags into containers

2 and divert organic waste from landfills. This
3 summer, the City Council passed the Zero Waste Act,
4 mandating citywide curbside collection of residential
5 organics by fall 2024 as well as organic drop-off
6 sites. DSNY has progressively rolled out curbside
7 organics operations in each borough. However, budget
8 cuts have unfortunately delayed this program in
9 Staten Island and the Bronx, and DSNY has altogether
10 cut the vital operations of community composting
11 organizations, and as a result over 100 compost
12 workers are being laid off over the next two weeks.
13 Outreach, communications, and education is key for
14 New York City residents to familiarize themselves
15 with best practices for waste disposal and rodent
16 mitigation. To that end, DOHMH has carried out rat
17 training, and DSNY has also funded on-the-ground
18 outreach on curbside organics. We look forward to
19 hearing from the agencies about how cuts to their
20 budget will impact the future trainings and outreach
21 in greater detail. We live in a city with \$110
22 billion dollar budget, and at this level of resource
23 we really deserve clean, healthy streets and safe
24 rodent-free buildings. And so we look forward to
25 hearing from the Administration about its rat

2 mitigation work. I want to thank my team and the
3 Sanitation and Health Committee taskforces for their
4 work, and of course, thank you to everyone who will
5 provide public testimony today. I want to
6 acknowledge Council Member Shaun Abreu and Crystal
7 Hudson are here with us, and I will turn it over to
8 Chair Schulman. Oh, I'm sorry, and Council Member
9 Menin.

10 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you, Chair
11 Nurse. Good morning everyone. I am Council Member
12 Lynn Schulman, Chair of the New York City Council's
13 Committee on Health. I want to thank Chair Nurse and
14 the Committee on Sanitation for holding this
15 important hearing with us today. The purpose of
16 today's hearing is to follow up on the
17 Administration's ongoing rat mitigation efforts and
18 examine the impacts of rats and rat mitigation
19 strategies on public health. According to the CDC,
20 rodents including the Brown Rat carry diseases that
21 can spread directly to humans either through the
22 handling of such rodents, contact with rodent waste
23 or saliva, or rodent bites. Certain diseases can
24 also spread from rodents to humans through indirect
25 contact such as when humans are bitten by ticks,

2 mites, fleas, or mosquitoes that have fed on infected
3 rodents. Rodent infestations in and around the home
4 are the main reason disease spreads from rodent to
5 people. In New York City, the Department of Health
6 and Mental Hygiene has identified rats as the main
7 source of bacteria responsible for leptospirosis, a
8 disease that in 2021 caused 15 reported cases
9 including one death. A study by Columbia
10 University's Mailman School of Public Health found
11 that rats in New York City carry bacterial pathogens
12 like E. coli, salmonella, and Seoul Hantavirus which
13 can cause mild to life-threatening symptoms in
14 humans. A 2023 study found that wild rats in New
15 York City were exposed to and susceptible to
16 infection by variants of SARS, COV2, including the
17 Alpha, Delta, and Omicron variants. While the CDC
18 assessed the risk of animals transmitting COVID-19 to
19 humans is low, the findings may suggest that
20 continuous and vigilant monitoring of rats will help
21 identify new virus strains that could pose public
22 health risks, and thus mitigate any potential threats
23 associated with such strains. But just as rats and
24 other rodents can pose a public health danger, so can
25 the mitigation strategies used to reduce their

2 numbers. Rodenticide poisoning can occur in humans
3 if directly ingested. Children, especially those
4 under six years old, are at high-risk of
5 unintentional poisoning through oral ingestion, which
6 can cause severe gastrointestinal symptoms, and in
7 extreme cases fatalities. According to some
8 estimates, over 10,000 children in the United States
9 suffer from rat poison-related health issues
10 annually. As awareness of the potential negative
11 health and environmental consequences of rodenticide
12 use has increase, modern rat control strategies have
13 shifted away from the poison-based approach to a more
14 holistic approach that focuses on pest prevention
15 known as Integrated Pest Management, or IPM. I look
16 forward to hearing form the Administration about the
17 ways in which it has adopted IPM tactics to ensure
18 that the City is employing effective rat mitigation
19 strategies that keep our children safe. In New York
20 City, rodent control is conducted by the Office of
21 Pest Control of the Bureau of Veterinary and pest
22 Control Services within the division of environmental
23 health at DOHMH. Through this office, DOHMH conducts
24 rat inspections, records data, and conducts public
25 education efforts, including community outreach and

2 professional trainings and runs multi-agency efforts
3 to curb rat infestations in New York City. Last
4 year, the Council passed a package of legislation
5 requiring DOHMH to create rat mitigation zones
6 throughout the City. the committees hope to learn
7 more about the implementation of these local laws,
8 including how DOHMH is designating rat mitigation
9 zones which mitigation measure have been implemented
10 in such zones, and whether those measures have
11 reduced the amount of rat activity. From November
12 2021 to the present, the number of DOHMH rat
13 inspections resulting in passing score has declined.
14 The average number of passed inspections in November
15 of 2022 was 625 a day, but in November of 2023, the
16 average of 500 a day. We need to see an improvement
17 in these numbers, and our committees stand ready to
18 provide any support we can in bringing the number of
19 past inspections back up to 2021 levels. I also hope
20 to learn more about how the Administration assigns
21 responsibilities for rat mitigation regarding outdoor
22 dining and how the expansion of composting might
23 impact rat mitigation. I also have many construction
24 sites in my district right now, and I'd like to learn
25 more about how the Department of Buildings engages in

2 rat mitigation efforts at those sites. I'm deeply
3 concerned about the Mayor's proposed budget cuts
4 could impact DOHMH's inspection rates and outreach
5 efforts and the City's mitigation efforts as a whole.
6 Rats and rodent mitigation are a serious public
7 health issue and public education and community
8 outreach are key components in preventing rat
9 infestations. Now is not the time to sacrifice any
10 progress we've made in the fight against rats, and I
11 hope that the Administration can reassure our
12 committees and New Yorkers today that it is fully
13 committed to the issue. In closing, I want to thank
14 my Chief of Staff Jonathan Boucher, Legislative
15 Director Kevin McAleer, and Legislative Fellow Andrew
16 Davis and the Health Committee Staff Christopher Pepe
17 [sp?], Sara Sucher, Mahnoor Butt for their work on
18 this important hearing. I also want to thank the
19 Sanitation Committee staff, and I will now turn it
20 back to Chair Nurse.

21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you, Chair
22 Schulman. I want to recognize Council Member Eric
23 Botcher has joined us. I'm going to turn it over to
24 Committee Counsel.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please raise your
3 right hands. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
4 whole truth and nothing but the truth before this
5 committee and to answer the Council Member questions
6 honestly? Thank you. You may proceed with your
7 testimony.

8 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Good morning Chair
9 Schulman, Nurse, and Members of the Committee on
10 Health and Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. My
11 name is Kathy Corradi, and I'm the Director of Rodent
12 Mitigation for the City of New York. I'm joined here
13 by my colleagues, Corinne Schiff, Deputy Commissioner
14 for Environmental Health from the New York City
15 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Javier
16 Lojan, First Deputy Commissioner, and Joshua Goodman,
17 Deputy Commissioner of Public Affairs and Customer
18 Experience, both from the New York City Department of
19 Sanitation, and First Deputy Commissioner Kazimir
20 Vilenchik PE [sic] from the New York City Department
21 of Buildings. Thank you for the opportunity to be
22 here today to address this important topic. New York
23 City's rat mitigation efforts are robust, evidence-
24 based, and effective. Our program is data-driven,
25 rooted in science, and involved planning and action

2 across multiple agencies and geographies. Built on
3 decades of experience, we know what works, and we are
4 executing. While some ground was lost during the
5 COVID emergency, city operations are back on track,
6 strong systems are in place, and we are confident our
7 approach will drive rat activity back to pre-pandemic
8 levels. New York City's rat mitigation effort is
9 committed to scientifically-proven Integrated Pest
10 Management strategy. IPM emphasizes inspections,
11 monitoring and removal of conditions rats need to
12 survive. Rats thrive when they have ready access to
13 food and water, a place to live and effective
14 transportation routes. This means that reducing the
15 rat population requires managing garbage, eliminating
16 nesting areas, and repairs cracks and holes in
17 sidewalk structures in buildings. Safe, targeted
18 extermination treatment utilizing best practices is
19 the final piece of an effective IPM program. IPM
20 stresses that poisons, rodenticides and pesticides
21 are used as a last resort, because science has shown
22 that pesticides in rodent control are not as
23 effective or sustainable and employing sanitation and
24 exclusion as the first and strongest interventions.
25 Our current programs' overall goal is to consistently

2 move towards more efficient integrated pest
3 management that goes deeper in identifying and
4 addressing the root causes of rat populations and
5 building long-term sustainable reduction initiatives-
6 - interventions, excuse me. The Health Department's
7 rat control program takes a multipronged, evidence-
8 based approach across New York City. key components
9 of health IPM program include proactive inspections
10 of every property in a particular area, enabling the
11 Department to learn where rat activity is greatest
12 and track progress over time, compliant inspections
13 to address New Yorker's concerns, enforcing the New
14 York City Health Code requirement to maintain
15 properties free of rats by directing property owners
16 to take action on their property to control rats, or
17 the conditions that support them, extermination by
18 licenses pest management professionals on private
19 properties when the owner fails to act and billing
20 for the work, providing guidance and technical
21 assistance to city agencies, as well as monitoring
22 city properties and referring areas in need of rat
23 control, and sealing or collapsing rat burrows by a
24 stoppage team [sic] to help control rat activity in
25 the public realm. New Yorkers can learn more about

2 the Health Department's activities on its Environment
3 and Health Data Portal and check inspection outcomes
4 for specific property on the agency's rat information
5 portal. Health Department inspection data indicates
6 that rat activity in New York City neighborhoods is
7 not equally distributed. Some neighborhood bear a
8 higher burden of rat infestation. Those
9 neighborhoods tend to be densely populated with high
10 foot traffic, an abundance of food service
11 establishments, and a higher proportion of public
12 property. To effectively address rats, city
13 agencies, property owners, and residents in these
14 areas must work together. The Health Department
15 maintains a robust outreach and education program to
16 help residents, property owners and pest management
17 professionals learn best practices for controlling
18 rats. The Health Department plays a central role in
19 the city mitigation efforts by serving as the lead
20 agency for analysis, reporting and evaluation of rat
21 mitigation efforts. The Department also offers
22 technical support for training to partner agencies so
23 that staff are trained in best practices. The
24 Department's research team take the lead on testing
25 new products and evaluations of different pest

2 management methods. The Department of Buildings
3 enforces building codes and local laws in
4 construction and building sites. This includes
5 enforcement of pre-building permit certification of
6 retaining a licensed exterminator as required by
7 Local Law 109 of 2022, rodent proofing construction
8 code requirements and construction site housekeeping.
9 The Department of Sanitation who will detail their
10 contribution to citywide rat mitigation collects
11 recycling, disposes of waste, and cleans streets.
12 DSNY takes 24 million pounds of trash recycling and
13 compostable material off the city streets every day.
14 Much of that comprises of the primary food source of
15 New York City's rats. For successful, long-term rat
16 mitigation to be realized, robust management of New
17 York City streets, including waste is essential.
18 From litter baskets to tree pits to parks to schools,
19 to NYCHA developments, every food source and
20 potential home for rodents must be considered when
21 building a plan to eliminate them. Mayor Adams'
22 commitment to citywide Integrated Pest Management,
23 including changes from the Department of Sanitation,
24 will ensure long-term rat-free New York. Public
25 properties, for example, public schools, parks, NYCHA

2 are responsible for keeping their city-managed assets
3 clean and rat free. As the citywide Director of
4 Rodent Mitigation, I serve as a central voice for New
5 York City's mitigation efforts, providing
6 organization and direction to the many facets of the
7 citywide pest management program, the Rat Czar
8 supports agencies as they innovate, drive individual
9 and collective accountability, and breaks down silos
10 to build a unified strategy. I also meet with
11 internal and external stakeholders to discuss
12 challenges and build skilled solutions. Some
13 successes: the Rat Action Plan legislative
14 codification of the rat mitigation zones, expanded
15 categories of construction's projects requiring
16 rodent abatement, mandated rodent-proof containers at
17 properties with repeat pest violations, and allowed
18 for changing of waste set-out times. The design and
19 maintenance guidelines dictated in the permanent
20 outdoor dining program also underscore the
21 interjurisdictional commitment to rat mitigation.
22 The rat taskforce which meets monthly is comprised of
23 representatives from Department of Health, Parks, New
24 York City Public Schools, NYCHA, DSNY, Mayor's Office
25 of Small Business Services, Department of

2 Transportation, Mayor's Community Affair Unit, and
3 Housing Preservation and Development. Representation
4 in the rat taskforce continues to expand as
5 mitigation efforts are integrated across all facets
6 of city government. In the past six months, the rat
7 taskforce has piloted the development of site-
8 specific IPM plans, collaborated on strategic
9 enforcement, directed agencies to implement best
10 extermination strategies, deepened agency alignment,
11 an collaborated on neighborhood engagement and
12 intervention. It is through this authentic
13 collaboration of problem-solving that sustainable
14 progress is made. Connecting with New Yorkers is a
15 core tenant in the City's approach to rat mitigation.
16 The Health Department's rat academies, NYCHA tenant
17 association visits, and family day tabling events,
18 neighborhood and community garden walk-throughs, and
19 anti-rat days of actions are all examples of the work
20 we do to connect city resources to New Yorkers and
21 New Yorkers to information. The Health Department's
22 rat information portal is a tool available to New
23 Yorkers to explore the results of all pest control
24 inspections and access information on rat prevention.
25 The Health Department's neighborhood indexing allows

2 for targeted interventions and monitoring. This
3 includes property and neighborhood-level data
4 collection with mapping and analysis to better
5 understand areas of highest rat burden. Conducting
6 over 220,000 inspections in FY23, the Department of
7 Health has unprecedented data on rat activity.
8 Analysis of this data drives interagency strategy and
9 private property interventions. New Yorkers can
10 track progress by checking the Department of Health
11 Environment and Health Data Portal. City pest
12 management teams have expanded the use of non-poison
13 bate extermination methods, for example carbon
14 dioxide and carbon monoxide applications, targeted
15 harborage conditions, and build sustainable
16 mitigation results through exclusion. Perhaps most
17 significantly, the Department of Sanitation's work to
18 containerize waste ensures removal of rat's food
19 source and severely impacts their ability to
20 reproduce, repopulate and spread further into our New
21 York City community. We know our approach to rat
22 mitigation is successful with consistent routinized
23 application. We continue to evaluate and refine
24 strategies as we amplify and scale mitigation
25 efforts. With data, science, and unprecedented

2 collaboration, New York City is working harder than
3 ever to mitigate rates and we are confident in our
4 ability to get stuff done, but our work cannot be
5 done alone. Rats do not observe property lines or
6 distinguish between public and private ownership.
7 This means efforts to mitigate rats demand nothing
8 less than full, citywide participation. We look
9 forward to partnering with you and all New Yorkers in
10 this collective effort. Thank you again for the
11 opportunity to be here today to address this
12 important topic. I would now like to pass to my
13 colleague, Joshua Goodman from Department of
14 Sanitation.

15 JOSHUA GOODMAN: Thank you very much.
16 Good morning Chairs Nurse and Schulman, Council
17 Members, and staff. I'm Joshua Goodman, Deputy
18 Commissioner of Public Affairs and Customer
19 Experience at the Department of Sanitation. I'm
20 joined today by First Deputy Commissioner Javier
21 Lojan, and it is our honor to bring you updates from
22 the front lines in the War on Rats. New Yorkers are
23 revolting, but not in the way the haters, doubters,
24 and Angelenos and Bostonians have long argued. No,
25 New Yorkers are leading a revolt, engaging in a

2 revolution, a revolt against the trash, against old
3 ways of doing things, and against the rats
4 themselves. The trash revolution, a tidal wave of
5 change in the management of 44 million daily pounds
6 of waste, has swept across the City over the last two
7 years, and New Yorkers are seeing the difference. In
8 the prior two decades, the Department of Sanitation
9 had focused on shifting our back-end operations from
10 a model where all trash was dumped at Fresh Kills
11 landfill, to a waste-export model, where all New York
12 City trash moves by barge and rail car to
13 destinations as far away as South Carolina. That was
14 a tremendous behind-the-scenes undertaking, but it
15 never addressed how New Yorkers experience the trash,
16 even as other cities around the world innovated
17 substantially. Residents and businesses continued to
18 drop their smelly, leaky, and rat-attracting bags of
19 trash on the sidewalk at 4:00 p.m. We had massive,
20 tremendous piles of bags on our sidewalks just as
21 rush hour was getting under way. And these piles sat
22 and sat and sat, sometimes up to 36 hours before we
23 picked it up. Well, that is now changing, rapidly,
24 thanks to Mayor Adams' commitment and vision to doing
25 what has worked in other cities around the world. We

2 started by changing the set-out times for trash. The
3 4:00 p.m. setout time was the earliest of any major
4 city in the United States, and it meant that rush
5 hour became trash hour. We moved that time to 8:00
6 p.m., and incentivized containerization by allowing
7 trash in bins to go out at 6:00 p.m. on the
8 residential side, or an hour before closing on the
9 commercial side. We also shifted our operations to
10 pick up that trash much, much sooner, sometimes
11 within an hour of it being set out. This included
12 moving more of our operations to a midnight shift,
13 particularly in the City's Rat Mitigation Zones, and
14 getting 2,500 of the largest residential buildings
15 onto routes that allowed for much faster service,
16 among other things. We often don't notice what is
17 not there. But if you think back, you can sure
18 remember those massive piles of bags, and the rats
19 that made them their home or their home away from
20 home. And if you look now, those piles are largely
21 gone. As of this summer and fall, all food-based
22 businesses, so restaurants, bodegas, delis, catering
23 halls, bars, etcetera, and all chain businesses are
24 now required to put their trash in an incredible
25 invention, the wheelie bin, and this coming March,

2 all businesses will be required to put their trash in
3 these containers that work so well around the world.

4 In fall 2024, residents who live in buildings with
5 one to nine units will be required to put their trash
6 in containers. We are engaged in a procurement
7 process to design the first-ever official NYC bins,
8 which will be available when the mandate goes into
9 effect, and required approximately two years later.

10 At that point, 70 percent of New York City trash will
11 be in containers, and Commissioner Tisch has been
12 clear that we are coming for the remaining 30
13 percent, mostly from larger residential buildings.

14 To containerize this trash, we are currently piloting
15 on-street containers for schools and residential
16 buildings in a section of Hamilton Heights, uptown.

17 We plan to further expand the containerization of
18 trash from larger buildings, and we are developing a
19 prototype automated side-loader truck to accomplish
20 this. These are the plays laid out in our
21 containerization playbook, the Future of Trash
22 report, viewable at nyc.gov/futureoftrash. We said
23 what we were going to do, and we are getting it done,
24 drastically transforming our streetscapes and putting
25 a dent in what used to be an all-night all-you-can-

2 eat buffet for rats. On behalf of my colleagues here
3 today, we all look forward to answering your
4 questions about our plan to stand up to the axis of
5 filth represented by the rats, the bags of trash, and
6 the old defensive status quo, and about the trash
7 revolution taking back our streets. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you both for
9 your testimony. We're going to move on to questions.
10 So, we wanted to talk first about rat mitigation
11 zones. As part of the Rat Action Plan, the city is
12 required to establish the zones and high areas with
13 levels of rat activity where city agencies can focus
14 resources to address rats and the conditions that
15 support [sic] them. Currently, these zones are in
16 Brooklyn which is inclusive of Bed-Stuy and Bushwick,
17 the Bronx, Grand Concourse zone and Manhattan where
18 we have the Harlem zone, East Village and Chinatown
19 zone. Some of the metrics used for establishing the
20 rat mitigation zones-- I'm just going to call them
21 zones from now on, if that's cool-- were listed in
22 rule-making, but can you describe the metrics used to
23 establish the zones and how those metrics are
24 prioritized in the establishment process. Is there
25 a-- well, we're start there.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Yes, hi,
3 good morning. Again, Corinne Schiff. I'm the Deputy
4 Commissioner for Environmental Health at the New York
5 City Health Department. So we worked with the
6 Council when you codified rat mitigation zones-- and
7 thank you for laying out the neighborhoods where
8 those zones have been designated. As Kathy
9 described, our program at the Health Department is
10 evidence-based and data-driven. We conduct what we
11 call indexing inspections which are proactive
12 inspections. We've been doing that since 2007. What
13 that does is it let us know where rats are in New
14 York City, and we know not every neighborhood is
15 burdened equally by rats. And so we have different
16 approaches. We work throughout the City on rat
17 control, but we take different approaches depending
18 on what the evidence shows about the conditions in a
19 particular neighborhood. And the rat mitigation
20 zones are those areas of the City where we look to
21 multiple criteria and find that those are the most
22 burdened. So those factors are failed inspections.
23 Both are initial inspection and when we conduct a
24 follow-up inspections. We find-- continue to find
25 signs of rats and conditions conducive to rats. The

2 number of times that-- the frequency with which the
3 Health Department has to conduct extermination. So,
4 as Kathy mentioned, the New York City Health Code
5 requires property owners to keep properties free of
6 rats. When we find rats we will order the property
7 owner to exterminate, but not every property owner
8 complies, and so sometimes the Health Department has
9 to step in and then bill the owner for that work. So
10 that's one of the factors we use, how often is the
11 Health Department needing to do that work, the
12 percentage of city-owned property in the area, and
13 the numbers of complaints. So we look at those
14 things together and where we find the highest burden,
15 that's where we take our most intensive approach, the
16 rat mitigation zone, but again, we have different
17 approaches throughout the City.

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Can you explain, just
19 elaborate more on that percentage of city-owned
20 properties, why that's a specific factor?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: A couple of
22 reasons. One because those are areas that the City
23 controls, and so we should be able to do work there
24 to address those conditions. Also, those conditions
25 can be one that are very vulnerable. For example,

2 Parks property. Park land gives rats-- can give rats
3 a nice place to live. So that can mean in a
4 community that that is an opportunity for rats. So
5 it's not just one factor, it's multiple factors
6 together that we seen an opportunity for rats to
7 thrive, and we focus our efforts most intensely
8 there.

9 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Are there agencies
10 involved in that data collection and aggregation
11 process for making those determinations?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, the data
13 collection and analysis is done at the Health
14 Department and we have a robust surveillance team
15 that's been doing this work for decades. The work to
16 address those condition is multi-agency, and that's
17 really the point of the rat mitigation zones. It is
18 us saying to our partner agencies we need to be
19 working on this together. As you heard and as you
20 know, it takes all of us working together. I believe
21 we've worked with all of you, for example, on Rat
22 Academies to bring in your constituents to make sure
23 that they also know best practices for addressing
24 rats. So we work very closely after we have
25 determined where the data should bring cities to

2 focus most intensively, and that is where the
3 Director of Rodent Mitigation really helps us all
4 come together.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: How often are you
6 reviewing or advising this information to determine
7 if you want to expand, contact, or open up new zones?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: The analysis
9 of the data is constant really. It's something we're
10 looking at, you heard, every month in rat mit-- in
11 the taskforce meetings. So we're looking at all the
12 time. I would say that they launched these zones in
13 2017, and then COVID happened, and as we all know we
14 back tracked. We were making great success. We
15 really saw progress in 2019. And then in COVID, we
16 back tracked, and so we don't expanding-- now, we
17 think we're in the right places based on the data.
18 We added Harlem most recently because we saw from the
19 data that that community was experiencing a high
20 burden of rat activity, but we're looking at this
21 constantly.

22 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. So there's no
23 specific threshold that are would need to receive to
24 trigger a zone and expansion of the zone?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: It's not a
3 bright line rule, a threshold that you tip over. It
4 is constantly looking at different factors.

5 DIRECTOR CORRADI: if I could just add, I
6 want to underscore that health and their services are
7 available citywide. So inspections are happening
8 everywhere. Interventions are happening everywhere,
9 not just in our rodent mitigation zones. So, every
10 New Yorker can rest assured that health is active,
11 sanitation, our rat mitigation efforts are active in
12 their communities. These are just designated zones
13 we have an extra attention to.

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Can you
15 describe the specific interventions that other
16 Alternative to Detention Programs such as Parks, DOE,
17 and NYCHA are employing in the zones?

18 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yeah, so all of those
19 agencies are active members in our Rat Taskforce, and
20 through that are employing Integrated Pest
21 Management. So across all agencies we're looking at
22 how waste is being managed and handled to reduce rat
23 food sources. We're looking at exclusion techniques
24 to remove harborage, so taking away active areas for
25 rats to live. That's repairing cracks, looking at

2 infrastructure, different ground coverings when we're
3 thinking about plantings, and then extermination
4 methods as our last piece, and across the agencies
5 there is-- we're pushing towards more use of non-
6 poison extermination methods. So we're using carbon
7 dioxide, carbon monoxide, rat ice which is another
8 application of carbon dioxide, snap traps-- NYCHA, in
9 fact, has deployed snap traps with sensors to be more
10 efficient in how they're deploying both equipment and
11 staff to deal with hot spots when we're talking about
12 rats.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and Local Law
14 108 of 2022 mandates that the Department of Health
15 produce an annual rat mitigation report no later than
16 November 1st. Can you provide an update on when we
17 would expect to receive that?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We're close
19 and we'll have it to you soon.

20 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [inaudible]

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Sorry. We
22 are close. So we'll have it to you soon.

23 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. As in by the
24 end of the year, or?

25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: I think we--
3 I think we should have it by the end of the year.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. What are some
5 of the challenges for being in compliance with the
6 timeline?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: This was the
8 first year of the report. The rat mitigation zones
9 have-- the codification of the rat mitigation law was
10 new, and so we want to make sure that we're producing
11 a report that will answer your questions and that
12 will be good model for the future.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you. I want to
14 acknowledge Council Member Ariola has joined us for
15 this hearing. The Department of Health and Mental
16 Health Environment and Health Data Portal shows that
17 the four zones have high rates of failed compliance
18 inspection. In the Bed-Stuy and Bushwick zone it
19 shows over 31,000 failed inspections followed by
20 7,000 compliance inspections with a 63 percent failed
21 compliance inspection. Why is the failure rate high?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Thank you
23 for checking out the Environment and Health Data
24 Portal. We encourage all New Yorkers to take a look.
25 We are-- we make that work available to New Yorkers

2 so everyone can track the progress that we together
3 in New York City are making. That's right, those
4 failure rates are high in that neighborhood. That
5 is-- and that's why we are focusing our attention
6 there. So all of the work that you hear that we are
7 doing together across the agencies is what we are
8 confident will drive those failure rates down, drive
9 the signs of rats down. We continue to do education
10 with property owners about best practices and about
11 their obligation to maintain their property free of
12 rats.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. I know Chair
14 Schulman will dive into a little bit more of those--
15 the particulars of that. I'm going to turn to
16 curbside organics and waste containerization for a
17 second. One of the key goals of the Zero Waste Act
18 and the mandatory composting is to not only address
19 the larger climate and environmental goals, but also
20 to tackle the neighborhood rat issues by
21 containerizing food waste. How many brown bins were
22 distributed in Brooklyn in the lead-up to the roll-
23 out of curbside organics collections?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Thank you.
25 It was about 60,000 bin orders were placed. I don't

2 have the [inaudible] number that were distributed,
3 because it might be more than one from a single
4 residence, but we were incredibly impressed by that
5 60,000 order number. It was substantially higher
6 than the 40,000-ish in Queens, even though big chunks
7 of Brooklyn already had brown bins from prior
8 programs. So that was very exciting that there was
9 more interest. I think it really speaks to the
10 success of the largest and easiest to use composting
11 program ever.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. So, 60,000 were
13 ordered, and you don't know how many went out the
14 door?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: I don't
16 have it handy. I know we have the delivery number. I
17 can get it to you.

