

**Testimony of
Joshua Goodman, Deputy Commissioner
New York City Department of Sanitation**

**Joint Hearing before the New York City Council
Committees on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management & Health**

**Thursday, December 12, 2023
10:00 A.M.**

Oversight – Rat Mitigation & Public Health

Good morning, Chairs Nurse and Schulman, Council Members, and staff. I'm Joshua Goodman, Deputy Commissioner, Public Affairs & Customer Experience at the Department of Sanitation. I am joined today by First Deputy Commissioner Javier Lojan, and it is our honor to bring you updates from the front lines in the War on Rats.

“New Yorkers are revolting,” but not in the way the haters, doubters, and Angelenos and Bostonians have long argued. No, New Yorkers are *leading a revolt* – a revolt against the trash, against old ways of doing things, and against the rats.

The Trash Revolution, a tidal wave of change in the management of 44 million daily pounds of waste, has swept across the City over the last two years, and New Yorkers are seeing the difference.

In the prior two decades, the Department of Sanitation had focused on shifting our back-end operations from a model where all trash was dumped at Fresh Kills landfill, to a waste-export model, where all New York City trash moves by barge and rail to destinations as far away as South Carolina. That was a tremendous behind-the-scenes undertaking, but it never addressed how New Yorkers *experience* trash, even as other cities around the world innovated substantially.

Residents and businesses continued to drop their smelly, leaky, and rat-attracting bags of trash on the sidewalk at 4 pm. We had massive, massive piles of bags on our sidewalks just as rush hour was getting under way. And these piles sat and sat and sat, sometimes up to 36 hours before we picked it up. Well, that is now changing, rapidly, thanks to Mayor Adams' vision and commitment to doing what has worked in other cities around the world.

We started by changing the set-out times for trash. The 4 pm setout time was the earliest of any major city in the United States, and it meant that rush hour became trash hour. We moved that time to 8 pm, and incentivized containerization by allowing trash in bins to go out at 6pm on the residential side, or an hour before closing on the commercial side.

We also shifted our operations to pick up that trash much, much sooner, sometimes within an hour of it being set out. This included moving more of our operations to a midnight shift, particularly in the City's Rat Mitigation Zones, and getting 2,500 of the largest residential buildings onto routes that allow for much faster service, among other steps.

We often don't notice what is not there, but if you think back, you can surely remember those massive piles and the rats that made them their home. And if you look now, they are largely gone!

As of this summer and fall, all food-based businesses and all chain businesses are now required to put their trash in an incredible invention, the wheelie bin, and this coming March, ALL businesses will be required to put their trash in these containers.

In Fall 2024, residents who live in buildings with 1-9 units will be required to put their trash in containers. We are engaged in a procurement process to design the first-ever official NYC bins, which will be available when the mandate goes into effect, and required approximately two years later.

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

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

We plan to further expand the containerization of trash from larger buildings, and we are developing a prototype automated side-loader truck to accomplish this.

These are the plays laid out in our containerization playbook, the Future of Trash report, viewable at nyc.gov/futureoftrash. We said what we were going to do, and we are getting it done, drastically transforming our streetscapes and putting a dent in what used to be an all-you-can-eat buffet for rats.

On behalf of my colleagues here today, we all look forward to answering your questions about our plan to stand up to the Axis of Filth represented by the rats, the bags of trash, and the old status quo, and about the Trash Revolution taking back our streets.

Jesse McLaughlin

Regarding Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,

Oversight - Rat Mitigation and Public Health

December 7, 2023

My name is Jesse McLaughlin, and I am a concerned District 37 resident and representative of New York City Audubon, an organization that works for the protection of wild birds and habitat in the five boroughs, improving the quality of life for all New Yorkers. **I am testifying about the dangerous use of rodenticides which harms both birds and people.**

New York City, in recent decades, has become home to large resident and breeding populations of raptor species, like the Red-tailed Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, American Kestrel, and Osprey. Three owl species—Great Horned, Barn, and Screech Owls—also nest in the City's largest parks; alongside Flaco, a non-native Eurasian Eagle Owl who escaped the Central Park Zoo in February of this year.

Birds are often New Yorkers' first connection with nature and NYC is, surprisingly, a birding hotspot. More than 300 species of birds pass through, nest, or reside year round in our city. Birds are also a critical part of a functioning, healthy ecosystem and that's especially true for raptors and their important place at the top of the food chain.

Our urban ecosystem supplies the sustenance that birds of prey need to survive—including rats. However, this food source also represents one of the greatest dangers to the birds, in the form of poisoning.

The methods our city uses to control rodents can have a devastating impact on our birds of prey. Rodenticides, also called rat poisons, are commonly yet ineffectively used to control rodent populations. One type, called anticoagulant rodenticides, causes death by stopping normal blood clotting. Anticoagulant rodenticides pose a serious risk to rodent predators such as hawks and owls: Rodents that eat the poison bait may not die for several days, and during that time become slow and sick, easy targets for predators.

When birds of prey such as Red-tailed Hawks eat these rodents, they become poisoned themselves. Because raptors are at the top of the food chain and will eat many rats, the toxins become more potently concentrated in the raptor through a process called biomagnification. **In fact, rat poisons were detected in 84 percent of dead birds of prey found in New York City, in research conducted by the Wildlife Unit of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.** Even recent celebrity birds are at risk, like Barry the Barred Owl who died in Central Park in Fall 2021 as a result of rodenticide poisoning.



Testimony on behalf of the Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and Bronx Solid Waste Advisory Boards
before the New York State City Council
Rat Mitigation and in Opposition of Mayor's Proposed PEG Budget Cuts
December 7, 2023

Good morning Chair Nurse and members of the Sanitation Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak. I am representing the four SWABs of Queens, Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx. The recent budget cuts announced by the administration will serve as a giant step backwards in any progress made around rat mitigation in New York City.

The Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation's budget eliminates community composting, reduces the number of parks and vacant lot cleaning, street litter baskets and street cleaning in underserved neighborhoods, delays the rollout of the curbside collection program for Staten Island and the Bronx, and completely cuts outreach and education efforts for the curbside collection going forward. These cuts are a recipe for rat proliferation in our city.

There are 550 community gardens in NYC; most receive free soil amendment of the highest quality from the NYC Compost Project. In addition to community gardens, street tree, and bioswale care are among the activities which will all continue to exist, but their existence will be threatened by the lack of vital support of the compost provided by the NYC Compost Projects and associated volunteer labor. The residents in our communities – especially our children, who interact the most with the natural environment in our parks and gardens – will be exposed to higher levels of heavy metals, such as lead and cadmium, mercury, and other toxins that the application of compost remediates.

Eliminating community composting programs and all of the community-building social connection that they provide through outreach and actual compost will weaken our natural urban immune system. Over the last year, the Compost Project kept 8.3 million pounds of compostable waste out of the landfill, and distributed compost to NYC parks, the Botanical Gardens, 325 community groups, community and school gardens, street tree care events, and thousands of individuals at no cost to the City or to the users.

Moreover, the curbside organics collection participation will fail without the grassroots outreach of the NYC Compost Project employees and volunteers who are passionate about composting education. Through their feet-on-the-street, hands-in-the-soil, person-to-person outreach, which ranges from door-knocking, event organizing and tabling, and Master Composter certification, they steadily educate and recruit ever more volunteers who reach and teach others.

Recycling rates in NYC since its inception in 1989 has never reached its modest goal of 23%. Now, as the city embarks on a new stream of source separation, residents need education and a reason to participate. Community composting's record of delivering beneficial soil amendments for the City's parks and tree canopy, social connection, green jobs, and measurable climate-altering greenhouse gas reduction, in addition to rat mitigation is the motivating message that along with the ongoing involvement of community composters throughout this city is what will make organics diversion succeed.

Testimony for Dec 7th, 2023 hearing with Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste, with Committee on Health, on Rat Mitigation

Since leading the development of the Zero Waste Design Guidelines, in 2017, I have been advocating for the city to separately collect organic waste, and containerize waste, to improve streetscapes, reduce rats, and help the city reach zero waste, climate, equity and resiliency goals. So, I applaud the current administration and DSNY leadership for forwarding these strategies. But, I have many ideas for how both **waste containerization** and **organic waste collection** could be done more affordably and bring more benefits to the city.

Thoughts on DSNY's containerization plans :

1. Tie into zero waste goals:

- a. Financial incentives [are a key strategy used by other cities](#), and containerization makes them easier to implement. The system proposed in New York City's 2015 [OneNYC plan](#) was called "Save-As-You-Throw" (SAYT) because it would allow waste-conscious buildings to save money relative to their current tax payments. Implementing SAYT at a building scale with wheeled bins is straightforward since the charge could be based on the number and size of bins. Applying the system to shared containers would require study. It could include technologies that measure the amount of waste deposited, or, alternatively, offer incentives at a block or district scale.
- b. Ensure that containerization and waste reduction incentives are part of [implementation of commercial waste franchise zones](#), leading to savings for both haulers and customers.



2. Ensure sidewalks don't have permanent rows of bins instead of temporary bags

- a. DSNY's new rule will require 1-9 unit buildings and allow 10-20 unit buildings to use standard 2 wheeled bins, and allow them to be permanently located in the sidewalk. This is a problem. For commercial strips with 8 unit walk-ups above there will be 2-3 commercial bins and ± 8 residential bins – which don't even fit in front of one storefront. Individual bins are OK for 1-2 family houses but row houses should have shared containers in the street, the same solution DSNY is recommending for larger buildings.

3. Take up the minimum amount of public space possible

- a. Large buildings have space within them. We can containerize waste for the 23% of waste from large buildings that DSNY said was unfeasible if we consider the space within buildings, and balance collection frequency. These buildings can stage 4-wheeled bins temporarily in the street, a different waste type every day, and the valuable curbside space can be used for deliveries at other times of day. **See here for details.**
- b. We know many buildings which would love to pilot 4-wheeled bins, and DSNY could use the same lift it is using for 2-wheeled carts in 1-2 family neighborhoods.



Both these photos are the same block of 146th St in Hamilton Heights

4. Design waste collection into streetscapes

- a. The Hamilton Heights pilot has up to 18 dumpsters on one block just for trash, and there are still bins on the sidewalks, as it wasn't thought through how residents and supers would use the dumpsters.
- b. Containers should be better designed into streetscapes, and it should replace the bins lining sidewalks. Containers should also be ADA accessible for all users, rain proof, rat-proof, durable and easy to service and maintain.

See more on our suggestions for how waste containerization can be improved [here](#), or in our Vital City article [here](#).

Thoughts on DSNY's organics collection plans :

DSNY's cuts to the NYC Compost project must be reversed. Community-scale composting is vital for the successful rollout of the city's curbside collection program AND for maintaining street trees, rain gardens and community gardens.

1. NYC Compost Project educates and engages New Yorkers

- a. Thousands of master composters are trained every year and these people help schools, community gardens and other places set up and run on-site composting, requiring no trucks and generating valuable compost to improve soils. Thousands of volunteers get to see how disgusting garbage can be instead turned into a valuable resource to make the city greener and healthier.
- b. The NYC Compost Project partners such as Big Reuse have been doing all the outreach work to educate the public on separating food scraps for the City's curbside organics collection program. Without their outreach curbside collection will be much less successful.

2. Community Composting is required to maintain street trees, rain gardens, community gardens and green spaces.

- a. The city needs the good-quality compost that community compost creates to properly maintain the [millions of dollars](#) of green infrastructure that it has recently installed. When compost is applied to street trees, rain gardens, parks and community gardens it [makes the soil](#) and plants healthier: reducing flooding and air pollution, providing summer cooling and making the city greener and cleaner.
- b. NYC Compost Project sites provide over 90% of the compost which Green Thumb distributes to community gardens for communities to grow healthy food.
- c. The vast majority of the organic waste collected by the city is not composted, but goes to Newtown Creek and is anaerobically digested, producing biogas and digestate, which goes mainly to landfill. It does not provide a healthy soil amendment.

Now is not the time for short-sighted cuts to community-scale composting, which is about 0.005% of the city's budget. The city should instead be expanding the number of small-scale compost sites to enable a [substantial percentage](#) of our food scraps and yard waste to be transformed into a valuable neighborhood resource.

Community composting helps regenerate city soils, neighborhood by neighborhood, reducing flooding, providing summer cooling and creating healthier urban ecosystems. The programs' stewardship opportunities foster civic engagement and social resilience, strengthen cultural connections to healthy food, and offer tangible steps for New Yorkers to start living in a more sustainable way. These cost-effective programs contribute to a more equitable, livable city with fewer rats, cleaner streets, and thriving green spaces. NYC has spent decades and invested millions of dollars building up successful community compost programs, so let's commit to their future success.

The Center for Zero Waste Design is willing to help the administration with any of these ideas, and explain them further to councilmembers.



Clare Miflin,
Executive Director, Center for Zero Waste Design



Joint Committee on Health and Sanitation

Support for continuing funding for curbside outreach and community composting to mitigate rat infestations

To: The Honorable City Councilmember Sandy Nurse and Lynn Schulman, Chairs

From: Justin Green, Big Reuse

December 7, 2023

Dear Councilmember Krishnan,

I am Justin Green - Executive Director of Big Reuse

Thank you to our amazing supporting council members, Chair Nurse and BP Reynoso! You are true climate leaders.

Thank you to incredible people that work at all the organizations that are part of our composting movement. The amount of support we have received from New Yorkers to restore funding shows how our work has impacted and inspired so many.

During a worsening climate crisis - 115 green jobs should not be cut. Community composting and outreach should be expanded, not cut. The need for a stronger community based response to climate change should be obvious after an unprecedented year of wildfire smoke, record rain, and high tides starting to regularly flood some NYC neighborhoods..

For 30 years - DSNY has funded innovative community based solutions for our food and yard waste. Master Composter and composting education at the Botanical Gardens, food scrap drop off at GrowNYC Farmers Markets, and over the last decade development of nationally recognized community composting program - supported and in partnership with DSNY.

DSNY recognized that community composting is the most ecological and common sense way to process NYC food and yard waste. We might not be able to compost all NYC's waste but we provide so many other benefits and value - from community engagement, laying the foundation for support for curbside and providing compost to green the city. Our community gardens, street trees and parks need compost. We have shown we can make the compost in our communities instead of burdening other communities.

At Big Reuse we compost 2.2 million lbs and 3 sites and produce over 1000 cubic yards each year that goes to over 200 Parks, community groups and street tree care. These cuts will eliminate this decade old program.

Thank you to chairs Nurse and Schulman for fighting for community composting and outreach, and to the many supporters, funding, 40,000 letter writers, and hundreds of people who came to rallies. Reducing rats in NYC will require curbside collections to be successful, with high participation rates. We need extensive outreach to New Yorkers to explain why and how to compost. Changing the habits/behavior of 6.5 million people is going to take a lot more work. DSNY/City is cutting the outreach budget while the program is launching. It makes no sense. The city should be increasing the outreach budget but instead the Mayor and DSNY are eliminating 115 jobs at nonprofits that are promoting composting.

Big Reuse is one of the Community Based Organizations that have been promoting composting and food separation for over a decade. Our compost and outreach programming are getting cut by 100% losing 19 jobs. We are a nonprofit organization fighting climate change through community based zero waste programs, composting outreach, reuse, and street tree care.

The cuts will eliminate Big Reuse's outreach team for curbside collection. Changing the behaviour of over 8 million New Yorkers to get them to participate in curbside collection is going to need more outreach.

Each year our outreach team speaks to 75,000 New Yorkers about curbside collection - knocking on 35,000 doors and attending over 900 events. In support with DSNY collection - we set up tables at community events and high rise buildings to educate residents about curbside collection, providing the outreach and information needed to participate and kitchen containers, compost, and leaf bags.

With the city's budget cuts to outreach, come December 31 - this amazing and incredibly hard working and dedicated team will lose their jobs and we will no longer be able to provide outreach.

A highly visible and consistent representation for composting awareness and education, our outreach associates find themselves fielding similar queries no matter how often they enter a neighborhood: What's this all about? Why would I do this? Won't it smell? Won't it be extra work? When would I set it out? What do I do if I'm in a large building? Do you have advice for how to talk to your landlord about the program? I think I'm the only person in my building using the bin; how do I get information to my neighbors?

With the city's budget cuts to outreach, come December 31 these types of questions will no longer be answered by an accessible and dedicated in-person team.

Every day, 115 experienced and dedicated Compost Project employees and outreach associates lend their passion and expertise toward making sure NYC residents understand their composting options and

the importance of these programs for keeping these materials out of landfills, enriching soil, mitigating rats, and keeping the city clean.

With the city's budget cuts to community composting and outreach, these 115 people will lose their jobs just in time for the holidays.

Reflecting on thirty years of unparalleled Compost Project work and the efforts of our outreach team to fill the critical need for education around the curbside composting roll-out reminds us that it's not just programs at risk of being cut; it's an entire community that is only continuing to grow and provide equitable access to all New Yorkers for a fraction of what other DSNY services cost to run.

These teams have demonstrated their willingness to pour their enthusiasm and energies into compost education, collection, and processing to better the city and its residents, their talents for integrating into communities, their responsiveness for adapting to the unique needs of NYC residents, and their creativity in expanding services and education to reach new audiences.

Eliminating these programs would mean a staggering loss of extensive knowledge and community connections that have taken decades to build, large numbers of residents without access to composting options, and a huge step backward for NYC in reaching sustainability goals.

Funding should be immediately restored to the FY24 budget to continue community composting and outreach work to reduce rat populations.



**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT AND
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
RAT MITIGATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH**

TO: Sandy Nurse, Committee Chair, Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

FROM: Dan Biederman, Bryant Park Corporation and 34th Street Partnership

Presented by Maddie Baker

DATE: December 7, 2023

Dear Sandy Nurse,

As the stewards of two large and distinct business improvement districts, we have found that successful rat mitigation techniques vary in different contexts. For example, at Bryant Park, we have found significant success in focusing our efforts on disrupting burrows, developing tracking systems, and making infrastructural improvements. Much of this success is due to the time and resources we have been able to concentrate on the issue, but a lot of the success can also be attributed to the island-like nature of the park itself. At 34th Street, we have had less luck with these methods due to the more open nature of the space, dining sheds with poor upkeep outside of our bounds of influence, and other factors outside our control.

One issue that remains constant across contexts is waste and waste containerization. At Bryant Park, we have invested a lot of time and resources in new containerization methods within the limitations of our pickups from DSNY. Our efforts overall have reduced rat activity by 80%, but we have not been able to push this number further without containerized waste pickups. We believe DSNY can and should be able to pick up waste from 3-cubic yard wheeled dumpsters at Bryant Park by the same method they use in trials elsewhere around the city.

We have seen various trials of 3-cubic yard dumpsters throughout the city in controlled locations and have admired the dumpster enclosures used in Upper Manhattan on 153rd St between Broadway and Amsterdam. While swift efforts to containerize trash across the city have much to be admired, we understand that logistics also differ from context to context, and key stakeholders vary in their resources and capacity to comply. We believe it makes sense to try dumpster pickups in a BID such as Bryant Park, which is also controlled, but tests the system's ability to handle containerized waste from a space that is more publicly trafficked.

As entities which manage a large portion of the city's public waste in some of the city's most trafficked areas, BIDs and our concerns should be prioritized as key stakeholders in the fight for containerized waste and rat mitigation. It is important to account for the varying nature, waste volume, and capacity of each business improvement district as the city's new waste management protocols are rolled out. We want to thank this committee and DSNY for all that they are doing to push the city forward on this issue. We hope you see Bryant Park as a promising place to try out new waste containerization and rat mitigation methods and look forward to partnering in the future.

Kind Regards,
Dan Biederman



**NYC Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
Oversight Hearing on Rat Mitigation and Public Health
December 7, 2023
Testimony by Lights Out Coalition**

Good afternoon, Chair Nurse and members of the Sanitation Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm Kathy Nizzari, Founder of the Lights Out Coalition. We are a 50 member organization made up of animal rights, environmental and professional groups; scientists, designers, engineers, attorneys, political clubs, community leaders, and a Vice President in the United Nations System. While our backgrounds may be very diverse, we all work together for a single purpose: to protect urban wildlife. This is what distinguishes us from other animal protection concerns.

Lights Out completely opposes rodenticides for 2 basic reasons. 1: It is an incredibly painful¹ and cruel way to die. Basically, rats bleed to death slowly over a period of days. And 2: Lethal non-targeted or secondary poisoning. Whether it be the wild birds and other animals who live in the parks including feral cats eating a rat who ingested the poison, or squirrels² and dogs out for a walk who nibble on the bait which is often in

¹ ["The Horrors of Rodenticide,"](#) *City Wild Life*, December 6, 2018.

² ["Rat Poison Kills More Than Rats,"](#) *City Wild Life*, August 9, 2023.

locations that are illegal. Last year there were reports of several dogs on the Upper West Side^{3,4} who died from ingesting rat poison. These are not isolated incidents. In fact, the Merck Veterinary Manual^{5,6} lists rodenticides as “a relatively common cause of poisoning in pets and wildlife.” American Academy of Clinical Toxicology⁷ reported a staggering 1 ½ million children under the age of 6 in the US poisoned by rodenticide with 1,630 fatalities in 2021. This data does not even include other age groups. We must employ humane mechanisms of rat population control.

Putting aside for a moment the moral and ethical argument against rodenticides, as well as their toxification of soil, water and, therefore, food systems, rodenticides don't work. If they did, we would not be sitting here right now. Their widespread use is costing the City millions of dollars, yet we have more rats now than ever, as the study you cited indicates. When the Mayor is making quality of life cuts, the City needs to redirect its limited resources away from failed methods that also cause so much collateral damage. The risks of using dangerous rodenticides and other lethal methods do not justify their use. Moreover, rats just breed too quickly.

The State, thanks to Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal,⁸ is taking action to get pesticide use banned. The Council needs to do the same.

The coalition is working with leading scientists in the field of humane rat population control which is much more cost effective, not to mention it works!

We are glad to hear discussion around composting and containerization today. By creating an Integrated Pest Management⁹ system, or IPM, rat populations will be reduced. This could include scientific humane population control systems; properly discarding trash in appropriate receptacles; expanding containerization¹⁰ which is working in Council Member Abreu's district; proper building maintenance and upkeep;

³ Kim, CeFaan, “[Dog owners on high alert after mysterious deaths in Washington Heights](#),” *ABC7 News*, November 15, 2022.

⁴ Co, Rich, “[Poison Intended for Rat Infestation Kills Three Dogs Instead on New York City Streets](#),” *Nature World News*, November 16, 2022.

⁵ Dr. Hommerding, Holly, “[Anticoagulant Rodenticide \(Warfarin and Congeners\) Poisoning in Animals](#),” *Merck Veterinary Manual*, Modified November 2022.

⁶ Dr. Hommerding, Holly, “[Overview of Rodenticide Poisoning in Animals](#),” *Merck Veterinary Manual*, Modified November 2022.

⁷ Gummin, David D., et al., “[2021 Annual Report of the National Poison Data System® \(NPDS\) from America's Poison Centers: 39th Annual Report](#),” *Clinical Toxicology*, January 5, 2023.

⁸ NYS Senate [S1856A](#)

⁹ University of California Agriculture & Natural Resources, “[What Is IPM?](#),” 2023.

¹⁰ Banerjee, Isha, “[A week into pilot program, containerization shows promise, sparks controversy in West Harlem](#),” *Columbia Spectator*, September 19, 2023.

and composting. By removing what amounts to $\frac{1}{3}$ ¹¹ of municipal trash, the key food source for rats is eliminated. If the Mayor cuts curbside pickup, there are still many drop-off sites. I personally compost at home.

Mandate attendance at Caroline Bragdon's¹² Rat Academy¹³ for building maintenance staffs. Invest in a comprehensive public awareness campaign. Explain what human behaviors cause this problem and how easy it is to tackle by making simple yet determined changes. Modifying behavior can have lasting positive results.

We need to pivot away from calling this 'a war on rats' and promoting an 'us versus them' mentality. Rats are not the enemy. Frame this in the truest sense that it is: We do not have a rat problem, we have a problem caused by humans for which, sadly, rats, and others, are paying the ultimate price. In other words, like climate change, this is an anthropogenic problem.

People caused this problem. People can solve it.

Thank you for your time.

Kathy Nizzari
Lights Out Coalition
kathy.nizzari.nam@gmail.com

¹¹ Cohen, Steve, "[New York City's Food Waste and the Circular Economy](#)," *Columbia Climate School's State of the Planet*, December 5, 2022.

¹² Fund For The City Of New York, "[Caroline H. Bragdon](#)," 2015.

¹³ NYC Health, "[Rat Academy Trainings](#)," 2023 & "[Rats](#)."

Testimony

Good morning, Chairs Schulman, Nurse and members of the Committees on Health and Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. My name is Kathy Corradi, and I am the Director of Rodent Mitigation for the City of New York. I am joined by my colleagues Corinne Schiff, Deputy Commissioner for Environmental Health from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Javier Lojan, First Deputy Commissioner and Joshua Goodman, Deputy Commissioner, Public Affairs & Customer Experience, both from the NYC Department of Sanitation, and First Deputy Commissioner Kazimir Vilenchik, P.E. from the NYC Department of Buildings.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to address this important topic.

New York City's rat mitigation efforts are robust, evidence based, and effective.

Our program is data driven, rooted in science, and involves planning and action across multiple agencies and geographies. Built on decades of experience, we know what works and we are executing!

While some ground was lost during the covid emergency, city operations are back on track, strong systems are in place, and we are confident our approach will drive rat activity back to pre-pandemic levels.

New York City's rat mitigation effort is committed to the scientifically proven Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategy. IPM emphasizes inspections, monitoring, and removal of conditions that rats need to survive. Rats thrive when they have ready access to food and water, a place to live and effective transportation routes. That means that reducing the rat population requires managing garbage, eliminating nesting areas and repairing cracks and holes in sidewalks, structures, and buildings. Safe, targeted extermination treatment, utilizing best practices, is the final piece of an effective IPM program.

IPM stresses that poisons (rodenticides/pesticides) are used as a last resort because science has shown that pesticides in rodent control are not as effective or sustainable as employing sanitation and exclusion as the first and strongest interventions.

Our current program's overall goal is to consistently move towards more efficient, integrated pest management that goes deeper in identifying and addressing the root causes of rat populations and building long term, sustainable reduction interventions.

The Health Department's rat control program takes a multi-pronged, evidence-based approach across New York City. Key components of Health's IPM program include proactive inspections of every property in a particular area, enabling the Department to learn where rat activity is greatest and track progress over time; complaint inspections to address New Yorkers' concerns; enforcing the NYC Health Code requirement to maintain properties free of rats by directing property owners to take action on their properties to control rats or the conditions that support them; extermination by licensed pest management professionals on private properties where the owner fails to act, and billing for the work; providing guidance and technical assistance to city

agencies, as well as monitoring city property and referring areas in need of rat control; and sealing or collapsing rat burrows by a stoppage team to help control rat activity in the public realm. New Yorkers can learn more about Health Department activities on its Environment and Health Data Portal and check inspection outcomes for specific properties on the agency's Rat Information Portal.

Health Department's inspection data indicates that rat activity in NYC neighborhoods is not equally distributed. Some neighborhoods bear a higher burden of rat infestation. Those neighborhoods tend to be densely populated with high foot traffic, an abundance of food service establishments and a higher proportion of public property. To effectively address rats, city agencies, property owners and residents in these areas must work together. The Health Department maintains a robust outreach and education program to help residents, property owners, and pest management professionals learn best practices for controlling rats.

The Health Department plays a central role in the city mitigation efforts by serving as the lead agency for analysis, reporting, and evaluation of rat mitigation efforts. The Department also offers technical support and training to partner agencies so that staff are trained in best practices. The Department's research team takes the lead on testing new products and evaluation of different pest management methods.

The Department of Buildings enforces building codes and local laws in construction and building sites. This includes enforcement of pre-building permit certification of retaining a licensed exterminator, as required by Local Law 109 of 2022, rodent proofing construction code requirements, and construction site housekeeping (cleanliness) requirements.

The Department of Sanitation, who will detail their contribution to city-wide rat mitigation, collects recycling, disposes of waste, and cleans streets. DSNY takes 24 million pounds of trash, recycling, and compostable material off the City's streets every day. Much of that comprises the primary food source of NYC's rats.

For successful long-term rat mitigation to be realized, robust management of New York City's streets, including waste, is essential. From litter baskets to tree pits to parks to schools to NYCHA developments, every food source and potential home for rodents must be considered when building a plan to eliminate them. Mayor Adams' commitment to city-wide integrated pest management, including changes the Department of Sanitation is making to how New York City manages its waste, will ensure a long-term, rat free New York.

Public properties, e.g., Public Schools, Parks, NYCHA, are responsible for keeping their city-managed assets clean and rat free.

As the Citywide Director of Rodent Mitigation, I serve as the central voice for New York City's mitigation efforts. Providing organization and direction to the many facets of a city-wide pest management program, the 'Rat Czar' supports agencies as they innovate, drives individual and collective accountability, and breaks down silos to build a unified strategy. I also meet with internal and external stakeholders to discuss challenges and build scaled solutions.

Legislation: The Rat Action Plan, legislated codification of Rat Mitigation Zones, expanded categories of construction projects requiring rodent abatement, mandated rodent proof containers at properties with repeat pest violations, and allowed for changing waste set out times. The design and maintenance guidelines dictated in the permanent Outdoor Dining program also underscore the interjurisdictional commitment to rat mitigation.

Interagency Collaboration: The Rat Task force, which meets monthly, is comprised of representatives from Department of Health, Parks, NYC Public Schools, NYCHA, DSNY, Mayor's Office of Small Business Services, Department of Transportation, Mayor's Community Affairs Unit, and Housing Preservation and Development. Representation in the Rat Task Force continues to expand as rat mitigation efforts are integrated across all facets of city government.

In the past six months, the Rat Task Force has piloted the development of site specific IPM plans, collaborated on strategic enforcement, directed agencies to implement best extermination strategies, deepened agency alignment, and collaborated on neighborhood engagement and interventions.

It is through this authentic collaboration and problem solving that sustainable progress is made.

Community Engagement: Connecting with New Yorkers is a core tenant in the City's approach to rat mitigation. The Health Department's Rat Academies, NYCHA tenant association visits and family day tabling events, neighborhood and community garden walk throughs, and Anti-Rat Days of Action are all examples of the work we do to connect City resources to New Yorkers and New Yorkers to information. The Health Department's Rat Information Portal is a tool available to New Yorkers to explore the results of all pest control inspections and access information on rat prevention.

Commitment to Integrated Pest Management: The Health Department's neighborhood indexing allows for targeted interventions and monitoring. This includes property and neighborhood level data collection with mapping and analysis to better understand areas of highest rat burden. Conducting over 220,000 inspections in FY23, the Department of Health has unprecedented data on rat activity. Analysis of this data drives interagency strategy and private property interventions.

New Yorkers can track progress by checking the Health Department's Environment and Health Data Portal.

City pest management teams have expanded the use of non-poison bait extermination methods (carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide applications), targeted harborage conditions and built sustainable mitigation results through exclusion.

Perhaps, most significantly, the Department of Sanitation's work to containerize waste ensures removal of rats' food sources and severely impacts their ability to reproduce, repopulate and spread further into our New York City community.

We know our approach to rat mitigation is successful with consistent, routinized application. We continue to evaluate and refine strategies as we amply and scale mitigation efforts. With data,

science and unprecedented collaboration, New York City is working harder than ever to mitigate rats and we are confident in our ability to get stuff done.

But our work cannot be done alone. Rats do not observe property lines or distinguish between public and private ownership. This means, efforts to mitigate rats demand nothing less than full, city-wide participation. We look forward to partnering with you and all New Yorkers in this collective effort.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today to address this important topic. I would now like to pass to my colleague Joshua Goodman from DSNY.

**Testimony by Erik Menjivar, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,
Jointly with the Committee on Health
Chairs Sandy Nurse and Lynn Schulman
Oversight: Rat Mitigation and Public Health
December 7, 2023**

Good morning Chairs Nurse and Schulman and members of the Sanitation and Health Committees. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Erik Menjivar, and I am a proud member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective, represented by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, RWDSU. I work as a Compost Coordinator for GrowNYC, and together with our partners at The New York City Compost Project, we serve millions of New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs, providing food scrap collections, organics processing, compost outreach, education access, and finished compost. We divert more than 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills each year, create hundreds and thousands of pounds of compost that is distributed to parks, community gardens, and individuals, and perform necessary environmental outreach and education to over 600,000 New Yorkers annually.

Community Compost was fully funded by the City and the Mayor in the last budget, and defunding it is a violation of the contract the City has with GrowNYC and the other NYC Compost Project programs. It is also a violation of the public trust and the open budgeting process through which we set the fiscal priorities for the City. Now, the Mayor is going back on that commitment without any public process.

Because of this, I, along with 114 others, will lose my job in less than 2 weeks, just before the holidays, unless the Mayor and City Council take a stand to protect this program. This includes 53 good, union jobs with the RWDSU.

Community composting is among the best tools the City has to mitigate rats and other common pests. Food waste sitting out on the street in plastic bags is a feast for rats, and diverting this waste through community composting is one of the most cost effective, preventive measures the City can take. This program is not expensive; it is a drop in the bucket of the City's budget, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular. There is no curbside pickup in the Bronx and Staten Island and our program fills that gap. The curbside program also does not return any compost to the community, whereas we do, serving the many community gardens in NYC.

The Mayor needs to find the money to fund the NYC Compost Project, and to keep union workers employed through the holiday season to keep a roof over our heads. The

Council must vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and to combat the rat infestation. If the Mayor succeeds in heartlessly cutting our jobs one week before the holidays, the Council must then fight to fully restore this program by ensuring sufficient funding for Community Composting in the 2024 budget this spring, and also mandating that this program exist through legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Erik Menjivar
Queens

My name is Jesse Hendrich, and I am the chairperson of Sterling's Committee for Rat Awareness and Mitigation (aka SCRAM), a committee of the Sterling Place Block Association (SPBA) in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn. Our committee has been active in education, organizing, and advocating for a strong response to our city's rat infestation. We work closely with CM Crystal Hudson's D35 Rat Task Force, and so our testimony overlaps a great deal, as you will see as you read my statement on behalf of SCRAM:

We implore the city, and the Rat Czar, to continue its efforts working toward a mitigation of the rampant infestation that has gripped our city since the pandemic, when people worked in their homes, so organic matter in garbage multiplied, and rats migrated -- and multiplied -- in all parts of our city -residential, commercial, mixed use-and specifically in our District. We welcome the proposed improvements to outdoor dining and sanitation, but we ask that other measures be taken to decrease the rat population. These include:

- fast action on taking down abandoned sheds,
- resuming financial support for compost programs,
- employing CO2 to destroy nests,
- address the rats nests in tree beds-all around our neighborhoods-and whose responsibility it is,
- address sinking sidewalks because of rats digging underground,
- address sinking sidewalks because of rats digging underground,
- provide appropriate closed trash receptacles in the parks and on sidewalks,
- require ALL buildings to set garbage out in bins with lids on pick up days,
- coordination of City efforts,
- clarify whether it is the City or a building owner's responsibility around which rat problems,
- clarify which city agency people should connect to regarding all of these RAT issues: Department of Health; Department of Parks, Department of Sanitation, Department of Transportation, Department of Buildings??

We recognize that individuals have a personal responsibility - to throw garbage in proper containers and not on the sidewalk or in the parks, to follow garbage containment rules, and to generally be aware that their actions can impact on the rat issue. We have made some progress as advocacy groups, and as a City, but there is so much more that needs to be done, and we need a City that is prepared to be a full partner in this issue. Rats are seen every day around restaurants with unclean outdoor sheds or deficient sanitation practices. Rats are seen every day on the street when walking, biking, or driving to work. Rats are seen every day in our neighborhoods and in buildings with multiple complaints and multiple fines but ultimately no action by delinquent landlords. Rats spread disease and, frankly, give our wonderful city a very bad name. In the interest of health, commerce, and quality of life, we ask you, the City and its departments, to do better. Thank you.



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Fax: 646.660.6701

December 7, 2023

Dear Councilmembers Nurse, Ossé, Bottcher, Gennaro, Menin, Yeger, Jordan, Velázquez, Salamanca:

I am Dr. Samantha MacBride, a faculty member of Baruch College, Marxe School of Public and International Affairs, where I teach public management and urban environmentalism. I am also a Manhattan Council District 2 resident; **former Director of Research and Operations at the Bureau of Recycling and Sustainability, New York City Department of Sanitation**; and I currently serve pro bono on the advisory board of Earth Matter, one of the community composting organizations slated for disastrous budget cuts under the PEGs proposed earlier in December.

I am writing to strongly urge you to reverse the reactive, short-sighted cuts to The New York City Compost Project and GrowNYC that are proposed to take effect this coming January 2024. You have no doubt heard about the extensive benefits of both programs' longstanding food scrap acceptance and composting operations, which are integrated into year-round, hands-on education, growing, and workforce development, affecting hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers directly and indirectly every year. **What I would like to address today is the relevance of this program to rat mitigation.**

As Director of Research and Operations at DSNY, I worked on the first rollout of curbside compost collection service to selected districts in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island. During that period, a very common concern among residents was that the requirement to segregate and store food scraps for once weekly collection would actually **encourage** rat activity. Crucial to overcoming this resistance was work conducted by the New York City Compost Project and GrowNYC to build strong, foundational knowledge of how composting works at a grassroots level – including best practices that eliminate pest access to organic material – as well as how resulting compost enriches soils, and is tied to food security, soil health, and climate change mitigation.

These messages drew public acceptance because of the accumulated wisdom and credibility of folks who walked the walk at the neighborhood level – Community Composters. The work by the GrowNYC and the Compost Project was essential to building a counter-understanding of composting as a healing social and ecological activity; **and this**

understanding of compost as something “good”, instead of “odor/task/threat”, had an underestimated, but huge, influence on reception of the curbside program. In fact, efforts of both groups have never been aimed at the “truest of the true believers”. They have been professionally tailored to diverse audiences of kids and adults that cross multiple demographic categories, and span the entire city.

Historically, most of DSNY’s own education around curbside composting has consisted of direct mail, with minimal outdoor/print advertising, and occasional spates of door knocking by contracted non-DSNY workers, often drawn from the ranks of organizations within the Compost Project and GrowNYC. The main messages of these outreaches are practical, having to do with schedules for collection and instructions on how to separate, store and set out material at the curb. This practical information is essential, yet leaves many New Yorkers unconvinced that participation will not come with risks to health and safety, due mainly to rats, but also from racoons, maggots, and flies. As someone who worked in DSNY curbside operations and interacted with the public during the first generation of the curbside program 2015-2020, **I can assert that DSNY’s direct outreach would not have been able to find foothold were it not for the decades of consistent, substantive educational work that GrowNYC and the NYC Compost Project had done prior, and continued to do, as curbside composting was introduced.**

In contrast to the on again/off again, aspect of DSNY curbside service offerings (an issue that persists to this day), the NYC Compost Project has existed since the 1990’s, and GrowNYC has been involved in composting since 2007. The antecedents to this work go much further back, originating in grassroots responses in the 1970s and 1980s to the destruction of neighborhoods in the wake of fiscal crisis. Starting at that time, and with blood, sweat, and elbow grease, current Compost Project/GrowNYC leaders Christine Datz-Romero, Marisa De Dominicis, and David Hurd – among others – worked with community justice coalitions to reclaim and green abandoned neighborhoods through composting and gardening.

Without interruption, Community Compost organizations have cultivated foundational knowledge about what compost is, and why it provides so many benefits to communities, and the planet. This knowledge has been built through consistency, creativity, and unflagging dedication among employees of GrowNYC, Big Reuse, LES Ecology Center, Earth Matter NY, New York Botanical Garden, Queens Botanical Garden, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden. Employees of these organizations, who were and are paid far less than civil servants, have showed up without fail to “roll with the punches” of DSNY pauses and restarts; never failing to overcome resident confusion and frustration with an engaging, welcoming, hands-on approach. **To say that this activity, recently trivialized by DSNY spokespersons, will be unneeded due to an anticipated 20-fold increase in organics collection tonnage, is deeply unwise.** Such projections are based on an **untested assumption of radically increased curbside participation under the new administration**, in contrast to the period 2015-2019. **An examination of organics tonnage collected 2021 to present in comparison to years 2018 and 2019 certainly does not suggest that the current iteration of the**

program, laudable as it is for its borough-wide application, is improving on capture rates and participation. I would be glad to provide data to this effect if requested.

After so much has been achieved, and in an era where decentralization, community involvement, and social/environmental justice are becoming recognized as never before, now is not the time to mercilessly jettison this crucial community resource.

As NYC faces a budget shortfall, it is essential to remember that NYC community composting emerged in the 1970's in a similar period of fiscal devastation, and was crucial to neighborhood recovery. My historical research on DSNY's involvement in 20th century organics recyclingⁱ confirms that without a thirty-year history of community composting to build on, it is probable that the city's aspirations to curbside organics collection, not to mention carbon neutrality through sustainable organics management, would still be ideas on the drawing board. Without the continuation of community composting, New York's future resiliency is imperiled. Community compost literally builds the ground that New Yorkers use to grow food and restore industrial land.

Sincerely,



Samantha MacBride, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Public Affairs
Baruch College School of Public Affairs
One Bernard Baruch Way, D-0901
New York, NY 10010

ⁱ. MacBride, Samantha. "Composting and Garbage in New York City: A 20th Century History," in Zimring, C.A. and Corey, S.H. eds., 2021. *Coastal Metropolis: Environmental Histories of Modern New York City*. University of Pittsburgh Press.

Dear City Council Members,

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the city is planning to defund community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation.

Compost in NYC is as much about building healthy communities as it is building soil structure, and the work of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC is essential to our city.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating the funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming, and enabling them to continue their vital work of education, diverting food scraps from landfills, and making the city a healthier, cleaner, and more resilient place to live and work. If these programs are removed from the budget, the city's Zero Waste goals are imperiled, and the jobs of 115 workers from 9 non-profits will be lost. Cutting these jobs, 53 of which are union, is unacceptable.

We cannot allow this colossal environmental setback on our watch; New Yorkers deserve better.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and make our city more sustainable. The Council must also fight for this program and ensure sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring.

Thank you,
Alana Moskowitz
Brooklyn, NY

Sanitation, Solid Waste Management and Health Joint Hearing Testimony - December 7, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for the joint hearing with Sanitation and Health committees. I'm Allison Allen, a member of MSWAB but submitting individual testimony. I testified a couple of times in June 2022 when rats were all over the news (and before we had a Rat Czar). I encouraged more collaboration between DSNY and DOH and made suggestions to promote the importance of diverting food waste (removing rat food from the waste stream), using composting programs as part of all rat mitigation tactics and communications. The #1 thing we can all do is to stop feeding the rats, by diverting their food out of the waste stream and into the compost stream.