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, can you see if
19 you can grab that before here.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Sure.

21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Will DSNY continue to
22 contribute brown bins as the curbside program rolls
23 out to the other boroughs?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: We've done
25 it on a borough-by-borough rolling basis. Obviously

2 the PEG has impacts. You know, this is an incredibly
3 challenging fiscal climate. We're developing those
4 plans now.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, so you're not
6 sure if you'll be able to distribute brown bins?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: I can tell
8 you that we have been very impressed by the success
9 of our brown bin distribution program, and that one
10 of the innovations around this program is allowing
11 people to use their own bins as well, but we're
12 developing the roll-out plans to get to the citywide
13 roll-out by October next year.

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, I think this is
15 really important because of specifically putting the
16 food in a container, and it seems like from what
17 everybody-- from what we get from feedback is that
18 those bins hold up, right? They're not fully being
19 eaten through yet by the rats, and they're holding up
20 for a while so it will be really important to roll
21 that out in places where that-- where people are
22 requesting that.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: And if I
24 may, regardless of what bin is used, under the rule

2 that implements the law, the food waste must go in a
3 bin securely.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: That's right. That's
5 right. We want to make it easy as possible for
6 people to use the right thing, right? Okay, have-- I
7 know it might be too early. We weren't sure if this
8 was a necessarily relevant question, or if you'd be
9 able to ask, but have there been any changes in rat
10 complaints associated with the curbside organics
11 program where we've seen it implemented?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Yes, give
13 me just a second. So, rat complaints are not tracked
14 specifically relative to the curbside organics
15 program. Obviously, from the time that rule changes
16 took effect and the containerization rules were
17 implemented, as you cited in your testimony, that
18 there was a 45 percent decrease in rat siting's in
19 the rat mitigation zones, 20 percent decrease
20 citywide. We're hopeful that that trend is going to
21 continue as curbside composting comes citywide.

22 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. With regards
23 to containerization, there's just been a string of
24 announcements. I know you, you know, justfully [sic]

2 characterize it as your-- what is it, your front,
3 your fronts on trash, your trash revolution.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: The trash
5 revolution.

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, okay. These
7 include-- let's just go through them. These include
8 new setout time, containerization requirements
9 effective April 1st; food-related businesses,
10 business containerization effective July 30th; chain
11 business containerization effective September 5th,
12 with more upcoming including all business
13 containerization by March 1st, 2024; and all
14 buildings with fewer than nine units by fall 2024.
15 This is a lot of changes going on, and I remember
16 when we were pushing for the curbside organics
17 rollout there was a lot of pushback saying it was too
18 complicated. And then there's a string of
19 announcements around trash setout times and
20 containers immediately after with very short
21 enforcement times. so how-- and given the PEG to the
22 outreach in communications, which I do have
23 additional questions on, how does DSNY expect to
24 effectively communicate all of these new requirements

2 as the agency cuts outreach funding while New Yorkers
3 are still adjusting to this long list of new rules?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: So, I'll
5 speak to the outreach component, and then First
6 Deputy Commissioner Lojan can speak to the
7 operational side. Say that outreach around these
8 roles is very important to us. The main thing I'll
9 say about it first before I get into some of the
10 specifics. I don't think there's anything
11 complicated about saying your trash goes in a can.
12 It doesn't go on the street anymore, and New York's
13 the only place in the world left that does that. How
14 about we do whatever works for everybody else, and
15 instead of putting it right on our public sidewalks
16 that belong to all of us, it goes into a bin that the
17 rats can't get into. We are engaged in substantial
18 outreach around this now, and being thoughtful about
19 the City's fiscal crisis. For example, around the
20 expansion of the containerization rules for
21 businesses to all businesses. We're working with the
22 NYPD Community Affairs Unit. We're distributing
23 leaflets to all 200,000 businesses in the City about
24 this. So we're trying to be creative and thoughtful,
25 but also every single one of these rules has come

2 with a one-month warning, and during that warning
3 period, that's not a fake, on-paper warning period.
4 We're out writing tens of thousands of warnings every
5 time to make sure that no one can say they didn't
6 know about this very basic requirements to get your
7 trash off of our sidewalks and into a bin.

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LOJAN: And
9 separately from that, we have our supervisors that
10 are out in the field nightly. We have supervisors
11 that are on the clock, sanitation enforcement agents
12 that go out and again, like Deputy Commissioner
13 Goodman said, we've issued for the one-month period
14 with, you know, obviously communicating with the
15 businesses and residents that have any questions that
16 come with it.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, so beyond the
18 NYPD's outreach unit, which doesn't always work for
19 different types of businesses. You might have
20 immigrant-owned businesses or different businesses
21 who that alarms them when that kind of outreach comes
22 their way. Who else are you working with to do
23 effective outreach?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: There's--
25 be in every relevant community board before the rule

2 was implemented. We're holding info sessions. Our
3 in-house outreach communication team is having info
4 session for all relevant businesses. Spoken to key
5 industry groups, and really making sure that
6 everybody knows about this. Be happy to work with
7 you on additional outreach opportunities too if
8 there's anything specific to communities in your
9 district.

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: That'd be great.

11 So, for the outer boroughs or less residential areas,
12 I've really been kind of struggling to understand the
13 new setout times with the caveat of the 6:00 p.m. or-
14 - no, 8:00 p.m. without a bin as a real, real rat
15 mitigation strategy. I understand it from an
16 aesthetic point of view, from the sidewalks not
17 having the mountains, but there's a lot-- if you go
18 to some of the outer neighborhoods around six o'clock
19 or even four o'clock, you'll have at four o'clock
20 supers putting the mountain of trash, just taking out
21 of the containers and preparing it at four o'clock.
22 It sits in a mountain just on the other side of the
23 sidewalk, and then at eight o'clock, that four
24 o'clock mountain goes to the eight o'clock mountain
25 in front of the sidewalk. So I'm just trying to

2 understand that. I know that you mentioned changing
3 some of the workforce to do the nightshift, but what
4 is the-- is that-- those routes in some of those
5 areas, or is this mostly in the Manhattan area?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: It has
7 substantial overlap with the four rat mitigation
8 zones. That's where we've emphasized more overnight
9 collection. I'll also say that-- two things about
10 the specific situation you're describing. The first
11 is that it will be resolved this coming fall when all
12 one to nine unit buildings have to use containers for
13 their waste set out. So the set out times was sort
14 of the leveling, a sweeping away of this old mistake
15 of the Lindsey administration of letting the plastic
16 bags go right on the sidewalk. It's a big undertaking
17 to get that done. It's, you know, 50 or 60 years of
18 inertia. Changing the set-out times is the first
19 step, and it put us in a place where the City was on
20 an even playing field, and the additional plays in
21 the future of trash playbook could be enacted. So,
22 does reducing that time-- you know, I mean I hear the
23 jokes all the time, people go, "The rats are
24 nocturnal anyway." I think it's sort of self-evident
25 that if the trash was out for 32 hours and now it's

2 out for four hours, yeah rats are out at night, but
3 they have less time to get to the trash if it's only
4 out--

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] But the
6 trash is not being picked up at eight o'clock, it's
7 not being picked up at nine o'clock. If it's sat out
8 at 8:00 p.m. in the rat mitigation zones, picked up
9 at midnight--

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] Yeah,
11 I'm talking about-- so outside of the rat mitigation
12 zones. We appreciate and understand what you're
13 saying in the rat mitigation zones as areas needing
14 extra and ordinary attention, but outside of that,
15 there's not-- most people would say there's not much
16 of a difference being done.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: I would
18 dispute that. I think that if it's set out at 8:00
19 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. in a container, which is even
20 better, and then collected outside a rat mitigation
21 zone at 6:00 a.m. as opposed to possibly being left
22 until 4:00 p.m. or the end of the 4:00 p.m. shift, as
23 used to be the case for up to 20 percent of the
24 trash, that's a major operational change. So I think
25 it's important to understand that the set-out time

2 rule asked New Yorkers to change, and we changed as
3 well. The time that the trash was out went like this
4 from both sides.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, and just--

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN:

7 [interposing] And that makes them--

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: to clarify because I
9 want to make sure I'm clear. If I'm in Brooklyn 5,
10 Garage 5 District, and I put my trash in bags out at
11 eight o'clock, what time does it get picked up?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Depending
13 on exactly where you are. It might be--

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] I'm at
15 garage five.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: No, but
17 depending on where-- as you know, Brooklyn 5 is an
18 enormous community.

19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: It's huge, but I don't
20 believe any of it has a rat mitigation zone.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Even so,
22 parts of it will receive midnight collection at parts
23 of the year, and the rest will receive 6:00 a.m.
24 collection. There used to be some collection, about
25 20 percent, left all the way until 4:00 p.m. the next

2 day. We eliminated that entirely. So now just using
3 Brooklyn Five as an example, all of the collection
4 would be either at midnight or 6:00 a.m.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

6 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Can I
7 just add to that, that the-- about 20 percent or more
8 in all districts citywide have that midnight
9 collection. And then when we're not in our winter
10 operations, we've shifted most of our daytime
11 collections to start at 5:00 a.m. So it allows our
12 crews to get through the streets, navigate quicker,
13 so you should see a lot of that refuse off the street
14 quicker, and virtually very little is on the 4:00
15 p.m. shift.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So, just to reconfirm
17 what you just said to me, in every district, 20
18 percent of the pick-ups would happen in that night
19 shift.

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LOJAN:
21 Correct. It varies from district to district, but
22 that's about the average.

23 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Is there a way
24 that we can understand a little bit more where that's
25 happening? I think that would be really helpful

2 information for members to know and the public to
3 know what time-- or my trash is on a night shift or
4 not.

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure,
6 we can get you that information broken out
7 [inaudible]

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: That'd be really
9 helpful. Okay. I'm going to keep moving forward. I
10 recognizes Council Member Gale Brewer and Gennaro and
11 Narcisse have joined us. Do you have any initial
12 data on either residential or commercial
13 containerization enforcement, including the number of
14 inspections or fines?

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Sure.
16 So, beginning with the set-out rule violations for
17 residential and businesses, we started our warning
18 period in April, and we issued 24,510 warnings, and
19 then beginning May 1st we started our violation
20 period which to-date, we've issued 59,324 violations.
21 On food-related businesses violations we had a
22 warning period for a month which was in August,
23 22,313 warnings were issued, and then the violation
24 period was started in September 1st. To-date, 3,323
25 violations. And then on the chain businesses the

2 warning period began September 5th, ran for a month,
3 5,561 warnings, and then since October 5th, we've
4 issued 211 violations.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. I just have
6 one more question in this topic around the bin, the
7 New York City bin that you all put out the RFP for.
8 How is this bin going to be different than anyone's
9 currently in the market?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Well,
11 there's a few ways in which it'll be different.
12 Obviously, the RFP process is going on now and I
13 don't want to say anything that'll prejudice the
14 procurement how that can be, but I will say a couple
15 of things about it. First thing about it is it's
16 going to be by far the cheapest bin available on the
17 market. We're using a concession model where we're
18 able to guarantee to the awardee, hey, you know,
19 because this bin will be mandated, you'll be the only
20 one who can sell it. We know the volume with be
21 approximately 3.2 million bins sold, so therefore
22 we're saying the price has to be about this. We did
23 a lot of research about what these bins cost off the
24 shelf at a-- you know, if you went to a store now to
25 buy one. The price points that we're talking about

2 are far lower. This will be the cheapest bin
3 available, and by a significant amount. So that's
4 the first thing. This is the cheaper bin to use.
5 The other thing is, by having them all uniform-- and
6 again, I don't want to prejudice the procurement, so
7 I'm not going to say in what way they will be
8 uniform. I'm not going to say where the handle,
9 etcetera, things like that. Just say that by having
10 them all uniform, we can optimize for mechanized
11 collection. Tippers [sic] on the back of the trucks
12 so that they're all the same.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. So it's really
14 more for logistic of routes rather than -- I mean, is
15 it going to be any more rodent-proof than what's out
16 there. It's just--

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN:
18 [interposing] Those are the kinds of things we're
19 looking at in the procurement.

20 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: uniformity and useful
21 for the route.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: well, no, I
23 wouldn't say it's just uniformity. I would say
24 uniformity is the only thing I can speak to now
25 without prejudice in the procurement. We are looking

2 at the kinds of things you're describing and going
3 to, you know, take the bids as they come in.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And you're saying it
5 would be cheaper than anything out on the market
6 comparable.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Alright, just
9 a few more questions. Just a few questions related
10 to the November Plan. You know, DSNY is cutting
11 significant portions of its outreach and
12 communication contracts. For example, curbside
13 composting outreach and other outreach funding will
14 be cut by about \$4.1 million in FY24, \$2.4 million in
15 FY25, and how are you all currently making decisions
16 about which outreach programs to prioritize
17 considering these cuts?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: You know,
19 this is, as you know-- you don't have to tell this
20 group what an incredible fiscal crisis this is and
21 how difficult these decisions have been. I can say
22 at this point as we're developing this plan, that
23 curbside composting is profoundly important to all
24 of us, and the whole idea behind the design of the
25 program was you need a curbside composting program

2 people will actually use. We are very aware that
3 people will not use the program if they don't know
4 about it. So what the outreach looks like, how much
5 we can do with existing resources, what's frozen,
6 what's cut, what's delayed, that's all in formation
7 now. But I really do just want to emphasize that
8 we're not going to run this program knowing that
9 people don't know about it, knowing that people
10 aren't going to participate. The idea is to educate
11 all 8.5 million New Yorkers about the fact that they
12 have access to an incredible new service, the
13 easiest, largest curbside composting program in the
14 country's history.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, I mean, I guess
16 I'm just curious about the prioritization, because
17 you've got a lot of things going on. You've got--

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN:
19 [interposing] Good thing we have a great team.

20 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, to y'all's
21 credit. You've got commercial waste zones coming on.
22 You've got rollout of three new boroughs next year.
23 You've got a string of setout times, setout times, a
24 new bin, a new this, a new that. so how are you--
25 how are you going to prioritize effectively

2 communicating these new programs with, you know, so
3 much being cut off?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: You know,
5 I'm not sure if you'll consider this a satisfying
6 answer, but I'll tell you my thinking about it. is I
7 just always go back to something that Commissioner
8 Tisch once told me, which is I don't do dropped
9 balls. And that's sort of it. We got a lot of balls
10 in the air on this, and we're going to get it done
11 because it's important.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, not a
13 satisfying answer, but I'll take it. So thank you
14 for preempting that.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: We're very
16 fortunate to have a lot of [inaudible]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: I'm just looking
18 at the list of stuff you all have rolled out, and I'm
19 like you're cutting a bunch of money. I see DSNY just
20 received the \$2 million grant from EPA foe recycling
21 education and outreach. I'm wondering how this grant
22 can support community composting groups that are
23 laying off 100 people in the next two weeks.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: The grant
25 is going to be used for compost education and

2 outreach. The-- as part of the roll out, the
3 remaining three boroughs. Specifics to come. I know
4 we're still working with the EPA grant management
5 team to determine exactly what [inaudible].

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, when does that
7 funding hit the ground?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: That's a
9 good question. I'm not sure if I have that here. I
10 believe that it's the next two fiscal years is when
11 it's accessible, but I'm not sure when we-- when it,
12 you know, comes in. But I believe it must be used
13 over the next two fiscal years. I think. We should
14 double check that. I apologize.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. I just have a
16 few more questions about-- on this line, and then I
17 have a couple questions for the Rat Czar, and then
18 I'll kick it over the Chair Schulman, because I know
19 a lot of people have questions. We're in the weeds.
20 Local Law 89 of 2023 required DSNY to establish 30
21 organic waste drop-off sites in consultation with
22 local organizations by April 1st, 2024. Can you give
23 any specific dates that you've had consultation with
24 local organizations, and what organizations those
25 were?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: So, as you
3 mentioned, Local Law requires full compliance by
4 April 1st. We will be in touch with everything ahead
5 of that deadline. I can share something exciting.
6 I'm just going to pull it up here.

7 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: You may
9 know, we have a network of about 400 compost drop-off
10 sites across the City, accessible by the NYC Compost
11 App which is available for both IOS and Android.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: so I
14 understand that the law has a few additional
15 reporting requirements and we will make sure those
16 are doing by April 1st.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, those 400
18 sites-- those are DSNY-funded sits, all 400?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Yes, these
20 are the 400 smart composting bins.

21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. And--

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN:
23 [interposing] They're accessible 24/7, and unlike
24 many community composting sites which are only open a
25 few hours a week, these also take meat and dairy. So

2 anything from your kitchen, anything from your
3 garden, we really encourage all New Yorkers to use.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, we totally
5 appreciate the smart bins. We also really, really
6 value our community composting drop-off sites where
7 people can learn, people can get educated on what
8 they're doing. People can see what's happening,
9 whether or not they've ever heard of it before. They
10 can pass by it and ask some questions and figure it
11 out. I personally don't think the smart bins are a
12 good substitute for those programs. But I do want to
13 know how you assess where these smart bins get
14 placed.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: so, the main
16 things I'll say about how they were placed is that
17 they are in all five boroughs. They are in
18 communities beyond the top seven districts from the
19 City's legacy composting program. It's very
20 important to provide equity around the placement of
21 these bins. They were added to many neighborhoods
22 that never had easy access to compost collection,
23 either curbside or through community sites. They
24 were collocated in many neighborhoods by schools.
25 The thought process there was the school is often the

2 central hub of the community. It's a place that
3 people pass by regularly, and a lot-- if you go to
4 the school, you can take your compost on your way in.
5 They are accessible 24/7, and they take any food
6 scraps. So they were collocated in central locations
7 in all boroughs, particularly with an emphasis on
8 getting beyond the truest of the true believers.

9 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, I have just a
10 few questions for the Rat Czar, and then I'm going to
11 pass it over to Chair Schulman. Earlier this year
12 Mayor Adams appointed you. Can you explain what you
13 do in detail? What does your day look like? What
14 are the specific deliverables for you? Are there
15 targets that you are scheduled to hit? How are you
16 measuring success? Just kind of tell us a little bit
17 about what specifically you do.

18 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yeah, thank you for
19 the question, and I'll start by saying I'm honored
20 and privileged to serve in this role for the City of
21 New York. I think it's an issue there's great
22 alignment on. No one wants to live in a city full of
23 rats. You shared that at the top. And that's--
24 there's been a groundswell of support to get this
25 done. So, much of my day today is working on

2 building coalition and accountability and uncovering
3 with agencies areas of need, areas that need to build
4 efficiencies. So I report into the Chief of Staff,
5 and the idea behind there is to make sure that
6 questions, concerns, challenges are brought directly
7 to the Mayor to make sure that-- this high-level
8 priority for him to make sure policies are identified
9 and implemented. In terms of target and success,
10 we're looking at a lot of the issues that Corinne
11 shared that we use as metrics across the City. So
12 we're looking at failure rates in rodent mitigation
13 zones. We're looking at public versus private
14 properties. We're looking at compliance and initial
15 inspection, what are those differences, and
16 underscore initial inspections. The first
17 inspections [inaudible], compliance is their second
18 follow-up inspection. Really the impact on everyday
19 New Yorkers, I think what you heard in testimony and
20 from my colleagues here, this is interjurisdictional.
21 The many facets that come into play when we're
22 talking about Integrated Pet Management and citywide
23 application require someone sitting at the helm
24 making sure we have direction, organization, and
25 collective accountability.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So the-- the real
3 measuring metric of success is what I heard, and
4 maybe I missed something, failure rates and
5 compliance.

6 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yes, and I'd say
7 impact on New Yorkers. so, measured in a number of
8 different ways, you know, impacting the community,
9 [inaudible] 311 complaints, education-- I know many
10 of the folks sitting up on the dais today have been
11 on visits with really a conduit of information back
12 from New Yorkers to the Administration, and then city
13 programs and policies back out to our New Yorkers as
14 well.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I heard in your
16 testimony you said there are-- you've been developing
17 site-specific IPMs. Is that coming-- how is that
18 coming together in terms of from where you're sitting
19 across all the agencies? Is there like a strategic
20 plan that we would be able to look at for how we're
21 addressing rats?

22 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yeah, so a lot of the
23 strategy was laid out in the testimony, again, really
24 drilling down on our integrated pest management
25 citywide, and the piloting we did since my

2 appointment was working with our core agencies in our
3 rat mitigation zone. That's Health, Parks, Public
4 Schools, and NYCHA to really dig into identifying
5 some sites where we can really go deeper on that
6 integrated pest management strategy. So piloting to
7 see what kind of resources need to see those success,
8 see how we can collaborate better and identify
9 challenges, and see if there are scaled solutions.

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And those sites are
11 public facilities?

12 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yes, all those sites
13 are publicly managed properties, and all of them are
14 in our rat mitigation zones, which is available. You
15 can see the shape [sic] files on Health's website.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. I'm going to
17 pass it over to Chair Schulman. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Before I go, I'm
19 actually going to concede to Council Member Hudson
20 who has to leave. So she's going to ask her
21 questions, and then I have a bunch.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you so much
23 to both Chairs. During my two years in office there
24 have been a few issues more pressing for constituents
25 than rats. Because of the number of complaints we

2 received, we formed the District 35 Rat Taskforce to
3 organize our constituents, share best practices, and
4 advocate for improvements, and the Committee will
5 hear from some of those members later today, and I
6 just want to thank Rocko and Andy for being here
7 today. One issue my staff and I have faced is the
8 administrative runaround and finger pointing as to
9 who is responsible for abatement in various areas.
10 So, I have just a couple of simple questions. The
11 first is which city agency is responsible for
12 mitigating rat burrows in tree pits?

13 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Thank you, Council
14 Member Hudson. I am-- it was a pleasure to meet with
15 your district's rat taskforce. They're very engaged
16 and have been a great source of conversation with me
17 as I've taken on this role. So I appreciate your
18 leadership there. Rats can make their home in tree
19 pits if there's a food source nearby. Health can
20 conduct emergency baiting in tree pits, but if the
21 underlying food sources and conditions that attract
22 rats are not addressed, the rats will repopulate. It
23 is the responsibility of property owners to make sure
24 their tree pits and sidewalks are free of debris and
25 litter, including 18 inches out into the street, and

2 that primarily serves as the food source for the rats
3 living in tree pits.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: so, in what
5 circumstances will the agency abate burrows and tree
6 pits? So DOHMH in this case.

7 DIRECTOR CORRADI: so, there's a number of
8 factors that go into how Health is able to deploy
9 their resources for emergency. Again, I'll
10 underscore emergency treatment, but it really comes
11 down to if those other factors are addressed, if
12 we're going to be able to see progress.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay, and which
14 city is responsible for abating rat burrows under
15 sidewalks?

16 DIRECTOR CORRADI: So, sidewalks are the
17 responsibility of the property owner, and Health will
18 issue violations if there are conditions conducive or
19 active rats' signs on our sidewalks. There is a
20 stoppage [sic] team out of Health that supports with
21 sidewalk work in our public realm.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay. It's a
23 little confusing, I think, for the average New Yorker
24 to understand, you know, 18 inches and sort of to the
25 Chairs point, a lot of different messaging around

2 this stuff. So I think if there's any way to
3 streamline some of that information and the messaging
4 and communication specifically around who's
5 responsible for what, whether it's small businesses,
6 property owners, you know, agencies that would be
7 helpful. And I just-- I want to echo your sentiment
8 from my end that you've been incredibly helpful and a
9 great resource to my team and also to the district.
10 And so with the creation of the Rad Reduction
11 Taskforce-- if I may? Thank you. With the creation
12 of the Rat Reduction Taskforce and the hiring of your
13 role, the City has shown its commitment to agency
14 coordination around rodent mitigation. How will this
15 commitment be maintained with the announced budget
16 cuts?

17 DIRECTOR CORRADI: So, the nature of the
18 position I serve in is to build efficiencies in
19 existing structures. So working with my colleagues
20 here, our other agencies, a lot of these systems we
21 have in place are standing operating procedures and
22 we continue to push on them, drive efficiency, better
23 strategy. You heard some of our numbers out of
24 Health, 220,000 inspections. We're getting better
25 and better identifying where our high area of needs

2 are, make sure we're deploying resources
3 appropriately, and better coordination leads to be
4 better communication, and that's the commitment you
5 have from me and this administration.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Great. And
7 Chair, if I may have one last question. Thank you.
8 So I passed by a police precinct in my district
9 almost daily, and on the nights before trash
10 collection days, there are over a dozen trash bags
11 out on the sidewalk which are very neatly placed, I
12 may add, but I'm wondering when the City is going to
13 require its own agencies and its own buildings to put
14 trash in bins the way we're requiring everybody else?

15 DIRECTOR CORRADI: So, I'll start by
16 saying, I listed some of the agencies that work in
17 our Rat Taskforce. We're always expanding that group
18 to make sure through integrated representation,
19 including representatives from NYPD, FDNY, DCAS,
20 making sure there's true cohesion across city
21 operations. So that is the benefit of having someone
22 in the role like I sit. I can truly take the horizon
23 line approach to make sure everyone is part of the
24 conversation. I'll defer to Sanitation around the
25 waste collection.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you.

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Thank you.

4 And Council Member, I'll say that the question you
5 posed, when will this require and cover city-owned
6 property, is something that comes up in our meetings
7 regularly. We're very interested in making sure that
8 all the trash is off the streets. So we do have the
9 pilot for schools which are the sort of public
10 facilities that produce the largest volume of trash.
11 We're excited about the results of that pilot so far.
12 As far as other buildings like a police precinct
13 being an interesting example, and I'd be curious to
14 know the numbers, be happy to talk to them. We do
15 have a team, the Technical Assistance and Training
16 Unit at the Department of Sanitation whose job it is
17 to work with institutional actors. For example,
18 schools, NYCHA, any other building like that, and we
19 conduct regular trainings, meetings, site visits,
20 making sure that these sorts of large institutional
21 facilities are handling their waste in accordance
22 with the rules. As far when the rule will be
23 expanded to cover city-owned property, it's an open
24 question, but we're very clear that the goal is to
25 get every single one of these bags off the street.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Okay. Thank you,
3 and thank you again to the Chairs for your time.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, I have a
5 bunch of questions. So, one is when you talked about
6 the rat mitigation zones, and I know that it's--
7 there's the statistics that go into selecting them
8 and all of that stuff. Be a representative from
9 Queens, I'm not feeling the love, because we don't
10 have any rat mitigation zones in Queens, but we do
11 have rats, and you know, even though our rat issues
12 may not be the same as other parts of the city, I
13 think that it would be helpful. So I just wanted to
14 ask if there's any consideration for expanding them
15 into some other areas that might not be as much of an
16 emergent issue than others.

17 DIRECTOR CORRADI: So, I think, Deputy
18 Commissioner Schiff answered that. You know, we're
19 looking at those zones now. We feel like we're in the
20 right place based on the information we have, but
21 I'll underscore again, we have resources to work
22 citywide. So if there are areas of concern out of
23 your office from your constituents, let's connect
24 over them, and we can work both collectively how do
25 we engage our constituents on education, and private

2 property owners are the responsible party for rats or
3 conditions conducive on their property. We work
4 interagency if there are public properties that are
5 contributing to rat populations, but we can-- health
6 inspectors come out, give that trained eye to where
7 we see our issues and work collectively to address
8 them in Queens and in all of the boroughs.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: I appreciate that,
10 and I will add that you were supposed to come out to
11 my district and that was the day we had three inches
12 of rain, so you couldn't. But we are going to
13 reschedule that, so we're looking forward to that. I
14 do also have a question in terms of the fines from
15 Sanitation. So, it was said earlier there were about
16 like some 59,000 and some other violations that were
17 issued after the warning period. So, my question is
18 how much do those fines add up to monetarily? And
19 the reason I'm asking that question is because, you
20 know, there has been some-- there has been some
21 statements about the fact that the City is not
22 collecting the fines that people are incurring or
23 businesses are incurring. I think Council Member
24 Brewer had pointed that out a while back, like two
25 billion dollars in fines that are not-- so I'm asking

2 because now that we're facing some cuts and
3 everything else in the November Plan, I want to know
4 if these are being collected. I want to know how
5 much they are, they add up to approximately. You
6 don't have to give me the exact number, and if
7 they're being collected?

8 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LOJAN: So, the
9 first violation is 50 dollars. The second violation
10 is \$100 and the third violation is \$200.

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Right.

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LOJAN: We have
13 to work with OATH just to see, you know, if they're
14 being adjudicated and being paid. That's something
15 we have to work on.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Can you gather
17 that and get back to us, because this is the time not
18 to sort of let these things slide. And I have-- you
19 know, I will tell you, I-- so I represent Forest
20 Hills, Kew Gardens, and Richmond Hill. So in Forest
21 Hills, you know, we have some chain stores that they
22 regularly don't pick up their garbage and they don't
23 do a lot of stuff, and those are the folks that I
24 really want to hold accountable, particularly. So we
25 really-- we really should take a look at that and

2 keep on top of that. So, if you can get back to us,
3 that would be--

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LOJAN:

5 [interposing] Yes, definitely do that.

6 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: In terms of the
7 composting, my understanding is that in areas-- and I
8 know you went over this a little bit with Chair
9 Nurse-- where you have composting that helps to
10 reduce the rat population, is that true?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: We
12 certainly think so. You know, it's not something
13 that we've been able to track specifically related to
14 composting, but it stands to reason that everything
15 that we eat, rats eat, right? All human food is rat
16 food, and right now, all of the human food that
17 becomes rat food in places that don't have
18 composting, it's in every one of the trash bags.
19 Every single one of the black bags has some rat food
20 in it. They all want to get into those bags and get
21 the food, but instead, you take it out of the black
22 bags, put it in separate secure container, and it's
23 just all in one place that they can't get into. That
24 will reduce their access to food.

2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: So, is-- now, Grow
3 NYC, is that part of Sanitation? Is that-- what does
4 that come out of?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: It's
6 outside community composter funded in part by the
7 Department.

8 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: so, and that's a
9 program that I understand is going to have a problem
10 now that the composting-- is that because of a grant?
11 I don't-- I just want to understand the particulars
12 of that.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Yeah, it
14 was a part of the PEG, and I can tell you
15 specifically.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Right.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: That about
18 10 percent of the City's composting budget was cut as
19 part of the PEG. The city's total composting budget
20 which includes curbside and the smart bins and the
21 community composters, about 10 percent of it was
22 eliminated, and the PEG will eliminate all city
23 funding for community composting programs across the
24 City, and there's no specific loss of DSNY headcount
25 related to that.

2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Right, but those
3 kinds of programs, I mean, I just want to point out,
4 I understand the issue in terms of the budget and
5 everything else, is that neighborhood folks go to
6 these programs. I mean, I see it because there's a
7 Grow NYC green market like two blocks from where I
8 live, and I go there every Sunday and I see the
9 composting that's done. There's a lot of it. So,
10 you know, I just want to make a point that I don't
11 want to like throw out the baby with the bath water
12 here, that we need to take a look at that kind of
13 stuff. I-- and there are jobs, I understand, that
14 are being lost because of that. That's what I was
15 bringing up. You may not-- maybe not something for
16 you to respond to, but I was told there was a grant
17 that was like going away, and I just don't know what
18 the grant is.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: I'm not
20 sure. I think it's just PEG-related.

21 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: It's just PEG-
22 related, okay, fine. When you talked about the bins
23 being the cheapest ones, the ones that are-- we're
24 going to have all over the place, I understand that
25 they're cheap, but I want to know what they're going

2 to look like, because we don't want to have ones that
3 are aesthetically, like, not.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Aesthetics
5 are actually one of the things written specifically
6 into the RFP.

7 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: We can judge
9 respondents based on the look and feel of their bins.
10 Our hope, if I can really just put in a plug for this
11 program--

12 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Yeah,
13 please, please, please.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: is that the
15 official NYC bin is going to become an icon in the
16 City.

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: People are
19 going to look at this and go-- right now, they look
20 at the city and they go, oh yeah, that's the place
21 with the bags of trash, right? And instead they're
22 going to say oh yeah, New York, that's the place with
23 the beautiful individual wheeled bins for all
24 residences with nine or fewer units.

2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Now, as part of
3 the PEGs of the November mod, we're going to lose
4 some trash bins, is that correct, like the regular
5 trash bins?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Yeah, so
7 the corner litter baskets.

8 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Right.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: The PEG
10 does include a 40 percent reduction in litter basket
11 service, and I can speak to-- what I have to say I
12 think is a really smart management strategy given an
13 incredibly challenging fiscal crisis. In the past,
14 you know, litter basket service, it goes up, it goes
15 down. It's funded. You know, stuff happens in
16 Exec., stuff happens in Adopted, all the plans goes
17 up and goes down. When it went down in the past,
18 baskets would overflow. You would see the change
19 right away, because you would see the baskets are
20 getting emptied less often and now they're
21 overflowing. Instead, in the face of this fiscal
22 crisis, we are not going to let any individual basket
23 be emptied less often, because all that does is invite
24 the rats, right? When the basket is overflowing-- so
25 instead we are going to remove litter baskets, and

2 instead of there being an overflowing basket on that
3 corner, there will simply be no basket in that
4 corner, nothing to attract the rats.

5 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: alright, I have
6 some differing opinions on that, but you know--
7 because the average person if they're looking for it,
8 then they're going to throw it in the street. And I
9 have-- depending on where you're talking about. So
10 there's-- at some point I want to know how you're
11 going to determine where those are going to be.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: We're in
13 the process now. I don't want to get ahead of a
14 public plan, but I--

15 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] No, I
16 get it. I get it.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: can say
18 that we're being very thoughtful about exactly the
19 situation--

20 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] I
21 just want to raise it here, but yeah. Okay, so now
22 my question-- how many DOHMH personnel are working on
23 rat mitigation?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We have
25 about 45 inspectors who are out doing the

2 inspectional work. We have many, many more people
3 across the agency working on pest control issues.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: What is the agency
5 cost for these positions?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: I don't have
7 budget numbers with me. We can get back to you about
8 that.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Please. How many
10 people are deployed for rat mitigation zones?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Our
12 inspectors work citywide. We do have some staff who
13 are specifically focused on rat mitigation zones. I
14 don't have those breakdowns, but we can get back to
15 you.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: How does DOHMH
17 work outside of rat mitigation zones?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, as we've
19 been saying, our program is citywide, and because we
20 do have such extensive data about rat activity around
21 the City, that means that we can calibrate the
22 approach to the neighborhood-level conditions. So,
23 as we've been saying, the rat burden in the rat
24 mitigation zones, those are the areas with the
25 highest rat burden, and so that's the area where we

2 have the most intensive, multiagency response. But
3 we work everywhere. We have done indexing in many,
4 many parts of the City. We respond to complaints
5 throughout the city. So really, the approach matches
6 the burden of rats.

7 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay. Education,
8 as we've talked about, is an important part of
9 tackling the rat issue. How many Rat Academy
10 Training sessions are held annually for both the
11 general community and for pest control professionals?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So this--
13 the first half of 2023 we had 20 Rad Academies.
14 These are very, very popular. I'm looking around the
15 room. I think we've held them with all of you. We've
16 trained hundreds, thousands of New Yorkers, about 850
17 in the first six months of this year. We worked with
18 many of your colleagues and other sponsors as well,
19 BIDs, community groups, block associations. They're
20 so popular. New Yorkers love them, and it's so
21 important as we've been talking about because we're
22 all in this together. So it's so important that all
23 of us New Yorkers, property managers know best
24 practices for controlling rats.

2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Do you have the
3 capacity to expand on doing the rat academies?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We do. We
5 want to hear from you and constituent groups in your
6 neighborhoods. Be in touch with us. I think you all
7 know how to reach us. We're happy to set those up.
8 We can offer them-- we've done them on the weekends.
9 We can do them in the evenings. We can do during the
10 day--

11 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [interposing] Oh,
12 you can, okay.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We want this
14 to be convenient for you. So please be in touch with
15 us. It's such an important part of our program.

16 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Is there a way to
17 put these trainings online for people to do on their
18 own time?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, let me
20 take that back. I mean, it's really-- it's an
21 experience that we want to be there with New Yorkers
22 and answer their questions. We give out trash bin at
23 the end, which is very popular part of the program.
24 So let me take that back, but there's pros and cons
25 to the different approaches.

2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Do you have them
3 in different languages?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: We have
5 offered them in Spanish and we can offer them in
6 different languages.

7 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: this summer the
8 City held its first Anti-Rat Day of Action in Harlem
9 with the new Rat Czar. What activities are involved
10 in an Anti-Rat day of Action?

11 DIRECTOR CORRADI: A great title that
12 rolls off the tongue, right? Get people talking
13 about rats and what you can do, what actions you can
14 take. So we had our first one in Harlem in August.
15 We hosted one in the Bronx in September, and then in
16 Queens in October. And at the Anti-Rat Day of Action
17 it's really about bringing city services to
18 communities, to New Yorkers to show them what action
19 we can take together and what power's in their hands.
20 So we had representation from Department of
21 Sanitation, their education unit, training on waste
22 set-out, waste compliance, and also our community
23 tool clean rental program, loan program where
24 communities can request tools to do a litter
25 collection day on their block. We had New York City

2 Park Stewardship-- Tree Stewardship Team there to
3 talk about tree stewardship and making sure your tree
4 pits are not only litter-free, but better for the
5 trees and less conducive to rats. And then we had
6 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene there.
7 Again, their education team, the folks who lead the
8 Rat Academy to do some direct engagement, and the
9 stoppage team who deploys different methods of
10 Integrated Pest Management, doing demonstrations of
11 borrow collapsing, burrow x [sic] machine used.
12 Really again, engaging New Yorkers what they can and
13 should be doing on their properties and their blocks
14 to see an impact.

15 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: And we can-- any
16 of us can call and say we'd like to do something like
17 this, and--

18 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yeah, all of these
19 services, the whole idea of this, these are existing
20 City services that are available to New Yorkers to
21 community groups. So, if there's interest in
22 building a coalition, getting some excitement about
23 rats or excitement to get rats out, let's connect and
24 we can talk about how we connect those services.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I just had one
3 follow-up question on this. Is there any pre-
4 requisite to having a day of action? I think our
5 office reached out and they said, "Oh, you have to
6 have Rat Academy trainings." We've had them, had a
7 dozen of them or so. So what would be any pre-work
8 that somebody would need to do to requisition
9 something like this?

10 DIRECTOR CORRADI: So we work with
11 different community groups. So we work with the
12 Mayor's Community Affairs Unit to identify partners.
13 The whole goal-- we worked with the tenants
14 association in Harlem. We work with a community
15 garden in the Bronx and a BID in Queens. So we're
16 looking to connect with groups. We're going to kind
17 of sustain ownership here. No pre-qualifications.
18 The only piece we'll underscore is these are
19 available services. I think the coordination around
20 them is very powerful. So if there's interest, let's
21 connect and talk about how we bring that to your
22 district.

23 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Does the City have
24 any resources to disperse to building owners for the
25

2 purposes of rat mitigation techniques, like funds to
3 assist with installing an odorless trash compactor?

4 DIRECTOR CORRADI: So, there are a wealth
5 of resources available to New Yorkers. I think a lot
6 of them we've underscored today around education and
7 I'll say case management support. So, Health has
8 plethora of resources on NYC.gov/rats. That's
9 checklist, toolkits, managing pests on your property
10 information, both for individual owners or to have
11 conversations with your property managers. The other
12 piece that I'll underscore is the piece josh spoke
13 about when we're talking about this concession
14 agreement coming down the pike [sic] around securing
15 the lowest price trashcan for all New Yorkers going
16 forward.

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Do you-- there are
18 programs that some of the other agencies have where
19 they'll go to a building and meeting with the
20 building owners and walk through and say, okay, you
21 need to do this. You need to do that. You need to--
22 is that something that you would be able to do to--
23 in terms of mitigating rats?

24 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Absolutely. I'm happy
25 to join anyone at any time on walk-throughs, both

2 from an education and, you know, collective,
3 community, consciousness standpoint. I'll also share
4 that Health inspectors do that work. When they're at
5 a site these re, you know, scintifially trained
6 inspectors who are identifying the issues either that
7 are attracting that, sort of showing where the rat
8 activity is. So we already have that 45 inspectors,
9 220,000 inspections this year. So that education is
10 already happening. We also partner very closely with
11 HPD if there are buildings that we need, you know,
12 joint agency intervention.

13 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Now, what do you
14 do-- I know you talked about construction, but what
15 do you about abandoned properties like abandoned
16 commercial property where-- I mean, I get-- in my
17 office there's one that's been closed for like almost
18 two years now, and it used to a restaurant, and
19 there's-- they see rats inside and all that, so how
20 do you-- how do you work with that?

21 DIRECTOR CORRADI: So, we do the same
22 process of an inspection and if rat activity or
23 conditions conducive are found, a second inspection
24 is done via the Health Department. Escalations can

2 happen past that if we're not seeing mitigation
3 efforts by the property owners.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay. No, I
5 appreciate that. Now I want to go just a few
6 questions to DOHMH about rat, you know, illnesses and
7 things like that. Can you, like, go over what the
8 issues are in terms of rats spreading disease and
9 rats-- you know, rat bites causing all kinds of
10 issues. So can you like just give a summary or give
11 us a little information about that?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: Yeah, sure.
13 And you mentioned the illness that we monitor and are
14 concerned about is leptospirosis. I'm-- I want
15 everyone to know it is very, very rare. We-- it's
16 rare for us. We see fewer than a couple dozen cases
17 a year. So out of a city of eight and half million
18 people this is very unusual. It's disease that is
19 transmitted by contact with rat urine. So that is--
20 and from a rat that is infected by leptospirosis. So
21 it's very unusual, but it is reportable to the Health
22 Department and we do monitor cases. You know, we're
23 also concern about rat droppings contaminating food
24 and that's why that is inspection for pest and pest
25 conditions is a part of our restaurant inspections.

2 So that's really what we think about in terms of
3 disease and rats.

4 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, and one of
5 the other questions I have, do you know how many rats
6 there are? I know that's a difficult question.

7 DIRECTOR CORRADI: We do not have a rat
8 census. The information that we use to drive our,
9 you know, collective strategy is the information our
10 Health Inspectors collect. Again, I'll underscore
11 these are folks coming with a scientific-- they're
12 trained. It's a very reliable metric to understand
13 where our rats are, and then where we need to
14 dedicate resources, and their city resources will
15 work with our private property owners to address
16 those issues.

17 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: So, I want to ask
18 the Department of Buildings what you do about
19 construction sites.

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VILENCHIK:
21 Good morning. Kazimir Vilenchik, First Deputy
22 Commissioner. Yes, we're participating in the Rat
23 Taskforce, but most notable is implementation of
24 Local Law 109 of 22 which is-- which become prominent
25 feature in our building code, which are considered a

2 most important section of the code and the largest
3 section of the code safety during construction. And
4 with implementation of this Local Law, owners,
5 applicants and permit holders supposed to identify at
6 time of filing for permit if construction involves
7 over 50 percent of the area of demolition work
8 involved over 50 percent of the area of the building
9 or if the building undergoing extension, vertical or
10 horizontal, which constitute 25 percent of the
11 building floor area. is that-- if any of those
12 questions answered yes, the permit holder at the time
13 of permit request supposed to submit to us
14 certification from licensed exterminator stating that
15 the site was treated for-- rodent extermination was
16 performed, and providing this form submitted to us--
17 provided the certification is submitted to us,
18 permits will be issued. In addition to that, on the
19 construction site where full demolition is scheduled,
20 we must see the form from exterminator which certify-
21 - not just certify but stating the fact that the
22 extermination is done.

23 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: DO you do any of
24 the inspections yourself? Because I know that's
25

2 self-affirmation. Do you do any independent
3 inspections from DOB?

4 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VILENCHIK:

5 Yes, that's absolutely correct question to ask. Yes,
6 we do inspection, and those inspectors not
7 specifically looking for the rats but there are
8 multiple factors which generate conditions which lead
9 to rat's appearance. And with that inspectors
10 obviously looking or inspecting 1,100,000 [sic] of
11 existing buildings looking for openings, especially
12 openings at the ground level, looking for structural
13 [inaudible] of the building, seeing for any openings
14 in addition of our building code was amended the
15 section which required protection openings for
16 utility pipes at the ground level, flat protection--
17 flat openings. So, and also a section of the safety
18 section was greatly expanded not with just Local Law
19 109 of 22, with requirements for housekeeping which
20 will be-- which supposed to be enforced by multiple
21 professionals working on construction sites.

22 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: How many inspectors
23 do you have and also are the inspectors going to be
24 affected by the PEGs?

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VILENCHIK:

3 Total number of inspector, we have 543, I believe
4 that's correct number. Out of 543 inspectors, about
5 160 of them is dedicated to safety on construction
6 sites. Inspections is dedicated to safety, and
7 they're not going to be subject that.

8 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: They aren't, okay.

9 I just want to ask a couple more questions and then
10 hand it over to my colleagues. One is New York City
11 Parks, because parks have a lot of rats and they have
12 burrow holes and things like that, so how is that
13 dealt with?

14 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Parks are-- I speak to
15 them quite often. They're part of our taskforce.
16 They're active participants in our rodent mitigation
17 zone and citywide efforts. They have an excellent
18 team of trained professionals, both extermination and
19 then integrating, again, the strategies we know that
20 keep long-term sustained reductions. So looking at
21 Harvard, waste management. Parks are an area
22 underscored that can be conducive to rats, because
23 rats are evolved t burrow into soil. That's their
24 preferred habitat. But Parks is an active
25 participant. They deploy a lot of alternative to

2 pesticide use, including the use of carbon dioxide
3 and carbon monoxide during nesting raptor [sic]
4 season to make sure we're not seeing secondary
5 affects to those animals. So they're on board and
6 excellent partners for us.

7 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Go ahead, and then
8 I have one more. GO ahead.

9 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Just because we were-
10 - touched on parks, I just wanted to have a question
11 because I think we all know how woefully underfunded
12 they are in their ability to do maintenance. I mean,
13 I have staff members calling Parks, begging them to
14 cut the grass because it's knee-high, right? And
15 these are opportunities where rodents get in. So
16 from your perspective, because it's unique, what
17 resources do these agencies need, specifically Parks?
18 Like, what does Parks need to be able to do effective
19 rat mitigation?

20 DIRECTOR CORRADI: So, all effective rat
21 mitigation comes down to routinized sanitation,
22 cleaning and removal harborage conditions. So across
23 all agencies, that's what we need to get this done.
24 The folks and the knowledge there to execute in a
25 standardized basis.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Is it your opinion
3 that Parks needs more workers to do that job?

4 DIRECTOR CORRADI: I think when we're
5 thinking about something as interjurisdictional as
6 rats, it's important to look across the whole
7 portfolio of, you know, where we have holes and where
8 they could be filled. I think every agency would
9 come to the table and say absolutely we could use
10 more staff to get this done.

11 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, so before I
13 ask my last question, I want to acknowledge we've
14 been joined by Council Member Farías and Council
15 Member Salamanca. So, my question it may be-- it's
16 either DOB or DOHMH or a combination. With buildings
17 that have food stores underneath on the ground floor,
18 how do you deal with that in turn? Because my
19 experience has been in those food establishments and
20 they have a basements, and they often-- the basement
21 has rats and how do you deal with that?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, just to
23 clarify, you're talking about mixed-use buildings
24 where there's a food establishment on the ground
25 floor and then apartments above?

2 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Apartments above
3 and like a supermarket underneath or a food store, or
4 what--

5 DIRECTOR CORRADI: So the same
6 [inaudible] and I'll pass to you next. The same
7 health code applies to even mixed-use buildings. So
8 if Health Department Inspectors externally are seeing
9 again conditions conducive or active rat signs, they
10 will issue at first a Commissioner's letter to abate,
11 and then subsequent violations if they're found.

12 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, thank you.
13 That'll conclude. I may come back later, but that
14 concludes my questions for now. Thank you so much.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So, next we have
16 Council Member Shaun Abreu.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Thank you Chairs
18 Nurse and Schulman for this very important hearing.
19 My first set of questions are for DOHMH. So, in my
20 district, we've been getting a lot of support from
21 the rat mitigation zones. We're very excited about
22 that, but there have been, you know, things that I do
23 have questions about. Just saw recently in my
24 colleague's district, Julie Menin's district. She
25 did an amazing job in bringing an exterminator to her

2 district which made a huge difference. I'm curious
3 to know how many city employees, exterminators, there
4 are that DOHMH has on a street on a typical day.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: So, as we've
6 been detailing, the program at the Health Department
7 is to enforce the health code which requires property
8 owners to keep their properties free of pests. When
9 we find conditions and we find rats and conditions
10 conducive to rats, we will order the property owner
11 to make corrections including by hiring a license
12 pest control professional. The Health Department
13 does have some exterminators on staff that we--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: [interposing] How
15 many?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SCHIFF: I don't have
17 that number, but I can tell you that in Fiscal 23 we
18 conducted 46,000 exterminations. We have
19 extermination staff. We really use those staff for
20 emergencies, for when the property owner doesn't
21 follow our order, we will conduct that extermination,
22 and the bill the property owner. But the model is
23 that property owners are responsible for maintaining
24 their properties free of pests, and so we direct them
25 to do that.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Yeah, I mean, I
3 think we have a crises right now when it comes to the
4 rat population. There are a lot of tree burrows
5 that, you know, need a lot of that support from the
6 extermination standpoint. I would like to know the
7 exact number of exterminators. I know you said some,
8 but we have millions of rats in New York City, and I
9 know we didn't do a census, but I just know it by
10 walking down the street. You know, DSNY has a done a
11 lot in my district, and I know that the-- after
12 containerization, right, after changing the set-out
13 times, there's only so much that we can do to address
14 the rat population. I'd now like to turn over to
15 DSNY. I do have questions on the containerization
16 pilot. Can you speak to the effeteness of it? Can
17 you speak to things that could be done better? What
18 feedback are you getting?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Yeah, so
20 thank you very much, Council Member. You've ben one
21 of the most outspoken allies in the trash revolution.
22 Appreciate your support and willingness to embrace
23 change in your district. Since the start of
24 containerization pilot on ten blocks of Hamilton
25 Height which began September 12th, rat sighting

2 complaint on those blocks are down 55 percent
3 compared to the same time period last year. In
4 absolute value it's a drop from 29 last year to 13,
5 but certainly that's a substantial decrease. We
6 continue to receive very positive feedback from
7 residents of the pilot zone as well as from the
8 school staff impacted by the school's component
9 [inaudible].

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: And have-- may I
11 go one more minute? Have you seen any-- what are the
12 rat metrics, especially in the containerization zone?
13 Have you seen a bigger impact there than other parts
14 in the residential-- sorry, have you see another-- an
15 impact there in the rat mitigation zone where there
16 is no containerization? Are the numbers-- are you
17 seeing different numbers there?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: I don't
19 have the number for the upper Manhattan zone broadly,
20 although we certainly can get it. I do know that the
21 decrease within the pilot zone is very noticeable.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Great. And if
23 you-- to the extent you can have any more specifics,
24 could you send that over? I know that's very
25 microdata.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: That 55
3 percent, though, is specific to the pilot zone, and
4 that's obviously--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: [interposing] Oh,
6 okay, yeah, yeah.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Yeah, so
8 it's 55 percent decrease--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: [interposing]
10 Specific to the pilot zone.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: for the
12 time period from the first day of the pilot to today
13 as compared to the same day as last year. Yeah, 55
14 percent.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Great. And then I
16 know there's a-- I think you said in testimony a
17 prototype of trucks. Can you speak to whether or not
18 those are coming to the pilot zones, how soon?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: So, what it
20 is-- I'll back it up a little bit and describe the
21 truck. In-- and this is laid out in the Future of
22 Trash Report. I believe it's on pages 71 and 74.
23 The go-forward strategy for on-street
24 containerization for higher-density residential
25 buildings is a container that lives on the street and

2 does not have wheels. But in order to lift that
3 container, to get the trash out of it and into the
4 truck, you need a special kind of truck called an
5 automated side loader. It's got-- you need-- and for
6 our one-way streets you'll need left side and right
7 side automated side loader. So it's a big
8 undertaking. This truck exists in Europe. It is not
9 from a regulatory standpoint as easy as just buying a
10 European one and having it sent over. The
11 requirements for a street-legal vehicle in North
12 America are so substantially different that we
13 basically have to start from scratch in the design
14 build of this truck. We are doing that now, and the
15 pilot truck is moving along at a pretty impressive
16 pace. It will not be for the pilot that's running--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: [interposing] Okay.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: In Hamilton
19 Heights. It's for the go forward containerization
20 strategy. We didn't want to look at containerization
21 and say, you know, well, we don't have the truck and
22 it could take a couple of years, so we're not going
23 to do anything. So we started the pilot in Hamilton
24 Heights with a rear-loading tipper truck, but the
25 eventual go forward strategy is a side loading truck.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Thank you so much,
3 Chairs. Thank you so much, Commissioners. Really
4 appreciate your time today.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I know everyone has
6 to leave, so we're going to crank through, but how
7 many of those trucks are in the works or on the road?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: None are on
9 the road.

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: That's
12 still a little ways away, but we're developing a
13 couple to look at.

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: A couple of them you
15 said? More or less?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Yeah, more-

17 -

18 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] Do you
19 not know how many you have in the works?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: I don't-- I
21 do know how many we have in the works.