To summarize from prior testimony, we need to better make the connection and cross promote DSNY's rat proof brown bins and the importance of diverting food waste from black plastic bags, as an effective option as part of every rat related inquiry, complaint and touchpoint. For example:

- The DOH Rat Portal should provide information and links to info on the expanding curbside organics collection program (already available to everyone in Queens and Brooklyn), as well as food scrap drop off locations and Smart Bins throughout the website, on multiple pages.
- The Rat Academy should strongly promote food waste diversion from the waste stream and resources at every opportunity.
- All 311 callers with a rat complaint should be given information on the available "composting" options and the importance of diverting food waste to remove the rat food supply.
- Anyone who has received a rat violation should be encouraged (if not mandated) to divert food waste.
- Building owners and property managers in areas where rat populations are high should also be targeted with information on the curbside organics program, Smart Bins and food scrap drop off sites. They need to be better informed about the connection between rats and organic waste left in easily opened black plastic bags as well as other building benefits.
- Bill #460, passed last year, requires buildings with repeated rodent infestations to use rat resistant trash receptacles. They should also be reminded of the importance of separating food waste into rat proof containers as a mitigation tactic..
- Any and all DOH rat related communications should include information on "composting" options, where possible:
 - For example, pasted below is a letter that DOH mailed to a colleague about mitigating rats in her area. I imagine that thousands, receive this mailer. It's a missed opportunity to promote the importance of food waste diversion, the brown bin program and other composting options, by simply adding a 7th bullet to this letter. It would cost nothing. As this is a mailer, there could have also been a separate insert on how/where/importance of diverting food waste - also at no additional cost, other than to make copies
- Please note the email I sent to DOH last year, is also pasted below. COVID was apparently the excuse for not being able to change anything, but this is seemingly simple stuff and the COVID crisis has subsided.
- Lastly, now that there is increased focus on containerization waste, there should be equal communication of the importance of diverting the rat food into separate containers. If you are talking rats and/or containerization, talk about how important it is to simply remove the rat food from the curbside buffet and into compost. This is increasingly important as mandatory curbside will be expanded by the end of next year to all New Yorkers - and already is an option in Queens and Brooklyn. We need to better help people connect the dots between rats and the food waste we leave for them out in the open and the easy options for removing their food.

Lastly, I ask for an update on NYC's rat contraception measures, related costs and metrics. This was apparently a successful tactic used by the MTA in the subways in 2017 and would like more information on why it has not been explored further and expanded.

<https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-deploy-rat-birth-control-attempt-curb-breeding-article-1.3065641>

Rats only live for a year and give birth 6-7 times a year, producing 84 offspring. Contraception may very well be more effective than extermination and is less dangerous to other animals and people. There have been a number of recent incidents of dogs ingesting rat poison and getting sick. Many are now also concerned that Flaco, New York's beloved owl that escaped from the zoo, is at risk should he eat a poisoned rat.

<https://www.westsiderag.com/2022/06/21/more-exposed-rat-poison-surfaces-in-the-neighborhood-another-dog-sickened>

Thank you for your consideration.,

Allison Allen

Allison's email to Dept of Health re: adding brown bin mention/promotion to Rat Portal, 311, etc

I will sign up for a Rat Academy event, but I see so many more opportunities to promote the brown bin program via other DOH channels as you manage rat complaints for the city.

For example, would be great if info on the brown bin program could be added to various pages of your website, so the info is available to the general public, including those that call into 311 with rat complaints. These pages (and others) would be a great place to promote the link between deterring rats by enrolling in curbside composting (or taking your food waste to a local food scrap drop off site):

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/rats.page>

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/rats-working-in-your-community.page>

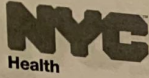
<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/rats/2021/what-happens-to-your-rat-complaint.pdf>

Also, can the info be pushed out to those buildings that have been found to have rat activity - per your portal? Do you have a way to send out a mass email?

<https://a816-dohbesp.nyc.gov/IndicatorPublic/Rats/>

As your agency is on the front line combatting rats, I'm hoping you can promote this resource via any and all channels available to you, including social channels. I see that you posted the rat academy events on twitter, but would be great to promote the brown bin program to residents and how it's another tool for controlling rats if you have a rat problem in your area. Would help reach those people who aren't able to sign up for the rat academy

I'm happy to help in any way as rats are a real problem for so many New Yorkers while there is a great, free, solution available which will also help divert organic waste from the mainstream to produce compost and clean energy. Food waste comprises 41% of the waste the DSNY exports to landfills where it emits harmful greenhouse gasses, so there are so many reasons to enroll in this program!



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Dave Chokshi, MD, MSc
Commissioner

WARNING: False statements made herein are punishable as a class A misdemeanor pursuant to section 210.45 of the Penal Law. Affirmed under penalty of perjury.

What you should do next:

1. Inspect your property. Thoroughly investigate your property for signs of rats and other conditions that contribute to rats. Review your enclosed inspection report and visit the Rat Information Portal (www.nyc.gov/rats) for more information on how to identify droppings, active rat runs, and evidence of gnawing, tracks or burrows. You may choose to hire a licensed pest management professional to assist you with this problem. The Rat Information Portal (www.nyc.gov/rats) will help you select a pest management professional that can help you identify conditions that have led to the presence of rats on your property and manage the problem safely.
2. Clean up your property. Sweep up droppings and wash away rub marks. This will discourage rats from returning.
3. Keep rats from getting the food they need. Store garbage in hard plastic or metal containers with a tight fitting lid. Do not put garbage out on the street more than one hour before pickup.
4. Eliminate the places rats can hide, nest and breed. Remove clutter and debris from your yard, basement and landscaping. Pest-proof your property by repairing holes and cracks.
5. Talk to others on your block. Managing rats is a community affair, and your property is probably not the only one that has signs of rats. Everyone in a neighborhood has to work together to solve the problem, since rats can quickly move from one property to the next. Neighbors can coordinate cleanup efforts, share in the hiring of licensed pest management professionals, and have a bigger impact by working together.
6. For more information on rat prevention download the guide "Preventing Rats on Your Property" at www.nyc.gov/rats or contact 311 and request a copy of the booklet.

Dear City Council Members,

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the city is planning to defund community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation. Compost in NYC is as much about building healthy communities as it is building soil structure, and the work of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC is essential to our city.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating the funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming, and enabling them to continue their vital work of education, diverting food scraps from landfills, and making the city a healthier, cleaner, and more resilient place to live and work. If these programs are removed from the budget, the city's Zero Waste goals are imperiled, and the jobs of 115 workers from 9 non-profits will be lost. Cutting these jobs, 53 of which are union, is unacceptable.

Community composting is among the best tools the City has to mitigate rats and other common pests. Food waste sitting out on the street in plastic bags is a feast for rats, and diverting this waste through community composting is one of the most cost effective preventive measures the City can take.

This program is not expensive; coming in at less than 0.02% it is a drop in the bucket of the total City budget, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

We cannot allow this colossal environmental setback on our watch; New Yorkers deserve better.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and make our city more sustainable. The Council must also fight for this program and ensure sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring.

Thank you,
Alyssa Dillon
Queens Resident

Dec. 6, 2023

Dear Committee of Sanitation & Solid Waste,

Thank you for holding this hearing on rat mitigation. I've been a resident of the East Village for 43 years, and for 21 years was a member of the Biology Faculty at the City College of New York (recently retired). I am also a community gardener, with ample exposure to NYC rats.

"Pest" populations can be controlled via "bottom-up" or "top-down" strategies. Bottom-up strategies can involve food reduction or reduction of nest sites; when feasible, this is less expensive, less labor intensive, and has fewer negative impacts on other organisms than top-down strategies (predation or other mortality-delivery systems). In the case of NYC rats, the bottom-up approach involves reducing the available food.

How do we reduce food supply in a huge and dynamic city such as New York? One important tool is to keep food waste out of our garbage stream. This is exactly what the Community Compost movement, introduced and conducted by organizations such as the Lower East Side Ecology Center—*and currently on the NYC budget chopping block*—was designed to do. These organizations not only provide food waste pick-up and processing, but have educated generations of New Yorkers on the importance of converting food waste into the "black gold" that nourishes our urban plants.

A year or two ago I estimated how much food waste I personally had dropped off at the farmers market for conversion to compost:

Composting since: 1996

Number of weeks: 1150

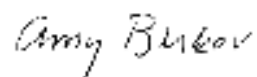
Estimated pounds per week: 4

Total pounds diverted from waste stream, and not available to rats: 2.3 TONS

It is clear to me that, even looking at the benefits through the rather narrow lens of rat reduction, Community Composting is an important bottom-up tool... one that we should be *making more, not less, available!* I hope that you will consider the importance of community composting, in this and other contexts, and support its continued inclusion in the NYC budget.

Please feel free to contact me with questions or comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Berkov".

Dr. Amy Berkov

From: Andrew Winfrey <awinfrey164@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 7, 2023 1:16 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] rat hearing testimony

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today. My name is Andy Winfrey and I am here to speak on behalf of S.C.R.A.M.

S.C.R.A.M., which stands for Sterling's Committee for Rat Awareness and Mitigation and is a committee of the Sterling Place Block Association (SPBA), has been working since the early pandemic to address the explosion of the rat population in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn.

We implore the city to help us combat the rampant infestations in our buildings, yards, and tree pits. Here are some ways we the city can help us:

- require all buildings to put garbage in bins with lids and enforce their use on garbage pick up days.
- streamline the rapid removal of all abandoned and/or decrepit restaurant outdoor dining sheds;
- replace all remaining wire mesh garbage cans with new enclosed garbage cans on every corner;
- clarify which city agency is tasked with rat mitigation in tree pits and increase number of response teams;
- employ recently developed CO2 technology and create teams to exterminate rats in all tree pits/public spaces

We are ready to be a partner to the city in helping to educate our neighbors on these and other best practices regarding rat mitigation. But we do not have the resources to solve this -- only the city does, and we implore the city to respond to our requests, and to do more to help!!!

Anita Chan's Testimony for December 7, 10 AM Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management (Jointly with the Committee on Health)

Dear City Council Members,

My name is Anita Chan. I am an Earth Matter NY board member, a member of 350NYC's working group WasteNot, a Long Island City resident, and a big supporter of community composting.

It was extremely disappointing to hear that the announced budget cuts mean an end to New York City's community composting programs and the loss of 115 green jobs by the end of this year. Earth Matter NY, GrowNYC, Big Reuse, LES Ecology Center, and the four botanical gardens are at the frontlines but the negative effects will trickle to people all throughout the boroughs and to other environmental organizations. It will be a huge setback to organic waste diversion, improving street cleanliness, rat mitigation, and NYC's progress in sustainability goals. These organizations collectively divert over 8 million pounds of organic waste from landfills; supply finished compost to over 300 community groups and thousands of individuals; and provide compost education to over 600,000 New Yorkers every year.

Where I live, there are "brown bins" from the organic curbside collection program and "orange bins" from the Smart Bin program, but they cannot replace the "green bins" at community food scrap drop off sites and all of the staff who engage and educate the public. It is through the tremendous work of all of these organizations and their staff over the years that made it possible that many people are actually using the brown and orange bins correctly. But there is still more work to be done, we want all NYers to know how to divert their organic waste properly, not only some. While it is true that the capacity of existing composting sites cannot handle all of the organic waste that is produced in the city, turning organic matter into compost locally should be prioritized as *the* method of organic waste diversion above biodigestion and certainly above landfilling and incineration. When you participate in community composting, you are able to trace your food scraps to a processing site and know that it has been composted and will be used for good. Separating food waste from the waste streams and turning it into a usable beneficial resource for the city helps cut emissions from shipping it elsewhere to landfill or incinerate, will deter rodents, nourish our soils, help grow nutritious food locally, provide a sense of community, and serve as a tangible way for individuals to combat climate change which contributes to better public health outcomes of New Yorkers.

I want to thank everyone who has been working so hard advocating to restore the community composting budget. The turnouts at last week's rally and yesterday's prove how important this is to NYers and that these jobs and programs are essential. It is extremely urgent to reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts.

Dear City Council Members,

My name is Annabelle Meunier, I have been a citizen of NYC for 18 years, and am a lifelong citizen of New York State. Growing up upstate, I learned about composting from a young age, because we “composted” via throwing scraps into a pile into the back yard. When I first discovered that it was possible in NYC after I moved here, via the collection at NYC Greenmarkets, I immediately started collecting and bringing my scraps. Since then, I have volunteered for community gardens and compost initiatives, received a Master’s in Urban Planning from Hunter College as well as a Master Composter certificate from the NYC Compost Project, and currently work for the City, and am currently on the board for my community garden, Smiling Hogshead Ranch, which has long served as a local community compost and food scrap drop-off site. Like many New Yorkers, I am passionate about waste management, particularly as, when done thoughtfully, it plays a critical role in improving our quality of life and the environment.

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the city is planning to defund community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation. Compost in NYC is as much about building healthy communities as it is building soil structure, and the work of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC is essential to our city.

If the food scrap processing of these several de-funded non-profits stop, the scraps coming to Smiling Hogshead Ranch will not. Our all-volunteer run garden experienced this exact scenario during the last budget cut of the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020 when overnight our food scrap intake quadrupled, reaching greater than 1,000 pounds of food scraps a week from concerned citizens willing to walk to the industrial business zone of LIC because they heard there was a garden there that would take their scraps. We cannot do this alone. We rely on community composting.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating the funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC’s compost programming, and enabling them to continue their vital work of education, diverting food scraps from landfills, and making the city a healthier, cleaner, and more resilient place to live and work. If these programs are removed from the budget, the city’s Zero Waste goals are imperiled, and the jobs of 115 workers from 9 non-profits will be lost. Cutting these jobs, 53 of which are union, is unacceptable.

Moreover, community composting is among the best tools the City has to mitigate rats and other common pests. Food waste sitting out on the street in plastic bags is a feast for rats, and diverting this waste through community composting is one of the most cost effective preventive measures the City can take.

This program is not expensive; coming in at less than 0.02% it is a drop in the bucket of the total City budget, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

We cannot allow this colossal environmental setback on our watch; New Yorkers deserve better.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and make our city more sustainable. The Council must also fight for this program and ensure sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring.

In Peas and SOILidarity,

Annabelle

Proud NYC citizen of Queens

Good morning, all!

My name is Anne Falcon, I am an NYC resident committed to maintaining a sustainable urban environment. I am testifying today about the importance of maintaining DSNY funding for community composting, specifically as it helps with rodent mitigation, and I will start my testimony with a story that showcases the repercussions of inadequate waste management.

I was recently visiting my friend, a cat owner, who lives in a brownstone in Manhattan. This friend keeps her trash under the kitchen sink, as many of us do; but, unlike me, she does not compost, so her food waste is thrown in with her usual trash. At one point, I walked over to the sink to throw something away, when I noticed her cat was sitting by the sink, unmoving. I stopped, and in the silence, I noticed the sound of movement under the sink. I yanked the cabinet open to reveal not just one, but three mice currying away from the crime scene, ruining the cat's patient attempts to catch them.

This incident illustrates a larger issue pervasive in urban landscapes, particularly in New York City: specifically, that improper waste disposal fosters environments conducive to rodent infestation. The link between unmanaged waste, particularly food waste, and the proliferation of these pests is undeniable. DSNY's own website suggests that, as a way to remove rats from a residential property, we should "Starve Them" by bringing "garbage to the curb as close to pickup time as possible", and by "disposing of garbage properly".

Community composting initiatives are already in place, and currently serve as a proactive measure to address the very root of rat infestation. By diverting organic waste from our sidewalks and traditional landfills, these programs not only curtail the volume of waste but also curtail the available food sources for rats. Effectively managed compost heaps regulate odors, restrict access to food, and contribute to a healthier urban ecosystem by dissuading rodent populations.

My experience serves as a microcosm of the larger challenge our city faces. It underscores the pressing need for continued support and investment in community composting endeavors when combatting rodent infestations.

In conclusion, I implore our city's leaders and stakeholders to recognize the pivotal role of composting initiatives in mitigating rat infestation and promoting sustainable waste management practices. The sustained funding and encouragement of these programs are paramount in crafting a cleaner, healthier, and more resilient urban environment for current and future generations.

Thank you for considering the urgency of this matter and for taking steps toward a more sustainable and rat-resistant cityscape.

References:

- “Rats: Information for Tenants and Property Owners.” *Rats: Information for Tenants and Property Owners - NYC Health*, NYC Health, www.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/rats-tenants-property-owners.page#. Accessed 6 Dec. 2023.

Annie Choi

[REDACTED]
NY, NY 10003

[REDACTED]
choias@yahoo.com

Hearing: **Committee of Sanitation & Solid Waste Hearing**
Thursday December 7th, 10am

I am writing to express my strong support for the continuation of the community composting in New York City and to highlight how this initiative aligns with the city's rat mitigation goals.

Community composting has proven to be a vital component in our efforts to manage waste responsibly and reduce the attractiveness of our neighborhoods to rats. By providing residents with convenient options for composting organic waste, the program contributes significantly to the reduction of food waste in traditional garbage bins.

As you are aware, food waste is a primary attractant for rats in urban environments. The community composting not only encourages residents to divert organic waste from regular trash but also promotes the proper containment and disposal of food scraps. This, in turn, minimizes the availability of food sources for rats and supports broader rat mitigation strategies.

In my neighborhood of Union Square where community composting has been implemented, we have observed a positive impact on reducing instances of rat infestations. The program not only addresses the environmental concerns associated with organic waste but also directly supports the Department of Sanitation's ongoing efforts to control and mitigate rat populations in our city.

Considering the program's success in aligning with rat mitigation goals, I respectfully request the Department of Sanitation to continue and possibly expand the community composting to additional neighborhoods in New York City. This will not only enhance our city's commitment to sustainability but also contribute significantly to our ongoing efforts to create cleaner, healthier, and more rat-resistant communities.

Thank you for your dedication to maintaining the well-being of our city. I look forward to witnessing the continued success of the community composting and its positive impact on both waste management and rat mitigation.

December 5, 2023

To Whom it May Concern—

My name is Caitlin Nasema Cassidy, and I am a resident of Hell's Kitchen, New York. For the past 10 years, my husband and I have made our home on 52nd Street, and for the past 3 years, we have deposited our compost at the community compost station in Mathews-Palmer Park. We are writing to express our deep concern about the imminent closing of this community compost site and to ask Mayor Adams to reverse his budget cuts immediately.

It is impossible to overstate the value of the Mathews-Palmer Park compost site and more broadly, community composting efforts across the city. My husband and I rely on community composting initiatives to divert over 50% of our household waste and to mitigate rat infestation in our neighborhood. We rely on community composting organizations such as GrowNYC, Big Reuse, LES Ecology Center, Earth Matter NY, New York Botanical Garden, Queens Botanical Garden, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden to care for our local environment and our personal well-being. These organizations collectively divert more than 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills each year. These organizations also produce and distribute hundreds of thousands of pounds of compost to over 325 community groups, parks, 85 street tree care events, and thousands of individuals each year, and provide compost outreach and education to over 600,000 New Yorkers annually, making them aware of food waste's contributions to the climate crisis while providing the opportunity to address this critical issue. To put it bluntly: Their efforts are critical to maintaining a habitable planet for us all. Given the climate emergency we all face, I cannot imagine a more important initiative for the city to be supporting.

I have benefited immensely from community composting initiatives, and I implore Mayor Adams to restore funding to support community composting across New York.

Sincerely,
Caitlin Nasema Cassidy

[REDACTED], NY, NY 10019
CaitlinNCassidy@gmail.com
[REDACTED]

Dear DOH and City Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony about the severity of the rat epidemic in New York City. My name is Carol Morrison, I live in Prospect Heights Brooklyn, 11238, and I speak on behalf of myself and on behalf of the Prospect Heights Rat Task Force. I am also an active member of the District 35 Rat Task Force.

The District 35 Rat Task Force, organized by Council Member Crystal Hudson and facilitated by Andrew Wright, represents every resident of District 35, including many representatives of block associations, coop boards, civic organizations, and anti-rodent activist groups such as Sterling's Committee for Rat Awareness and Mitigation (SCRAM) and the Prospect Height Rat Task Force (PHRTF) represents residents between Washington Avenue and Underhill, from Eastern Parkway to Sterling Street. It is a densely-populated community that has been handling a severe rat infestation for years. We are thousands of voices joining together to say: rats are still a big problem.

We implore the city, and the Rat Czar, to continue its efforts in mitigation the rampant infestation that has gripped our city since the pandemic, when people worked in their homes, so organic matter in garbage multiplied, and rats migrated -- and multiplied -- in all residential parts of our city. We welcome the proposed improvements to outdoor dining and sanitation, but we ask that other measures be taken to decrease the rat population. These include: fast action on taking down abandoned sheds, resuming financial support for compost programs, employing CO₂ to destroy nests, and to finally address the overlap and confusion about which city agency is supposed to mitigate rats nests in tree beds.

We have made some progress as advocacy groups, and as a city, but there is so much more that needs to be done, and we need a city that is prepared to be a full partner in this repulsive issue. Rats are seen every day around restaurants with unclean outdoor sheds or deficient sanitation practices. Rats are seen every day on the street when walking, biking, or driving to work. Rats are seen every day in our neighborhoods in buildings with multiple complaints and multiple fines but ultimately no action by delinquent landlords. Rats spread disease and, frankly, give our wonderful city a really bad name. In the interest of health, commerce, and quality of life, we ask you, DOH, to do better. Thank you.

Dear Friends,

Please be aware that rodenticides end up killing our birds of prey in New York City. While we all want to rid the city of rats, we beg you to do everything possible to protect our birds.

Thank you,

Catherine Gulevich

[REDACTED]

New York, New York 10010

[REDACTED]

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To NYC Council Members;

I am writing this testimony to request that funding for the very critical COMPOSTING be fully funded and continued.

This city with more than eight million people generate tons of organic waste on a regular basis which when returned or dumped in the landfills create more health and environmental hazards, which in turn increases in more spending be it in medical and health care costs but and decrease in quality of life in NYC and throughout the environs. It's an evil cycle which we need to stop.