22 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, do you want to
23 say it, or?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Yeah, it's
25 three.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: It's three? Okay,
3 that's very easy to answer, right? Okay, we have
4 Council Member Menin.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Great. Thank you
6 so much, Chairs. So, last year my office did
7 research. We looked at every major city, how they
8 were dealing with rat mitigation, and as a result we
9 found that a technique that was used, Burrow RX,
10 which fumigates the tree pits, it's being
11 successfully used in San Diego and Boston. So we
12 brought it to my district last year and I've
13 continued it this year. We're funding it out of my
14 office, which is I think kind of unfortunate, because
15 it shouldn't be up to individual Council Members to
16 have to supplement this. But I do want to ask, we've
17 had tremendous success with this program, and I do
18 want to note, like if you look at Council District
19 Four which is adjacent to my district all throughout,
20 to the south, to the west, every single block they've
21 had, according to your data, 51 percent increase in
22 rats. We have not had that at all in Council
23 District Five, and I contribute that in part to our
24 novel method of rat mitigation. So my question is
25 why can't we use this citywide to really kind of

2 target in particular the tree pits where the rats are
3 populating, and we know that to be the case?

4 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Thank you, Council
5 Member. And I want to give you congratulations on
6 that work, and the coverage. I think everything that
7 brings attention to this issue is positive for our
8 collective effort, so thank you. We use Burrow X as
9 a city. NYCHA, Parks, DOHMH all employ it as one of
10 our techniques to exterminate rats. It really comes
11 down to, again, we can drop numbers. We know we're
12 successful in extermination as an application, but if
13 we have those other conditions present, namely a food
14 source or harborage, we see those numbers rebound.
15 So while we have coordinated extermination efforts,
16 including the Burrow RX, in our high areas of need,
17 certainly on our public properties, we really trying
18 to take an approach of how do we make sure it's
19 integrated with those other components of better
20 waste management, sanitation of the curb, removing of
21 harborage conditions, so when we get 100 percent
22 extermination we don't see a rebound in the upcoming
23 months.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: So, how many of
25 the Burrow RX machines does the City currently have?

2 DIRECTOR CORRADI: I do not know an exact
3 number. I can get them. I know we're using them
4 across those agencies I mentioned. Primarily in our
5 green spaces they are a great, safe, effective tool,
6 but they can only be used outside of 10 feet from a
7 building, so they're primarily used in our green
8 spaces.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: I definitely want
10 to see that data. We've had tremendous success in my
11 district. We started with 86th Street corridor, went
12 all along 86th Street, and while yes, it still means
13 we have to go back and supplement the tree pits and
14 the fumigation, it really is working. So I would very
15 much like to see the City adopt this approach in the
16 tree pits and other areas. I hear you about the food
17 source, but again, we know this technique works, and
18 so I'd like to see it used in a more fulsome way.

19 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Absolutely, and love
20 to connect with you more about you did that in your
21 district to see if there's ways that we can--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: [interposing]
23 Right.

2 DIRECTOR CORRADI: you know, bring it to
3 other districts and Council Members and talk about we
4 build that partnership.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Great, thank you
6 so much.

7 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: thank you, Council
9 Member Menin. I'm going to call on Council Member
10 Bottcher.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Good afternoon.
12 In July, the Department of Health announced that the
13 311 rat activity complaints across the city had
14 decreased by 20 percent, from May to mid-July. Can
15 you tell us the citywide 311 numbers since July to
16 now?

17 DIRECTOR CORRADI: I don't have them in
18 front of me, but happy to share those back with you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: And do you have
20 numbers broken down by council district, community
21 district, zip codes?

22 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yes, we can share all
23 that information.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Great.
25

2 DIRECTOR CORRADI: I'd also say it's all
3 available on Open Data. We'll help curate it and get
4 it shared over, as well as Health Department
5 inspection information. So that information is all
6 shared publicly in the idea of data transparency and
7 making sure New Yorkers can access the work we're
8 doing as a city.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: so, we looked
10 up the zip codes that overlap with our council
11 district, Council District Three on the west side of
12 Manhattan from January 1st to December 1st. last year,
13 there were 1,127 311 complaints. In 2003, there were
14 1,122 311 complaints. So it's pretty much flat from
15 2022-2023. The new set-out times started in May. The
16 commercial containerization started this fall.
17 What's your assessment of why the 311 complaints in
18 our district on the west side of Manhattan have
19 pretty much been flat despite these pretty
20 revolutionary changes?

21 DIRECTOR CORRADI: I think each
22 neighborhood has their own kind of interaction of how
23 they utilize 311 and the services they expect from
24 311. So that could be part of why we're not seeing
25 necessarily the changes from your district. I know

2 when we conducted a walk-through you have a very
3 engaged citizenry. They're informed and they know
4 311 is how you get--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: [interposing]

6 Yes, they are.

7 DIRECTOR CORRADI: how you get city
8 services, and that's something we want to amplify to
9 all New Yorkers. 311 is the tool that we use as a
10 city to direct services. Every time a 311 complaint
11 is called into the Department of Health, they send an
12 inspector out to assess that complaint that comes in.
13 So, maybe it's a condition of, you know, knowing how
14 to get action taken in your neighborhood. It's
15 definitely something, you know, we would love to
16 partner with you on, and how do we do-- I know you
17 already do a lot of engagement at Rat Academies, days
18 of action, things of that nature, but how we can make
19 sure your citizenry feels like they're getting the
20 attention they need and seeing the impacts of these
21 larger legislation that we are seeing making an
22 impact on 311 complaints in other districts.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Do you believe
24 that the rat activity has gone down, but 311 calls
25 aren't reflecting that?

2 DIRECTOR CORRADI: We use the 311 metric
3 as one of the things we look at when we're engaging
4 effectiveness, you know, and ratiness [sic] in an
5 area. Really, we rely on our Department of Health
6 inspections, because we have trained professionals
7 doing the in-depth analysis of each site, inspection
8 of each site to tell us really what we're seeing in
9 terms of rat activity.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Would you be
11 able to say whether or not rat activity has gone down
12 on the west side of Manhattan or not in the last
13 year?

14 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Right now, I couldn't
15 give you a full analysis of our Health Inspection
16 data to say if we're seeing that trend.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Okay, what I'd
18 love to do is work with you and determine if we're
19 not supposed to only look at 311 calls, what other
20 metrics should we look at to really get a handle on
21 what's working and what's not. And what's the plan
22 for the year ahead if it is flat like the 311 data
23 suggests. What are we going to do in the year ahead
24 to really see those numbers come down?

2 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yepa, love to
3 collaborate on that, and I'll plug again NYC.gov/rats
4 that has the rat information portal. You can see
5 real-time information on all health inspection data.
6 so you can zoom into a property, a block, a
7 neighborhood and see what the rat activity is in that
8 specific area, so we can talk about targeting, you
9 know, in your district and for the whole City of New
10 York that plan for next year of, you know, how do we
11 better, how do we see these numbers drive? We know
12 it comes down to consistency and routinized
13 application. So, Corinne had mentioned, I mentioned
14 in my testimony, in a lot of ways we're still feeling
15 the impacts of changes in city operations due to the
16 COVID emergency, but as we get more time under our
17 feet with operations back to the level we've seen
18 before, the better interagency coordination,
19 engagement with the public, engagement with council
20 people, we know that's how we're going to see the
21 long-term changes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you. Council
24 Member Narcisse?

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: thank you.

3 Good afternoon and thank you, Chairs, and I have to
4 say thank you to your Department of Sanitation that
5 have been stepping up, and sometimes you have to tell
6 people when they're doing positive things. But on
7 that note, we still have a lot of work to do. Since
8 the implementation of the new set-out time for
9 residents especially, has there been an uptick in
10 fines given to the households? Have they been
11 increasing summons?

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Yeah,
13 so as I referenced earlier, the number of summons
14 that we began issuing-- started with warnings and
15 then the summonses in May were a drastic increase.
16 Previously, we really never issued that many
17 summonses. I can give you the year over year
18 increase. Right now I just have the numbers that
19 we've issued since the start of the May period.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. Compost
21 is a great thing. I'm going to say giving it up to my
22 Chair over here, Nurse, but one of the concerns the
23 residents have been bringing to our offices, I mean
24 our office here especially, it's about when they pick
25 them up and they're not emptying them out completely,

2 they let things seep on the streets, and they don't--
3 they cannot use-- from my understanding, can you use
4 bag or not? That's a question, sir.

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Yes,
6 you can use bag.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay, because
8 that's concern because there was confusion whether to
9 use bags, because it's supposed to be still in the
10 can, but when they do pick them up, if it's not
11 empty, so you end up with things on the streets.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Council
13 Member, if I may, I just want to point out, one of
14 the reasons that there's confusion about this-- and
15 certainly in our outreach efforts we've got to
16 address that-- is that old programs didn't allow
17 bags. And the ability to say, you want to use a bag,
18 you can use a bag is actually one of the-- it
19 required a technological innovation. We got a new
20 piece of equipment that lets us separate out the bags
21 on our end. It's one of the ways that this is the
22 largest and easiest curbside composting program ever.
23 you know, sometimes you try to compost, and they say,
24 "Oh, it's not in the right-- you can't." We made it
25 a lot easier. So I often tell people when they ask me

2 am I allowed to use a bag or not. I say, "On almost
3 any question you could ask me, you're overthinking
4 it. Just put it out, we'll get it." And then the
5 other item you mentioned, not emptying it completely,
6 we have rules internally about the condition of what
7 we call spillage. It's our industry term for when
8 material is left behind. Certainly, it's something
9 we take seriously.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: by the way, I
11 love the bins. They look very cute and they really
12 seal very tight. Rats is a big problem. It's a huge
13 problem in my city, and one of my concern-- I have--
14 I think someone mentioned it. We have sister cities
15 that they're doing very well, and I have been mention
16 that to the Chair as well. We can't-- we have to
17 reimagine how we take out trash in our streets in New
18 York City. I hate when I go visit other places and
19 people talking about how dirty New York City is, and
20 I take offense to that, because that breaks my heart.
21 But now, can we imagine for the next few years how
22 we're going to address it? Can you collaborate with
23 DOT and come up with a great plan, because we have to
24 have those bin on our streets to make sure they seal,

2 they close, or else we'll never be able to address
3 rats in our city.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Completely
5 agree. Completely agree, Council Member. I have two
6 things to say to that. The first is that there is a
7 plan at nyc.gov/futureoftrash. It's a 100-page
8 report that we put out in April of this year that
9 outlines the next several years, the plan to
10 containerize every piece of trash in New York City.
11 We are well on our way. By this fall 70 percent will
12 be in the containers. So, tell you, like I was just
13 in LA in October and I heard that from some of the
14 haters and losers out there. Like, "Oh, New York's
15 so dirty, right?" The best thing you can say to them
16 is, "I guess you haven't been there recently."
17 Because things are changing and people who come to
18 our city today, they will see the difference.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: And I'm not
20 going to see rats flying all over the place. Like
21 they look like kind of cats when you looking at them.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: If you see
23 the rats flying all of the place--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: [interposing]
25 [inaudible]

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: After were
3 done with this, you might want to see an optometrist.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay. Thank
5 you for your service, and I'm sure that we're going
6 to see a better city, a cleaner city. Thank you,
7 Chairs. I appreciate you.

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you. You know,
9 I get like the rat stuff is really funny, but I have
10 to say, I mean, I've had people come into my office
11 who've been bitten by rats. I walk through NYCHA
12 developments where people live with rats, rodent-
13 infested buildings, rent-stabilized buildings with
14 rat shit everywhere. So this is not funny. It's not
15 some smug thing. People live in really bad
16 conditions with bad rodents. I have people come and
17 tell me that their cars-- they got to put ammonia
18 mats so that the rats don't go to their cars. This
19 isn't a joke. So I understand from a larger
20 narrative point of view, that it's a way to elevate
21 the issue and get people engaged and keep it in
22 people's minds, but let's just keep in mind, that
23 this is the reality of a lot of people.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Exactly
25 right, Madam Chair. As a renter in a rat mitigation

2 zone, I take it very seriously. I see the rats every
3 day. It's why I've chosen to dedicate my career to
4 helping fight back against them. While we're on the
5 subject, I do have the answer to your question about
6 the brown bins.

7 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: We
9 distributed 56,252 brown bins in Brooklyn to-date.
10 I'm very happy to report that the largest district
11 for both requests and distributions was Brooklyn
12 Community Board 18, so Canarsie, Flatlands, Mill
13 Basin. Again, speaking of the success and efficacy
14 of this program that there's so much interest outside
15 the traditional beating heart of the compost belt.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you. Next up
17 we have Council Member Ariola.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you,
19 Chairs. Welcome and thank you for your testimony. I
20 want to speak to something specific that happened in
21 Queens in my district, because my district is not in
22 a rat zone, however, we had a really bad issue with
23 rats. And I want to thank Director Corradi for
24 coming out herself with the Department of Health,
25 with Sanitation and really working with us. It was

2 not a one-day thing. We had to identify the food
3 source. We did. DOHMH went in, inspected the
4 buildings. It was behind a commercial strip. So what
5 I think was really great about is because all the
6 agencies were there. The community members came out
7 because the rat infestation was so bad that it went
8 to their back yards. And so they knew they had to
9 get exterminators for their area, that was their
10 property, and then the City of New York took care of
11 their property because it was all burrowed in, of
12 course, the tree pits. But most importantly, the
13 DOHMH did enough inspections so that the bad actor
14 who was-- who owned a restaurant. We figured out who
15 the food source was, and then once we notified the
16 landlord that they were going to start to get fines,
17 a container went out there. So I want to thank you.
18 There is no more rats in that area, and that's
19 because of your concerted effort. And Sanitation you
20 were great because when there was anything left in
21 the street you came right out and took care of it and
22 picked it up. So, I do appreciate what you do, and
23 you know, Deputy Commissioner Goodman, your
24 department is terrific. We work well with your
25 Public Affairs Department, and they've never let us

2 down. So, thanks for that. I am a little taken
3 aback by the removal of the baskets of the streets,
4 because I know that there were budget cuts to that.
5 What concerns me is like my colleagues said, people
6 will naturally just throw that on the ground, but
7 what's going to happen is our commercial strips where
8 these baskets are being removed, they're storefronts.
9 There are small business owners there, and then
10 they'll be responsible for the dirt and the garbage
11 that's left in front of their building.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Thank you,
13 Council Member. I appreciate the kind words, first
14 of all. Say a couple things about our thought
15 process in the basket removal plan. Right now there
16 are maybe 100,000 corners in the city that don't have
17 litter basket on them, right? That's already the
18 case. You walk down many neighborhoods, you don't see
19 a litter basket at every corner. When there's no
20 litter basket, people don't just drop their litter
21 there. I mean, sometimes they do and they're
22 breaking the law, and they're cited and issued
23 violations. We are going to be very thoughtful about
24 a reduction in the number of litter baskets on the
25 street. Trying not to focus on the commercial

2 corridors that you're describing to the extent
3 possible. Trying to make sure that there's borough
4 equity involved to the extent possible, right? The
5 idea is not to decrease cleanliness. It is to take a
6 very difficult budget cut and try to make it work in
7 a way that does not-- because you know, when the
8 23,000 baskets, we could have all of them 40 percent
9 more full, or we could just have fewer of them and
10 have them all empty so that the rats can't get in the
11 food. So it's a tough decision. I really appreciate
12 the feedback, and we're going to be very thoughtful
13 about the removals.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: thank you so much
15 and thank you for the work that you do.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you, Council
17 Member. I forgot to recognize Council Member Feliz.
18 Thank you for joining us. I have Council Member
19 Brewer next.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.
21 Carolyn Bragdon [sic] is my hero. We've been doing
22 the walks for the last 20 years together. So I
23 appreciate her very much. Let me-- orange bins-- I
24 have like a 100 questions, so I'll just go with them
25 and then you can decide. Orange bins, the problem--

2 I love them, but two things. One, the old people
3 don't know how to have an app, older people in my
4 neighborhood. And second, they're often full but not
5 they're not really full. So how do you-- what's with
6 the app and that technology problem?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: I can say
8 two things about it, Council Member, the two parts to
9 your question. So, the-- I'm going to start with the
10 fullness issue. We actually did identify a technical
11 challenge with the bins where the-- sort of-- its an
12 infrared sensor inside--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] I
14 know. I use it. I know.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: We toned
16 down how quickly they think it's full. We basically
17 adjusted on the back end--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing]
19 Alright.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: when the
21 sensor goes off. And we do empty the bins six days a
22 week. We get them every day except Sunday. And then
23 on the app side-- so one of the topics that we are
24 concerned about when it comes to composting is
25

2 contamination, right? And the idea is if there's no
3 locking mechanism on the bin--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] No,
5 I understand that. I'm letting you know that the
6 older people don't know how to do the app. They like
7 going to the green market.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, I know you
10 want to keep it, and it's the Mayor who doesn't. So
11 we're going to work on that. So, we need the other
12 opportunities for composting.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: If I may
14 just say one thing about the app that I think is
15 really worthwhile and something that you may find
16 useful to tell your constituents. Some of them I
17 understand, they're just not going to want to do it.
18 We work so hard to make this app as user-friendly as
19 possible.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: One thing
22 that I think is a really interesting story--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] But
24 you're under 80.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Your friend
3 Rayn Morolla [sp?] said that the bins that-- this
4 company makes other locking bins that are used in
5 other cities. In every other city in the world where
6 they have these, the bins play "Old MacDonald" to
7 distract you from the fact--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] But
9 that's not going to help.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: that
11 they're taking forever to unlock to hide that it's
12 taking long time.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Ryan worked
15 on an app update along with some other members of our
16 team to get them to open so fast that there was no
17 time for the--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] I
19 got it. I'm just letting you know, we still want the
20 other opportunities for composting. Now let me just
21 tell you about Parks and Sanitation. I speak pretty
22 plainly. Parks can't handle it. Let me tell you, my
23 parks, we've got two of them on both sides of the
24 community. They only pick up Monday to Friday, so
25 rats got Saturday and Sunday to have a feast. So,

2 I'm telling you right now, whether it's the Broadway
3 malls which is overflowing or the Riverside, and I
4 guess this would be the Rat Czar's issue because
5 nobody else seems to talk to each other in this
6 Administration. We have a lot of silos despite what
7 the Mayor says. We got to have Sanitation pick up
8 from parks. That's got to happen. Any ideas about
9 that, Madam Rat Czar? That would solve the problem.
10 Monday morning it looks like hell.

11 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Absolutely, and these
12 are pieces we're discussing in our tenderness. How
13 do we build these efficiencies, co-mingle operations?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: How long do we
15 have to discuss it before it happens? I could do it--
16 - the Commissioner's willing to do it tomorrow,
17 Sanitation Commissioner.

18 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Great, then we'll bring
19 that back and have those conversations and see about
20 putting it into action. It does come down to resource
21 availability.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: She's got the
23 resources.

24 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Great. Then I'll have
25 the conversations back, and we'll--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] All
3 of Broadway malls, all Riverside Park, nothing picked
4 up weekends. Lots of food for the rats.

5 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Pigeon
7 feeders, what are you going to do about them? I
8 argue with them. They say the pigeons are hungry.

9 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yeah, bird feeding is
10 a big issue--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] And
12 what are we going to do about it? It's a mental
13 health issue. It involves Health Department, mental
14 health, I don't know, but they feed the rats, too.

15 DIRECTOR CORRADI: The best piece we have
16 right now is education. I know you're doing that on
17 an individual level--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] What
19 kind of education are you going to tell somebody who
20 says the pigeons are hungry?

21 DIRECTOR CORRADI: It has to come down to
22 the understanding that they're also feeding rats.
23 Health Department has a big campaign around that
24 work.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. We can
3 discuss-- I'm just saying, you got to put a little
4 bit more effort into it. They're going to keep
5 feeding them. We got to figure out something else.
6 It's challenging.

7 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Absolutely.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Dog people
9 want litter baskets. That's-- you know, you-- who's
10 putting-- you could talk about household, I got that.
11 I've been doing this, I don't know, 40 years. Dog
12 people want the litter baskets. So please-- I mean,
13 all I do is right the Department of Sanitation, "I
14 want a litter basket. I want a littler basket. I want
15 a litter"-- I do like hundreds of letters for the dog
16 people. Are you going to keep the basket where the
17 dog people want litter baskets?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: You know,
19 as a dog person myself, I have to often carry dog
20 waste for a couple of blocks.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: My people don't
22 want to carry it one block.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: There are
24 responsibilities for pet guardians.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Not on the upper
3 west side.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Bring an
5 animal into our home, have things that we have to do
6 to take care of it.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I'm just
8 saying, it's an issue, and you're going to get more
9 call, and more 311.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Understood.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So keep the
12 litter basket.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Thank you.
14 Got it.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Stolen bins--
16 west side kids got a \$200 stolen. How-- are many
17 getting stolen? What's the-- where do they take
18 them?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Great
20 question. I get this question, too, all the time
21 about what happens--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] Two
23 of them got stolen last night, just FYI.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: [inaudible]
25 I always tell them if something of yours gets stolen,

2 there's already a process in place, call NYPD. I
3 don't know why as we've rolled out the
4 containerization requirements, we've heard from
5 people acting like the idea of stolen property is
6 like a new thing.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Well, it's a new
8 thing for them to have to have the bin. That's the
9 issue.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: The bin is
11 supposed to come inside when you're not using it, or
12 be chained up along the property line.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It can only chain
14 it to a tree. You know, something-- and you don't
15 want to chained to a tree.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: No public
17 property. It's supposed to be--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] I
19 know, but there's no place else to chain it.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: [inaudible]
21 within three feet of building.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I'm just
23 telling you their issues they go-- and just finally,
24 the tree pits, I know you heard about them, but they
25 are a problem because nobody knows-- I know you say

2 property owner, but maybe it is between the property
3 owner. It's not clear who the property owner is. We
4 need a better solution on tree pits, just generally.
5 It's not of course just rats. It's also they're
6 filthy dirty. People dump their freaking garbage in
7 a tree pit. It's unbelievable to me. So who's in
8 charge of these tree pits? You say owner, but that's
9 not really what happens. And they have to be clean,
10 and that's when you say-- I agree, you go to another
11 city and you come back to New York, and we should
12 say, "Have you been here lately?" Unfortunately,
13 these damn people have been here lately, and they
14 still think it's dirty, and some of it is the tree
15 pit. So what is, again, citywide, no silos-- let's
16 talk to each other. What's going on with the tree
17 pits?

18 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yeah, so it's an area
19 of conversation. It is property owner responsibility
20 to keep the tree pits free and clear of litter and
21 debris, including 18 inches out into the sidewalk.
22 Health will do emergency bating in tree pits, but if
23 we have those other conditions which becomes a block
24 issue, we will see the rats rebound.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. But I'm
3 letting you know when you say it is a property and
4 they're not doing it, then we have to be a little bit
5 more creative as a city and figure out something
6 else. That's not working. Now, with these cars, oh
7 my God. The rats eat all the cars. They just have a--
8 - so what are you-- do you tell owners-- is there
9 anything that you can tell them? I mean, I lost
10 three cars the other day for my neighbor's rats.

11 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yeah. There's no
12 scent or product that keeps rats away that's
13 scientifically proven. So when it comes down to
14 issues with cars, we're talking about community
15 issues, and you know, a piece of tragedy of the
16 commons. If we have conditions conducive where rats
17 active on a block, there's nothing we can do as a
18 city to legislate nay changes to how people are
19 parking their vehicles on the--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] So,
21 I guess if you have a 311 complaint out there with
22 mine that's a car problem, then you should go to that
23 block and figure out what's going on. Is that
24 something that would be followed up for a 311
25 complaint?

2 DIRECTOR CORRADI: For a 311 complaint
3 about an abandoned vehicle?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No, about a car
5 that just got eaten by a rat. They go right in there.
6 They eat all the different aspects of a car. I don't
7 own a car. I don't know a damn thing about a car, but
8 they eat everything and then you can't start the car
9 when you're going to work.

10 DIRECTOR CORRADI: I'll do some
11 investigation. I don't know-- I do not believe
12 there's a 311 category specifically for car impacted
13 by rat, but that's some information we can look into
14 and--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing]
16 Because then you would go to the -- as you suggest,
17 go to the block, do a walk-around and see who's not
18 putting the garbage out correctly, etcetera. Okay,
19 something to think about. I'm always thinking a
20 little bit more creatively than sometimes city
21 agencies. Just a suggestion.

22 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Appreciate it.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, and are
24 these new trucks finally quiet? Like that are going
25 to pick up things at night quietly? Your three

2 trucks or your new trucks, or whatever kind of
3 trucks?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: So
5 actually, it's a great question. Short answer is,
6 we're waiting for the truck to come in. It's one--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] Then
8 you could listen to it.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: when we put
10 out the report, there were people who said that there
11 are automated side loaders already. They use them at
12 the Port of Philadelphia. I watched a video of this
13 industrial one they use in Philadelphia. So loud,
14 completely inappropriate for the upper west side or
15 any community in New York City.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah [inaudible]

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: that's why
18 we're developing a new one with that in mind.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So you're going
20 to have a quiet truck.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: As quiet as
22 possible.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: quiet truck.

24 Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Appreciate you,
3 Council Member Brewer. We're going to move on to
4 Council Member Fariás.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Thank you so
6 much, Chairs. I do want to quickly just state that
7 in terms of composting, Grow NYC and other community
8 partners are-- they have an important role in our
9 community posting, especially in our outer borough
10 communities and I hope that we look at other ways to
11 support them and maintain these efforts in the city.
12 Let's talk about rats. So we did a wonderful tour
13 throughout my district. We're getting an ADA-
14 complaint MTA station. Yay, we're excited about
15 that. We say we had a bunch of different rodent
16 hotspots throughout the community that risen [sic].
17 Though we were integrating a lot of mitigation
18 efforts at the station itself through MTA, the rats
19 were then finding food elsewhere in the surrounding
20 area. So wanted to touch base on the streamline
21 process. I think what we realized in the tour that we
22 were able to do is everyone was kind of doing efforts
23 on their own. DSNY was kind of touching base with
24 folks, but we really didn't have full streamlined
25 effort just yet. So our tour was really important in

2 that it happened at the right moment, and we were
3 able to streamline that. How are we navigating the
4 streamlining process, and then have we put into place
5 any efforts around informing the surrounding
6 communities, like the surrounding community in
7 Parchester [sic] is a bunch of homeowners and co-op
8 owners, and informing them that they may have to take
9 individual, independent effort as we're targeting a
10 hotspot area that they may see, you know, rodents in
11 their area, and they should take an effort to do so,
12 so we can dispel the rodent, period.