We live in a very precarious time when we need to strengthen and create infrastructures to mitigate the catastrophic climate changes that is happening and will continue to happen. COMPOSTING is a very direct participation by the citizens. We need it. And more so because there are a bunch of landlords and supers who are LAZY and NON-COMPLIANT with the DSNY brown bin program. Making the brown bins mandatory in all residential buildings should also be considered particularly in boroughs where they have been made available.

I understand the city's post-pandemic budgetary issues. Yet, I am confident that the Office of the City Mayor and city leaders will find a creative source of revenue to solve this crisis, as had been done historically.

Respectfully,

Cecilia Dacanay
Queens, NY

Dear Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,

I am a concerned citizen who wants to live in a sustainable New York City and I understand that community composting has been cut.

The New York City Compost Project and GrowNYC serve millions of New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs, providing food scrap collections, organics processing, composting outreach and community education. I urge you today to save these programs in light of announced budget cuts.

I myself take my organics and bring them year round on Saturdays to the Maple Street Community Garden in Prospect Lefferts Gardens, which partners with BigReuse to process the scraps at their facility in Gowanus. The experience of visiting the garden and engaging with other community members who are passionate about combating climate change and making New York City a more sustainable and greener place to live.

I urge the Mayor and City Council to halt these massive cuts and to guarantee full funding to these programs for the future. These cost-effective programs contribute to a more liveable city with fewer rats, cleaner streets, and healthier soils, while cutting waste destined for landfills or incinerators.

Respectfully,
Chloe Bergsma-Safar

Dear City Council Members,

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the city is planning to defund community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation. Compost in NYC is as much about building healthy communities as it is building soil structure, and the work of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC is essential to our city.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating the funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming, and enabling them to continue their vital work of education, diverting food scraps from landfills, and making the city a healthier, cleaner, and more resilient place to live and work. If these programs are removed from the budget, the city's Zero Waste goals are imperiled, and the jobs of 115 workers from 9 non-profits will be lost. Cutting these jobs, 53 of which are union, is unacceptable.

We cannot allow this colossal environmental setback on our watch; New Yorkers deserve better.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and make our city more sustainable. The Council must also fight for this program and ensure sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring.

Thank you,
Christian DeFilippo
Brooklyn

Testimony for the Committee of Sanitation & Solid Waste Hearing

December 7, 2023

Cindy Martinez
Jamaica, NY 11435

Dear Committee Members:

I wish to express my concerns for the potential elimination of Community Composting programs due to Mayor Adams' budget cuts. I have been composting my food scraps for over a year, and I feel like I'm contributing to our communities. The community composting programs have given me an opportunity to help combat climate change as well as keep food sources away from rodents. I can't even tell you in numbers how much food waste I have diverted by dropping off my food scraps every week to my local drop off site in Kew Gardens. If I can't make it to Kew Gardens, I know I can drop off at Forest Hills as an alternative. The drop off locations are a great way to help people like me who do not have composting available in our buildings to contribute to our communities. Knowing that our food scraps are helping create compost for our local gardens, parks, farms, tree beds, and more is so important. It would be a disaster for us in NYC if these vital community composting programs were eliminated. These are vital to fight climate change, to divert food waste, and to keep food sources away from rodents. Please reconsider and save our community composting programs. We need them, and we need them now more than ever. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Cindy Martinez

**Testimony by Courtney Scheffler, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,
Jointly with the Committee on Health
Chairs Sandy Nurse and Lynn Schulman
Oversight: Rat Mitigation and Public Health
December 7, 2023**

Dear City Council Members,

My name is Courtney Scheffler, and I am a proud member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective, represented by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, RWDSU. I work as a Compost Coordinator and Driver for GrowNYC, and together with our partners at The New York City Compost Project, we serve communities throughout the five boroughs by providing food scrap collections, processing, outreach, education, access, and finished compost. I am devastated by the Mayor's plan to defund community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation.

Because of this, I, along with 114 others, will lose my job in less than 2 weeks, unless the Mayor and City Council take a stand to protect this program. This includes 53 union jobs. Our workers provide essential education, outreach, and waste diversion services to neighborhoods across the five boroughs. Our work keeps food scraps separate from garbage placed on city sidewalks. This limits food sources that attract rats and makes for cleaner neighborhoods.

Community Compost was fully funded by the City and the Mayor in the last budget, and defunding it is a violation of the contract the City has with GrowNYC and the other NYC Compost Project programs. It is a betrayal of the public trust and the open budgeting process through which we set the fiscal priorities for the City. These budget cuts are a loss to the whole city, but especially fail communities in the Bronx.

When community composting sites were partially restored in 2021 for Bronx neighborhoods, residents were receptive because they knew this would help address the rat problem. Diverting this waste through community composting is one of the most cost effective preventive measures the City can take to reduce rat presence. Community compost is accessible and entails workers communicating to the public and providing education about how to dispose of waste properly. Participants in Morrisania and Parkchester noted that when collections resumed, available food sources for rats decreased in their neighborhoods. Community compost is a method that does not contaminate our environment with rat poison. Instead, it disinvents pest animals from our stoops and curbs. Our problems with rats will not be solved by smart bins. They fill quickly with no workers to compact the contents and often frustrated people leave their food scraps on top of

defunct or full bins. Our education and outreach work are essential to realizing waste equity and healthier communities.

This program is not expensive. It constitutes only 0.3% of the City's Sanitation budget. The health of our communities is worth it.

The Mayor must allocate funding to the NYC Compost Project. The Council must vote NO to the Mayor's defunding this essential program to save union jobs and livelihoods. If the Mayor sees these budget cuts through and ends the community programs that nurture the city, the Council must fight to fully restore this program by ensuring sufficient funding for Community Composting in the 2024 budget this spring, and also mandating that this program exist through legislation.

Thank you for your consideration,

Courtney Scheffler
Brooklyn

December 3, 2023

Dear Mayor Adams,

There are over 200 FSDO sites, many in communities that don't receive curbside service. When curbside becomes available citywide, if the food scraps are still not being composted properly, we will lose the compost that would have been created from these FSDO sites.

The current Master Composter applicants won't be able to complete their certification. Current Master Composters give back to their communities by way of education, outreach, community composting efforts, and assisting with proper brown bin implementation.

I have personally benefited from free NYC compost for community gardens, started/maintained a community compost site during part of Covid, completed the Master Composter Certificate Course, and have continued to do education and outreach regarding compost, brown bins, recycling, and safe waste disposal.

May you please try to find a way to not cut funding for community composting?

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Deborah Johns

[REDACTED]
Bronx, NY 10463-3116

[REDACTED]
dihersch@yahoo.com

December 7, 2023

Dear Sanitation Committee,

I'm writing to express my concern that the proposed closure of community composting programs due to budget issues will increase the rat population in the East Village and Lower East Side.

NYC's Rat Map/Rat Information Portal shows a great deal of "rat activity at last inspection" across large areas of the East Village and Lower East Side. I live along Tompkins Square Park. Poisoned bait is an unfortunate necessity. A much more friendly tool is community composting.

I compost weekly with the Lower East Side Ecology Center at the Tompkins Square Farmers Market, as do hundreds of other community residents. We know that the less we put in the trash, the less the rats have to eat. I bring 2-5 pounds of compostable food scraps to Tompkins each week. The drop-off site there collects an enormous amount of scraps every Sunday; it would take at least 15-20 of the orange city bins to meet the need just for that one day per week. With Sanitation budget cuts, those won't be available either.

I'm concerned that if community composting is no longer available, residents will either give up and dump their scraps in building trash, or dump them on the street next to any orange bin they can find. Either way, those scraps become rat food.

It doesn't need to be that way. The community composting program is not costly and, unlike bait, benefits the environment. Please advocate for keeping it in your arsenal of rat control, and good luck in your fight.

Sincerely,

Dianne Lake

Thank you Council Members Nurse and Schulman for chairing this hearing.

My name is Elizabeth Aceituno and I am a resident of district 26 in Queens. I am testifying in my personal capacity but I am also a board member of two community organizations, Smiling Hogshead Ranch, a community garden in Long Island City and Big Reuse, one of the organizations whose programs are targeted to be cut.

As a growing number of people are, I am acutely aware of the climate crisis we are facing. I am also aware that there is very little individuals like me can do without a systemic change.

Composting organic waste is one of those few things that we can all do and actually helps significantly reduce GHG emissions, not only by diverting food waste from landfills but by creating compost that can make the soil of city parks and gardens healthier and more resilient.

Containerizing food waste is a good idea but the reality is that in many neighborhoods diverting food waste from the landfill still relies on individuals taking their food waste to farmers markets and community gardens because their buildings do not want to provide brown bins or because smart bins are too far (that is my case). This active participation is the result of community education, outreach and engagement.

For years, the organizations currently at risk of losing their budget have not only helped mitigate climate change but have also helped create and strengthen a large community of engaged citizens through their broad and deep community engagement. That community engagement has been carried out by not only the 115 people whose jobs are at risk today by these proposed cuts but by many others who have done this and shared their knowledge over the years. Over 40,000 of those New Yorkers have expressed their concerns about those cuts in a petition. I hope their voices and those of us testifying in this hearing will be heard by Mayor Adams and Commissioner Tisch, as well as other elected officials.

The efforts of these organizations cannot be replaced by installing smart bins around the city or by leaving the work to unpaid and already overwhelmed volunteers in small community gardens such as the one I volunteer at.

If these budget cuts go ahead, all the work that has been done in educating and convincing New Yorkers that their individual actions count will be undone and the expertise that these organizations and their workers have collectively developed will be foregone, instead of being leveraged on to expand food waste processing that produces compost for healthy soils and support the City's fight against climate change (and rats).

Thank you very much for considering my comments.

Elizabeth Aceituno
Long Island City, NY

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts. I have been composting in NYC for decades, starting at community gardens in the early 90's, and then participating in the food scrap recycling program. We have been told how much money NYC saves by not having to haul garbage somewhere else, and instead, NYC can turn our food scraps into usable compost for our parks and biodiesel for power. Because of this system, I do not make any "wet" garbage. I see my neighbors carry dripping plastic bags of garbage down the hallway to the chute, but I have very little trash, and what I do have can go in a brown bag tied with string or a large rubber band to send down the trash chute. No mess, no critters, no plastic.

The brown bin system works. It keeps garbage out of our homes, food off the street that attracts rodents, and is useful. It also keeps us in the habit of thinking about the consequences of our actions, such as creating tons of rotting food in plastic bags sitting in landfills in poor neighborhoods. Please let us continue to participate in living sustainably and teaching our children to do so also. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth DeLaBarre

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to urgently address the proposed cuts to our community composting programs and to implore you to vote against the Mayor's reductions. It is crucial that we take a firm stand to save union jobs and enhance the sustainability of our city.

Composting in New York City is not only about soil structure; it is a cornerstone for building healthy and resilient communities. The vital work carried out by the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC is essential for the well-being of our city.

I cannot emphasize enough the urgency of reinstating funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming. Their work in education, diverting food scraps from landfills, and making our city a healthier, cleaner, and more resilient place to live and work is invaluable. The removal of these programs from the budget would not only imperil our city's Zero Waste goals but also result in the loss of 115 jobs from 9 non-profit organizations, 53 of which are union positions—an outcome that is simply unacceptable.

We cannot allow such a colossal environmental setback to occur under our watch. New Yorkers deserve better. Community composting is a vital tool in mitigating the prevalence of rats and other common pests. Food waste left on the streets in plastic bags becomes a feast for rats, and diverting this waste through community composting is one of the most cost-effective preventive measures the City can take.

It's crucial to highlight that this program is not expensive, constituting less than 0.02% of the total City budget. Yet, it has proven to be effective and immensely popular among our citizens. Eliminating or reducing funding for such a successful and cost-effective initiative would be a short-sighted move that undermines the overall well-being of our city.

I implore you to fight for the reinstatement of funding for community composting programs and to ensure sufficient allocation in the 2024 budget. Let us affirm our commitment to sustainability, job preservation, and the health of our communities.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I trust that you will make the right decision for the future of our city.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Grande

December 7, 2023

Dear City Council Members,

I am very saddened to learn that the city is planning to defund community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation. Compost in NYC is as much about building healthy communities as it is building soil structure, and the work of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC is essential to our city.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating the funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming, and enabling them to continue their vital work of education, diverting food scraps from landfills, and making the city a healthier, cleaner, and more resilient place to live and work. If these programs are removed from the budget, the city's Zero Waste goals are imperiled, and the jobs of 115 workers from 9 non-profits will be lost. Cutting these jobs, 53 of which are union, is unacceptable.

We cannot allow this colossal environmental setback on our watch; New Yorkers deserve better.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and make our city more sustainable. The Council must also fight for this program and ensure sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring.

Thank you,
Elizabeth Stewart

Queens resident

Dec. 7, 2023

To: NYC Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

From: Ellen M. Cooper, Master Composter 2023, former Member of Manhattan SWAB, member of SWAB Organics and Residential Recycling committees

Re: Testimony to Restore Community Composting Budget

I urge you to restore funding for the Community Composting. This is an essential part of New York's city-wide composting programs and would have a destructive effect on our environment if cut. These programs took decades to build and are now part of the fabric of life here. This is a very tiny part of the budget, but the impact is huge. We would lose not only 115 good jobs & union jobs, but you would also lose the benefit provided by the thousands of dedicated volunteers who make the compost program run, and create millions of pounds of quality compost that makes our parks, gardens, street trees and neighborhoods healthier. Diversion of more food waste out of the black bags will significantly mitigate rat proliferation. We should be INCREASING composting, not eliminating it.

By cutting community composting, you are cutting out the heart of the program. Without it, your curbside program will falter. The citizen education provided by the community composters is irreplaceable. They/we would be the army of people who would support the curbside program once it rolls out fully. DSNY can lean on this additional help and expertise, with minimal cost to the department or city.

Once this community compost ecosystem is destroyed/eliminated, it would take many years to restart it and build it back to its current status. If we are to address our climate crisis, as the mayor has promised, then community composting is one of the most basic, and non-negotiable programs we have.

As a master composter, I have seen first hand the dedication, energy, extraordinary expertise and power of the composting community around the city, both paid and volunteer. Even NYC school kids know the benefits of recycling and composting. They don't vote yet, but it is their world, their city to inherit. How confusing to them if we suddenly take this away, and don't practice what we preach.

Diversion of organic material from our waste stream has financial, environmental, and social benefits, but trucking this material (30+% of our residential waste stream) to far away landfills is both expensive and destructive the environment. It's more expensive in the long run.

Please don't be penny wise and pound foolish. Cutting community composting is a big mistake.

Respectfully,

Ellen M. Cooper, District 2, Manhattan

Dear City Council Members,

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the city is planning to defund community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation. Compost in NYC is as much about building healthy communities as it is building soil structure, and the work of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC is essential to our city.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating the funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming, and enabling them to continue their vital work of education, diverting food scraps from landfills, and making the city a healthier, cleaner, and more resilient place to live and work. If these programs are removed from the budget, the city's Zero Waste goals are imperiled, and the jobs of 115 workers from 9 non-profits will be lost. Cutting these jobs, 53 of which are union, is unacceptable.

This program is not expensive; coming in at less than 0.02% it is a drop in the bucket of the total City budget, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

Community composting is among the best tools the City has to mitigate rats and other common pests. Food waste sitting out on the street in plastic bags is a feast for rats, and diverting this waste through community composting is one of the most cost effective preventive measures the City can take.

We cannot allow this colossal environmental setback on our watch; New Yorkers deserve better.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and make our city more sustainable. The Council must also fight for this program and ensure sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring.

Thank you,
Genevieve Basso
Brooklyn

December 8, 2023

Dear Mayor Adams,

May you please restore funding for community composting?

These programs are vital for Zero Waste goals and rat mitigation.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Glenn Fleischman

[REDACTED]

Bronx, NY 10463

[REDACTED]

grfleischman@aol.com

Dear City Council Members,

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the city is planning to defund community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation. Compost in NYC is as much about building healthy communities as it is building soil structure, and the work of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC is essential to our city.

I've personally benefitted from not just the environmental but also community building and social aspects of the GrowNYC compost hubs. Every week for the last 6 years I've taken my compost to the Borough Hall Green market and enjoyed meeting neighbors, fellow composters, and supporting local NYC businesses while I'm out and about.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating the funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming, and enabling them to continue their vital work of education, diverting food scraps from landfills, and making the city a healthier, cleaner, and more resilient place to live and work. If these programs are removed from the budget, the city's Zero Waste goals are imperiled, and the jobs of 115 workers from 9 non-profits will be lost. Cutting these jobs, 53 of which are union, is unacceptable.

We cannot allow this colossal environmental setback on our watch; New Yorkers deserve better.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and make our city more sustainable. The Council must also fight for this program and ensure sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring.

Thank you,
Grace Halvorson
Brooklyn

Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, 12/7/23

Good morning, members of the council, my name is Greta Wong, and I am a resident of Brooklyn. I am here to speak about the profound impact community composting efforts can have on pest mitigation, especially in light of the Mayor Eric Adams and DSNY's plan to eliminate community composting programs in the recent budget cuts.

Community composting is not merely about disposing of organic waste; it is a catalyst for education and outreach that plays a pivotal role in mitigating pest issues in our neighborhoods. As a Master Composter, I have witnessed firsthand the positive effects of community composting programs. This program not only helps in waste reduction but also provides invaluable opportunities for New Yorkers to learn about responsible waste management and pest mitigation. It is disheartening to learn that DSNY plans to eliminate community composting programs, including 115 green jobs, jeopardizing the education and outreach efforts that are integral to addressing the persistent rat issues in our city and contribute to a cleaner and healthier environment.

I attended the Rat Academy course, where it was emphasized that rats thrive in our city because they have an abundance of food in our garbage. The solution is clear – by separating food scraps and diverting them into compost, we can significantly reduce the materials that attract rats. However, for this solution to reach across the city, we need widespread education about composting. Community composting programs and initiatives like the Master Composter Course are vital components of this education.

I urge the council to advocate for and to press Commissioner Tisch to reinstate funding for community composting programs, especially given that DSNY was granted protection from further budget cuts for the January PEGs.

In conclusion, I implore the council to recognize the urgent need for community composting and the vital role it plays in pest mitigation. Let us work together to ensure a sustainable and cleaner future for all New Yorkers. Thank you.

Thanks in big part to the efforts of DSNY, people are increasingly aware of the need to divert food scraps from landfills - whether to lower the rat population or lower the methane that spills into the atmosphere - and are eager to participate and learn more about composting. Currently, the city doesn't process the food scraps in a way that creates maximum environmental benefit. Turning it into biogas is a great incremental step, but it is not the end.

Organizations like Big Reuse, Lower East Side Ecology Center, our city's botanic gardens and, of course, our community gardens have been successfully composting for years, often with the support of the city. But more than that, these organizations have been the PRIMARY educators of the importance of composting, long before DSNY picked up the baton. And they are still the hardest working activists who can encourage the public to separate their food scraps, ensuring both the success of the DSNY scrap collection and the improved cleanliness of our city. By cutting out funding for Big Reuse et al, we are undermining this education, we are taking a big step back and losing the enthusiasm for composting before it has been cemented. In 3,4,5 years, we would look back on sluggish participation in food scrap recycling, shrug our shoulders and say "people just aren't doing it, we don't know why, so let's stop separating food scraps." But the decision to cut funding for composting efforts would be exactly why. Ultimately, we would be making our city dirtier and less healthy. And that, of course, is the primary reason to preserve the funding.

Thank you,

ilya magazanin

Dear City Council Members,

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the city is planning to defund community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation. Every Sunday for the past few years, I've dropped off my compost at the McGolrick farmers market in Greenpoint. It devastates me to learn that this could be taken away, and that all the food scraps that could otherwise go toward building soil structure would be needlessly, harmfully diverted to landfills.

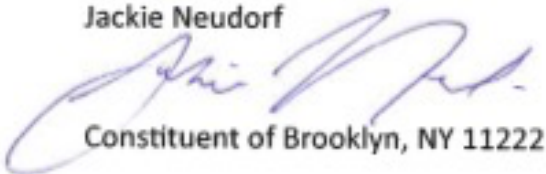
It angers me to no end how the City has deprioritized urgently needed initiatives to address climate change, and that the NYPD budget remains bloated while essential social services suffer. This particular program is not expensive; coming it at less than 0.02% of the total City budget, it is a drop in the bucket, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating the funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming, and enabling them to continue their vital work of education, diverting food scraps from landfills, and making the city a healthier, cleaner, and more resilient place to live and work. If these programs are removed from the budget, the city's Zero Waste goals are imperiled, and the jobs of 115 workers from nine nonprofits will be lost. Cutting these jobs, fifty-three of which are union, is unacceptable.

We cannot allow this colossal environmental setback on our watch; New Yorkers deserve better.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program, which would save union jobs and make our city more sustainable. The Council must also fight for this program and ensure sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring.

Thank you,
Jackie Neudorf

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jackie Neudorf", is written over the typed name.

Constituent of Brooklyn, NY 11222

Jesse McLaughlin

Regarding Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,
Oversight - Rat Mitigation and Public Health

December 7, 2023

My name is Jesse McLaughlin, and I am a concerned District 37 resident and representative of New York City Audubon, an organization that works for the protection of wild birds and habitat in the five boroughs, improving the quality of life for all New Yorkers. **I am testifying about the dangerous use of rodenticides which harms both birds and people.**

New York City, in recent decades, has become home to large resident and breeding populations of raptor species, like the Red-tailed Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, American Kestrel, and Osprey. Three owl species—Great Horned, Barn, and Screech Owls—also nest in the City's largest parks; alongside Flaco, a non-native Eurasian Eagle Owl who escaped the Central Park Zoo in February of this year.