13 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yes, and that's-- it
14 was a great walk-through. I think really showed the
15 example of the challenging work when we're talking
16 about rats in ad dense city like New York and our
17 private and public interspaces. The streamline
18 process, that is the power and the position I serve
19 in. a person whose job is to look across all
20 agencies and bring those conversations together, that
21 coalition together to make sure we're working outside
22 silos, make sure we're coordinating efforts, both in
23 a-- I'd say a field operational place. So a big
24 piece we're working on is making sure folks out in
25 the boroughs have each other's contact information

2 and are doing direct contact when they're addressing
3 an issue or seeing hot spots arise, and then that's
4 scaled all the way up to our taskforce meetings where
5 we're having full sail conversations about how do we
6 do this work better. How-- if we're identifying a
7 park and there's a private property or school nearby
8 that's contributing to an issue, that we bring these
9 folks together so we don't just end up chasing, kind
10 of, the rats from property to property. Department
11 of Health does a tremendous job in public education.
12 I think it's a great idea to expand that work around.
13 You know, we've identified a hot spot, how are we
14 communicating with those neighbor's adjacent
15 properties, and I think that's something we'd love to
16 partner with-- I know when we there, Council Member,
17 you took some pamphlets and got right on the ground
18 engaging with the folks at the green market, thinking
19 about authentic ways we can really build that
20 community collective effort.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Great. Chairs, I
22 have a couple of follow-up. Thank you. And then in
23 terms of working with some of the state authorities,
24 right-- MTA's a state authority. NYCHA, for example,
25 is a state authority, but they're here within the

2 City. How are those efforts and communication or
3 with DOHMH or with DSNY?

4 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yeah. So I'll start
5 with NYCHA. They are an active lead agency in our
6 rodent mitigation work citywide. We have great
7 relationships with leadership down to the folks doing
8 the work on the ground, and they're a real partner
9 for us in testing out and making sure that what we're
10 doing as a city is also reflected in our public
11 housing. MTA and other state agencies, the same.
12 Always working to get our best points of contact and
13 build those relationships. So we're seeing the
14 policies, the strategies we're using on city property
15 and for our private property, also on our state-run
16 spaces.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay, great. And
18 then just a last question I had thought of in terms
19 of Council Member Bottcher's questions. Do we know
20 or have any log of the frequencies of building
21 extermination services to analyze? Like, do we know
22 if there are private buildings, municipally-owned
23 buildings, state buildings that have a month-to-month
24 or quarterly, or bi-- you know, every year, like,
25 frequencies of their extermination? And does that--

2 do we analyze that and determine maybe in areas that
3 we aren't seeing high 311 complaints, where we can
4 see there are 25 buildings that require extermination
5 every three weeks or every month?

6 DIRECTOR CORRADI: so, we as a city do not
7 track private extermination efforts. Department of
8 Health and a lot of their resources to private
9 property owners detail what you can do as a private
10 property owner, the last piece being hired a licensed
11 exterminator to take care of that work.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay.

13 DIRECTOR CORRADI: that is typically
14 determined between that service contractor and the
15 person employing the service, paying for the service,
16 so that's not something that we have a central
17 tracking on. I think it often speaks to kind of the
18 collective consciousness and thinking about, you
19 know, how are we addressing pests and those
20 conditions in a neighborhood.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Sure. I guess
22 the thought process that I have is if when DOHMH goes
23 out and we get a complaint about a private household,
24 they issue a violation, then we follow-up to ensure
25 that they've remedied or have done something. In that

2 same vein, we would not look at super-dense buildings
3 in that way and say how are you mitigating rodents or
4 pests, or even like what we're seeing globally right
5 now with bed bugs happening in Paris. Lots of-- you
6 know, it's coming to this side. We see the numbers
7 increases weekly with bed bug numbers. So, just
8 wondering how do we get ahead of some of this stuff
9 or how do we use some of this, that even though it's
10 a private building or privately-owned household, we
11 do in some way look at it for individual homeowners.
12 I guess I would like to think more creatively and say
13 like how do we then use or encourage building owners
14 to like validate the information that they are active
15 partners in this city and also helping with
16 extermination or rodent mitigation.

17 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yeah, I think it's a
18 really good idea. I'd love to explore it how-- this
19 collective accountability. Again, we have, you know,
20 the formal systems through Health and inspections,
21 but we can host, you know, education academies with
22 blocks, with buildings, you know, to talk about how
23 that individual ownership gets [inaudible] to our
24 private property owners and how we can better support
25 them, because the truth is we need our private

2 property owners to be doing the right thing when it
3 comes to rats, just like we need our city properties
4 to be working in concert.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Thank you so
6 much, thank you Chairs.

7 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Alright, thank you. I
8 have four questions, and then we're going to turn it
9 over to public testimony, which we're going to
10 migrate over-- for those of you who are here to
11 testify, we'll be migrating over before we do that.
12 Just with regards to the smart bins, it's here on
13 this topic because it's related to containerization
14 of food. But the smart bins and the community
15 composters are very different. One primary example
16 is where the outcome is. So the community composters,
17 they collect the food waste. They process it here.
18 They distribute the compost. That compost is used in
19 our street trees, our parks, and all that-- in all of
20 these public spaces. The smart bins go to the
21 digester eggs [sic] and are for the production of
22 methane. So, as a coms person, someone who's done a
23 lot of coms for Sanitation, how are you ensuring that
24 you're being very clear with the public that the

2 smart bins are not a composting program, that they
3 are a methane gas production program?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Some of the
5 smart bins do produce compost. Those smart bins
6 particularly on Staten Island are taken to the Staten
7 Island compost facility and turned into compost
8 there. Staten Island compost facility-- and I've
9 heard this come up a few times, the idea that New
10 York Sanitation's composting programs don't compost.
11 That facility processes about 150 million pounds of
12 leaf and yard waste per year, and we're engaged in a
13 major upgrade to it now that will take that number to
14 over 200 million. We've produced on average roughly
15 42 million pounds of finished compost per year for
16 the last decade or so, and that material, 40 percent
17 of it is distributed to parks, community groups, and
18 community gardens. Sixty percent of it is sold to
19 landscapers. We expect the amount given away for
20 free to increase substantially as the capacity goes
21 up. So I want to begin by saying there is a false
22 narrative that the material that you put out for
23 curbside compost collection or put in smart
24 composting bin is not composted.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, so what's the
3 percentage? You're saying Staten Island--

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN:
5 [interposing] There's some digestion--

6 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yes?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: The smart
8 bins, yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, so what about
10 Brooklyn and Queens?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: I want to
12 be careful about that. I can give you some
13 information.

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Alright.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: I want to
16 be careful about it because we have an active
17 procurement going on to develop new backend
18 processing capacity. And if I'm sitting here and I
19 say, we want more of this kind or that kind, that
20 prejudice is the procurement. I don't know what the
21 current state is today, but I can tell you that we
22 are working on changing that. The other thing I--

23 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] But you
24 can say, is the back end-- is the back end process--

2 procurement process for composting or for methane
3 gas?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: It's for
5 the processing of source separated organic material
6 as part of the City's curbside composting program. We
7 right now, the City operates a large wastewater
8 treatment plant at Newtown Creek. That plant is
9 powered by electricity. That electricity could come
10 from fracked gas or it could come from material put
11 in the--

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] We
13 understand that part.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: I want to
15 say for the record that I believe there's a good
16 thing for that plant which needs to exist to process
17 our wastewater to be proc-- to be powered by food
18 waste that would otherwise go to landfill.
19 Decomposition produces greenhouse gases. Let's put
20 those greenhouse gases to use.

21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Right. So, my
22 original question was, how are you ensuring in the
23 messaging that New Yorkers understand the differences
24 between where this material is potentially going?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: We've been
3 very clear that the focus of this program is
4 beneficial use. I've said it to the New York Times.
5 You know, I'm not sure how much more clear we could
6 be, that the goal is to make sure the material does
7 not go to landfill, that the material does not become
8 rat food.

9 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: So where does the
10 material that comes out of the dehydrated out of the
11 eggs go?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Well, I know
13 that the solids, which are just the small pieces--

14 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] The
15 digested [sic], where does it go?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Some of it
17 is used for the capping of landfills and some of it
18 becomes fertilizer, bio-solid fertilizer.

19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And none of it ends up
20 inside the landfill.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: DEP operates
22 the facility. You'd have to ask them. I'm sorry--

23 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] Well,
24 we've asked them and we've actually asked people
25 who've gone out to the landfills in Ohio and it is

2 not only being used for capping. So I just want to
3 make sure we're being clear, all the way through and
4 through to New Yorkers that this material does
5 potentially end up and a percentage does end up in a
6 landfill.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: And may I
8 ask what it becomes if there's no curbside
9 composting?

10 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I--

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN:

12 [interposing] [inaudible]

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: think we should be
14 investing in more composting facilities.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Okay, I get
16 it.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Hands down, that's my
18 position. I'm not saying I'm against all of it. I'm
19 saying dispropor-- in proportion--

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN:

21 [interposing] I understand.

22 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: I would like that. I
23 understand that's not the point of this hearing, but
24 I just wanted to walk that all the way through.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: I agree,
3 Council Member, that it's worth discussing today. If
4 I may respectfully make one other point. I think you
5 have encountered a very frustrating situation in the
6 past which is this pernicious myth about recycling,
7 metal, glass, plastic, and paper recycling. People
8 say, "I don't really have to do that, right? Doesn't
9 it all get thrown away? It all gets thrown out
10 right? I don't have to separate." And we know
11 that's false. It gets recycled. It gets put to
12 beneficial use. I'm very cautious about the idea
13 that we are now creating pernicious myth around
14 composting. I don't really have to do it. I heard
15 in a council hearing that it goes into a landfill.
16 It's not true. We put it to beneficial use. And I
17 want to be very clear, New Yorkers should separate
18 their material as part of the largest and easiest
19 curbside composting program ever created.

20 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: We all want that to
21 happen, and no one's trying to create false
22 narratives here, and that's why I'm asking you to
23 make sure that's not happening.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Thank you
25 for the opportunity to speak about it.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. So Council
3 Member Chi Ossé, I just wanted to recognize you. Oh,
4 and you do have a question. Okay, I just have a
5 question related to NYCHA. Early 2023 reporting
6 stated that dozens of NYCHA basements remain dirt
7 uncapped by concrete. Can you describe kind of where
8 we are at in that process of finally sealing off
9 these basements and if there's anything related to
10 schools? I thought some schools were left also
11 uncapped, but I'm not sure. But if you could just
12 give us an update on where we are.

13 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yeah, so I'll speak
14 eye [sic] level to NYCHA and then further questions
15 we can defer to-- refer to them for details. As a
16 mentioned, NYCHA's employing a plethora of exclusion
17 methods. So that's door sweeps, that's wire lathe.
18 The rat slabs [sic] which is the capping off of dirt
19 crawl spaces. As of 2019, they had 50 rat slabs
20 installed across-- let me get my numbers here-- nine
21 developments, 10 developments, and with the Harlem
22 Road mitigation zone standing up announced this April
23 there's an additional six slabs being put in. As it
24 refers to Department of Education, we'll have to
25 direct that question to them.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you. I know
3 we-- there was a line of questioning about DOB, but
4 just to get it-- I wasn't fully clear on what was
5 being said. So I know that the-- with the law,
6 people who are to get the construction permit have to
7 upload. They self-certify. How are you-- I mean,
8 how are you just-- they put up the certificate: "I
9 got an exterminator, I got someone who's going to
10 come," but beyond that process, is there any
11 additional verification strategies?

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER VILENCHIK:
13 Yes, so it's several levels of verification exist
14 within the Department. First of all and most
15 obvious, certain construction site, we created--
16 created unit which called Construction Safety
17 Compliance in which we proactively visit the
18 construction site. And obviously, a part of the
19 inspections [inaudible] housekeeping. As I said
20 they're not specifically targeting rats and we're not
21 looking for them, but we well aware that conditions
22 of poor housekeeping is a blinking light which lead
23 to the safety accidents. And to us, when we see the
24 poor housekeeping, this is really good cause we
25 initiate conversation with the constructor or

2 competent person who's in charge of the construction
3 site. On top of this, as you know, certain
4 construction sites require construction
5 superintendents, construction site safety manager.
6 They are obligated to keep the record and perform
7 daily inspections. So a part of daily inspections
8 they're supposed to mention about housekeeping, and
9 if they said there's poor housekeeping is-- it's kind
10 of serious which could lead to much serious
11 violations.

12 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Thank you for
13 that additional explanation. My last question, and
14 then I'll turn it over to Council Member Ossé. OMB
15 when he had our Exec Budg [sic] hearing last year--
16 or no, the final OMB hearing, they said they had
17 adopted climate budgeting as part of its ongoing
18 commitment to addressing the climate crisis. And one
19 of the -- one of these, I guess the benefit of it is
20 that they will be offering sustainability and
21 resiliency evaluations tools to compare different
22 types of operations in consistent ways such as CO2
23 avoided, or how projects contribute to citywide
24 resiliency. Has OMB provided DSNY any guidance on
25 these tools yet?

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Not
3 that we're aware of at this time yet.

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay, thank you.

5 That's my last question. Council Member Ossé, do you
6 want?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you so much,
8 hair, and good afternoon everyone. My apologies if
9 this question was asked already, but I'm just looking
10 in the testimony. Has there been an update on the
11 results of the containerization plan in Hamilton
12 Heights? My apologies if that was probably asked
13 during this hearing, but would love to learn about
14 that.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: It was but
16 I'm happy to recap. We're very proud of the
17 developments in that program. within the 10-block
18 pilot zone, the rat sightings to 311-- so we look at
19 the period from when the pilot started which was
20 September 12th to the present and compare it to that
21 same set of days last year. Sightings of rats are
22 down 55 percent.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: And what's the plan
24 for expansion of that?

25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Well, the
3 plan is really laid out in the Future of Trash Report
4 which is to develop this side-loading truck and fixed
5 on street containers. This specific pilot is likely
6 not going to expand in this form. It provides us with
7 a lot of information that we're going to use to
8 rollout broader containerization measures.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: So I haven't read
10 the trash report, my apologies, but is there a
11 timeline in terms of the process and [inaudible]

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: There's not
13 a specific timeline laid out in there. What I can
14 recap-- for it to get to 100 percent.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Sure.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: I'll recap
17 very quickly what we've done so far. So, first we
18 changed the set-out times, which incentivized
19 containerization. Then we mandated containerization
20 for first, food related businesses, then chain
21 related businesses, then all businesses, and then we
22 announced in October of this year that starting in
23 the fall of next year, all residential buildings with
24 one to nine units will have to use individual
25 containers, and then two years after that they'll

2 have to use the standard official NYC container.

3 Those announcements alone get us to 70 percent
4 containerization. The plan for that final 30 percent
5 which is the high-density residential is in formation
6 now based on the results of the Hamilton Heights
7 pilot. We are excited to be operating at what I
8 certainly consider to be a very fast pace, and I
9 think we're going to have more to say of it in just
10 the next couple of months.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Great. And what
12 are the communities that you are considering to
13 become--

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN:
15 [interposing] Citywide.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Citywide, okay,
17 great.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: The whole
19 city is going to be containerization not by-- under
20 our current thinking.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Sure.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Not
23 neighborhood by neighborhood, but building type by
24 building type.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Okay. Another
3 question I have is, you know, according to the
4 committee report, my district, the 36th District in
5 Brooklyn has the third longest mean response time to
6 311 complaints at two days. Yet, Bedford-Stuyvesant
7 is considered one of the areas where rat issues in
8 New York City are some of the worst, right? I think
9 my-- I know my community is one of the four rat
10 mitigation zones. What is the response for this long
11 311 response time and how do we fix that?

12 DIRECTOR CORRADI: Yeah, so I'll start by
13 saying as a rodent mitigation zones, there's
14 proactive indexing which means health inspections of
15 every property twice a year in the parts of your
16 district that are rodent mitigation zones. For 311
17 complaints, everyone does solicit a response by
18 Department of Health if it's a rat sighting, and
19 that's something-- I don't know, Corinne, if you want
20 to expand on that. It's something we can definitely
21 take a look at about varying response times and see
22 if there's something we can, you know, uncover to
23 make sure we're providing equity across all the
24 districts.

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LOJAN: Can I
3 just add to that, just across all 311 complaints,
4 sanitation related, each 311 complaint type has a
5 pre-requisite service level agreement, meaning the
6 response that we have to get back to the resident.
7 We've recently started having what we call trash dash
8 [sic] meetings where we have our district
9 superintendents come down every week on rotation, and
10 we stress the importance of meeting those service
11 level agreements, so that-- should hopefully be an
12 improvement at least on the sanitation related SRs
13 [sic] for your district.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Alright, thank you.
15 Thank you, Chairs.

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Just want to thank
17 you, members of the Administration, for testifying
18 today. It was nice to meet you at hearing for the
19 first time. Really appreciate all of your answers.
20 We'll send a list of follow-up questions, but thank
21 you very much for being here. I believe we are going
22 to transition. For members of the public who are
23 here to testify, we're going to transition to the
24 committee room. And we're going to take a five-
25 minute break for the chairs.

2 [break]

3 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Alright, we're going
4 to start our public testimony portion. I'm going to
5 kick it over to Morgan who will facilitate it.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you all for
7 being here today. We'll call up panels of three.
8 First we'll have Justin Green, Arif Sunmonu, and
9 Marisa DeDominicis. Justin, you may begin.

10 JUSTIN GREEN: Hi, I'm Justin Green. I'm
11 the Executive Director of Big Reuse. Thank you guys
12 so much for having us, and thank you, Chair Nurse,
13 for all your support for community composting
14 outreach. As we're fighting to restore our funding
15 for community composting outreach, we've seen
16 incredible outpouring of support with over 40,000
17 letters submitted and hundreds of people at a rally.
18 Right now, our budget at Big Reuse for outreach has
19 been cut. We are the street team for Department of
20 Sanitation for curbside collection. We have nine
21 staff who have been working on this for the past two
22 years, with six part-time staff, speaking seven
23 different languages, going door to door throughout
24 the City, going to over 900 events a year, speaking
25 to over 75,000 people about curbside each year.

2 Right now, the City with these PEGs is going to
3 eliminate that team completely. They're also
4 eliminating our community composting team who's been
5 working on promoting composting for the last decade
6 in the City. We compost over two million pounds of
7 material a year, provide 1,500 cubic yards of compost
8 to community gardens, 250 community groups and street
9 tree care events. The City's is also completely
10 cutting funding for that program. we are part of a
11 coalition of seven other community groups who are
12 also losing their funding, resulting in 115 jobs
13 being cut that are all supporting composting and
14 outreach for curbside. Now, obviously, this makes
15 zero sense when you're launching a citywide program
16 for composting for curbside collection, to be cutting
17 the 115 most-dedicated people that are supporting
18 that program, eliminating green jobs during a climate
19 crisis, eliminating those jobs while a launching
20 program is sort of-- doesn't make sense. So I
21 really-- we're hoping the Ci ty will expand community
22 composting and expand outreach instead of cutting it.
23 I think it makes sense to support this to eliminate
24 rats. Thanks.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Justin.

3 And I should have mentioned this earlier, folks will
4 have two minutes each to testify, and also 72 hours
5 after the hearing to submit written testimony. Arif,
6 you may begin. Thank you.

7 ARIF SUNMONU: Thank you. Good afternoon
8 Chairperson Nurse and members of the committee.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today.

10 My name is Arif Sunmonu, and I'm the Government

11 Affairs Lead here at Grow NYC, a nonprofit that

12 played a pivotal role in improving the environmental

13 quality of New York City for the past 50 years. One

14 of the secondary benefits of composting and food

15 scrap collection is rat mitigation. More than a

16 third of all the trash in our city comes from organic

17 waste, while just 1.4 percent of that is composted.

18 Much of this waste is not separated and put in

19 traditional black bags providing rats with a vital

20 source of food. We've all had the unpleasant

21 experience of seeing a bag-- seeing trash bags being

22 pilfered by a gang of rats. Through food scrap

23 containerization and composting-- through food scrap

24 containerization, composting can play a pivotal role

25 in the City's fight against rats. Grow NYC's zero

2 waste program works with communities to help them
3 responsibly manage their waste and separate their
4 food scraps. In FY23 we provided New Yorkers with
5 over 2,600 opportunities to drop off food scraps at
6 our 52 sites. Through the collective efforts of over
7 400,000 New Yorkers we diverted over 2.5 million
8 pounds of food scraps. Additionally our zero waste
9 schools program has worked with over 800 schools,
10 implementing schoolwide composting and recycling. We
11 provided outreach and education to thousands of New
12 Yorkers which in full served not only the community
13 composting program, but the curbside program as well
14 as echoed by the Commissioner. While our organic
15 waste collection is critical to curbing greenhouse
16 gas emissions and keeping our city clean, it also
17 eliminates the number one food source for rats.
18 Several municipalities have cited compost as a cost-
19 effective method to decrease the rat population.
20 Additionally a study by the Department of Sanitation
21 found food scrap collection and community composting
22 are an effective tool in mitigating the city's rising
23 rat population. This amongst many reasons is why
24 were so alarmed when Commissioner Tisch cut the
25 community composting program, effectively eliminating

2 Grow NYC's compost program and shuttering over 198
3 food scrap drop-off sites across the City. In
4 addition to these environmental and social costs,
5 there's an economic cost as well. If these cuts were
6 to go through, we'd see the termination of 115 jobs,
7 including 15 union jobs. For these-- additionally,
8 New Yorkers will lose access to free accessible
9 educational resources, making adoption of the
10 curbside program that much harder. For these reasons
11 I've outlined we urge DSNY and the Adam's
12 Administration to reconsider these cuts as they would
13 hinder the City's ability to respond to this crisis
14 while jeopardizing New York City's climate justice
15 objectives. The community composting program is a
16 cost-effective tool in the fight against rats, and we
17 hope to partner with the New York City Council and
18 Adams Administration with these efforts. And on a
19 personal note, as an alumni of New York Harbor
20 School, I'm really happy to see students here today
21 testifying and being civically engaged.

22 MARISA DEDOMINICIS: Good morning. My
23 name's Marisa DeDominicis. I'm the ED and Co-Founder
24 of Earth Matter, a nonprofit dedicated to composting,
25 and we're located on Governor's Island. I'd like to

2 thank the Commissioner for her work in the commercial
3 containerization and the new residents set-out trash
4 time. These initiatives have assisted New Yorkers in
5 reducing the amount of rats feasting off of what's in
6 the black bags, but this community is well aware,
7 however, that there's 3.9 million tons of food scraps
8 that are going into the landfill each year; 34
9 percent in the black bags or containers could be
10 composted. There's a very small percentage of the
11 food scraps that's currently captured through the
12 composting program. While I agree what the
13 Commissioner stated a full participation of New
14 Yorkers are needed to solve the city's rat epidemic,
15 teaching New Yorkers the why and the how successfully
16 taking away food scraps from the black bags for
17 decades has happened through the New York City
18 composting that is done by many of the people that
19 are-- the community composters organizations,
20 residents that have been paving the way for this to
21 become a municipal service and a global model. The
22 lack of validation by the Commissioner through this
23 budget cut that's slated for December 31st wipes out
24 the foundational and essential work that the
25 organizations-- it's a cut to her own goal of full

2 participation. It's a cut in the jugular actually,
3 in order to arrive at what we can do to solve this
4 together. We may want to pat ourselves in the back
5 that composting is now a household word, but nine out
6 of 10 New Yorkers do not actually know what
7 composting is, what the process is, or that New York
8 City composting program is mostly exclusively
9 consisting of digestion [sic] which is not
10 composting. Oh, I'm sorry. I'll submit my full
11 testimony. But we're asking the Commissioner to turn
12 a new page, adopt a tag line that DSNY is the
13 resource recovery agency and continue to do this
14 critical work, and to send the rats packing together.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you so much. I
16 just have like a few, just two quick questions. I
17 recognize there's so many people who want to testify,
18 so I will hold to-- try to hold to the two minutes.
19 But how long has DSNY been funding your operations?

20 MARISA DEDOMINICIS: 2012.

21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And for--

22 MARISA DEDOMINICIS: Excuse me. However,
23 they've been hosting the compost project since 1994
24 with you all.

25 MARISA DEDOMINICIS: No, just the--

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] Okay,
3 just--

4 MARISA DEDOMINICIS: Botanical Gardens
5 and the lower east side ecologist.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: In the lead up to
7 this PEG announcement, were there any conversations?
8 Was there any outreach to you to say this is coming
9 down the pipeline, get prepared?

10 JUSTIN GREEN: Not at all. I mean, we
11 were given a month notice that we're going to have to
12 lay off, you know, 20 staff, and also to just affirm,
13 we have operating composting sites that we have to
14 somehow-- that have 250 yards of like active compost
15 that are going to have to be shut down in a month,
16 during holiday season without like zero [inaudible].

17 MARISA DEDOMINICIS: And for our
18 organizations, we're getting half of our staff laid
19 off.

20 ARIF SUNMONU: Exactly. Grow NYC, too.
21 [inaudible]

22 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Half of both of your
23 staffs are laid off for both of your organizations.
24 And for I believe Earth Matters specifically, and
25

2 maybe for you Big Reuse, the land that you operate on
3 is public land, correct?

4 MARISA DEDOMINICIS: Yes, in fact, it's
5 actually tied to a three-way relationship with the
6 island, and so the island is able to execute the zero
7 waste and doing the composting only because the
8 Department of Sanitation's memorandum for
9 understanding from 2012 stipulates that the
10 contractor Earth Matter is doing all of the
11 composting work. So the island will not be able to
12 be impossible for the island to be able to continue
13 their zero waste island because they don't have the
14 funding's. They're getting PEGs as well. They don't
15 have any funding to provide for the composting on the
16 island.

17 JUSTIN GREEN: And our land is-- I mean,
18 we're-- we have a couple of different-- we have three
19 different locations. One of our locations is on DSNY
20 DEP land. One is on Parks land, and then one is co-
21 located at Red Hook Farms which is on Parks land. So
22 we're hoping, you know, to continue operation, but
23 with no time or notice to find other funding sources
24 or set up other systems, it's going to be incredibly
25 difficult.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And since the
3 announcement of these cuts, what has engagement been
4 by the Department of Sanitation with you all as DSNY-
5 funded organizations?

6 JUSTIN GREEN: Just been focused on
7 cutting. Got like laying--

8 ARIF SUNMONU: [inaudible]

9 JUSTIN GREEN: Yeah, pushing the budget
10 out and reducing the staff and laying people off.

11 ARIF SUNMONU: Yeah, echoing Justin's
12 sentiments, very, very well [sic]. Not very helpful.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay. Well, thank
14 you so much. We appreciate all the work you've been
15 doing for so long to get New Yorkers ready. I do
16 agree that this is undercutting the Commissioner's
17 own goal of getting this program online. I mean, even
18 with the IBO report, if we don't get participation
19 rates high enough, this is actually going to be a
20 cost-negative program. So we want to make sure that
21 enough people are participating where it's actually
22 justified, and that's really only through you all
23 doing the work you do. So thank you so much.

24 JUSTIN GREEN: And just on the-- for the
25 outreach, too, like we have been really the main team

2 if not only team out in the field doing that or door
3 knocking and curbside, for curbside. So they-- you
4 know, in asking them what's their plan, our team is
5 still going out even though they know they're losing
6 their jobs at the end of the month. We're still at
7 events today.

8 MARISA DEDOMINICIS: I would [inaudible]
9 the Commissioner just validate that composting is
10 something that people can see, people can get on
11 board on, and we need it for the infrastructure which
12 the City has invested in significantly. So is the
13 city now going to with the budget deficit buy compost
14 to be able to take care of all the trees that it's
15 invested in?

16 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Yeah, the validation
17 needs to come through the funding of the programs.
18 Thank you all very much for your testimony.

19 JUSTIN GREEN: And thank you, Council
20 Member Nurse and Schulman and the rest of the Council
21 for all your help in these efforts. We really
22 appreciate it. Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: thank you. Next we
24 will have Erik Menjivar, Eric Goldstein, and Clare
25 Mifflin. Erik Menjivar, you may begin. Thank you.

2 ERIK MENJIVAR: Good afternoon Chairs

3 Nurse and Schulman and members of this committee.

4 Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name's

5 Erik Menjivar, and I'm a proud member of the

6 Bargaining Committee for the Grow NYC's Worker's

7 Collective. I work as a compost coordinator and

8 green market manager for Grow NYC and together with

9 our partners at the New York City Compost Project, we

10 serve millions of New Yorkers throughout the five

11 boroughs providing food scrap collections, organics

12 processing, compost outreach, education, access, and

13 finish compost. Community compost was fully funded

14 by the city and the Mayor in the last budget, and

15 defunding it is basically a violation of our contract

16 and also a violation of the public trust and also the

17 trust [inaudible] employees. Because of this, 115

18 environmental jobs are at risk of being lost, 53 of

19 those have been strengthened in the last year due to

20 our unionization efforts, and that is also being

21 placed at risk as well. Community composting is

22 among the best tools that we've got when it comes to

23 rat mitigation. Food waste sitting out in the street

24 in plastic bags has always been the ever-present

25 factor when it comes to rat infestations. Our

2 current roll-out of curbside composting and smart
3 bins, besides not being environmentally sound is
4 basic-- is deeply flawed. I work at the Green Market
5 at Forest Hills every single Sunday, and I can tell
6 you from experience of what people tell me, it's a
7 sense of frustration and disappointment of how the
8 City is doing composting through curbside and smart
9 bins. They see community composting as their only
10 option. And compared to the comments that we heard
11 earlier in the hearing when it came to DSNY, this is
12 an issue that is important to over think about, to
13 basically put a lot of thought into where does--
14 where the food scraps are going. Constituents see
15 that as a necessity when it comes to placing their
16 trust in compost. So I call on all of you to vote no
17 on these budget cuts, and if this nefarious plan to
18 remove community composting is successful, then I ask
19 you to basically restore that funding for Fiscal Year
20 2024 and to ensure the existence of the program
21 within legislation. Thank you.

22 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Good afternoon Chair
23 Nurse and Chair Schulman. Eric Goldstein from the
24 Natural Resources Defense Council. As you know, rats
25 are a public health challenge and a real problem for

2 New York City. I'm going to summarize my written
3 testimony. To its credit, the Administration has
4 taken steps to reduce the rodent invasion, and one
5 important initiative has been the set of rules that
6 the Sanitation Department has promulgated in the
7 demonstration projects they've launched on
8 containerization. It's hard to determine how much
9 progress is actually being made, because we need
10 better measurements as Councilman Bottcher said; what
11 gets measured gets done. Data from 311 suggests that
12 some progress has been made on a month to month basis
13 compared to last year, but even if you assume that
14 that data is correct, looking back over 10 years the
15 amount of rat complaints in the 311 database has more
16 than doubled. So we've got a lot of work to do. My
17 personal observation on the upper west side where I've
18 lived for more than 30 years, seems to confirm that
19 containerization may be helping at least in our
20 neighborhood. Many but not all of the restaurants in
21 our neighborhood have begun using rodent-proof
22 containers in recent months, and we do seem to
23 observe fewer rats at these locations, because we all
24 know the problem has hardly been solved, and more
25 intensive and exceptional efforts are necessary.

2 Just last night I was walking home from the subway,
3 and a man walking behind me yelled, "did you see
4 that?" I said, no what? He said, "A rat just jumped
5 out from under that car." We have them I said. He
6 said, "I just moved here to the City. That was a big
7 one," he said. Welcome to New York I said. A couple
8 of blocks away-- and this is true, both of these
9 things happened last night. As I was passing the
10 20th precinct police house on 82nd Street I noticed a
11 big pile of plastic bags of trash right outside the
12 precinct house, and sure enough, a rat scurried
13 righty by the pile. As Council Member Hudson noted,
14 the war on rats is not yet over. We have three
15 suggestions. First, DSNY and DOH must be given the
16 resources they need to enforce and fully implement
17 the new containerization requirements in every
18 neighborhood throughout the city, especially in
19 places like NYCHA properties. The problems with rats
20 are not equally distributed in this city. On the
21 upper west side I observed restaurants and other
22 commercial establishments that now have trash
23 containers, but not enough of them. so these
24 establishments either have piles of food waste or
25 refuse in plastic bags right next to the containers,

2 or they overfill the containers leaving the lids open
3 and defeating the rodent-proof purpose of those
4 containers. So, we need stronger enforcement.

5 Second, we recommend the Council, DSNY and DOH take
6 steps to ensure that all buildings under ownership or
7 control of New York City comply or come into

8 compliance with City Sanitation and Health Department
9 rules and laws including containerization. We've

10 observed significant rat populations as Council
11 Member Hudson noted, outside police precincts, and we

12 know that NYCHA properties over the years have a been
13 a disgraceful-- have had a disgraceful level of rat

14 invasions. Finally, the Administration must act
15 more broadly upon its understanding of the link

16 between available food sources and rat population.

17 That means providing rodent-proof bins for organics
18 collection to all households in all five boroughs.

19 It means much more extensive education and outreach
20 on citywide composting, and most urgently it means

21 restoring three billion dollars in fiscal funds this
22 year for community composting. Community composts

23 are the necessary citizen education, participation,
24 and compliance arm needed to make the curbside

25 organics collection program succeed. The Department

2 should recognize that these nonprofits organization
3 are valuable partners and resources, and should find
4 a way to work with them and deploy throughout the
5 community, not only on the residential side, but to
6 educate restaurants and businesses and assist them.
7 The City will never solve the rat problem without a
8 successful composting program, and the City will
9 never have a successful curbside composting program
10 if it ends up destroying its community composting
11 partners. Thank you to your attention.

12 CLARE MIFLIN: Thank you. My name is
13 Clare Miflin. I'm the Executive Director of the
14 Center for Zero Waste Design, and since 2017 when we
15 released the Zero Waste Design Guidelines looking at
16 how you could better design buildings in the City to
17 get to zero waste, we have been calling on the City
18 to containerize its waste to collect all organic
19 waste. So we're very happy that they're doing that,
20 but we have so many ideas for how they could do it
21 more affordably and in a way that would bring so many
22 more benefits to the City. Seems like the Future of
23 Trash Report just looked at the piles of bags on the
24 street and said how can we put them in containers
25 instead. They didn't look at how can we improve the

2 whole system, how can we do this in the most cost-
3 effective way, and how can we make sure that the
4 biggest piles of trash-- that's 23 percent of the
5 residential waste-- they said couldn't be done from
6 the big buildings. Because their only solution is
7 permanent bins on the streets. They think those 400-
8 unit buildings supers are going to bring bags out and
9 put them in side load containers and take up half the
10 block. That's just a stupid idea when you could
11 actually just have the cutes go into wheeled bins,
12 stage them temporarily in the parking lane, different
13 [sic] waste type every day, and then use that for
14 delivery other times of day. That is much more
15 affordable, much less impact on our public space, and
16 they could tie it into [inaudible] because we need
17 those kinds of incentives for containerization to tie
18 into waste reduction goals. Similarly, our
19 commercial strips, we have people in walk-ups that
20 brings their bags of trash straight to the street.
21 They have no shared bin. There's commercial on the
22 ground floor. We already have those commercial
23 businesses having to bins on the sidewalk, chained to
24 the storm drains. Now they want the walk-ups above
25 to have bins. Our commercial walk-up streets are

2 going to be lined with like nine bins in front of
3 every store front. That makes no sense. And then
4 organics-- oh, my god. I'm already done time.
5 Organics, we need to-- we spend a billion on rain
6 gardens and we want to increase our street trees. We
7 need compost to maintain those, and the way to get it
8 is the good, quality, community scale. Composting--
9 give us good quality compost. If we can spend a
10 billion dollars doing rain gardens, shouldn't we be
11 able to spend a few million every year to make sure
12 we have the compost to maintain them. And if you
13 want to cut funds, what about 37 percent of the city
14 streets that are one to two-family blocks, many of
15 them in Brooklyn and Queens. They get two or three
16 times trash pick-up a week. My block is two
17 families, it has 10 trucks come down it each week.
18 It's oen lane. It has a different truck for each
19 side of the street. We can cut those trash trucks,
20 especially if they're getting organics, and that
21 could save the necessary money and more to save
22 community composting. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: thank you so much.
24 Gave little extra time, because you all come and
25 testify all the time. And you know, we consider Eric

2 an honorary member of the committee. But thank you
3 so much for your testimony today.

4 ERIC GOLDSTEIN: Thank you for your
5 leadership both of you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next we
7 will have Jesse McLaughlin, Andrew Winfrey [sp?], and
8 Robert Markuske.

9 JESSE MCLAUGHLIN: Hi there. Good
10 afternoon. Thank you Chairperson Nurse and
11 chairperson Schulman for hearing my testimony today.
12 My name is Jesse McLaughlin and I'm a representative
13 of New York City Audubon, and organizations that
14 works for the protection of wild birds and habitats
15 in the five boroughs, improving quality of life for
16 all New Yorkers. Today, I'm testifying about the
17 dangerous abuse of rodenticides which harms both
18 birds and people. Birds are often New Yorkers for
19 connection with nature, and New York City is
20 surprisingly a birding hotspot. More than 300
21 species of birds pass through, nest, or reside here
22 in our city. Birds are also a critical part of a
23 healthy, functioning ecosystem, and that is
24 especially true for birds of prey like raptors and
25 owls, and they're an important place at the top of

2 the food chain. Our urban ecosystem supplies the
3 sustenance that birds of prey need to survive, and
4 that actually includes rat. However, this food
5 source also represents one of the greatest dangers to
6 these birds in the form of poisoning. Rodenticides,
7 also called rat poisons, are commonly yet
8 ineffectively used to control rodent populations.
9 When birds of prey like a red tailed hawk eats a
10 poisoned rodent, they become poisoned themselves.
11 Because raptors are actually at the top of the food
12 chain and will eat many rats, toxins become more
13 potently concentrated in the raptor through a process
14 called bio magnification. In fact, poisons were
15 detected in 84 percent of dead birds of prey found in
16 New York City in a study conducted by the Department
17 of Environmental Conservation. New York City Audubon
18 applauds New York City Parks for their integrated
19 pest management approach and observance of raptor
20 nesting season during which they do not bait for
21 rodents in raptor hunting or nesting areas. But on a
22 whole, New York City's war on rats through poisons
23 has been unsafe. We just do not have that data to
24 prove that poisons meaningful reduce rat populations,
25 but we do have data that proves that rodenticide's

2 dangerous and unconscionable effects on wild birds
3 and people. Thank you.

4 ROBERT MARKUSKE: My name is Robert
5 Markuske. I'm a teacher at the New York Harbor
6 School. I just want to say thank you to Chairman
7 Nurse for being so accessible and honoring the youth
8 at these events. I'm going to try to keep it really
9 short. It seems like the Department of Sanitation in
10 the City is taking a technocratic approach to dealing
11 with a community problem, not relying on communities,
12 community experts. I'm inspired and trained by
13 community composters that deal with food waste. I
14 then train my students. My students are trained by
15 community composters on Governor's Island,
16 particularly Earth Matter. I've also interned at Big
17 Reuse. It seems like all roads lead back to
18 community composters and dealing with rats, food
19 waste mitigation, and a whole list of climate change
20 issues. Just now while I was in this hearing, my
21 administration texted me a question about an event
22 this morning. I had to show it to Marissa, and then
23 Earth Matters bringing something over to school. So
24 just the approach from the top down doesn't seem to
25 work. We should rely on the bottom up, which is the

2 community composting organizations. Yeah, I showed
3 this to my students. Your testimonies are just in
4 line with what is being spoken early on in your
5 opening Chairman Nurse. So I hope that the folks
6 are, as they said would be, virtually listening to
7 the youth, because they'll speak very eloquently on
8 this issue. One last thing, I-- waste-- the money--
9 waste has to be picked up. Money's going to be
10 needed to pick that up. I just don't see why it would
11 be taken out of the hands of the people that are
12 already doing that work, rather than reinvent the
13 wheel or rely on some technocratic method that hasn't
14 been proven to be successful yet. So, that's all I
15 have. And that's the real revolution, right, is to
16 start from the bottom up. So thanks a lot.

17 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you so much.
18 And thanks for bringing your students today. We're
19 looking forward to hearing from all of them. I guess
20 we're going to start calling them up.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes. The next panel
22 will be Cristiano Cornell, Connor Perry, and Halee
23 Hernandez.

24 CRISTIANO CORNELL: Hey guys, how's it
25 going? I am Cristiano Cornell, a student in the New

2 York Harbor School's Marine Affairs and Policy

3 Advocacy Program. I've worked with Earth Matter and

4 have been trained in composting. I've also managed

5 and processed organic matter and compost in my

6 school. I'm looking forward to working an internship

7 with Earth Matter over the spring. The mayor's

8 proposed budget cuts, however, threaten not only the

9 zero waste goal of Earth Matter, but also my

10 internship experience. If Earth Matter gets

11 downsized not only will me and other students be

12 denied a similar and fulfilling internship

13 experience, but the uncertainty of their ability to

14 manage waste is a serious concern for our school. I

15 can personally advocate for community composting

16 because I've seen firsthand the benefits of it.

17 Composting, along with as many other benefits is one

18 of the best tools to implement for rat mitigation.

19 The process is easier said than done, but it's pretty

20 simple. Having a way to sustainably get rid of food

21 scraps will get rid of rats. If there's food in our

22 trash and on our streets, there's less rats on our

23 streets. However, while composting is a great tool

24 to help mitigate rats, that isn't its only purpose.

25 Composting can help reduce landfill sizes by

2 diverting food waste into compost instead of into a
3 landfill site and pollute. Once turned into compost,
4 it can enrich soil and reduce rain runoff. Creating
5 compost comes with amazing benefits, but in order to
6 do that it actually has to be turned into compost and
7 not into an engineered bio slurry [sic]. While this
8 bio slurry does provide energy, it completely gets
9 rid of the benefits of composting and creates methane
10 along with it. the bio slurry also has to be
11 transported by truck meaning that it has the
12 potential to leak and cause serious health and safety
13 concerns, and not to mention, we don't need more cars
14 I the road. If the City is going to collect food
15 scraps, they should put them to good use. It doesn't
16 matter if citywide composting is even there however,
17 if people don't know how to use it. If people don't
18 know how to use the smart bins, people with either
19 not use them or use them incorrectly. Community
20 composting programs can help educate people on how to
21 use these smart bins, and if the food waste actually
22 gets turned into compost, we can look forward to a
23 more sustainable future for the City. If the Mayor's
24 proposed-- damn. If the Mayor's proposed budget cuts
25 go through and community composting is cut, our food

2 scraps will go to waste and the rat problem will only
3 continue to grow. Please don't cut funding. Thank
4 you.

5 CONNOR PERRY: Hi, my name is Connor
6 Perry, and I'm a senior in the Marine Affairs Policy
7 and Advocacy Program at the New York Harbor School on
8 Governor's Island. As a part of the Marine Policy
9 CTE, I do a lot of composting with the help of other
10 organizations such as Earth Matter and Grow NYC.
11 These organizations work very closely with several
12 communities helping to educate citizens on the
13 benefits of composting as well as helping citizens
14 become more involved in their communities. Through
15 their efforts in composting, they also help fight the
16 rat problem facing our city. However, these
17 organizations are at risk of being seriously
18 downsized by budget cuts. With the help of these
19 organizations, we hope to achieve zero waste at
20 Harbor School. While it might seem that composting
21 is non-crucial, it doesn't need to be kept-- and
22 doesn't need to be kept in the budget, that's simply
23 not the case. It diverts over eight million pounds of
24 organic waste from landfills each year along with
25 being the most sustainable and equitable form of

2 waste management. However, one of the main and most
3 crucial problems composting helps solve is our rat
4 problem. The whole concept of composting is that any
5 food waste gets turned into soil which can then be
6 used to plant trees and crops. So if composting is
7 taken out of the budget, people across the City won't
8 be able to sort their food waste, and with all this
9 extra food waste, the number of rats in the city will
10 increase drastically being attracted to all the
11 thrown out food. I hope that you take my testimony
12 along with the rest of my peers into consideration.
13 Thank you.

14 HALEY HERNANDEZ: Good afternoon City
15 Council Members. My name is Haley Hernandez, a Marine
16 Affairs Policy and Advocacy Senior from New York
17 Harbor High School. I've come to voice the crisis of
18 New Yorkers' community composting and fundamental
19 process in New York Harbor School's High School.
20 Research and education for student-- as a students of
21 Marine Affairs Policy and Advocacy, I've understood
22 that composting is a solution not only for rats, but
23 creating an alternative version of the American
24 dream, one may say a sustainable dream. Alternations
25 that interfere with essential tools and methods will

2 deplete the education and opportunities of our Harbor
3 School students [inaudible]. These essential tools
4 are provided by Earth Matter and all sustainable
5 companies that give opportunities and education to
6 students across New York City. Unfortunately, the
7 budget cuts would drastically set back the education
8 at not only Harbor High School, but the education of
9 composting throughout all of New York City. While
10 studying a diverse career in technology education,
11 also known as a CTE, I began to understand with the
12 help of Earth Matter that when properly sorting
13 compost, New Yorkers can eradicate the unsanitary
14 beasts of the city. In addition, it will create a
15 sustainable reality for us and future New Yorkers.
16 When conducting our own process of composting and
17 sorting we never saw rats even with production being
18 outside in the garden. When budget cuts close to
19 more than 75 percent of access to disposable compost,
20 this may cause a greater rat infestation. With all
21 that being said, I'll continue to voice and advocate
22 for the crisis of New Yorkers' community composting,
23 a fundamental process in New York Harbor High
24 School's research and education for current and

2 future generations. Thank you everyone for your time
3 and consideration.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you all
5 very much. Really appreciate it. I want to
6 acknowledge that we've been joined by Council Member
7 Joseph.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you all. Next
9 we will have Summer Stevenson [sp?], Mia Velez, and
10 Steven Matthew. Okay, Summer, you may begin.

11 SUMMER STEVENSON: Hi, my name is Summer
12 Stevenson, and as a New York City resident and New
13 York Harbor School Senior I am concerned for the
14 future of our compost. Rats thrive in large cities
15 because lots of trash and litter. New York is the
16 second-most rat infested city in the world of over
17 10,000 cities. By diverting and sorting food waste,
18 we are also decreasing the amount of rats we have on
19 our streets. Budget cuts will not only affect
20 composting, it'll eliminate education initiatives,
21 internships, and community programs. Community
22 composting projects alone have helped to divert over
23 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills.
24 Earth Matter has been a key resource to our career
25 and technical education course, Marine Affairs Policy

2 and Advocacy. Earth Matter has helped us to expand
3 our thinking and model what a community compost site
4 should look like. We use this feedback to improve
5 our urban farm and reflect what they do on a smaller
6 scale. If the amount of pounds in food waste that we
7 have is too large for us to compost at school, we
8 send it over to Earth Matter since they're capable of
9 processing on a larger scale than we do. There will
10 no longer be as many public outreach initiatives for
11 Earth matter employees and interns, meaning less
12 people will become aware of composting as a whole
13 when it's already not as mainstream as it should be.
14 In my neighborhood there are so many community
15 compost centers and composting opportunities that I
16 had no knowledge of. Composting not only helps
17 reduce food waste, but it helps mitigate the rodent
18 crisis. Thank you for listening.

19 MIA VELEZ: Good afternoon. My name is
20 Mia Velez and I'm a concerned resident of the Urban
21 Assembly New York Harbor School. I am reaching out
22 today to express my deep concern about Mayor Adams'
23 decision to eliminate funding for community
24 composting in New York City. I started getting
25 involved in community composting at my Career

2 Technical Education Program at the Harbor School. In
3 my Career Technical Education program Marine Affairs
4 Policy and Advocacy, we do all sorts of
5 sustainability and most importantly composting.
6 Through all my school-- through my school I have
7 worked internships with one of its partners, Earth
8 Matter. During my three different internships I have
9 learned the importance of composting and why it
10 should be spread more throughout the city. Not only
11 have I learned the importance of composting, but I
12 was also able to educate visitors of the facility on
13 composting because how in-depth they saw me on
14 composting. Without city-funded composting
15 facilities, a lot of people wouldn't be educated on
16 the importance of composting and why it's so helpful
17 to our city. If the budget is cut for composting, it
18 will have throwback to the cleanliness of the City.
19 Many volunteers, corporations, and even Council
20 Members are educated by Earth Matter. Since they are
21 educated, they can spread the information they
22 learned and take it back to their communities. The
23 evolution of composting has improved since COVID when
24 it was shut down, and if it's shut down again, it
25 will go back down. When we didn't have our food

2 scrap drop-off sites, there was much more food waste
3 which led to more garbage being thrown out. Some
4 people say that composting brings rats, but it's not
5 the truth. The bigger issue is the garbage bags
6 being filled full of food left on the curb where the
7 rats can have a feast. When the rats know there is a
8 consistent food source, they stay in the area and
9 start building their families which turns into a
10 cycle. Cutting community composting would be very bad
11 for the environment and city. Many problems will
12 arise without the composting efforts being run by the
13 communities and the city-funded composting
14 facilities. Thank you for your time.

15 STEVEN ALLEN: Hey, I'm Steven Allen, and
16 I'm part of the Marine Affairs Policy Advocacy
17 Program. So, I'll be honest, one of my favorite
18 animals are rats, but they're not good to have in our
19 city. They-- many animals like rats spread diseases,
20 contaminate our food supply and enter homes. Rats
21 also probably shouldn't be around us either, to be
22 honest. One way to solve this problem is to practice
23 composting. It's a healthy and sustainable way to
24 manage our food scraps. It'll benefit us in any
25 rodents around. It creates less food in trash for

2 rats to feed on and find spaces to like sleep in.

3 Not only will removing rats protect us from diseases,

4 it will protect the rats as well. Rats get sick the

5 same way we do. You know, they get all over the city,

6 get in the trash, and that's how they get these

7 sicknesses. So, composting also isn't even just a

8 solution for the rats. It's a benefit for the whole

9 environment. Nobody really wants to see just a bunch

10 of garbage everywhere, like food and everything.

11 Yeah, we could compost it so it actually has a use

12 instead of just being garbage. So, rats, like I

13 mentioned, they like to find places to stay. So

14 there should be a way-- there should be a way where

15 we can like cover trash contain-- something,

16 something, so they have no access to getting in these

17 areas, and they could find other places to live.

18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you. We have--

20 Chair Joseph has a question, and she was a teacher

21 for a long time, so I hope you're prepared to answer.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. First

23 of all, let me say congratulations on your advocacy.

24 I started advocacy at 19, so you're in the right time

25 and the right moment. So thank you for bringing your

2 voice here and uplifting New York City students. My
3 question to you is as a student, how do you hope the
4 Mayor and the city administration will respond to the
5 concern raised about the impact of budget cuts on
6 community composting?

7 STEVEN ALLEN: I just hope they don't,
8 you know, try to stop the compost from happening.
9 It's very important for our community, like I said,
10 not just a solution for rats, it's a solution for the
11 environment itself. We could use compost for like
12 soil and stuff instead of just leaving all the food
13 all over the city and attracting animals that could
14 spread diseases around to others, invade homes, and
15 yeah.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Anyone else? Go
17 ahead.

18 HALEY HERNANDEZ: like, I hope, like, the
19 Mayor and Everybody else's response to like our
20 voices is just like trying to really hear us out and
21 see like how the budget cuts are not only like
22 affecting the people higher up, like the Department
23 of Sanitation. And it's going to affect our city as
24 a whole, not just as our students, because with more
25 like trash and food waste on our streets, the more

2 rats are going to come, and I hope like if they do
3 decide to cut our budgets and stuff that they really,
4 like, see, like, the effects that's going to happen,
5 like, with the rats and stuff, because nobody wants a
6 whole bunch of rats running around because I know I
7 don't personally.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Neither do it.

9 HALEY HERNANDEZ: And yeah, so like, it's
10 really going to affect a lot of the stuff that we do
11 in school because without the budget we won't be able
12 to work closely with Earth Matter. And like before--
13 you're actually by Council Member, but before coming
14 to the New York Harbor School, like, I was not aware
15 of like composting as a whole. Like, I didn't know
16 what it was. I didn't know how to do it, but now,
17 like, after being in a school, like, we really see it
18 being put to use because we use it like every day in
19 our garden and stuff, and we process our own compost
20 from our school, but Earth Matter also help us,
21 because sometimes we can't like process everything
22 that we're given. Thank you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: You're welcome.

24 That's why we're here to have this very important
25 conversation about how we maintain-- sustain the

2 funding to make sure that you continue doing what you
3 do and bringing the resources to the communities.

4 Again, I can't commend you enough. Thank you,
5 Chairs. This means a lot that I see New York City
6 kids raising their voice. Continue to advocate.

7 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: We often have the
8 youths at our committee hearings.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Yes, same here.
10 We want you. So Monday, too. Monday, if you can't,
11 submit your testimony. We're having hearings on
12 budgets. Come and raise your voice, and if you can't
13 come in person, submit your testimony online. Thank
14 you, Chairs.

15 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you. Thank
16 you, you three, and thank you to the Brooklyn Harbor
17 School. You all are modeling excellent public
18 testimony behavior in terms of keeping to the two
19 minutes. Y'all are doing great. Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next
21 we'll have Marlana Kinlan, Ryan Trainor, and Thomas
22 Kamitsis.

23 MARLENA KINLAN: Good afternoon, Council
24 Members. I am Marlana Kinlan, a student at the New
25 York Harbor School studying in Marine Advocacy and

2 Policy. One thing I've learned in the time I've spent
3 studying in this program is to identify and resolve
4 the factors of an issue in order to resolve the issue
5 as a whole. In relation, this city's issue is the
6 increase in rats taking over our streets. However,
7 the biggest factor of this issue is created by
8 humans. The lack of sorted food scraps that end up
9 in trash bags on sidewalks are fueling this
10 population of rats. So why is the funding for
11 community compost centers being cut? These community
12 compost centers actively educate people on food
13 sorting and get rid of food left on streets for rats
14 to feed on. The main focus of these centers is to
15 take food scraps off the streets and out of people's
16 homes and make it into a sustainable resource for
17 crop growth, essentially creating a cycle which
18 yields benefits citywide. To add on, while these
19 community compost centers benefit the City's systems,
20 they also provide necessary education for the youth
21 on the basics of composting. Without the education we
22 currently have around composting, the City of New
23 York would not be as developed as it has become, and
24 by getting rid of this resource, you're depleting the
25 youth from leaning and experiencing the importance of

2 composting, essentially setting them up to destroy
3 what has built over decades. Not only is getting rid
4 of these resources creating further damage, but it
5 fuels a bigger problem as well. Without these
6 community compost centers, the only resources left
7 are the landfills and commercial composting sites.
8 These locations use compost to make methane which
9 when released into the atmosphere become CO₂, a
10 greenhouse gas. For years, the people of New York
11 City have preached upon regulated population and
12 finding sustainable ways to clean up our home, yet
13 the actions made by the very same people is what's
14 bringing these rats to our city and poisoning our
15 air. So truly, the best solution is not to take away
16 the City's community compost centers, but to support
17 them in the work that they do. Thank you for your
18 time.