Birds are often New Yorkers' first connection with nature and NYC is, surprisingly, a birding hotspot. More than 300 species of birds pass through, nest, or reside year round in our city. Birds are also a critical part of a functioning, healthy ecosystem and that's especially true for raptors and their important place at the top of the food chain.

Our urban ecosystem supplies the sustenance that birds of prey need to survive—including rats. However, this food source also represents one of the greatest dangers to the birds, in the form of poisoning.

The methods our city uses to control rodents can have a devastating impact on our birds of prey. Rodenticides, also called rat poisons, are commonly yet ineffectively used to control rodent populations. One type, called anticoagulant rodenticides, causes death by stopping normal blood clotting. Anticoagulant rodenticides pose a serious risk to rodent predators such as hawks and owls: Rodents that eat the poison bait may not die for several days, and during that time become slow and sick, easy targets for predators.

When birds of prey such as Red-tailed Hawks eat these rodents, they become poisoned themselves. Because raptors are at the top of the food chain and will eat many rats, the toxins become more potently concentrated in the raptor through a process called biomagnification. **In fact, rat poisons were detected in 84 percent of dead birds of prey found in New York City, in research conducted by the Wildlife Unit of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.** Even recent celebrity birds are at risk, like Barry the Barred Owl who died in Central Park in Fall 2021 as a result of rodenticide poisoning.

NYC Audubon applauds NYC Parks for their Integrated Pest Management approach and observance of raptor nesting season, during which they do not bait for rodents in raptor hunting or nesting areas. But on a whole, New York City's "war on rats" through poisons has been unsafe. According to researchers at Fordham, in 2021 alone, over 60,000 pounds of rodenticide poisons were deployed on our streets and in our homes. From 2015 to 2021, City agencies have doubled their use of anticoagulants to no avail. This mass deployment of poison across our streets hurts our communities and our ecosystem.

For rats to go away, New York City Council, City Hall, Department of Sanitation, and Department of Health must be willing to address the fundamental issues of food waste and ineffectual trash collection. We just don't have the data to prove that poisons and traps meaningfully reduce rat populations, but we do have data that proves rodenticides' dangerous and unconscionable effects on wild birds and people.

Thank you to Chairperson Nurse for hearing my testimony. Your consideration of these matters and solutions is very much appreciated.

Written testimony to D35 Rat Task Force Statement for Council Hearing on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

Submitted by John Coyne

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony about the severity of the rat epidemic in New York City. My name is John Coyne. I live in Prospect Heights Brooklyn, and I speak on behalf of myself and my family of four. My testimony can be summarized in five words:

Rats remain a huge problem.

We implore the city and the Director of Rodent Mitigation to continue efforts aimed at mitigating the rampant infestation that has gripped our city since the pandemic when people worked in their homes and organic matter in garbage multiplied, resulting in the migration and multiplication of rodents in all parts of our city, especially Central Brooklyn. We welcome the proposed improvements to outdoor dining and sanitation, and we ask that other measures be taken to decrease the rat population. These include:

1. Coordinating a rapid, multi-agency response to remove abandoned or underutilized dining sheds, especially those with false floors that may harbor rats;
2. Begin agency review of the use of carbon monoxide to eradicate rodent populations and destroy nests;
3. Enhance city funding for rodent mitigation efforts and sanitation efforts, including resuming financial support for community composting;
4. Install more rat-proof litter bins in city parks and on sidewalks and prioritizing commercial corridors with DSNY's roll out of the new Better Bins;
5. Establish routine city inspections for sidewalks and tree beds impacted by rodent infestations;

6. Provide all residential and commercial properties with low-cost, appropriate closed trash receptacles;
7. Expand the city's curbside waste containerization pilot to more neighborhoods, including Prospect Heights; and
8. Require all buildings to set garbage out in bins with lids on pick up days.

Additionally, **I urge the Council to work with City Hall to clarify various rules and responsibilities around rodent mitigation.** Areas where clarity is desperately needed include

- clearly articulating building owners' responsibilities to mitigate rodent issues rather than the city, and
- clearly articulate which agencies are responsible for various rodent-related issues. When asked who has jurisdiction over rodents in tree pits or rodents that burrow under sidewalks and more City officials have given conflicting answers.

In the interest of health, commerce, and quality of life, I ask that you, the City and its departments, to do better, starting with the actions I describe above.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

John Coyne

Dear New York City Council,

Save NYC Community Compost (Green Bins Programs).

For the health and safety of NYC ongoing I am asking that NYC change the city budget cuts that eliminates Community Composting (Green Bin) programs. I have seen first-hand since 2015 the health from active community connections and the storm safety from improved soil biodiversity and ongoing plantings in our neighborhood.

The community compost programs like the NYC Compost Project (Big Reuse, Lower East Side Ecology, Earth Matter, Snug Harbor) and Grow NYC play a vital role in our city. These 115 essential green jobs mean that NYC

- diverts over 8 million pounds of organic waste from landfills.
- gives finished compost to over 335 community groups and thousands of individuals.
- creates storm resilient soils across the city that mitigate flooding.
- provides compost education to over 600,000 New Yorkers and educate as well as about active, ongoing prevention of rats.

This essential service supports New York's climate goals. The green bin **community compost programs are like keystone elements of an arch.** They are the part of our NYC waste reduction that work and hold other together. Other parts of composting in the city (orange and brown bins) are not in any way of this quality and do not create hyper local real compost. In addition they depend on the outreach of these essential green bin programs. **These NYC Compost jobs with green bin programs give back and give back to our city and our planet and our people. Compost is one of the top 100 solutions for global warming and these local programs work.**

We must work with Commissioner Tisch and DSNY and Mayor Adams to be sure that these long standing, successful, people and environment programs and jobs are not cut, but instead supported permanently to thrive.

Real community composting is **part of the vital social infrastructure** of our great city. Social infrastructure and people to people connections are the way forward and research proves they make cities more resilient in times of crisis such as those presented by the extreme storms of climate change. Composting is a climate justice solution that reverses global warming.

Restore the Community Compost Program to the city budget. We need these jobs, these sites, this amazing people to people outreach moving forward. **Cutting the amazing workers who lead and teach and run extensive, quality volunteer programs in these jobs across the city is shortsighted and unwise.** Compost is so much more than compost. It is connection in neighborhoods. These programs are climate and biodiversity solutions connected to people and soil.

Community Composting is part of the health and safety for our people locally in all NYC neighborhoods.

Sincerely, Julia Ferguson

<https://www.flinders.edu.au/content/dam/documents/research/bgl/Fulbright-Lecture-Series-Pub8.pdf>

<https://drawdown.org/solutions/composting>

For the past two years, my family and I have been actively composting in Bensonhurst, diligently dropping off our food scraps at the designated bins on Bay Parkway and 86th Street. During weeks when we generate excess food waste, we also utilize the green bins in Seward Park. Since implementing this practice of separating food scraps, we've observed a remarkable reduction in our household garbage. The knowledge that our food waste is being recycled back into our ecosystem through genuine composting fills me with immense satisfaction.

Over the past two springs, I've had the privilege of acquiring free compost soil from events organized by the LES Ecological Center and GrowNYC. These initiatives play a crucial role in educating our younger generations about the significance of a closed-loop system. While brown bin composting is gradually gaining traction, green bin composting produces compost that specifically benefits our parks and gardens. Considering New York City's status as one of the world's most prominent urban centers, abandoning this long-standing program seems like a misguided decision.

NYC has the opportunity to set an exemplary standard for the world by showcasing our unwavering commitment to sustainability and zero-waste initiatives. Abruptly terminating funding for all of our composting programs is undoubtedly not the solution. Let's work together to ensure that NYC remains at the forefront of environmental stewardship by preserving and enhancing our composting infrastructure.

Best,
Karen Hsin

I am very upset by the decision to cut the community composting program in NYC. I have been utilizing the drop-off sites here in the UES for many years, originally the weekend neighborhood greenmarkets and since 2017 on Friday mornings at 96th and Lexington. As a conscientious New Yorker, I rely on this city program to limit the garbage I create; instead of throwing food remains down the chute with the regular garbage, I put it back into the organic cycle it came from. Composting is a part of our local and global hope for self-sustainment, and eliminating this vital city program is anti-progress, reducing the quality of life in the short and long-term. This program does so much good at very little cost. Keep our valuable community composting!!! We need it, for the good of the city.

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony about the severity of the rat epidemic in New York City.

My name is Katie Trapanese and I live in Prospect Heights Brooklyn. Rats are still a big problem in our neighborhood, and I see them and evidence of them daily. In addition to seeing them living in active and abandoned sidewalk sheds along Washington Avenue, I also see them daily at Stroud playground, where a massive open nest has existed for up to a year outside of 495 Sterling Place. I see them each evening in gardens of St John's Place between Underhill and Washington Ave.

I welcome the proposed improvements to outdoor dining and sanitation, and we ask that other measures be taken to decrease the rat population. These include:

1. Coordinating a rapid, multi-agency response to remove abandoned or underutilized dining sheds, especially those with false floors that may harbor rats;
2. Begin agency review of the use of carbon monoxide to eradicate rodent populations and destroy nests;
3. Enhance city funding for rodent mitigation efforts and sanitation efforts, including resuming financial support for community composting;
4. Install more rat-proof litter bins in city parks and on sidewalks and prioritizing commercial corridors with DSNY's roll out of the new Better Bins;
5. Establish routine city inspections for sidewalks and tree beds impacted by rodent infestations;
6. Provide all residential and commercial properties with low-cost, appropriate closed trash receptacles;
7. Expand the city's curbside waste containerization pilot to more neighborhoods, including Prospect Heights; and

8. Require all buildings to set garbage out in bins with lids on pick up days.

Additionally, I urge the Council to work with the Administration to clarify various rules and responsibilities around rodent mitigation, including instances in which it is a building owner's responsibility to mitigate rodent issues rather than the city and to further clarify which agencies maintain responsibility over various rodent-related issues, as both city officials and constituents have heard different answers from city officials regarding who has jurisdiction over rodents in tree pits or rodents that burrow under sidewalks and more.

Sincerely,
Katie Trapanese

December 8, 2023

Dear City Council Members,

Almost three years ago, on December 18, 2020, I submitted testimony calling on Mayor de Blasio and Parks Commissioner Silver to allow Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center to continue operating on their community composting sites. At the time, both organizations were facing imminent eviction, despite the immense environmental benefits their teams provide to our city. I'm frustrated that these organizations and many others are again in jeopardy, this time at the hands of Mayor Adams and Sanitation Commissioner Tisch.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating funding for the NYC Compost Project and community composting. Collectively, the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC manage hundreds of food scrap drop-offs (FSDOs) across the city, process millions of pounds of organics each year, do vital work to educate citizens, and directly contribute to building a healthier and more resilient future for this city. Cutting the funding for these organizations will result in the loss of 115 green jobs and will be a major setback for the city's Zero Waste goals.

When will the leaders of our great city recognize the importance of community composting and the NYC Compost Project? When our shoreline erodes further? When more lives and homes are lost to historic flooding? I can only hope that the recognition comes before it is too late.

From a practical perspective, community composting is one of the most effective tools we have to mitigate rat activity. While food scraps placed in flimsy trash bags on the sidewalk become a buffet for rats, food scraps dropped off at FSDOs ensure that there is nothing in the trash to attract rats or other pests.

Moreover, community composting represents less than .03 percent of the total city budget. Despite the minimal cost of these programs, they are highly effective and beloved by many.

Please reverse the cuts to these vital programs and vote "NO" on the Mayor's budget cuts. Every New Yorker deserves a healthy, sustainable future.

Thank you,
Katie Zwick
District 33
Greenpoint, Brooklyn

**Written testimony submission to continue curbside composting programs in New York City
December 6, 2023**

Dear NY City Council:

The city wide composting programs have been a huge improvement in our neighborhood and the city. My family has participated in the program, dropping off our compostable waste bi-weekly for years. It has provided our building and neighborhood with an outstanding program with strong participation from the community. The compost pick-up bins are chock full of waste that is turned directly into beneficial compostable soil and used.

All of this waste has been diverted from the landfills and the city has saved money not having to pay for expensive carting of a significant portion of the NY waste stream. There are no losers in this program, in fact the very same composted soil is even being used in the new East River Park, where it will provide a rich and fertile environment to grow the new park.

Please realize how important the compost programs are to NY City. For the budget they have, the ecologists have done a brilliant job and it would be more expensive to the city to go back to the old method of throwing the compostable waste into the trash.

Composting has directly improved our neighborhood and our coop buildings. Since the composting program has been in operation, our building no longer smells like garbage. It is a healthier environment.

I am proud to support the NY Composting initiatives. They are essential to NY City and are the correct way to deal with this waste, for now, and for our children's futures.

Thank you for your consideration

Kenneth Colosky

Hello, my name is Keturah Thorpe, I am a constituent of district 45 and I am a participant in the Master Composting program. I'm here to testify my belief and understanding in diverting food waste via community composting as the best way to mitigate the rat program in NYC. Having food waste in the trash creates a buffet for rats to indulge in as organic waste is their primary source of food. The brown bin collection and orange bins around (more affluent) parts of the city will help with this, but they will not be successful without the aid of community composting. Firstly, the brown bins are not being used by many buildings, mine included, and pick up is not happening as promised, like for my partner in sunset park. These are new programs which are still getting off the ground, they need the support of existing, successful and adjacent community composting. The 6 community compost sites across our city process 8.3 million pounds of food waste a year, where is that waste going now with the loss of community composting, ill functioning pickups and complete lack of smart bins south of crown heights brooklyn? Much will be trashed, exponentially adding to the rat problem, among many other issues. Secondly, without outreach and education people will not know what or how to compost, and will continue throwing out food waste, and not utilizing the new resources provided to them. The knowledge I have learned through the master composting program is invaluable. It's a train the trainer program and in my few short months I have been able to start informed conversations about composting at work and in my social circles, educating and empowering people to adopt composting practices in their own life. This is how knowledge and change happens. Through community. In short, save community composting, which is already successful and thriving, not just in organic waste management, but in community outreach and education as well. Successfully diverting organic waste from the trash is the safest and most successful solution to eliminating the rat issue.

December 9, 2023

Dear Mayor Adams,

May you please restore funding for community composting?

These programs are vital for Zero Waste goals and rat mitigation.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Kevin Johns

[REDACTED]

Bronx, NY 10463

Dear City Council Members and Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management ,

I recently became aware of the decision to discontinue the composting program starting January 1st, and I must express my profound disappointment. This initiative represented a significant step for New York City, demonstrating leadership in fostering a greener, more equitable, and sustainable environment. Across the city, communities have been learning about the importance of sustainable living, and for families practicing composting at home has been a key part of reinforcing these values.

I strongly urge your reconsideration of this decision. Abandoning this nascent program would not only be a loss for our city but would also reflect poorly on the City Council and the Adams Administration, suggesting a complete lack of commitment. The enthusiasm shown by New Yorkers towards composting has been heartening. Therefore, I believe it is essential not only to continue but to expand this program for the benefit of our children and their future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Laura Silber

[REDACTED]

New York, NY 10025

12/5/23

To whom it may concern;

I am a New Yorker who has been separating my compostable food scraps, storing them in the freezer, and transporting them weekly to the farmer's market to be composted for more than a decade. As an apartment dweller with no outdoor space whose building has not implemented brown bin collection, this is the only avenue I have to ensure that my waste is put to good use rather than increasing methane emissions in a landfill. Every week I am incredibly moved to see so many people from my community taking the time to compost and minimize their negative impact on the environment. Together, we fill dozens of bins each week with food scraps that become incredibly valuable nourishment for our soil, and this is just a single site out of the many compost collection sites across the city. I am absolutely dismayed that this program's funding is being cut. This program's impact on sustainability is tremendous. Not only does it directly reduce emissions, it also encourages people to make other small positive changes in reducing their carbon footprints. Further removing the majority of food from household trash reduces trash odors and rats that plague our city. Community composting is a program that makes me proud to be a New Yorker. In the long run, supporting waste systems that are sustainable for the environment will save money and make our city more livable. Please do not be short-sighted and cut this important program.

Sincerely,

Laura Vert

2023-12-07

RE: NYC Compost Project budget and programs

To whom it concerns:

I moved to Brooklyn from Texas one year after 9/11 and can't think of where I'd rather live than New York City. I've also been an avid composter for at least 5 years. What is meant by "avid"? . . .

I devote space in my freezer to a compost bin. Every few weeks I ride the train 45 minutes one way to drop my food compost off at the GrowNYC collection in Union Square because my building only handles yard waste. Why Union Square? It's the only place that keeps hours and a frequency that I can make a day to go.

In 2020 when the GrowNYC program paused collection due to COVID-19 emergency shutdowns, I searched for anywhere an apartment dweller with no other access could deposit compost. When my boyfriend found the Rocket at Domino Park, I picked my orange peels and soiled paper out of the compost and took time off work to take my collection there.


This is all to say I believe the good these programs do to help New Yorkers reduce their waste and create something useable, perhaps even a commodity like gas. Composting programs have cut my own landfill stream in half and made me imagine the potential across this whole city. If only we can make it easy until people learn a new habit of it, just like recycling.

To cut the budget to programs that support compost is a step backwards and an example of being penny wise and pound foolish, where would-be compost goes back into costly landfill waste and management. It puts NYC behind other U.S. cities that already have robust programs. It also causes us to lose the knowledge and experience of people who've been working at these programs.

To the City Council, the Committee of Sanitation and Solid Waste, the Committee on Finance, and any other related Committees, please continue to invest in compost programs across our beautiful city and expand their budget lines where possible. It's not wise management to anorexically cut budgets to programs and agencies and expect our city to still function. We must continue to plan for and invest in our future and not wait for the status quo to move on without us.

Warm wishes for the holidays,

Lauren Lamm


Brooklyn, NY 11230

Save Community Compost Testimony

To: Committee of Sanitation and Solid Waste, on the occasion of the hearing to address rat mitigation in New York City

Committee members, I am writing to express my testimony due to Mayor Adams' recently proposed budget cuts which will defund community composting programs across the city. I am deeply disappointed to hear that Mayor Adams has chosen to defund these valuable programs. Community composting provides the city with numerous benefits, including rat mitigation. The reason rats are such a problem in NYC is because food waste is improperly managed. Without comprehensive composting programs, food waste from residential buildings, restaurants, and other settings is mixed in with other waste, stored in flimsy plastic bags, and thrown onto the street to wait for hours before collection. Inevitably, rats chew through the plastic bags and eat the food waste. This is rats' main food source. Then, sanitation workers have to collect ripped bags with food and other potentially hazardous waste spilling out. With such a dysfunctional food waste collection system, it is no wonder NYC has a rat problem. In contrast, citywide composting, either in the form of community drop-off sites or pick-up by the department of sanitation, contains food waste in secure bins, eliminating the food source for rats. Comprehensive composting programs would be a simple and effective solution for NYC's rat problem.

In addition to rat mitigation, composting offers climate and community benefits. In the face of global climate change and environmental degradation, it is irresponsible and frankly unacceptable to defund sustainable programs. Food and organic matter is a major contributor to landfill waste, where it becomes a problem—it must be transported long distances to a landfill, which requires fossil fuels, and it releases methane (a greenhouse gas) because it can not biodegrade properly in landfills. Composting turns organic waste into a climate-friendly resource—it can properly biodegrade and serve as fertilizer for city green spaces. Composting organizations, like GrowNYC and the Lower East Side Ecology Center, also provide green jobs and community hubs. These organizations help New Yorkers connect and learn skills, empowering us to lead more sustainable lives. As a life-long New Yorker, and a young person coming of age in a time of climate crisis, I urge you to refund community composting and prioritize other environmentally-focused programs and legislation.

Layla, Brooklyn

To Chairs Nurse and Schulman and members of the Sanitation and Health Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Lena Frey, and I am a proud member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective, represented by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, RWDSU. I have worked as a Compost Coordinator for GrowNYC for over 4 years, but have been dropping off my food scraps at our sites for long before that.

Together with our partners at The New York City Compost Project, we serve millions of New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs, providing food scrap collections, organics processing, compost outreach, education access, and finished compost. We divert more than 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills each year, create hundreds and thousands of pounds of compost that is distributed to parks, community gardens, and individuals, and perform necessary environmental outreach and education to over 600,000 New Yorkers annually.

Community Compost was fully funded by the City and the Mayor in the last budget, and defunding it is a violation of the contract the City has with GrowNYC and the other NYC Compost Project programs. It is also a violation of the public trust and the open budgeting process through which we set the fiscal priorities for the City. Now, the Mayor is going back on that commitment without any public process.

Because of this, I will lose my job in less than 2 weeks, and so will 114 others. The Mayor and City Council must take a stand to protect this program, and the 53 union jobs that are at stake.

Community composting is among the best tools the City has to mitigate rats and other common pests. Food waste sitting out on the street in plastic bags is a feast for rats, and diverting this waste through community composting is one of the most cost-effective preventive measures the City can take. This program is not expensive; coming in at less than 0.02% it is a drop in the bucket of the total City budget, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

The Mayor needs to find the money to fund the NYC Compost Project, and to keep union workers employed and able to pay our rent. The Council must vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and to combat the rat infestation. If the Mayor succeeds in heartlessly cutting our jobs one week before the holidays, the Council must then fight to fully restore this program by ensuring sufficient funding for Community Composting in the 2024 budget this spring, and also mandating that this program exist through legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Lena Frey
Brooklyn, NY
Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective

Community Composting Programs

My name is Leo Kirts, my pronouns are they/them and I am a founding member of the Sunnyside and Woodside Mutual Aid mobile food pantry. In 2020, in the early months of the pandemic, when the city halted the curbside food scraps program, I like many other New Yorkers relied on local community composting gardens to step in and meet the sanitation needs of our neighborhoods.

It was these volunteer-led and grassroots programs that made up for the services that the city failed to prioritize and to reduce rodent infestation. How is it that the richest city in this country fails their responsibility to maintain an essential and environmentally responsible component of the public's sanitation needs? Why are these services deemed disposable in times of crisis when we need them most, be it a pandemic or budget cuts, when it is these programs that reduce rodent infestation, cut down on plastic waste, keep organics out of landfills and thereby cut greenhouse gas emissions, not to mention benefit the health of our soil and communities.

Knowing that the curbside brown bin and so-called smart bin project actually generates greenhouse gas emissions, rather than creating rich compost people can use and beautify greenspace, adds insult to injury and shows that the city needs to give more power to expert composters, not take it away. Without public outreach, people do not know how to use these bins or understand the benefits of redirecting their food waste. These measures are not suitable substitutes for the hands-on education that neighborhood compost programs provide and the direct benefits that people experience in these community spaces. If the city wants to eliminate rats, they need to fund science-backed social good solutions to eliminate organic waste in trash which means prioritizing community composting programs.

Anyone who is involved in community composting knows that these programs do far more than just redirect food waste, chop up neighbor's food scraps and turn them back into compost. Where there are composting programs, there are community gardens, green spaces for people to enjoy and learn about nature, and people gather together who are concerned for the social well-being of their neighbors.

In Sunnyside and Woodside, two out of the three community composting programs we have emerged during the pandemic, as a response to our neighborhood's needs. Woodside Sunnyside Composting operates out of the Sunnyside Community Garden and quickly ran out of space to process the increased amount of food scraps being dropped off on a weekly basis when brown bin service was halted in 2020.

It was these same composters and community gardeners who harvested fresh produce grown in the community garden and brought it to our mutual aid pantries to give away for free. I can tell you that nothing brightens people's faces like learning that the tomatoes, herbs and lettuce they're holding were grown in a garden a few blocks away. The majority of people who come to

get free food for the last 3 and a half years live in public housing or on the streets where rat infestations are the worst. These social justice and public health issues are directly linked, as are their solutions. Cutting funding to safe and free community spaces like libraries and community gardens directly increases vulnerable people's exposure to rodents, disease, and negative health outcomes.

Composting programs are in HIGH demand and have the power to help reduce trash that attracts rodents. Our third composting garden in Sunnyside, 45th St. Composters started during the pandemic with the help of Smiling Hoghead Ranch in LIC and the gardens in our neighborhood. Together they transformed a run down abandoned lot into a lush biodiverse garden teeming with life: pollinators, flowers, raised beds growing food and people. As our local composters sought more greenspace to expand food scraps drop-off they saw a need for healthy soil to grow food for our neighbors who were going hungry.

Not only do these budget cuts exacerbate the rat problem, when you cut funding to community programs, you directly cut services that feed people nutritious food and create greenspaces we all need more of to capture rainwater so we don't get flash floods, to reduce temperatures during oppressive summer heat waves, and to provide leisure spaces where anyone can sit down to rest without buying something and creating more waste that attracts more pests. Smart bins, brown bins and multibillion dollar anaerobic digesters do not provide ANY of these social benefits that the community composting programs do.

Our local composters also started the Rusty Wheelbarrow community composting garden that is currently a food scraps drop-off site working with BigReuse. Volunteers at Rusty use the compost from food scraps to nourish the soil from which they grow food exclusively for our mutual aid food pantries in a closed-loop food justice program. Not only does this garden grow free food, it is a hub of education where volunteers of all ages and backgrounds come to learn about food waste reduction, agroecology, aquaponics, soil science and more. It is a beautiful inviting community greenspace on a lot where there previously was none.

Budget cuts like these before us betray our communities and set us up for failure, and outsource the rat problem to low-income communities where the rat populations are the worst. Budget cuts like these fail to protect and fund grassroots initiatives that keep our city cleaner, safer and happier. For a mayor and an administration that claims to fight rats and expand "nutritious vegan food" access, they have proven to weaponize their incompetence to make matters worse, not better. The sanitation department needs to align their priorities as public servants with the values of their constituents and with the future of this city. Thank you.

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Leslie Cheung, and I am writing on behalf of the Queens composting community. I urge New York City officials to say no to defunding crucial environmental initiatives in our neighborhoods.

I live in Elmhurst, Queens and was a volunteer for the St. James Compost site for almost 4 years. During my time volunteering, St. James Compost had seen an enormous interest in composting during its opening year. Once the pandemic started, St. James Compost realized that we were receiving more drop-offs than they could handle. So the SJC collaborated with BigReUse.

Big ReUse was such an incredible asset to St. James Compost – we would not have been able to collect the roughly 350+lbs of food waste per week if it were not for the help of this organization. They made it possible for our little compost site to keep food scrap collections available in Elmhurst—a neighborhood that has been severely neglected from any green initiatives to improve the quality of life for its residents.

Food scrap collections and Queens Community Compost sites allow apartment dwellers to participate in outdoor activities that would otherwise be unavailable to them.

As NYC tries to come up ways with reducing the rat population, I would like to point out a cost-effective method of deterring rat activity: Separating food waste.

St. James Compost has not seen one rat—not one!— enter any of the totes used to store foods scraps. Containerizing food scraps works!

Please don't defund composting programs. We need organizations like BigReUse to help us make our neighborhoods clean and safe. NYC residents deserve better.

Thank you,

Leslie Cheung

**Testimony by Leslie Feinberg, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,
Jointly with the Committee on Health
Chairs Sandy Nurse and Lynn Schulman
Oversight: Rat Mitigation and Public Health
December 7, 2023**

Good morning Chairs Nurse and Schulman and members of the Sanitation and Health Committees. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Leslie Feinberg and I am a proud member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective, represented by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, RWDSU.

In my previous position, prior to working with GrowNYC, I was a bar owner on the Lower East Side and can tell you some true rat horror stories. What I can also tell you is that when I started composting the majority (nobody's perfect) of our food wastes by dropping off at the LES Ecology Center, the rat presence outside of our bar went down significantly. I will also tell you that my visits to the Ecology Center as well as my local community garden's compost group, I have seen firsthand the importance of these programs not just towards sustainability, but towards education and community development.

Community Compost was fully funded by the City and the Mayor in the last budget, and defunding it is a violation of the contract the City has with GrowNYC and the other NYC Compost Project programs. It is also a violation of the public trust and the open budgeting process through which we set the fiscal priorities for the City. Now, the Mayor is going back on that commitment without any public process.

Because of this, 115 of my co-workers will lose their jobs in less than 2 weeks, unless the Mayor and City Council take a stand to protect this program. This includes 53 good, union jobs.

Community composting is among the best tools the City has to mitigate rats and other common pests. Food waste sitting out on the street in plastic bags is a feast for rats, and diverting this waste through community composting is one of the most cost effective preventive measures the City can take. This program is not expensive; it is a drop in the bucket of the City's budget, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

The Mayor needs to find the money to fund the NYC Compost Project, and to keep union workers employed through the holiday season to keep a roof over our heads. The Council must vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and to combat the rat infestation. If the Mayor succeeds in heartlessly cutting our jobs one week before the holidays, the Council must then fight to fully restore this program by ensuring sufficient funding

for Community Composting in the 2024 budget this spring, and also mandating that this program exist through legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Leslie Feinberg

This is my testimony to share at the 7 Dec Committee on Sanitation and Waste Collection committee meeting.

I have been a volunteer for food scrap collection for almost 3 years, in Hell's Kitchen. The Lower East Side Ecology Center provides our bins and services them. We started with 2 bins, and now have 5 that we fill every week!

Food Scrap collection must not be cut from the city budget, and here is why:

1. We divert thousands of pounds of food scraps from being dumped in trash, where rats feast on it.
2. Ultimately city sanitation must send these organics to landfill where it produces methane that is destroying our environment.
3. The neighborhood has benefitted from coming together to volunteer for this worthy effort and from neighbors meeting neighbors at the bins to share information, look out for each other, and offer neighborly support.

We are the eyes/ears of NYC. We care about our neighborhoods. Please do not disband this vital service.

Linda Novenski



New York, NY 10018

Dear City Council Members,

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the city is planning to defund community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation.

Community compost in NYC is as much about building healthy communities as it is building soil structure, and the work of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC is essential to our city.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating the funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming, and enabling them to continue their vital work of education, diverting food scraps from landfills, and making the city a healthier, cleaner, and more resilient place to live and work. If these programs are removed from the budget, the city's Zero Waste goals are imperiled, and the jobs of 115 workers from 9 non-profits will be lost. Cutting these jobs, 53 of which are union, is unacceptable.

Community composting is among the best tools the City has to mitigate rats and other common pests. Food waste sitting out on the street in plastic bags is a feast for rats, and diverting this waste through community composting is one of the most cost effective preventive measures the City can take.

This program is not expensive; coming in at less than 0.02% it is a drop in the bucket of the total City budget, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

We cannot allow this colossal environmental setback on our watch; New Yorkers deserve better. Climate change is here, we simply cannot go backwards.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and make our city more sustainable. The Council must also fight for this program and ensure sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring.

Thank you,
Maria Fernandez
Astoria, Queens

Testimony 12.7.23 City Council Sanitation committee

Good morning. I'm Marisa DeDominicis - the Executive Director and Co-Founder of Earth Matter NY - a non profit dedicated to the art and science of composting, located on Governors Island.

I would like to thank Com Tisch for all of her work with commercial containerization and the residential waste efforts - putting out waste containers for sanitation pick up instead of bags at the curb if it is at an earlier time. Both of these initiatives have assisted New Yorkers in reducing the amount of rats feasting off of what is in the black bags. In terms of what happens once those bags are collected...

As this committee is well aware,

- over 3.9 million tons of food scraps go into the landfill each year.
- 34% of what is in the black bags or containers could be composted.
- Less than 1% is this food scrap is captured through composting

I would like to commend the Mayor and Commissioner Tisch and especially, most of all the Council Members who have made it a reality that NYC has mandatory composting and it is rolling out.

What is not so rosy, is the lack of acknowledgement by the Mayor or Com Tisch of the decades of hand maidens, volunteers, non profits and DSNY's very own compost project funding, New Yorkers who have paved the way for nyc composting to be a municipal service and global model.

This lack of acknowledgement is deeply felt loud and clear through the delivery of the budget cuts that wipe out the foundational and essential work of the community composter organizations that will come to an end on Dec 17, 2023.

While we may be patting ourselves on the back that composting is in our household vocabulary, 9 of 10 ppl do not actually know what composting is, what the process is, or that the nyc "composting" program is made up of digestion, which is not composting. Producing methane gas is not producing a product that is educational for showing the circularity of peoples' food scraps going into the compost process and coming out to serve nyc green infrastructure of nurturing green spaces and tree beds.

The city has invested a significant amount in planting trees, in our parks and other green spaces that benefit from residential food scraps transformed into compost used to ensure these trees and parks' soils thrive, to serve our city.

The education needed for the 9 out of 10 new yorkers still needs to be done and compost is superior way to help them understand why to separate out their scraps, not only to deter rats from their feast, but to use, at least some of the scraps, as the resource for composting that nurtures us all.

Please reverse the budget cut to community composting and instead double the budget for this crucial work that your hand maidens, the community composters are successful and require only a fraction of what is earmarked for DSNY - whose tagline should become "Resource Recovery".

Thank you for this opportunity.

Hello Members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,

I am writing to express my support for the reinstatement of funding for community composting. I am a graduate of the Queens Compost Project Master Composter course, a long-time community gardener, and co-founder of Smiling Hogshead Ranch in Long Island City. I have witnessed firsthand the POSITIVE IMPACT of composting on our community.

We rely on compost givebacks to grow our garden, the food scrap processing BigReuse does to help us manage the volume of scraps when it exceeds our volunteer capacity, and the outreach to help teach others and ourselves the value in respecting the land.

The fact of the matter is, if the food scrap processing of these several de-funded non-profits stop, the scraps coming to our garden will not. We experienced firsthand this exact scenario in 2020 when overnight our food scrap intake quadrupled, reaching greater than 1k pounds of food scraps a week from concerned citizens willing to walk to the industrial business zone of LIC because they heard there was a garden there that would take their scraps. We are a bunch of volunteers. We can not do this alone. We rely on community composting.

You have encouraged millions to create better food waste habits that they are unwilling to change overnight just because the city decided to change their mind that it is important. We are on the forefront of big cities doing great things, this would be an embarrassing step backwards, a shameful reversal in environmental progress.

Composting serves as a FUNDAMENTAL NECESSITY in our fight against climate change and plays an INTEGRAL ROLE in the natural circle of life. While the curbside composting program exists, it will lack the outreach efforts performed by community composting organizations to properly use it, leading to confusion and ultimately failing in the WHOLE POINT of its existence.

This is leaving aside the fact that LITTLE of these food scraps are actually composted, in a move that FEELS LIKE the city is BLATANTLY LYING to us and letting us believe our food scraps are in nice brown piles of FUTURE SOIL.

I STRONGLY BELIEVE that reinstating funding for community composting is IMPERATIVE to ensure the success and effectiveness of fighting climate change and creating a more resilient city. New York City should be a shining example of what is possible.

Thank you for your time,
In SOILDarity,
Mia Roy

Hello Members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,

I am writing to express my support for the reinstatement of funding for community composting. I am a community gardener at Smiling Hogshead Ranch in Long Island City. I have witnessed firsthand the POSITIVE IMPACT of composting on our community.

We rely on compost givebacks to grow our garden, the food scrap processing BigReuse does to help us manage the volume of scraps when it exceeds our volunteer capacity, and the outreach to help teach others and ourselves the value in respecting the land.

The fact of the matter is, if the food scrap processing of these several de-funded non-profits stop, the scraps coming to our garden will not. We experienced firsthand this exact scenario in 2020 when overnight our food scrap intake quadrupled, reaching greater than 1k pounds of food scraps a week from concerned citizens willing to walk to the industrial business zone of LIC because they heard there was a garden there that would take their scraps. We are a bunch of volunteers. We can not do this alone. We rely on community composting.

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I STRONGLY BELIEVE that reinstating funding for community composting is IMPERATIVE to ensure the success and effectiveness of fighting climate change and creating a more resilient city. New York City should be a shining example of what is possible.

Thank you for your time,

Michelle Arvin

Dear City Council Members,

As a resident of Queens and a graduate of the master composting program supported by DSNY, I am extremely disappointed to learn that the city is planning to defund community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation.

Eliminating funding of community composting initiatives would be a great loss to NYC. The work of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC is invaluable to our city. Funding community composting is an investment in the well-being of NYC's communities, green infrastructure, and is a powerful tool in the fights against climate change and rats.

There are many benefits of converting food and yard waste to compost and using compost around NYC communities. Composting is one of the key tools in the fight against climate change. When food and yard waste is dumped in a landfill, it produces methane (CH₄) which is a climate warming gas thirty times more potent than carbon dioxide (CO₂). If that waste was properly composted, methane is not produced and carbon is sequestered.

Current "composting" options offered by DSNY, which include the orange smart bins and brown bins are not circular systems. Waste collected by these bins are either trucked to composting facilities outside of NYC or taken to Newton Creek digestion facility to produce bio-gas and bio-sludge resulting in the release of climate warming gasses into the atmosphere. Theoretically, the bio-gas could be used to provide power to the electric grid; but due to technical difficulties bio-gas is diverted and off-gassed RELEASING MORE climate warming gases into the atmosphere. The current situation, is a form of green-washing, and is only adding to the climate crisis. Additionally, instead of returning nutrients to soil in the form of compost some of the bio-sludge generated diverted to landfills where it will further generate climate warming gasses.

Instead of paying money and burning fossils to truck 8.3 million pounds food and yard waste to landfills outside of NYC, various community composting sites within NYC like Lower East Side (LES)Ecology Center, Queens Botanical Garden (QBG), and Big reuse turn organic waste into black gold. This compost is then distributed to local community gardens and used for beautification efforts to improve the overall health and structure of NYC's poorly depleted soils.

Hurricane Ida in September of 2021 is a prime example of how vulnerable NYC is to extreme weather patterns and is flood prone. By using compost to restore soils, some of the damage caused by flooding can be reduced. Compost restores the physical structure and composition of soil, allowing it to capture more water. Depleted soils are not able to capture water and it just runs off into sewers. The current sewer system cannot handle the rapid influx of massive amounts of water during extreme storms, which results in flooding. Instead of water quickly running off into sewers, compost will capture more water and slow down the flow of water into sewers.

Composting is also an important tool in the war against rats. By diverted foods scraps from trash to compost, we are limiting the smells and denying rats access to an unlimited buffet. This will

help reduce the exploding rat population and provide NYCers with cleaner/better smelling streets.

As a graduate of the Master Composter program, I have witnessed firsthand the work that community composting sites do. The NYC compost project trains 1,000 master composters who then go in and outside of their communities to provide compost outreach and education. The education aspect of this is very important. Master composters share their knowledge and experiences to encourage people to start composting, provide them with information on how/what they can compost, the benefits of using compost and how compost can be used to improve soil health and mitigate the effects of climate change. Master composters also support various beautification efforts throughout the city. These events include applying compost to tree pits, spring bulb plantings, and many more.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating the funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming, and enabling them to continue their vital work of education, diverting food scraps from landfills, and making the city a healthier, greener, cleaner, and more resilient place to live and work. If these programs are removed from the budget, the city's Zero Waste by 2030 goals are imperiled, and the jobs of 115 workers from 9 non-profits will be lost. Cutting these jobs, 53 of which are union, is unacceptable.

We cannot allow this colossal environmental setback on our watch; New Yorkers deserve better.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and make our city more sustainable. The Council must also fight for this program and ensure sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring.

Thank you,
Michelle Cheung
Queens, NY

Dear City Council Members,

Defunding community composting as part of cuts to the Department of Sanitation is nonsensical, infuriating, and completely antithetical to the needs and wants of the city and its communities.

Cutting 120 green jobs amid a worsening climate crisis, over 50 of those being union jobs, leaves our already vulnerable city even more susceptible to the worsening consequences of climate change. It weakens and severs community ties by restricting our outreach and education programs, which work in favor of our programs and other active DSNY programs like Smart Bins and curbside composting, which for many older or disabled New Yorkers are not easily navigable at face value. Food waste being allowed to ferment on the street opposes the city's recent directive to eliminate our rat problem and will only contribute to it. Plainly, these cuts ignore the data that we have accumulated for the past 10+ years of community composting: it works; it binds communities with the workers who are committed to a greener and more sustainable city; it provides inimitable education and outreach that many people are not getting otherwise; it provides green jobs; it is greatly reducing our rat problem; it is vastly improving our degraded soils; and importantly, in a time of hopelessness, it gives New Yorkers hope and possibility that their city is on the right side of the climate fight, and that they themselves are active participants in climate resiliency efforts.

Our communities, our city, and our planet deserve better.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and make our city more sustainable. The Council must also fight for this program and ensure sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring.

Thank you,

Mikaela Charalambous
Queens, New York

SUBJECT: DECEMBER 7, 2023 HEARING - SAVE COMMUNITY COMPOSTING IN NEW YORK CITY

Dear Committee of Sanitation & Solid Waste Hearing,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for your commitment to building a more sustainable and resilient New York City. As a concerned citizen and advocate for environmental initiatives, I would like to bring to your attention the significant benefits of community composting and the positive impact it can have on our city. Cutting the funding for composting to several organizations will only work to undo all the progress our city has worked so hard for.

Community composting is more than just a waste management strategy; it is a powerful tool for fostering community engagement, environmental stewardship, and local resilience. Here are some compelling reasons why I believe investing in community composting is a wise decision for the future of our great city:

Waste Reduction and Diversion:

Community composting plays a crucial role in diverting organic waste from landfills, which not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions but also minimizes the strain on our already overburdened waste management infrastructure. By embracing composting at the community level, we can significantly decrease the amount of organic waste that ends up in landfills, contributing to a cleaner and healthier environment. With the Newton Creek Digester Eggs becoming a unreliable option for NYC, we need to ensure we have alternate plans within the community.

Job Creation and Economic Benefits:

The establishment and maintenance of community composting sites can create job opportunities within local communities. From compost educators to site managers, these initiatives can stimulate economic growth while addressing pressing environmental concerns. We need to invest in our local by keeping these jobs.

Community Building and Social Cohesion:

Community composting initiatives bring people together with a shared purpose. I was fortunate enough to attend and complete the NYC Compost Project's Master Composter Course. There I learned about the intricacies of solid waste management and connecting with the community. Working with other classmates and volunteer, we collectively reduced waste, nurtured the environment, and built stronger connections with other community members. This sense of shared responsibility not only contributes to a cleaner city but also strengthens the social fabric of our communities for future generations.

I urge you to consider restore funding, and dare I say expand, our community composting programs as a priority in your environmental agenda. By harnessing the power of community engagement, we can and HAVE transformed New York City into a more sustainable, resilient, and environmentally conscious metropolis.

Thank you for your time, dedication, and leadership in shaping a brighter and greener future for our beloved city. We're counting on you!

Sincerely,

Natalie C. Sousa
Brevoort Place
Brooklyn, NY 11216
nataliecsousa@gmail.com
###-###-####
December 5, 2023

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.

My name is Natasha Eziquiel-Shriro, and I am a resident of Queens and born-and-raised New Yorker. I work in healthcare, where I serve my community each day as a part of a medical team.

I care deeply about the future of this City and was shocked when I learned that Mayor Adam's agreed to cut community composting programs, especially when so many of our City leaders, including members of this committee, would agree that cutting these programs is not what is best for our City.

Without community composting programs, millions of pounds of organic waste might end up in the trash and in landfills, rather than becoming valuable compost for our parks, gardens, and street trees. Without community composting programs, organic waste might end up being burned, releasing methane gas as a byproduct. Last year, community composting programs diverted over 8 million pounds of organic waste from curbside collection. So without these programs, that's 8 million more pounds of trash per year to be picked up by our sanitation workers, and 8 million more pounds of food to be left curbside for rats.