19 RYAN TRAINOR: Dear Committee, New York
20 City is a food heaven, not just for us-- oh. Dear
21 Committee, New York City is a food heaven, not just
22 for us but for our rodent friends. I'm Ryan Trainor,
23 I'm with the Marine Policy and Advocacy Program, and
24 Earth Matter partner, and a student attending the New
25 York Harbor School, all located on Governor's Island.

2 First off, I want to thank the Committee and Chairman
3 Nurse for hearing us out today. Earth Matter is a key
4 component to our mission to bring zero waste to
5 Governor's Island. Without it, this greatly affects
6 our ability to make our schools zero waste. This
7 might not seem like a very serious issue, but if
8 Mayor Adams wants to win this feud against rats, he
9 should really look deeper into composting that he is
10 cutting from his budget. The reason why rats are
11 dining at five stars on the sidewalk is because of
12 the way people dispose of their trash. The food
13 waste smell coming from the bags attracts the rats.
14 A few ways we can minimize food waste and half the
15 rat population in New York is to turn all the food
16 waste into compost. For example, when food waste is
17 turned into compost, it discourages the rats.
18 Compost doesn't give off the same scent the food
19 waste does when it's just hanging around on the
20 sidewalk. I feel the Mayor and the people of New
21 York would benefit from this. Another way people
22 would benefit from not cutting the funding from
23 composting would be education. If you educate people
24 on what composting is, perhaps they would dispose of
25 their trash differently. Not only that, but

2 composting is also a big way of reusing. Old food
3 waste and compostable utensils just sitting out for
4 rats to eat can be used for parks enriched soil for
5 plants. This would also be a lot cleaner than
6 alternative which emits methane which is harmful to
7 us and our environment. Overall, I think if Mayor
8 Adams wants to win his battle against rats, he can't
9 cut the funding for community composts from the city
10 budget. There are so many opportunities with
11 composting for the future of this city. Education
12 and revitalization are the main positives taken from
13 this. Again, I want to thank the Committee and
14 Chairman Nurse for hearing us out about this new
15 budget proposal.

16 THOMAS KAMITSIS: Sorry, I'm a little
17 nervous. Dear Sandy Nurse and members of the
18 committee, my name is Thomas Kamitsis, and I am a
19 junior at the New York Harbor School on Governor's
20 Island studying Marine Affairs Policy and Advocacy.
21 I'm here today because my classmates and I are
22 concerned about the proposed budget cuts that would
23 threaten the community composting programs throughout
24 the City. Composting is a critical part of
25 sustainable waste management and rat mitigation. 8.3

2 billion pounds of food [inaudible] scraps are
3 collected and turned into compost each year in New
4 York City. The organic waste is used to produce
5 nutrient-rich soil for community parks and gardens.
6 This process results in less waste ending up in
7 landfills where it could produce methane. It
8 therefore plays a key role in reducing greenhouse
9 gases and making the environment healthier.

10 Composting also helps decrease the number of rodents
11 roaming our streets. The separation of waste has
12 proven effective in mitigating the rodent population
13 in cities. That is another reason why we shouldn't
14 get rid of programs like Earth Matter that educate
15 the committee about composting and how to manage
16 waste effectively. As students studying
17 sustainability, we question how these budget cuts
18 abide by the Zero Waste Act which aim to divert all
19 recyclables and organic waste from landfills and
20 incinerators by 2030. These budget cuts would reverse
21 important progress the City was making towards a more
22 sustainable New York. I respectfully ask that you
23 reconsider this decision and protect composting--
24 community composting, to be exact, in this city.

25 Thank you.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next we
3 will have Grace Arnold, Juan Villavicencio, and
4 Dillon Pierre.

5 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: And just when you
6 guys are testifying, you could speak a little bit
7 more into the mic because there are people online and
8 for the archive of this, and if you want pull the
9 video later and put it on your socials or whatever,
10 you won't be able to hear yourself if you don't talk
11 into the mic.

12 GRACE ARNOLD: Hi, my name is Grace
13 Arnold. I am a concerned resident of Staten Island,
14 and I oppose cutting funding for community composting
15 and education. You have made it clear that you are
16 concerned with the rat problem in New York City, that
17 Mayor Adams is cutting funding for community
18 composting and composting education which hurts the
19 goal of shrinking the extremely large population of
20 rats in the City. Snug Harbor is the closest
21 community composting site to me. I spend a lot of
22 time in Snug Harbor, and I'd to see these budget cuts
23 negatively affect them. Every time I've walked past
24 the farm there have been bags of leaves sitting
25 outside that they will turn into a soil amendment

2 [sic] that they can use to produce new food. Staten
3 Island does not have brown bins, and we only have
4 eight of the smart bins. So it isn't possible to
5 compost food waste unless you have the help of a
6 community composting organization. Food waste from
7 Snug Harbor doesn't end up in compost, it ends up
8 piled on the curb in garbage bags that won't fit in
9 garbage cans. Most households in my neighborhood end
10 up with two to three more bags of trash than their
11 bin can hold, and rats thrive off these exposed bags.
12 Staten Island being a fairly suburban place compared
13 to the other boroughs means that not only rats, but
14 various other animals also eat this food. Community
15 composting organizations like Snug Harbor are vital
16 to solving this problem. They already don't receive
17 much funding and cutting funding will hurt their
18 ability to provide community outreach and education
19 that gets some of that food waste off of the street
20 and into compost. Community composting programs
21 divert more than 8.3 million pounds of organic waste
22 from landfills, produce virtually no pollutants and
23 result in soil amendment that revitalizes soil,
24 unlike citywide composting which produces greenhouse
25 gases. A while ago Mayor Adams introduced a rule

2 that trash must not be put out on the curb before a
3 certain time. He believes this rule helps with the
4 rat problem, but it does not. Rats are not like
5 people, they don't work jobs and they don't have to
6 sleep at night to go to work in the morning. They
7 don't care when the trash goes out, they care about
8 where, and I would much rather have rats eat food
9 waste on a farm away from houses and apartment than
10 from garbage bags right outside my house. Thank you.

11 JUAN VILLAVICENCIO: Good evening. Often
12 I see rats in trash too much in our boroughs, but
13 I'll focus on Staten Island because that's where I
14 live. Trash is seen on every corner while kids and
15 adults are trying to get through their days the best
16 they can. Eric Adams said he was going to bring
17 curbside compost to the entire city by 2024. So when
18 I heard that he was going back on his word and
19 cutting funding from the education that can affect
20 composting I was confused, because he was just saying
21 these things that can help everyone in the city. What
22 can happen to deter this from happening? You can
23 convince Mayor Eric Adams to not cut funding from New
24 York City compost educators like the people from
25 Earth Matter and organizations similar to it, because

2 he struggles to see the connection between community
3 composting and rats in the city. Community
4 composters educate people how to use food scraps to
5 make soil, making food more scarce for the rats who
6 depend on it. So by cutting funds from the community
7 composters, the rat problem will not go away and
8 possibly get worse over time. By the end of 2024,
9 every New York City resident will have access to
10 clean, convenient, curbside compost from the
11 Department of Sanitation, a quote from Eric Adams
12 from the official website of the New York-- of the
13 City of New York. If he really wants this, than why
14 is he proposing to go back on this by cutting funds?
15 Because if it does get cut then more than 8 million
16 pounds of organic waste will be fed to rats annually,
17 and over 6,000 New Yorkers will not get educated on
18 community composting. So, if Mayor Eric Adams
19 doesn't want to do all the composting, then the
20 composters will. Thank you for listening to the
21 testimony.

22 DILLON PIERRE: Good afternoon everyone.
23 My name is Dillon Pierre from the New York Harbor
24 School. Community composters are important and want
25 to help the rat problem instead of just throwing

2 money at the rat problem. Over 8.3 million pounds
3 of organic waste is turned into compost, and part of
4 us at New York Harbor School and Grow NYC and Earth
5 Matter to risk-- I'm sorry. To rescue-- to reassure
6 the composting activity will the additional--
7 addition of composting we now have a new more
8 advanced solution to get rid of rats. With working
9 with community composter groups like Earth Matter to
10 learn how to sort, compost, and soil amendment. My
11 generation is now left with the hard work like
12 advocating for rat timely [sic] data and the
13 composting cut. We all work hard at the New York
14 Harbor School and our partners at Earth Matter-- and
15 all the work seemed unnoticed, and now due to the
16 budget cuts, our school is getting affected. My
17 school is actively working with Earth Matter to teach
18 our Career Technological Program on how to compost.
19 If us as New Yorkers can partner with schools and
20 with people like Earth Matter or someone like Earth
21 Matter on a bigger scale we can get rid of rats,
22 instead of cutting budgets and getting rid of things
23 that we need. Empowering New Yorkers to make more--
24 to make composting local-- including climate change.
25 At my school we are all about composting,

2 responsibility and food sorting. Food scraps are
3 turned into useful compost that makes NYC green. So
4 in conclusion, we as New Yorkers have to work
5 together and go about this problem in a green way
6 instead of-- I'm sorry-- with the help of community
7 composters. Thank you for listening to my testimony.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next
9 we'll have Courtney Matthias, Jayleen Garita, and
10 Shkurte Lajqi.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: If it's light red.

12 SHKURTE LAJQI: Yeah.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Okay.

14 SHKURTE LAJQI: If rats are becoming a
15 problem in New York, shouldn't we all take
16 responsibility for teaching the upcoming generations
17 how to sort waste streams properly. The rats don't
18 run this city, the youth will. When the budget for
19 community composting gets cut, the only place we
20 would be able to place our food scraps is in smart
21 bin or a brown bin. The big issue about this is
22 people not knowing how to use the brown bins and
23 smart bins, thus adding food sources for rats. At New
24 York Harbor School on Governor's Island in Marine
25 Affairs we work with Earth Matter located on the

2 island to help compost food scraps we get from the
3 cafeteria. Earth Matter teaches our career technical
4 education program critical skills on composting such
5 as sorting the waste and learning how to turn that
6 waste into soil amendment to later on use on our
7 school farm to grow food. My father is a
8 superintendent at six building in Brooklyn, and he
9 states that the brown bins are nasty due to people
10 not knowing how to use them correctly, leading to
11 flies, maggots, and most importantly rats. In Marine
12 Affairs, we are taught how to use, operate, and
13 understand all the important factors of composting,
14 but not everyone has the privilege to learn about
15 this, too, which is why we should implement more
16 teaching about composting in New York City schools
17 through community compost programs like we do with
18 earth matter. I believe implementing more community
19 composting programs in schools citywide and teaching
20 the upcoming generation more about composting
21 [inaudible] people understand the brown bins and
22 smart bins. The main issue is people not knowing how
23 to work or use the bins, but with teaching them we
24 could offer them more learning which eventually as
25 they learn and implement it more, they would be used

2 correctly, and rats will have no food sources and the
3 population will die down. Last year, we diverted
4 10,000 pounds of food waste, that's 10,000 pounds of
5 food that the rats could have eaten, but thanks to
6 our career technical education program implementing
7 Earth Matter work into our school schedules, we can
8 easily avoid the rats eating our food waste and
9 terrorizing our city. Thank you for your time.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And just
11 say your name when you start so we can note it for
12 the record. Thank you.

13 JAYLEEN GARITA: Good afternoon Council
14 Members. I'm Jayleen Garita. I am in Marine Affairs
15 program, and this is my testimony. If Eric Adams
16 wants to avoid rats in New York City, why isn't he
17 doing anything to avoid it like community composting.
18 I am involved with community composting because I am
19 trained in a community composting site called Earth
20 Matter. Earth Matter is an organization that is
21 being threatened by the budget cuts, and this affects
22 my program because we do composting with them and
23 process food scraps with them. These programs are
24 unique because brown bins and smart bins are not used
25 correctly which results in waste on the curb that

2 attracts rats. We need education to teach citizens
3 how to participate in citywide composting without
4 attracting pests. I believe that Earth Matter
5 shouldn't get their budget cut because they do
6 community composting and outreach and education for
7 our youth. Earth Matter has benefitted me and my
8 program by composting and teaching us how beneficial
9 composting is to the city. Thank you for your time.

10 COURTNEY MATTHIAS: Hi, good afternoon.

11 My name is Courtney Matthias, one of the students at
12 New York Harbor School, and a student of Marine
13 Affairs. Because of the funding getting cut we can't
14 learn anymore about composting. Earth Matter is just
15 one of the organizations that are having their funds
16 cut. Without us learning about proper composting and
17 sorting, how are we going to solve the rat problem if
18 we can't manage our food scraps properly? With food
19 scraps lying around New York, that is the perfect
20 breeding ground for rats, especially when they can
21 get easy food. I've seen many piles of food waste
22 around the lower east side, and I've even seen rats
23 carrying full slices of pizza. If this situation
24 doesn't get fixed, rats will begin to overpopulate in
25 areas where people don't accurately remove their food

2 waste. I for one live in an apartment. While no
3 rats have gotten in yet, if they keep on
4 overpopulating and running around the city,
5 eventually we will have rat problems. We've already
6 seen them running around outside of the apartment,
7 but one day I'm scared I'll find one in my house, or
8 even worse, in my walls. A lot of other people
9 already have rat problems, but this would make
10 everything a lot worse. By cutting community
11 composting funds, there will likely be no more actual
12 physical composting. The rat problem that everyone's
13 so worried about will get worse. Community
14 composting helps reduce the food scraps that people
15 leave lying around New York. The brown bins don't
16 help with composting either because people don't know
17 how to properly use them. regardless, some people
18 just throw things in there that don't belong and not
19 every area has the privilege of said brown bind, and
20 in some buildings there are no trash cans at all,
21 like mine. All our garbage goes to the front of the
22 building because there's nowhere else to sort our
23 trash. The cuts affect a lot of people's information
24 on this topic and will cause a lot of issues with
25 people being uninformed and not being able to do the

2 right thing. A lot of people don't even have access
3 to trash bins or brown bins outside of their homes.
4 If everybody wants to do the right thing, but
5 nobody's willing to take that step but community
6 composters, why cut these funds? Thank you for
7 listening.

8 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thanks for your
9 testimony.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next we
11 will have Lina Lajqi, Layla Bursor, and Stevie
12 Maisonet.

13 LINA LAJQI: Hello, my name is Lina, and
14 it's no surprise that rats have inhabited New York
15 City and lived among us for years. Rat mitigation
16 initiatives have put into place and failed various
17 time. One of the successful rat mitigation
18 initiatives is actually community composting. I'm a
19 senior in the Marine Affairs course at the New York
20 Harbor School and I have firsthand experience with
21 composting. I have seen the change that compost
22 brings both at school in my Brooklyn Heights
23 community. Both of these places have serious rat
24 activity. Rats find food and trash and are able to
25 chew through thin plastic to get to the food. If the

2 food was simply sorted into another bin, rats
3 wouldn't have easy access and fail to find a food
4 source. However, it's not that easy. Information
5 does not spread without a reliable source. Mayor
6 Adams has made it clear that rats do not have a place
7 in New York City, but with the recent budget cuts
8 that eliminate funding for community composting
9 programs in New York City, I'm not sure if he's
10 working with us or the rats. Every home produces
11 organic waste, but the issue is that brown bins are
12 introduced and the City gives no further direction.
13 Nonprofit organizations like Big Reuse where I've
14 interned in clothing [sic] for over a year, educate
15 neighborhoods on composting. According to Big Reuse,
16 over 60,000 New Yorkers were engaged at community
17 events showing interest in community composting. By
18 educating New Yorkers on where their food should go,
19 rats have a smaller chance of thriving from our
20 leftovers. In my personal experience, brown bins
21 aren't used the way they are meant to be used, and
22 New Yorkers aren't confident in their use of brown
23 bins. This issue can only be solved with community
24 compost outreach. Without the community composting
25 programs like Big Reuse, Earth Matter, and BK Rock

2 [sic] and more, residents are left to figure
3 composting out on their own, which means that more
4 organic waste will find its way in black trash bags
5 ready for the rats to feast on, and the City should
6 be afraid for this rat takeover.

7 LAYLA BURSOR: Hi, I'm Layla Bursor. I'm
8 a junior at the Harbor School, and I'm Vice President
9 of our SSA and SVCA [sic] chapters. I believe that
10 funding for community composting should not be cut.
11 If you want to effectively solve a problem, it is
12 important to start at the source. The source of our
13 constantly growing rat populations is an
14 overabundance of waste, specifically food waste that
15 provides rats with as much food as they could every
16 need. Correctly separating food waste is an
17 effective way to reduce rat populations, along with
18 contributing many other positive effects. Community
19 composting makes this possible through compost
20 education, teaching people how to correctly sort
21 their waste. Brown and orange bins alone are not a
22 solution. Just a few years ago, I would have never
23 considered composting to be something that I could
24 participate in at home. I had heard of composting
25 and I always put my food scraps at school in the

2 orange bin in our cafeteria. But I never know what
3 happened to the food scraps or why it was so
4 important. It wasn't until I went to Earth Matter
5 this changed. They explained every step of the
6 composting process, from sorting the waste, to
7 spreading the finished product into their urban farm.
8 I learned that animals can be used for composting and
9 got to interact with chickens and goats. I learned
10 that organic waste is put-- that when organic waste
11 is put in landfills and breaks down without oxygen,
12 it creates methane. I learned that you can compost in
13 your own backyard, but as someone who doesn't have a
14 backyard, the most important thing I learned is that
15 the City collects food scraps from residential
16 buildings and smart bins throughout the city.
17 Community composting is an essential way for people
18 to learn about separating organic waste. In 2022,
19 Earth Matter alone had 15,000 volunteers and
20 visitors. I'm just one of the many thousands of
21 people who learned about composting and started
22 separating food waste because of community compost
23 centers. If funding is cut from community
24 composting, they will not be able to do outreach and
25 education, slowing the growth of composting and

2 cutting off people's access to compost education. We
3 should instead raise the budget for compost
4 education, using community composting to make the
5 orange and brown bins more effective. Many city
6 officials, including Mayor Eric Adams, have discussed
7 using composting to control rat populations. While
8 increasing access to composting is important, orange
9 and brown bins alone have no use. The public needs
10 to understand the how and why behind composting if it
11 is going to be effective. We need community
12 composting. Thank you for your time.

13 STEVIE MAISONET: Hi, my name is Stevie
14 Maisonet, and I'm an 11th grade students in the MAPA
15 program at New York Harbor School led by Robert
16 Markuske. What Mayor Adams has proposed is absurd.
17 I'm sure that's why you have considered hearing
18 multiple testimonies today. At school, we directly
19 work with community compost centers such as Earth
20 Matter and Grow NYC to enhance our knowledge of
21 compost and apply techniques for our own urban farm.
22 During the summer I worked under Earth Matter and the
23 environment was like no other. We taught people of
24 all ages about the importance of compost, growing
25 your own food and much more. If this budget cut

2 proceeds, outreach and education will be no more.

3 Cornell University Pest Management educator Matthew

4 Fry spoke on the matter claiming, "The single most

5 important step in limiting urban pests populations is

6 to remove the food source," in regards to curbside

7 pickup. However, citizens don't know anything about

8 food scraps, compost, and its management to

9 understand how curbside pick-up works and what it

10 does. Curbside pickup markets itself as compost,

11 which is the finished product of decomposed organic

12 waste. Yet it isn't. It's converting food scraps

13 into greenhouse gases harming both our environment

14 and economy, and projects itself as something people

15 should do without explaining why and how to do it,

16 while also bringing rats into the mixture. Citizens

17 like myself, someone that lives in a low-income

18 neighborhood, do not have access to these resources.

19 Not only will this continue to draw rats in, it will

20 make it harder to keep food scraps out. Education

21 isn't discussed regarding this matter at all. In

22 fact, I did not even know what compost was, nor did I

23 care until I met my educator, and he introduced me to

24 those at Earth Matter. The solution isn't holding

25 residents responsible for something they don't

2 understand. It's giving them the education they need
3 to help them by the people who know it best,
4 community composting centers. Their funds shouldn't
5 be cut. If anything, they should be widely expanded.
6 In my personal experience, since working directly
7 with compost, our school and island rat issue has
8 dissipated. Rats are known for hiding in dirty, open
9 spaces with leftover food. Our urban farm doesn't
10 give them the chance to do any of that, because we
11 turn our food scraps into something we can reuse that
12 rats don't recognize or like. The only reason we
13 were able to do so is because we have access to the
14 much-needed equal not all residents have or continue
15 to have if this budget takes effect. In summary,
16 curbside pick-up and cutting funds to the community
17 compost centers will allow the issue to rise, not
18 end. We cannot expect people to regulate what they
19 don't understand and if we have the tools to allow
20 citizens to educate themselves, why diminish them?
21 Once people know the stakes of composting, it will
22 apply it into their daily lives. That will get rid
23 of the rat issue, not curbside pick-up, nor brown
24 bins. Thank you for your time and consideration with
25 my testimony. I look forward to hearing from you.

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you. You're
3 becoming an experienced testifier in pushing the
4 clock. No, you're good. Council Member Joseph has a
5 question for you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Hi, over here.
7 Hi. My question is, how might the budget, proposed
8 budget cuts impact the education aspect of the
9 community composting, especially in schools and
10 educational institutions?

11 STEVIE MAISONET: Personally, in my
12 experience in working at Earth Matter, we educated,
13 like, all ranges of kids to senior citizens about
14 composting, and we got them to be engaged with it by
15 using like food to kind of help, I guess, have a more
16 personal experience with them, because everybody
17 likes food. And as far as my own education, this
18 isn't going to help at all, because we-- our food
19 scraps, we don't have enough tools to regulate and
20 convert all of those food scraps into compost. So we
21 definitely need community composting centers like
22 Earth Matter and Grow NYC to help us out with that.

23 LINA LAJQI: I was going to say, like I
24 agree with everything that Stevie's saying, and also
25 it's kind of like on a bigger scale, too, like drop-

2 off and pick-up locations. So people who are
3 interested in composting and they want to drop off or
4 pick-up, they know that their food scraps are being
5 turned into actual compost, whereas, the brown bins
6 that superintendents have to place in their buildings
7 or landlords have to place in their buildings, too.
8 Like, these get turned into harmful chemicals or
9 those get-- that gets burned. So no matter, even if
10 it's like a school setting or a pick-up or drop-off
11 location, you still get to learn. There's a learning
12 experience hidden in all this.

13 STEVIE MAISONET: I also just want to
14 like quickly add that I live in public housing in the
15 lower east side in a very low-income neighborhood.
16 We don't have trash cans. We don't have brown bins.
17 It says on the app that we have smart bins and we
18 don't. All of our trash is dumped in the street.
19 Cars run over it. Rats eat it. We have roaches
20 everywhere. So, if smart bins and brown bins do get
21 implemented, not only will it be creating a false
22 narrative in the sense that it will say that it's
23 compost when it's not, but also places like where I
24 live won't have access to it all, and if we do, it'll

2 be very minimal, and most people aren't going to want
3 to travel that far to dump off their food scraps.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: I agree. Thank
5 you so much for sharing. I love the jackets, by the
6 way. Thank you, Chair. The jackets--

7 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] Yeah,
8 and I just wanted to also mention, we did have a
9 hearing on Sanitation at NYCHA, and they're supposed
10 to be developing plans for how to have--

11 STEVIE MAISONET: [interposing] That's
12 what they say.

13 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: What they say.

14 STEVIE MAISONET: It's not really.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: No, I know. I'm
16 just saying they're supposed to roll it out, and the
17 smart bins, they're not allowed to put inside the
18 campuses. They can put 50 feet from a development.
19 So, I know we have a lot of work to do on that, and
20 that's why I had to kind of check the Department of
21 Sanitation when they tried to present that they have
22 provided so much access, because we know that most of
23 those folks are not tapped into what-- you know, this
24 kind of situation. So, we appreciate you bringing
25 that extra angle here.

2 STEVIE MAISONET: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you all for
4 testifying.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Our last
6 panel for in-person testimony will be Madison
7 Matthias, Anita Chan, Christopher Leon Johnson. Is
8 Madison Matthias here? Oh, okay. Okay. Is Anita
9 Chan available? We'll transition and then come back
10 to Madison. We'll transition now to Zoom testimony.
11 Again, please limit your testimony to-- I'm so sorry,
12 I did not-- okay. You may approach the dais to
13 testify. I apologize.

14 RORY ALREZZO: Check, check. Hi, thank
15 you. My name is Rory Alrezzo. I'm the founding
16 science teacher of New York Harbor School, a
17 community gardener, native Brooklynite, and I
18 fortunately got funding from Department of Sanitation
19 in the 90s to start a compost program and Project
20 Roots Community Garden with IS318, and I helped start
21 the compost project at the Harbor School in 2010. I
22 was the former sustainability coordinator. I'm not
23 going to talk about education. I'm not going to talk
24 about rats, and I'm not going to talk about the fine
25 words these guys already said, how important compost

2 is. All I need to say is that I'm a little confused
3 about the money. So I would love to hear back. I
4 would like everyone to advocate to make more
5 transparent how cutting compost will have the City
6 money, when we know the organic waste is the
7 heaviest, most abundant part of the waste stream. We
8 know there's no landfills in New York City. It has
9 to be trucked out. It needs to be-- we need to pay
10 tipping fees which is based on weight. So how is it
11 if we're cutting compost, we're saving money? I just
12 don't see it, and I would like to hear from the Mayor
13 and the people that know this stuff, because it's not
14 transparent online. Not all those costs appear in
15 one place. Rob looked it up last night. We did not
16 see tipping fees listed. So, let's follow the money,
17 and let's prove instead of justifying that this is
18 important that's it's actually going to save money,
19 and let's follow the money and make sure we're making
20 good decisions financially for our city. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you. And yes,
22 as I mentioned, the Independent Budget Office also
23 had said that it would be a cost-savings program to
24 have community composting. So we also want to know
25 what's going on with the money. So thank you.

2 RORY ALREZZO: Yes. Appreciate it.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, we will begin
4 Zoom testimony. Please limit your testimony to two
5 minutes. First, we will have Rhonda Keyser and then
6 Anna Sacks, and after Anna, Kathy Nizzari.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'm sorry, one moment,
9 please.

10 RHONDA KEYSER: Hi, yeah.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'm sorry, one
12 moment, Rhonda. We'll start with you in just one
13 second. Okay, thank you, Rhonda. You may begin.

14 RHONDA KEYSER: Okay, hi, thanks. Good
15 afternoon, Chairs Nurse and Schulman and members of
16 the committees. My name's Rhonda Keyser. I'm Chair
17 of the Brooklyn SWAB. My testimony today is on
18 behalf of the four SWABs of Queens, Manhattan,
19 Brooklyn, and Bronx. The recent budget cuts announced
20 by the Administration will serve as a giant setback
21 backwards on any progress made around rat mitigation
22 in New York City. the DSNY's budget eliminates
23 community composting, reduces the number of parks and
24 vacant lot cleaning, street litter baskets, and
25 street litter cleaning in underserved neighborhoods,

2 delays the rollout of curbside collection programs
3 for the Staten Island and the Bronx and completely
4 cuts outreach and education for curbside collection
5 going forward. These cuts are a recipe for rat
6 proliferation in our city. over the last year, the
7 Compost project kept 8.3 million pounds of
8 compostable waste out of the landfill and distributed
9 compost to New York City parks, the botanical
10 gardens, 325 community groups, community and school
11 gardens, street tree care events, and thousands of
12 individuals at no cost to the City or the users.
13 This community-- eliminating community composting
14 programs in all the community building social
15 connection that they provide throughout outreach and
16 actual compost will weaken our natural urban immune
17 system. Moreover, the curbside organics collections
18 participation will falter or fail without the
19 grassroots outreach in the New York City compost
20 project employees and volunteers who are passionate
21 about composting education. Their feet on the
22 street, hands in the soil, person-to-person outreach
23 which ranges from door-knocking, event organizing,
24 and tabling and master composter certification, they
25 steadily educate and recruit evermore volunteers who

2 reach and teach others. Recycling rats in New York
3 City since its inception in 1989 has never reached
4 its modest goal of 23 percent. Now, as the City
5 embarks on a new stream of source separation,
6 residents need education and a reason to participate.
7 Community composting's record of delivering
8 beneficial soil amendments--

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time has
10 expired.

11 RHONDA KEYSER: from the city's parks--
12 Thank you very much. We oppose the budget cuts.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Rhonda.
14 Next we will have Anna Sacks.

15 ANNA SACKS: Can I begin?

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun, yes.

17 ANNA SACKS: Hi, my name is Anna Sacks. I
18 did the Master Composter program at the Lower East
19 Side Equality Center in 2018, and the Master
20 Composter Program is also about to be completely cut
21 in this new budget, and one of those things that I
22 learned through it was rat mitigation. We did a full
23 day of rat mitigation, learning all about rats, their
24 habitats, everything, and then I have been able to
25 take that knowledge back to my local upper west side

2 community and organize block events teaching
3 residents about the connection between composting
4 separating their food scraps and rat mitigation. We
5 are about to gut one of the most important, local,
6 community-based programs that not only teaches people
7 about environmentalism, but also teaches people about
8 rat mitigation. This is the program that creates
9 leaders in these waste issues, and it's really short-
10 sided, and as other people have said, it's pennywise
11 and pound foolish. It also does not bode well for
12 New York City's climate resiliency efforts that one
13 of the most successful programs that's been around
14 for around 30 years is about to be gutted. It is
15 around 6 million dollars for this program, which is I
16 think. 0.2 percent, something like that, of New York
17 City's overall budget. We really need to keep this
18 program. It is a direct link between New York City
19 community needs, climate change, soil resiliency, and
20 rat mitigation. Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we
22 will have Kathy Nizzari.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun.

24 KATHY NIZZARI: Good afternoon Chair
25 Nurse and members of the Sanitation Committee. Thank

2 you for the opportunity to speak. I'm Kathy Nizzari,
3 founder of the Lights Out Coalition. We're a 50-
4 member organization made of animal rights,
5 environmental, and professional groups, scientists,
6 designers, engineers, attorneys, political clubs,
7 community leaders, and a vice president in the United
8 Nation system. While our background may be very
9 diverse, we all work together for a single purpose,
10 to protect urban wildlife. This is what
11 distinguishes us from other animal protection
12 concerns. Glad to hear discussion around IPM.
13 Lights Out completely opposes rodenticides for two
14 basic reasons. One, it is an incredibly painful and
15 cruel way to die. Basically rats bleed to death
16 slowly over a period of days. And two, lethal, non-
17 targeted or secondary poisoning. Whether it be the
18 wild birds and other animals who live in the parks
19 including feral cats eating a rat who ingested the
20 poison or dogs out for a walk who nibble on the bait
21 which is often in locations that are illegal. Last
22 year, there were reports of several dogs on the upper
23 west side who died from ingesting poison, rat poison.
24 These are not isolated incidents. In fact, the Merck
25 Veterinarian Manual lists rodenticides as a

2 relatively common cause of poisoning in pets and
3 wildlife. Additionally, the American Academy of
4 Clinical Toxicology reported a staggering one and a
5 half million children under the age of six in the US
6 poisoned by rodenticide with 1,630 fatalities in
7 2021. This data does not include the other age
8 groups. We must employ humane mechanisms of rat
9 population control. Putting aside for amendment the
10 moral and ethical argument against rodenticides, as
11 well as their toxification [sic] of soil, water, and
12 therefore food systems, rodenticides don't work. If
13 they did, we would not be--

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
15 expired.

16 KATHY NIZZARI: sitting here right now.
17 Their widespread use is costing the City millions of
18 dollars, yet we have more rats now than ever as
19 someone's study indicated. When the Mayor is making
20 quality of life cuts, the city needs to redirect its--
21 -

22 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] Can you
23 please wrap your remarks?

24 KATHY NIZZARI: limited resources--

2 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Please wrap your
3 remarks. We're trying to do two minutes for the
4 online.

5 KATHY NIZZARI: Okay, I'll be finished in
6 a sec. The risks of using dangerous rodenticides
7 and other lethal methods do not justify their use.
8 Rats just breed too quickly. And I have-- I'm
9 submitting a longer version of written testimony with
10 additional information. Thank you for your time.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next will
12 be Anne Falcon.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun.

14 ANNE FALCON: Thank you. So, my name is
15 Anne Falcon. I'm a New York City resident committed
16 to maintaining a sustainable urban environment. I'm
17 testifying today about the importance of maintaining
18 DSNY funding for community composting program,
19 specifically as they help rodent mitigation. I was
20 recently visiting my friend who is a cat owner. She
21 lives in a brownstone in Manhattan. She keeps her
22 trash under the sink, unlike me I actually learned
23 about the importance of composting from Grow NYC--
24 shout out to them. Basically what happened was the
25 cat was hanging out under the sink because there were

2 actually rats in her house. She-- I'm a little
3 nervous. Basically, there were rats in her trash
4 because she doesn't compost. She throws her organic
5 food in with her trash, and the rats got it, and you
6 know, it was kind of a big mess. It ruined the rest
7 of the day, but this is a symptom of a larger issues.
8 As we all know, we've been talking about the problem
9 of rodent infestation in New York City, the link
10 between unmanaged waste, particularly food waste and
11 the proliferation of these pests is undeniable.
12 Community composting initiatives like Grow NYC are
13 already in place and have historically served as a
14 resource to address the very root of rat infestation.
15 They have existed for years and honed and perfected
16 their methods of engaging and educating local
17 communities about composting. When it comes to
18 composting as a solution, there is no equivalent to
19 community composting organizations from meeting New
20 York City residents where they're at, teaching them
21 the importance of diverting food waste from our
22 sidewalks, and actually getting communities to
23 participate in composting. I believe it could be a
24 meaningful solution to New York City's rat
25 infestation, but if that's going to happen, they need

2 to continue to support and invest in those endeavors.

3 I hope New York City stakeholders and Mayor Adams
4 please recognize the pivotal role of community
5 composting initiatives, and rat mitigation
6 infestation, and sustainable waste management
7 practices.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

9 ANNE FALCON: Thank you very much for
10 your time. Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next will
12 be Mary Arnold.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Has begun.

14 MARY ARNOLD: I'm Mary Arnold, Co-founder
15 of Civics United for Railroad Environmental
16 Solutions. Communities that live with waste by rail
17 are looking forward to the day when public
18 participation in organic source separation eliminates
19 the unhealthy noise pollution, foul odors and rats
20 from trains hauling New York City's putrescible waste
21 by rail. However, that day is never arriving, and
22 the public is not going to learn to source separate
23 organics and be influenced to participate to the
24 fullest. Without the authenticity, motivation,
25 education, outreach, and volunteerism that is

2 provided in the city by the employees and volunteers
3 of the eight community composting centers who DSNY's
4 own testimony indicated are part of the beating heart
5 of composting. The public is not going to source
6 separate organics just so national grid and waste
7 management can turn them into methane waste with
8 sewage contaminants flared off at Newtown Creek or in
9 a home kitchen. The public will not be inspired to
10 source separate organics just so the City can export
11 more contaminated sewerage sludge, including by rail.
12 Containerizing waste in the city doesn't address this
13 or the externalization of climate change costs from
14 putrescible waste export or the quality of life and
15 health costs in communities where this waste is
16 processed, transported, dumped, and burned. Please,
17 retain the 115 green jobs and education needed to
18 give residents inspiration and support for their
19 participation in cost-effective organics diversion
20 and US ETA [sic] preferred composting. Please, care
21 not cuts. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next will be Maddie
24 Baker.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun.

2 MADDIE BAKER: Thank you Chair Nurse and
3 Chair Schulman and committee members for welcoming
4 all of us to this public hearing today. My name's
5 Maddie Baker. I'm testifying on behalf of the Bryant
6 Park Corporation and 34th Street Partnership. As the
7 stewards of two large and distinct business
8 improvement districts, we found that successful rat
9 mitigation techniques vary in different contexts.
10 For example, at Bryant Park we have found significant
11 success in focusing our efforts on disrupting
12 burrows, developing trucking systems, and making
13 infrastructural improvements. Much of the success is
14 due to the time and resources we have been able to
15 concentrate on the issue, but a lot of the success
16 can also be attributed to the island-like nature of
17 the park itself. At 34th Street we have had less
18 luck with these methods due to the more open nature
19 of the space, dining sheds with poor upkeep outside
20 of our bounds of influence, and other factors outside
21 of our control. One issue that remains constant
22 cross context and has been spoken about a lot today
23 is waste and waste containerization. At Bryant Park,
24 we have invested a lot of time and resources and new
25 containerization methods within the limitations of

2 our pick-ups from DSNY. Our efforts overall have
3 reduced rat activity in the park by 80 percent, but
4 we have not been able to push this number further
5 without containerized waste pick-ups. We believe
6 DSNY can and should be able to pick up waste from
7 three cubic yard wheeled [sic] dumpsters at Bryant
8 Park by the same method they use in trials elsewhere
9 around the city. We've seen various trials of these
10 three cubic yard dumpsters throughout the city in
11 controlled locations and have admired the dumpster
12 enclosures used in upper Manhattan on Hunter and 53rd
13 Street between Broadway and Amsterdam. [inaudible]
14 efforts to containerize trash around the City have
15 much to be admired, we understand that logistics also
16 differ from context to context and key stakeholders
17 vary in their resources and capacity to comply. We
18 believe it makes sense to try dumpster pick-ups in a
19 BID such as Bryant Park which is also controlled, but
20 test the systems ability to handle containerized
21 waste from a space that is more publicly trafficked.
22 As entities which manage large portions of the City's
23 public waste and some of the City's most trafficked
24 areas, BIDs and our concerns--

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time has
3 expired.

4 MADDIE BAKER: should be prioritized as
5 key stakeholders in the fight for containerized and
6 rat mitigation. It's important to account for the
7 varying nature of waste volume and capacity of each
8 business improvement district as the city's new waste
9 management protocols are rolled out. We want to thank
10 this committee and DSNY for all they've been doing to
11 push the city forward on this issue. We hope that
12 you see Bryant Park as a promising place to try out
13 new waste containerization and rat mitigation methods
14 and look forward to partnering in the future. Thank
15 you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next we
17 will have Greta Wong.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun.

19 GRETA WONG: Good afternoon. My name is
20 Greta Wong and I'm a resident of Brooklyn and
21 volunteer with Nurture BK [sic] which is a food scrap
22 drop-off that is hauled by Big Reuse. So I'm going
23 to speak about the profound connection between
24 community composting efforts and pest mitigation
25 especially in light of these budget cuts that will

2 completely eliminate community composting programs.

3 Because of the deep education and outreach ethos of
4 these community composting programs, at the NYC
5 Compost Project in Grow NYC, it is a unique and vital
6 tool for spreading awareness about solutions to pests
7 in our neighborhood. So as a Master Composter I've
8 witnessed firsthand the positive effects of community
9 composting programs. They help not only with waste
10 reduction, but also providing invaluable
11 opportunities for New York residents to learn about
12 responsible waste management and pest mitigation.

13 It's really disheartening and disempowering to learn
14 that DSNY plans to eliminate community composting
15 programs, which also includes 115 green jobs and 50
16 union jobs. This really jeopardizes the education
17 and outreach efforts that are so integral to
18 addressing the persistent rat issues in our city and
19 also contribute to just a cleaner, greener and
20 healthier environment. So, throughout the Master
21 Composter workshops, it was really emphasized that
22 rats thrive in our city because they have an
23 abundance of food in our garbage, and the solution is
24 really clear, right? By separating food scraps and
25 diverting them into compost, we can significantly

2 reduce the materials that attract rats. However, for
3 this solution to reach across the city, we need
4 widespread and hands-on education about composting
5 such as the education that's going on with all of
6 these composting programs like the Master Composter
7 course. Without them, all of those learning
8 opportunities will completely cease to exist. So I
9 really want to urge the Council to advocate for and
10 to press Commissioner Tisch and Mayor Adams to
11 reinstate funding for community composting
12 immediately, especially within that--

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time has
14 expired.

15 GRETA WONG: [inaudible] granted
16 protection from further budget cuts with the January
17 [sic] [inaudible]. Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next we
19 will have Chelsea Encababian.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun.

21 CHELSEA ENCABABIAN: Hello everyone. My
22 name is Chelsea Encbabian, an Astoria, Queens
23 resident deeply passionate about the vitality of our
24 city and environment. In my neighborhood we have a
25 plethora of organic diversion options. We are the

2 first borough to have universal composting post-2020.

3 We were one of the first neighborhoods to host a
4 pilot of the smart bins, but I still participate in
5 community composting options. Not because I am a
6 true believer, as Joshua Goodman from DSNY has said
7 to the Gothamist news outlet, but because my landlord
8 doesn't provide brown bins as an option, because
9 smart bins are overflowing or not working. So,
10 community composting is really my only option to
11 ensure food scraps are actually composted, not just
12 posted on an orange bin compost and then only 20
13 percent actually is, and also ensuring that my food
14 scraps are not on the curb in the case it's over-
15 flown [sic] for rats to consume. Today I'm here to
16 shed light on the critical issue affecting New York
17 City, the indispensable role of community composting
18 education and outreach and its connection to pest
19 mitigation. The New York City composting funded by
20 Department of Sanitation community compost education
21 programs play a vital role and empower New Yorkers to
22 take actionable steps in pest mitigation by providing
23 them with the knowledge and tools needed to
24 understand these intricacies of composting. Through
25 these programs, individuals learn effective waste

2 management practices, the importance of maintaining
3 balanced compost piles to deter pests and
4 significant-- the significance of proper techniques
5 in creating an inhospitable environment for pests in
6 our neighborhoods. With this understanding,
7 residents become proactive participants implementing
8 pest prevention measures in their homes, in their
9 communities, and ultimately are the contributing
10 factor to cleaner, healthier, and pest-resilient
11 urban environment or all. The Department of
12 Sanitation's plan to eliminate all community
13 composting programs is a significant set-back. It
14 covers four botanical gardens and three nonprofit
15 organizations, and they're not just collection sites.
16 They're centers for learning--

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time has
18 expired.

19 CHELSEA ENCABABIAN: for communities to
20 gather together, and moreover to host thousands of
21 hours of volunteer activities where we are going out
22 into communities, beautifying spaces, applying
23 compost to street tree beds, and prevent-- and
24 sharing information about pest mitigation. Now, I
25 implore the Council, and I thank the Council for all

2 their work, but to urge Commissioner Tisch to revert
3 this funding, this defunding and to continue the 30-
4 year relationship with these New York City compost
5 projects so that we can continue to have these zero
6 waste goals that the Mayor continues to, you know,
7 say that he wants to do, but then defunds ultimately.
8 Thank you for your time.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next we
10 will have Renee.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun.

12 RENE PAPAS: My name is Renee Papas
13 [sp?], and I am a resident of District 22. I would
14 like to thank the committee members for allowing me
15 to speak up on behalf of all New Yorkers, most
16 specifically the 115 people who stand to lose their
17 jobs should the Mayor's budget cuts be enacted. As a
18 Master Composter and community garden volunteer, I
19 can say with certainty that our city relies on the
20 staff of the NYC Compost Project and Grow NYC to keep
21 our streets clean and free of rats. Most
22 importantly, the NYC Compost Project staff and Grow
23 NYC staff provide the education needed for New
24 Yorkers to learn and understand how the simple act of
25 separating their scraps can improve the health and

2 safety of their environment. As I worked through the
3 requirement for the Master Composter Program, I
4 learned from the Big Reuse's outreach team that rat
5 mitigation is the primary motivator for New Yorkers
6 to participate in any compost program, green bin,
7 brown bin, orange bin. Every New Yorker has had an
8 experience with rats, and every New Yorkers I
9 invested in learning ho to do their part to keep the
10 rats at bay. A standalone orange bin does not
11 communicate the importance of separating food scraps
12 in this process. We need community composters to the
13 lead the way. And to points and questions raised
14 earlier, the NYC compost project is transparent.
15 When I drop off my scraps at Socrates Park,
16 participate in a build day at Queens Botanical
17 Garden, or apply compost to street tree beds with Big
18 Reuse, I know where my food scraps are going and I
19 know what they're being used for. To put it simply,
20 we need community composters to build New Yorker's
21 trust in our city's environmental efforts. As the
22 City Council works together to avoid the worst of the
23 Mayor's budget cuts, I ask that you fight for
24 community composting and the 115 people who make this
25 program--

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time has
3 expired.

4 RENEE PAPAS: Thank you for your time.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: thank you. Next will
6 be Keturah Thorpe.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun.

8 KETURAH THORPE: Hello. My name is
9 Keturah Thorpe, and I am a constituent in-- sorry. I
10 just realized my video wasn't on. Hi, my name's
11 Keturah Thorpe. I'm a constituent in District 45, and
12 I'm a participant in the Master Composting program.
13 I'm here to testify my belief and understanding in
14 diverting food waste via community composting as the
15 best way to mitigate there at problems here in New
16 York City. Having food waste in the trash creates a
17 buffet rats to indulge in as organic waste is their
18 primary source of food. The brown bin collection and
19 orange bins around more affluent parts of the city
20 will help with this, but hey will not be successful
21 without the aid of community composting. Firstly,
22 the brown bins are not being used by many buildings,
23 mine included, even though we have one, and pick-ups
24 are not happening as promised like for my partner in
25 Sunset Park who's been forced to stop putting out the

2 organics. These are new programs which are still
3 getting off the ground. They need the support of
4 existing, successful, and adjacent community
5 composting. The six community compost sites across
6 our city could process 8.3 million pounds of food
7 waste each year. Where is that waste going now with
8 the loss of community composting, ill-functioning
9 pick-ups and the complete lack of smart bins south of
10 Crown Heights in Brooklyn? Much of it will be
11 trashed, exponentially adding to the rat problem,
12 among many other issues. Secondly, without outreach
13 and education, people will now know what or how to
14 compost and will continue to throw out their food
15 waste, and not utilizing the new resources provided
16 to them. The knowledge that I have learned through
17 the Master Composting Program is invaluable. It's a
18 train the trainer program and in a few short months I
19 have been able to start informed conversations about
20 composting at work and in my social circles,
21 educating and empowering people to adopt composting
22 practices in their own life. This is how knowledge
23 and change happens, through community. In short,
24 save community composting, invest more in the
25 successful and thriving--

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time has
3 expired.

4 KETURAH THORPE: Sorry, I'm just going
5 to finish this sentence. Successful and thriving
6 already exiting composting programs, diverting
7 organic waste form the trash is a huge step that
8 needs to be taken to eliminate the rat issue. Thank
9 you so much.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next
11 we'll have Stephanie Gaweda.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun.

13 STEPHANIE GAWEDA: Hi, my name is
14 Stephanie. I'm a resident of District 38, and my
15 partner is a participant in the Master Composter
16 program. I'm here to testify that one of the best
17 ways to mitigate the rat program in New York-- the
18 rat issue in New York is to divert food waste via
19 community composting. So I'm a third-generation,
20 born and raised Brooklynite, generations of my family
21 have lived in this same building since the 60s. I'm
22 very familiar with rats and have chronic mouse issues
23 in my home even at this moment. So the brown bin
24 plan was great. I was very excited to get my bin,
25 except most landlords are not using them. For

2 smaller buildings with less than nine units, the 25-
3 dollar fines are way too small for them to care, and
4 they receive no education on how this actually
5 benefits anyone. For larger buildings the fine is
6 only 100 dollars, which still pales in comparison to
7 the rent generated, so they don't care at all. And
8 there's a huge misconception that the compost bins
9 will attract more rats because there's been no
10 advocacy in explaining how this will curb it. So,
11 for those of us that have tried composting, our pick-
12 up has been rejected multiple times, even when
13 following all correct protocols. So it's clear that
14 Sanitation worker themselves have not been given the
15 resources to support this new initiative. As they've
16 received an extra step per every household without
17 additional labor. The amount of people on the truck
18 have not changes. So either their hours are getting
19 longer, or they're being expected to work the same
20 amount of collections into their shifts, and it's not
21 getting done. So you have compost sitting out that
22 hasn't been pick up and it's getting ripe where do I
23 bring it? Well, I could drop it off at my community
24 composting sits, unless of course that was also shut
25 down due to the budget cuts. So let's look at the

2 smart bins, except there's no smart bin within 3.1
3 miles from me, and it's in an area that I never pass
4 through in my daily life. So this showcases how
5 Sanitation needs the support of existing and
6 successful community composting, you know, processing
7 8.3 million pounds of food waste a year. You
8 eliminate those programs--

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time has
10 expired.

11 STEPHANIE GAWEDA: and there's nowhere for
12 that waste to go. So now the Sanitation Department
13 clearly can't keep up. It means compost will rot out
14 in the street or food waste increases exponentially.
15 Now your rats are having a feast. So if we don't
16 take the waste out of our garbage stream, this issue
17 is not going to get any better. I can attest that
18 over the last few months, my partner has shared
19 invaluable knowledge through her Master Composting
20 program, and knowledge is reinvested in others
21 through channels of those that you know and trust.
22 So, you know, reinstate composting, invest more in
23 diverting waste from the trash, and no more rats.
24 The end.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next we
3 will have Leo Kirts.

4 LEO KIRTS: Hi. My name is Leo Kirts and
5 my pronouns are they/them, and I'm a founding member
6 of the Sunnyside and Woodside Mutual Aid Mobile Food
7 Pantry. In 2020, a volunteer-led community
8 composting programs in my neighborhood, and Sunnyside
9 stepped up to collect food waste when the City
10 canceled our brown bin collection and failed to
11 prioritize measures that actually reduce rodent
12 infestation. And I just wonder like, how is it that
13 the richest city in this country fails their
14 responsibility to maintain an essential component of
15 our public sanitation needs. Why are solid waste
16 collection services deemed disposable in time sin
17 crisis when we need them most, whether it is a
18 pandemic or budget cuts. It is these programs that
19 actually reduce rodent infestation, cut down on
20 plastic waste, keep organics out of landfills, and
21 thereby cut greenhouse gas emissions, not to mention
22 benefitting the health of our soil and communities.
23 The city needs to give more funding to expert
24 community composters, not take it away or redirect it
25 to faulty brown bins and inaccessible smart bins.

2 Without public outreach people do not know how to use
3 these bins or see the benefits of redirecting their
4 food waste. These city measures cannot replace the
5 hands-on education that neighborhood compost programs
6 provide, nor the direct benefits that people
7 experience in these green community spaces. Worst
8 yet, mutual aid members in my own community stand to
9 lose their jobs right before the holidays, if this
10 budget cut is passed. If the city wants to eliminate
11 rats, they need to use-- they need to fund science-
12 backed social good solutions to eliminate organic
13 waste that ends up in the trash. And anyone who's
14 involved in community composting knows that these
15 programs do so much more than just redirect food
16 waste. Where there are composting programs there are
17 community gardens. There are green spaces for people
18 to enjoy and learn about nature, and it brings people
19 together who are concerned for the social wellbeing
20 of their neighbors. In Sunnyside and Woodside alone
21 we have three-- at least three community composting
22 programs. The Woodside--

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time has
24 expired.

2 LEO KIRTS: composting. Oh, I'm sorry.

3 The Woodside and Sunnyside compost--

4 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: [interposing] Just
5 means the time expired. If you could wrap your
6 remarks.

7 LEO KIRTS: Okay, great. I just wanted
8 to mention that we have several community composting
9 programs that really beautify our community and it's
10 such an asset and please do not vote to cut these
11 funds. Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next will
13 be Elizabeth Arcitano.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun.

15 ELIZABETH ARCITANO: Thank you. My name
16 is Elizabeth Arcitano and I'm a resident of District
17 26 in Queens. I'm testifying in my personal capacity
18 today, but I'm also a member, a board member, of two
19 community organizations, Smiling Hogshead Ranch [sic]
20 which is a community garden in Long Island City, and
21 also Big Reuse, one of the organization whose
22 programs are targeted to be cut. As a growing number
23 of people are, I am acutely aware of the climate
24 crisis we are facing, and I also know that there's
25 very little individuals like me or us today can do

2 without a systemic change. however, composting
3 organic waste is one of those few things that we can
4 all do and that actually helps significantly reduce
5 greenhouse gas emissions, not only by diverting food
6 waste from landfills, but also by creating compost
7 that can make the soil of city parks and gardens in
8 our urban [inaudible] healthier and more resilient.
9 Containerizing food waste is obviously a good idea,
10 and it's good that it's happening, but the reality as
11 others have said is that in many neighborhoods,
12 diverting food waste from landfills still relies on
13 individuals taking their food waste to farmer's
14 markets or community gardens, because [inaudible]
15 don't want to provide brown bins, or also because the
16 smart bins are too far, also my case. So I don't
17 know what I'm going to do if this happens. And this-
18 - participating in this because of this community
19 education, outreach and engagement that has been
20 happening. For years, these organizations which are
21 currently at risk of losing their budget have not
22 only help mitigate climate change, but they've also
23 helped create and strengthen a large community of
24 engaged citizens through their [inaudible] and lived
25 engagement. And that community engagement is carried

2 out today by 115 people whose jobs are at risk, but
3 also are the result of what many others have done--

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time has
5 expired.

6 ELIZABETH ARCITANO: [inaudible] share
7 their knowledge. Just to end, there's 40,000 New
8 Yorkers that have expressed concerns about those cuts
9 in applications, so I hope our voices can be heard by
10 the Mayor and the Commissioner, and I'll send the
11 rest of my testimony in writing. Thank you very
12 much.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next will
14 be Andy Holloway.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has begun.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Andy Holloway?
17 Hearing no testimony from Andy, next will be Dinesh
18 Pya Kuro [sp?]. Dinesh? Okay, thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON NURSE: Thank you so much
20 Committee Counsel. Thank you to everybody who has
21 provided testimony in person and online. We really,
22 really appreciate you. I understand it's very
23 challenging to limit everything to two minutes, but
24 we do take your written testimony and we do read it,

2 so thank you very much. This concludes the hearing
3 today. And thank you for joining us.

4 [gavel]

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COMMITTEE ON SANITATION & SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date December 29, 2023