Having an effective composting system for NYC goes far beyond a curbside bin solution – we also need community education and outreach to encourage people to compost their organic waste, and we need a labor force to do the work of processing that waste into organic gold. Up until these program cuts, NYC composting programs provided education to well over half a million New Yorkers each year, and created natural fertilizers used by over 300 community groups and thousands of individuals each year.

We need to come together and fight to protect organizations like the Lower East Side Ecology Center, GrowNYC, and Big Reuse. Community composting is jobs, the environment, a smart sanitation solution, and vital to the future of our city.

**Testimony by Nathalie Huang, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,
Jointly with the Committee on Health
Chairs Sandy Nurse and Lynn Schulman
Oversight: Rat Mitigation and Public Health
December 7, 2023**

Good afternoon Chairs Nurse and Schulman and members of the Sanitation and Health Committees. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Nathalie Huang, and I am a proud member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective, represented by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, RWDSU. I work as a Compost Coordinator for GrowNYC, and together with our partners at The New York City Compost Project, we serve millions of New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs, providing food scrap collections, organics processing, compost outreach, education access, and finished compost. We divert more than 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills each year, create hundreds and thousands of pounds of compost that is distributed to parks, community gardens, and individuals, and we perform necessary environmental outreach and education to over 600,000 New Yorkers annually.

Community Composting was fully funded by the City and the Mayor in the last budget, and defunding it is a violation of the contract the City has with GrowNYC and the other NYC Compost Project programs. It is also a violation of the public trust and the open budgeting process through which we set the fiscal priorities for the City. Now, the Mayor is going back on that commitment without any public process.

Because of this, I, along with 114 others, will lose my job in less than 2 weeks, unless the Mayor and City Council take a stand to protect this program. This includes 53 good, union jobs.

Community Composting is among the best tools the City has to mitigate rats and other common pests. Food waste sitting out on the street in plastic bags is a feast for rats, and diverting this waste through Community Composting is one of the most cost-effective, preventive measures the City can take. Our network of more than 50 food scrap drop-off sites has increased accessibility for New York City residents in all 5 boroughs, and by taking them away, many are at risk of having few to no options for composting their food waste, particularly in communities where people have been historically deprived of local access to composting.

This program is not expensive; it makes up just over 10% of the overall \$33 million annual composting budget and it is only 0.03% of Mayor Adams' announced \$106.7 billion budget for the coming fiscal year. Community Composting is just a drop in the bucket of the City's budget, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

The Mayor needs to find the money to fund the NYC Compost Project, and to keep union workers employed through the holiday season to keep a roof over our heads. We have the heart and passion for this job, and we also deserve to stay employed in this field doing essential work for all communities. The Council must vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program to save union jobs and to combat the rat infestation that is a problem that will only grow expediently without the assistance of community composting programs. If the Mayor succeeds in

heartlessly cutting our jobs one week before the holidays, the Council must then fight to fully restore this program by ensuring sufficient funding for Community Composting in the 2024 budget this spring and mandating that this program exist through legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Nathalie Huang

Dear City Council Members,

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the city is planning to defund community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation. Compost in NYC is as much about building healthy communities as it is building soil structure, and the work of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC is essential to our city.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating the funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming, and enabling them to continue their vital work of education, diverting food scraps from landfills, and making the city a healthier, cleaner, and more resilient place to live and work. If these programs are removed from the budget, the city's Zero Waste goals are imperiled, and the jobs of 115 workers from 9 non-profit organizations will be lost. Cutting these jobs, 53 of which are union, is unacceptable.

We cannot allow this colossal environmental setback on our watch; New Yorkers deserve better.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and make our city more sustainable. The Council must also fight for this program going forward by ensuring sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring. The Council should also mandate that this program exist through legislation, which would make it permanent

Thank you,
Nikhil Dugal
Brooklyn

December 6, 2023

Dear City Council Members and Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management:

I write today about the relationship between rat mitigation and composting.

Rat mitigation is relevant to the issue of composting because many people incorrectly believe that composting attracts rats.

Misinformation, as well as inertia and inconvenience, are all reasons why new practices such as setting aside food waste are slow to develop.

New Yorkers have really been learning and making an effort to separate food scraps from landfill garbage.

Yes, we are bringing scraps to the NYC Smart compost bins and other **curbside** composting bins, but the outreach and composting work of the **community** organizations like those at green markets are an important part of fighting the misinformation, inertia and inconvenience counterweights.

I understand that the community composting sites must not feel like a worthwhile expenditure of precious funds.

But with more and more people living in New York, generating more and more garbage, we need to make our best effort to divert food scraps and make the garbage bags as small as we can.

The recent increase in the City's population should make composting **more** urgent, not less of a priority.

No composting initiative should be cut unless it is clearly shown to be inconsequential in the reduction of waste. The community composting programs divert about 8 million pounds of waste each year. Until the curbside composting programs are more effective, the community programs should not be cut.

We need to fight the disinformation that composting attracts rats, and community composting programs help do that.

Thank you,
Phoebe Roosevelt
Upper West Side resident

TESTIMONY

NYC City Council Hearing Department of Sanitation

Rat Mitigation December 7, 2023

Submitted by:
Rae Linefsky
(Rae.Linefsky@consultc3.com)

I would like to add my comments to the submission of Rocco Rella who is representing The District 35 (CCM Chrystal Hudson) Rat Task Force.

I have been a home owner on South Portland Ave. between DeKalb and Lafayette-Fort Greene Brooklyn- since the 1970's and the rat infestation over the past few years has far exceeded any obvious problems we had in the past. Our Block Association became more aggressive in the past few years to try to lessen the problem through the establishment of a Rat Committee from the block, resident education and encouragement, subsidizing an independent exterminating expert company to assess each of the houses and buildings from the outside (including buildings up the next block to Fulton), joining the District 35 Rat Task Force, reporting rat sightings and subsequent problems, co-sponsoring a Rat Academy and trying to keep the block informed of City changes.

I want to delineate the most often heard complaints and issues expressed by our concerned neighbors:

- Home, condo owners and apartment building owners want clarification regarding **who is responsible for what?** There is conflicting information as to who is responsible-(the owner, the city?-and is there a difference in who is the responsible party depending on the size of the building) and if the city-**which** department (Transportation, Sanitation, Health, Parks, Education etc)

- Tree pits (there are several which have become infested with rat burrows), creating deep tunnels, affecting the very large and older beautiful trees
- Sinking sidewalks related to above
- Fort Greene Park has the old mesh trashcans which are open to rats. There should be appropriate trashcans with tight lids. Neighbors on the streets surrounding the park have complained about the rats coming from there into their tree pits and front gardens.
- The corners of Lafayette and S. Portland and Lafayette and S. Eliot still have the open mesh trash containers. These are blocks where people buy food they eat while walking and then throw the trash into those receptacles- even though the local commercial business have the appropriate receptacles for their own waste. This is also true at the corner of DeKalb and S. Eliot -where Brooklyn Tech and 6000 students go to school.
- The block association is exploring CO to kill rats but are unsure whether that is allowable, despite it being used around other parts of the city.

Recommendations

- Address the issues raised above, particularly the unseamless way the city appears to be addressing the problem, not being clear which Department is responsible for addressing specific issues, e.g. tree pits and sidewalks in danger because of rat activity.
- The Rat Academy has several useful posters. These should be distributed to store fronts around the city, possibly through the BIDS, but not limited to that.
- The Rat Academy information could be translated to TV presentations, e.g. Channel one on Spectrum and other local news stations, as well as radio stations-in different languages. A full city marketing campaign needs to be instituted so that everyone is aware of what they, as an individual, can do to mitigate the citywide rat problem.

Thank you.

December 9, 2023

Dear Mayor Adams,

May you please restore funding for community composting?

These programs are vital for Zero Waste goals and rat mitigation.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Johns



Brooklyn, NY 11214

Testimony for the Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Hearing

Dec 7, 2023 10am

Rebecca Naegele

Community composting education programs throughout the city have taught me that their methods of processing food scraps into valuable compost is also a city-wide rat mitigation strategy. I've learned more about NYC's sanitation and rat mitigation methods in my time with the NYC Master Composting program, and composting at my local community garden in Queens, than I have in all other decades of my life. The composting programs offer real-life applicable skills to process our own food scraps and yard waste into a soil additive (compost) to grow healthy plants and nutritious herbs and food as well as healthier street trees. The process is simple and economical, supporting urban gardening and ecology. Diverting one third of waste that will otherwise go to landfill, and attract rats along the way, and educating engaged citizens on how to do this for a more sustainable NYC is important.

The community composting education program funding should be ensured for years to come to alleviate strain on the sanitation system and propel NYC as leaders in the climate crisis. Community composting programs engage New Yorkers of all ages to become mindful of their waste, and conscious of how to minimize their impact. Engaged citizens become responsible and proactive members of civic life. I've met other proactive civic-minded New Yorkers through the NYC Master Composter program and accompanying field trips at Governor's Island, Queens Botanical Garden, and other community gardens throughout the city. We are all passionate land stewards and growers who volunteer our time and energy to rebuild NYC's depleted topsoil, and together help process waste and boost our local ecology. Defunding this incredible program is a huge mistake.

The education done by those employed with community composting throughout NYC is crucial for mitigating climate change as it educates hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who care about our city, the environment, health, and that of future generations. These programs teach circularity and how consumers can be responsible for processing their own waste, reducing landfill trash and strain on the sanitation system. The workers in the community composting sector across organizations affiliated with the Master Composter program are some of the most inspiring, humble and impactful people I've met in this city. Do not defund their jobs and rob New Yorkers of education that will help our city thrive, and keep rats at bay!

**Testimony in Opposition of Mayor's Proposed PEG Budget Cuts and In Favor Full Funding for
Community Composting Programs**

My name is Renee Pappous, and I am a resident of District 22. I am writing to advocate for the 115 people who stand to lose their jobs should the Mayor's budget cuts be enacted.

As a Master Composter and community garden volunteer, I can say with certainty that our city relies on the staff of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC to keep our streets clean, resilient, and free of disease-carrying rats.

As I worked through the requirements for the Master Composter certificate, I learned from Big Reuse's outreach team that rat mitigation is the primary motivator for New Yorkers to participate in any city compost program, be it the green bin, orange bin, or brown bin. The outreach team knew this because they had done the work of listening to their neighbors, and finding a way to make composting resonate with them.

The NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC staff not only educate New Yorkers on how and why separating their organic waste keeps rats at bay. They also show how finished compost beautifies and protects their environment. When I participate in build day at Queens Botanical Garden or apply compost to street tree beds with Big Reuse, I know where my food scraps are going, and what they are being used for. I can see the advantage of keeping my food out of a black garbage bag and in the appropriate bin.

To put it simply, the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC staff builds New Yorkers' trust in our city's environmental efforts. A standalone orange bin or a few flyers advertising brown bins do not have the same effect as a knowledgeable neighbor who understands what motivates you, and can answer any questions you might have.

As the city council works together to avoid the worst of the Mayor's proposed budget cuts, I ask that you fight for community composing and the 115 people who make these programs work.

Thank you for your time and dedication to this matter.

Sincerely,

Renee Pappous



Astoria, NY 11106

Community composting is an undervalued asset for New York and for a broad range of New Yorkers in every corner of the city. Like the subways and other vital interconnecting infrastructure, it merits further investment rather than disinvestment to meet short-term budget needs, in my estimate. It's invisible to most New Yorkers but perhaps the committee could do a service by using this moment to bring this asset to wider view. It's obviously an environmental asset, keeping green waste out of landfills and suppressing the rat populations in neighborhoods that need it most. Further, the system's educational and volunteer base connects New Yorkers from all parts of the city and promotes community and organizational development and the physical and mental health of participants and those who benefit from the work. Perhaps most important, this program combines the hands-on and the visionary. To manage green waste every day is not only to measurably improve the city's quality of life a bucket at a time but also to envision a healthier, more environmentally sustainable city for future generations. New York's natural history is second to none, as is the dynamic and diversity of New Yorkers. The community composting program is a force to sustain both together with high returns at modest expense.

Rick DeVecchio

Manhattan

DSNY Master Composter

Volunteer, Earth Matter

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony about the severity of the rat epidemic in New York City. My name is Rocco Rella. I live in Prospect Heights Brooklyn, and I speak on behalf of myself and on behalf of the District 35 Rat Task Force. The Task Force, organized by Council Member Crystal Hudson and facilitated by Andrew Wright, represents every resident of District 35, including many representatives of block associations, coop boards, civic organizations, and anti-rodent activist groups such as Sterling's Committee for Rat Awareness and Mitigation (SCRAM) and the Prospect Heights Rat Task Force (PHRTF), South Portland Ave Block Association, Lincoln Block Civic Association, and many others. We are thousands of voices in commercial and residential buildings, businesses, apartment house and house owners' residents joining together to say: RATS are still a big problem. We implore the city and the Director of Rodent Mitigation to continue efforts aimed at mitigating the rampant infestation that has gripped our city since the pandemic when people worked in their homes and organic matter in garbage multiplied, resulting in the migration and multiplication of rodents in all parts of our city, especially Central Brooklyn. We welcome the proposed improvements to outdoor dining and sanitation, and we ask that other measures be taken to decrease the rat population. These include:

1. Coordinating a rapid, multi-agency response to remove abandoned or underutilized dining sheds, especially those with false floors that may harbor rats;
2. Begin agency review of the use of carbon monoxide to eradicate rodent populations and destroy nests;
3. Enhance city funding for rodent mitigation efforts and sanitation efforts, including resuming financial support for community composting;
4. Install more rat-proof litter bins in city parks and on sidewalks and prioritizing commercial corridors with DSNY's roll out of the new Better Bins;

5. Establish routine city inspections for sidewalks and tree beds impacted by rodent infestations;
6. Provide all residential and commercial properties with low-cost, appropriate closed trash receptacles;
7. Expand the city's curbside waste containerization pilot to more neighborhoods, including Prospect Heights; and
8. Require all buildings to set garbage out in bins with lids on pick up days.

Additionally, I urge the Council to work with the Administration to clarify various rules and responsibilities around rodent mitigation, including instances in which it is a building owner's responsibility to mitigate rodent issues rather than the city and to further clarify which agencies maintain responsibility over various rodent-related issues, as both city officials and constituents have heard different answers from city officials regarding who has jurisdiction over rodents in tree pits or rodents that burrow under sidewalks and more.

We recognize that New Yorkers also have a personal responsibility. We must encourage our neighbors to toss litter in corner bins, follow garbage containment rules, and to compost rather than toss organic waste in their personal trash. We have made significant progress as a City, but there is so much more that needs to be done. We need a City that is prepared to be a full partner in this issue. Rats are seen every day around restaurants with unclean outdoor sheds or deficient sanitation practices. Rats are seen every day on the street when walking, biking, or driving to work. Rats are seen every day in our neighborhoods and in buildings with multiple complaints and multiple fines but ultimately no action by delinquent landlords. Rats spread disease and, frankly, give our wonderful city a very bad name. In the interest of health, commerce, and quality of life, we ask you, the City and its departments, to do better, starting with the previously described interventions. Thank you.

December 7, 2023

To: City of New York City Council
Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
Rat Mitgation Hearing

Dear Elected Representatives,

I write to urge your support to restore budget cuts to the DSNY's Community Composting programs, effective in just a matter of days. When the community drop-offs cease operations, thousands of pounds of food scraps will end up back in the garbage. Not everyone can use a smart bin. Not every building is using curbside composting. The habits people have of saving their scraps until the weekly trip to the market or a nearby drop-off will fall away leading to increased garbage in trash bags. This of course will lead to an increase in rats.

Why not work with the community composting groups to come up with a plan together to keep the drop-offs and processing of them intact? The cuts to these programs are revolting. Please restore the budget cuts and keep the rats at bay. Community Composting FSDO's are a key part of NYC rat mitigation policy.

Thank you.

Ruth Groebner

Dear City Council Members,

I am extremely disappointed to hear that the city is eliminating funding for community compost programs as part of its mid-year budget cuts. Composting initiatives are one of the best tools available for mitigating New York City's horrific rat problem, since they literally remove the food waste from our streets.

When the COVID 19 pandemic began in 2020, I was living in a basement-level apartment in the Crown Heights Neighborhood of Brooklyn. I had been in the habit of composting my food scraps at the GrowNYC food scrap drop-off on Franklin Avenue, but like many of my neighbors, had to revert to throwing out my food scraps with the. Or so garbage when community compost programs were suspended due to the pandemic.

By the end of the summer, I began to notice two seemingly unrelated phenomena. The first was that for the first time, I would walk outside at night and find rats on my stoop, rummaging inside my garbage barrels, and attacking the garbage bags set out on the curb for pickup the next day. The area in and around my stoop soon began to reek of rat feces and urine, which are hazardous to human health. My super set out bait stations in attempt to address the problem.

The second phenomenon was that my basement apartment began to fill with a type of fly I had never seen before. This large, grey and black striped variety is known as a flesh fly-it feeds off of dead and decaying animals, and well as excrement. My first reaction was to hang two rolls of sticky fly traps. Within 48 hours, both rolls were filled solid with flies, with no visible space left.

I called an exterminator, who told me that it was not sanitary to stay in my apartment with the state of my fly infestation. Together, we explored the part of the basement that housed the boiler room, etc, and found a blood-curdling scene. Not only were there dozens of rats scurrying about, there was significant layer of rat excrement covering the entire floor, and dozens of dead rats in several stages of decomposition. The rat carcasses were crawling with fly larvae, and the smell in the room was noxious.







It took thousands of dollars in exterminator and contractor fees to bait, clean and patch the basement so it was no longer a health hazard.

I implore you restore funding for community compost programs such as those run by GrowNYC, Lower East Side Ecology Center and others. While curbside composting and the new Bluetooth compost bins address the food waste problem that fuels our city-wide rat infestation, they do not serve all neighborhoods, or even all boroughs, and require a learning curve and familiarity with technology that make them inaccessible to many city residents. Community compost programs have the advantage of having a live person who can educate residents about how to compost their food waste, keeping it off the streets and out of rats' stomachs.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and make our city more sustainable. The Council must also fight for this program going forward by ensuring sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring. The Council should also mandate that this program exist through legislation, which would make it permanent

Thank you,
Sally Ann Velez-Guzman
Brooklyn

More than ever, in a time when we need to be rapidly strategizing away from fossil fuels and methane-burping landfills, we need to massively improve our processing of organic waste. Diverting food scraps, spoiled food, cardboard, any waste product that can be digested by a compost heap, is an incredibly economical and easy way to do this. Certainly easy compared to the elaborate scheme devised for the brown and orange bin compost... why go to all the trouble of turning food scrap into methane when the gas company doesn't even care to cooperate?? Why not just make real compost using the plans these community organizations have developed for years? Making real compost from new yorkers' waste products is also educational and creates so many fulfilling jobs, in education and community outreach, science, engineering, architecture, urban farming, strategic planning, sanitation, transport, etc. It's also healthy for people to see the cycle of where waste goes- our trash doesn't just disappear, it travels far far away from us, continues to exist, gets buried, burned, dumped, ignored. Community compost programs not only remove organic matter from landfills, but it processes that waste locally, eliminating the need for more trucking in and out of the city. There are so many reasons for us to allocate a (large!) budget to this natural and enormously beneficial process. Please reconsider the cutting of this community service, and move towards making New York a more sustainable city in the future.

Thank you,
Sarah Lammer

SCOTT V. SORENSON

Sunnyside NY 11104 ·

*Committee On Sanitation and Solid Waste M
NY, NY*

DEAR MAYOR ADAMS,

I write today regarding the budget cuts being made to the Community Composting programs. These cuts can not happen to a program that has been with us since 1999.

I am a member of the over 11,000 master composters who have been trained and developed by the composting community and the programs they so strongly lead in all five boroughs. Because of their hard work I am now composting all organic matter including food at my home. I now advocate in my community about how to compost and improve rat mitigation by properly composting food. There are over 11,000 Master Composter's giving the city a minimum of 30 volunteer hours every year. That's 330,000 hours of volunteer time making our city a greener place that NYC will lose. (That's \$5.0M in free labor that will be lost as well.)

The 115 green jobs being eliminated is very disappointing. The number of green jobs should be increasing not decreasing. I attended the rally at city hall last week and I saw the passion of the community composting team. They love their jobs, they love NYC, are great teachers and stewards of NYC and represent the diversity of all of NYC!

Here are some of the reasons shared at the rally for why we need community composting.

- It makes sense.
- NYC soil sucks
- Rat mitigation
- Green Jobs
- The people of the composting community are dynamic, smart and care about NYC.
- We compost to keep organic matter out of landfills.

Lastly the composting community is active in taking care of our city. Community composting is an important part of taking care of this place we love. We are a community of voters and will move from our support for leaders that want to throw such an important program away. Community composting in NYC should be held as the standard for large cities in the United States. Let's set the standard for what an

American city can do with composting. Kicking community composting to the curb and the green jobs that support it make no sense and show no vision.

Sincerely,
Scott Sorenson
Sunnyside, Queens

Dear City Council Members,

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the city is planning to defund community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation. During the pandemic I came to rely on my local farmers market as a source of fruits and vegetables and my frequent visits taught me about the community composting program. As soon as I started, I fell in love with the program! It's part of my Saturday ritual to take my compost to the farmers market first thing in the morning and the added benefit is that I rarely have to take out my trash now - the amount of trash I produced has been so significantly reduced. Because of this access, I've come to become a composting advocate, teaching family and friends that they too can easily compost both here and in other cities. I love the idea that my waste is returned to the city in a better form.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and make our city more sustainable. The Council must also fight for this program going forward by ensuring sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring. The Council should also mandate that this program exist through legislation, which would make it permanent.

Thank you,
Shira Saiger
Brooklyn

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

I am writing to express my support for the community composting initiative at 45th Street in Sunnyside and to urge the restoration of funding for this program, both immediately and in the upcoming year.

Four years ago, I moved to Sunnyside, a neighborhood that, unfortunately, lacks parks and city greenery. In my quest for a connection to nature, I discovered the community composting site on 45th Street. This place provided an informative and well-organized environment where volunteers are actively engaged in a thriving community.

The community composting site has been such an important resource for me, not only educating me about responsible waste management and composting but also teaching me about the power of community and the creation of social capital. Since attending, I've developed significant friendships and built social connections that were elusive in my first few years in the city.

Social capital, intangible yet essential, is what binds communities together. The community composting initiative contributes to this by promoting a sense of belonging and shared responsibility, positively impacting the neighborhood beyond waste reduction. It goes beyond the immediate benefits of waste reduction; it contributes to the creation of safe, clean, and well-functioning neighborhoods.

I believe the restoration of funding for composting is a practical investment in community building, waste reduction, and environmental responsibility. I appreciate your consideration of this matter and the positive impact it can have on Sunnyside residents.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Stefanie Grech

[REDACTED]

From: Stephanie Gaweda <sjgaweda@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 7, 2023 3:05 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Stephanie Gaweda testimony for 12/7/23 Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Jointly with the Committee on Health

[REDACTED]

Hello,

My name is Stephanie Gaweda, I am a resident of district 38 and my partner is a participant in the Master Composter program. I'm here to testify that one of the best ways to mitigate the rat program in NYC is to divert food waste via community composting.

I'm a 3rd generation born and raised Brooklynite. Generations of my family have lived in the same building since the 60s. I'm very familiar with rats, and have chronic mouse issues in my home. The brown bin plan was great, and I was very excited to get my bin.

Except most landlords are not using them. For smaller buildings with less than 9 units, the \$25 fines are too small for them to care about the extra work, and they've received no education on how this benefits the building. For larger buildings the fine is \$100, which pales in comparison to the rent generated. There is a huge misconception that the compost bins will attract more rats, because there has been no advocacy in explaining how this will curb them. For those of us that have tried composting, our pickup has been rejected multiple times, when following all correct protocols.

It's clear that the sanitation workers themselves have not been given the resources to support this new initiative, as they've received an extra step per every household without additional labor. The amount of people on the truck have not changed, so either their hours are getting longer, or they're being expected to work the same amount of collections into their shifts, and it's not getting done. So now you have compost sitting out that has not been picked up, and it's getting real ripe. Where do I bring it? Well I could drop it off at my community composting site, unless that was also shut down due to the proposed budget cuts. Or you could hope that there's a smart bin in your area, somewhere within a reasonable distance as it leaks all down your leg. But I know my nearest smart bin is 3.1 miles away in an area I never pass through in my daily life.

This showcases how Sanitation needs the support of existing and successful community composting. There are 6 community compost sites across our city and they process 8.3 million pounds of food waste a year. You eliminate those programs, and there is nowhere for that waste to go, and the sanitation department clearly can't keep up. That means compost will rot in the street, or food waste will increase exponentially. And then your rats are having a feast. If we don't take the food waste out of our garbage stream, we are going to continue to have a climate change crisis, as well as a rat crisis.

I can attest that over the last few months, my partner has shared invaluable knowledge with me through her Master Composting program. Knowledge is reinvested in others through channels of those you know and trust.

Save and reinstate community composting, invest more in diverting organic waste from the trash and a huge step will be taken in eliminating the rat issue. No food, no rats

--

Stephanie J. Gaweda

Sjgaweda@gmail.com

[LinkedIn](#) | [Website](#)

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony about the severity of the rat epidemic in New York City. My name is Steve Flack. I live in Prospect Heights Brooklyn, and I speak on behalf of myself and on behalf of the District 35 Rat Task Force. The Task Force, organized by Council Member Crystal Hudson and facilitated by Andrew Wright, represents every resident of District 35, including many representatives of block associations, coop boards, civic organizations, and anti-rodent activist groups such as Sterling's Committee for Rat Awareness and Mitigation (SCRAM) and the Prospect Heights Rat Task Force (PHRTF), South Portland Ave Block Association, Lincoln Block Civic Association, and many others. We are thousands of voices in commercial and residential buildings, businesses, apartment house and house owners' residents joining together to say: RATS are still a big problem. We implore the city and the Director of Rodent Mitigation to continue efforts aimed at mitigating the rampant infestation that has gripped our city since the pandemic when people worked in their homes and organic matter in garbage multiplied, resulting in the migration and multiplication of rodents in all parts of our city, especially Central Brooklyn. We welcome the proposed improvements to outdoor dining and sanitation, and we ask that other measures be taken to decrease the rat population. These include:

1. Coordinating a rapid, multi-agency response to remove abandoned or underutilized dining sheds, especially those with false floors that may harbor rats;
2. Begin agency review of the use of carbon monoxide to eradicate rodent populations and destroy nests;
3. Enhance city funding for rodent mitigation efforts and sanitation efforts, including resuming financial support for community composting;
4. Install more rat-proof litter bins in city parks and on sidewalks and prioritizing commercial corridors with DSNY's roll out of the new Better Bins;

5. Establish routine city inspections for sidewalks and tree beds impacted by rodent infestations;
6. Provide all residential and commercial properties with low-cost, appropriate closed trash receptacles;
7. Expand the city's curbside waste containerization pilot to more neighborhoods, including Prospect Heights; and
8. Require all buildings to set garbage out in bins with lids on pick up days.

Additionally, I urge the Council to work with the Administration to clarify various rules and responsibilities around rodent mitigation, including instances in which it is a building owner's responsibility to mitigate rodent issues rather than the city and to further clarify which agencies maintain responsibility over various rodent-related issues, as both city officials and constituents have heard different answers from city officials regarding who has jurisdiction over rodents in tree pits or rodents that burrow under sidewalks and more.

We recognize that New Yorkers also have a personal responsibility. We must encourage our neighbors to toss litter in corner bins, follow garbage containment rules, and to compost rather than toss organic waste in their personal trash. We have made significant progress as a City, but there is so much more that needs to be done. We need a City that is prepared to be a full partner in this issue. Rats are seen every day around restaurants with unclean outdoor sheds or deficient sanitation practices. Rats are seen every day on the street when walking, biking, or driving to work. Rats are seen every day in our neighborhoods and in buildings with multiple complaints and multiple fines but ultimately no action by delinquent landlords. Rats spread disease and, frankly, give our wonderful city a very bad name. In the interest of health, commerce, and quality of life, we ask you, the City and its departments, to do better, starting with the previously described interventions. Thank you.

The City Council should reinstate the budget for community composting- I can't put it better than my friend Clare Miflin at the Center for Zero Waste Design stated in the New York Times- "With the lack of trust in recycling, we need solutions that create many more true believers, such as those at the New York City Housing Authority, where residents drop off food scraps in return for fresh healthy vegetables. The city also needs good-quality compost to properly maintain the millions of dollars of green infrastructure that it has recently installed. When compost is applied to street trees, rain gardens, parks and community gardens, it makes the soil and plants healthier, reduces flooding and air pollution, provides summer cooling, and makes the city greener and cleaner. Instead of cutting community-scale composting, the city should be trying to increase the number of small-scale compost sites to enable a substantial percentage of our food scraps and yard waste to be transformed into a valuable neighborhood resource."

The Department of Sanitation's investment in community composting stands as a crucial step toward fostering sustainable waste management practices within New York City. Community composting initiatives play a pivotal role in diverting organic waste from landfills, and their integration into the city's waste management strategy is imperative. Personally, community composting has been instrumental in fueling my engagement in public events centered around food scarcity, particularly in low-income neighborhoods. Through these initiatives, I've witnessed the transformative potential of composting in addressing critical issues while engaging with communities most affected by food insecurity.

As a green energy-trained advocate, I recognize the urgency to address the ecological impact of depleting natural resources. Community composting aligns seamlessly with these objectives by offering a tangible solution to reduce waste and lessen the strain on our planet's limited resources. My involvement in these initiatives has amplified my empathy toward the urgent need for action, emphasizing the importance of sustainable practices in preserving our environment. However, as just one citizen, my impact is limited. This underscores the significance of the Department of Sanitation's role in spearheading and scaling up community composting efforts across the city.

Community composting programs are not only about waste reduction; they're about fostering a sense of collective responsibility and engagement within communities. They empower individuals to actively participate in waste management practices while addressing broader issues like food insecurity and environmental sustainability. The Department of Sanitation's investment in these programs would not only bolster efforts to manage organic waste but also contribute to a more resilient, environmentally conscious city. Scaling these initiatives requires the commitment and resources of governmental bodies like the Department of Sanitation to ensure that community composting becomes an integral part of New York City's waste management infrastructure.

I am the Sustainability Manager at Riverside Park Conservancy in Manhattan, and am proud to have opened a composting facility in the Park alongside my colleagues this year. As part of this process we worked with several of the community composting entities across the City, and have experienced first-hand the incredibly impactful network of waste diversion, soil remediation, and interpersonal connection that results from compost programs.

The practice of composting is interconnected with overall climate resiliency and environmental justice at large. The City has a duty to step up and financially support programs that enable a transformation of waste management practices (specifically addressing the intentional placement of waste transfer stations in communities of color), adequate and equitable maintenance for parks, and other policies that directly address environmental justice realities, such as disparities in air quality and green space distribution in low income communities and communities of color.

These programs are not just about waste management; they are a gateway to educating New Yorkers about pest mitigation. As we collectively address the challenges facing our city, I urge the council to recognize the interconnectedness of community composting, education, job creation, and rat mitigation. These programs are not expendable; they are the essence of a cleaner, safer, and more informed community. Let us unite in urging Commissioner Jessica Tisch to reinstate funding for community composting programs, understanding that this is an investment in our city's future. Together, we can ensure that the fight against rat infestations is fortified by education, jobs, and a shared commitment to a healthier New York.

I am deeply troubled by the potential elimination of community composting programs, recognizing that this decision not only jeopardizes our fight against rat issues but also threatens the very fabric of our educational outreach initiatives.

The proposed cut to community composting programs is more than a budgetary concern; it is a blow to our collective efforts to educate citizens on responsible waste management. These programs are not merely bins for organic waste but serve as invaluable tools to instill a fundamental practice among New Yorkers – the separation of food waste from regular garbage. This practice, often overlooked, holds the key to mitigating rat-related problems in our neighborhoods.

Community composting education is a linchpin in the creation of an informed and responsible citizenry. It is a gateway to enlightenment, empowering residents to understand the critical importance of diverting food scraps to compost bins. By actively participating in this practice, individuals contribute directly to the reduction of easily accessible food sources for rats, thereby addressing the root cause of our persistent rat issues.

The language of community composting education is one that speaks not only of waste disposal but of shared responsibility for our city's cleanliness. It is sustainable. It is helping to balance a healthy ecosystem and biodiversity, and it lessens the burden on landfills and the extended environment. It is an investment in our future, fostering a culture of environmental awareness and encouraging sustainable living practices. As we contemplate the fate of these programs, I implore the council to recognize the profound educational imperative they hold. Let us advocate fervently for the reinstatement of funding for community composting programs, safeguarding not only our city's cleanliness but also the well-informed and engaged citizens who are essential partners in the ongoing battle against rat infestations. Together, let us champion a New York where every resident understands the pivotal role they play in reducing the allure of food sources for rats and actively participates in building a cleaner and healthier urban environment.

When I first began working at Bellevue hospital back in 2018, I was intimidated but thrilled - it meant I got to see my cousin, an employee of GrowNYC, who visited Bellevue to bring the community fresh produce. I loved knowing that she was close by but more importantly I loved that in a place with few grocery stores, I had access to fresh and local food. I have loved the community compost sites. I use my community compost site all the time. It has been so incredible to know I am keeping the city cleaner and healthier with the compost, while building community and connecting with my neighbors. I thank one of the reps at Grow NYC whenever I see them at a community event because they were the ones to recognize the value in being able to reduce our food waste and to contribute to growing locally-sourced resources. I will never forgive the city for threatening these jobs and I will do all that I can to support and uplift the tremendous, necessary work that all of the compost community has done.

The DSNY's plan to eliminate community composting programs is a step backward in our efforts to mitigate rat issues in NYC. These programs not only create jobs but also provide education about composting, a crucial element in reducing the material that attracts rats. I urge the council to advocate for the reinstatement of funding and push Commissioner Jessica Tisch to prioritize the fight against rat infestations in our city.

I freeze all food scraps and drop all compost at designated food scrap drop off sites every few weeks (two blocks from where I live). This drastically reduces the amount of waste my household produces, and keeps the shared trash area in better shape. I really value this service provided by community composters and make use of it consistently throughout the year. I have learned so much by talking with the volunteers about what compost is and how diverting food scraps from waste helps to mitigate pest issues. While it may sound simple to remove food scraps from garbage to reduce rats' food source, many New Yorkers are not thinking about this. We need a robust and dedicated group of community composters to explain to residents how to do this and why it works. The organizations of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC are integrated into neighborhoods across all 5 boroughs. They have the connections and trust of community members and are therefore the best messengers to do this education and outreach. If we want to get rid of rats in NYC, we NEED community compost to stay. Please do not let Mayor Adams and Commissioner Tisch eliminate a program that has been doing good work for over 30 years.

I take my organic materials to a nearby community garden that partners with Big Reuse to compost. I feel more connected to the community through this activity and the garden provides invaluable green space to the neighborhood.

The potential cut to community composting programs is not just a blow to waste management; it hinders our community building and educational efforts to combat rat issues. These programs are instrumental in teaching residents to separate food waste from regular garbage, reducing the readily available food sources for rats. Community composting education is an investment in a cleaner and safer city. It empowers citizens with the knowledge to make environmentally conscious choices, directly impacting the prevalence of rats in our communities. I urge the council to recognize the significance of these educational initiatives and push for the reinstatement of funding by letting Commissioner Tisch know how irreplaceable the educational component of community composting is. Let us prioritize an informed citizenry capable of actively contributing to the reduction of rat-related problems.

[To solve NYC's rat problem, expand curbside organics recycling – New York Daily News](#)

“The real solution to our rat problem is hiding in plain sight: a citywide curbside organics recycling program, which would significantly limit the amount of food freely available to the city’s estimated 2-million-plus rat population.

Despite our current efforts — such as the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s site inspections, exterminations, and free “Rat Academy” public education workshops — the fact remains that in our city, rats never go hungry. They feast nightly on the millions of pounds of food that sit in trash bags on our sidewalks for more than 10 hours before being collected by the Department of Sanitation (DSNY). Rats are nocturnal, and while we sleep, they rip open these bags and dine like kings. Not only are we feeding the rats, but the ripped-open bags lead to litter on our streets. It’s a system that makes absolutely no sense at all — which is why we’re the only major city in the world that disposes of its trash this way.

The City Council has a solution in the works: a [bill that would require the Sanitation Department to create a citywide curbside food-scrap collection plan](#). If passed and implemented well, the program would require New Yorkers to separate all food and organic waste from landfill-bound waste, and put it in a rodent-proof container. Taking the food out of the trash bags that sit out all night — the peak hours when rats feast — is a concrete solution to our rat crisis. It’s a win-win proposition: rats lose access to a major food source, and the city gains valuable organic material and takes a big step toward our zero waste goals.

Currently, DSNY has launched a borough-wide organics recycling program in Queens — touted as the largest municipal composting program in the country. In order to be successful, the program will have to overcome previous failures by being widely adopted; that’s the only way to achieve the scale necessary to make the program cost-effective. The Council’s proposal takes things a step further: By making organic recycling universal and mandating it, just like we do with other forms of recycling, New Yorkers across the five boroughs will learn to make separating their organic waste part of their daily and weekly routines...

This Zero Waste package, coupled with the Rat Action Plan — another rat-specific legislative package — will allow the city to take real action on rats and improve our garbage management systems. The Rat Action Plan would formalize and enforce Rat Mitigation Zones, crack down on repeat sanitation offenders, and require larger buildings to put waste out in containers rather than rat-friendly garbage bags. It’s time to pass these bills and provide some relief to New Yorkers who are ready to put the days of Pizza Rat behind us.”

Thank you for this opportunity to speak about the urgency of rat mitigation in our neighborhood. Much has been said and written about this problem. What has been done by neighbors (such as our neighborhood's SCRAM action group) and also steps are being taken by the City; however, none of this is enough. We need the City to step up and enlarge its efforts so that we can eliminate the rat infestation, which jeopardizes our health and our lives.

I am deeply concerned about the potential repercussions of the Department of Sanitation's decision to eliminate community composting programs. The implications reach far beyond waste management; they threaten our city's resilience against rat infestations and jeopardize 115 green jobs that contribute significantly to a healthier urban environment. Community composting is not just about diverting organic waste; it is an educational platform that empowers New Yorkers to actively participate in mitigating rat issues. It fosters a culture of responsibility, environmental awareness, and sustainable living. The elimination of these programs poses a dire threat to the very essence of our city's progress toward a cleaner and safer future. As we navigate the complexities of urban life, I implore the council to consider the multifaceted benefits of community composting. It is an investment in education, employment, and the long-term well-being of our communities. Let us stand united in urging Commissioner Jessica Tisch to reinstate funding for these vital programs, recognizing that the fight against rat infestations is not just a battle of waste but a collective commitment to a healthier and more informed New York.

The reinstatement of community composting programs is integral to fostering a safer, healthier, and rat-free community. These programs are pivotal in not just managing waste but in actively curbing the factors that attract pests like rats. Proper composting practices ensure that organic waste is managed effectively, reducing the availability of food sources that attract and sustain rat populations. By reinstating these programs, the City Council takes a proactive step towards mitigating pest-related issues, creating a cleaner and safer environment for our communities.

Community composting initiatives play a vital role in waste diversion and rat prevention. When organic waste is diverted away from landfills and channeled into controlled composting systems, it significantly diminishes the opportunities for rats to access easily available food sources. This essential step is a preventive measure, reducing the likelihood of attracting rodents and fostering a healthier living environment for residents. By reinstating and supporting community composting programs, the City Council acknowledges their pivotal role in maintaining the cleanliness and safety of our neighborhoods.

The importance of community composting in rat prevention cannot be overstated. Through education and active participation in these programs, residents are empowered to manage their waste more effectively, diminishing the attractants for rats. The knowledge and skills acquired through composting initiatives are not only practical but also serve as a tool for residents to actively contribute to a rat-free environment. By reinstating community composting programs, the City Council demonstrates its commitment to fostering communities that are not only environmentally conscious but also actively engaged in rat prevention efforts, ensuring the safety and well-being of all residents.

This City does things backwards, undercutting stated policy statements all the time. We all know that composting is good for the environment and reduces rats. Forcing people to wait until after 8:00 p.m. to put out garbage, inconveniencing supers and older residents by doing so, yet eliminating drop off sites for organic waste is just idiotic and short sighted.

Many of the larger residential buildings on the block do not participate in curbside pickup, and individual residents who want to compost have been able to take their organic waste to nearby Fort Greene Park on Saturdays at the Farmer's Market. New York City residents must be re-educated at this point to re-establish the habit, and the easier it is for them, the more likely they will participate.

I welcomed curbside pick up when it was instituted under DeBlasio and decried its elimination by Adams. We signed up immediately when it became optional, because though my husband and I compost in the backyard of our single family house, we use the brown bin for waste like chicken bones and soiled paper goods, reducing our total garbage to one small kitchen waste bag a week.

Increased waste in land fills cost the City more money and hurt the environment. Whatever small cost the drop off sites may have for subsidies will cost more for Sanitation in the longer haul.

The impending elimination of community composting programs is a blow to our city's education initiatives. These programs are pivotal in teaching citizens the importance of removing food waste from regular garbage and depositing it in compost bins. The reduction of easily accessible food sources is key to addressing our persistent rat issues. Community composting education efforts are not mere luxuries; they are essential to our city's cleanliness and the well-being of its residents. They provide New Yorkers with the knowledge and tools needed to actively contribute to the reduction of rat-attracting food waste. I urge the council to prioritize education in our fight against rat infestations and press Commissioner Jessica Tisch to reinstate funding for community composting programs.

Community composting programs taught me -- a city boy like so many young school children teach -- what it means to connect to our local environment and conserve resources. The idea that you would cut these programs instead of enforcing recycling and composting initiatives (that would save the city tens of millions) is ridiculous. You're robbing Peter to pay Paul. The trouble is, given the way city government works, Paul never gets the money either.

Having community composting at my neighborhood garden has significantly reduced my own household's food waste and we've never had any problems with rats. we have a compost bin provided by the city that we take to our neighborhood garden during the on season. For several months now we've had the ability for compost to be picked up as well. Living in an urban area—especially one known worldwide for its trash—programs like community composting that actually do help mitigate waste are invaluable and benefit both residents who are looking for ways for their front sidewalks to not be filled with trash bags and city officials who would no longer like to be known as a city for rats.

Dec 7, 2023
Supportive Housing Oversight Hearing
Testimony of John Doe (pseudonym), Supported Housing Tenant

City Council Members, thank you for giving me the opportunity to make this statement.

I have been a supported housing Tenant for more than a decade. During that time I have had many different housing case workers due to the high turn-over rate of my housing provider.

The last six years have been the most difficult of my life. I have always had strained relations with my provider. Six years ago, my provider inspected my apartment and decided that the floor was in bad condition and that they would have to notify the landlord. Subsequently I was called down to the main office and forced to sign a letter stating I was financially responsible. It was inferred that if I did not sign, my housing stipend would be stopped, essentially meaning I would end up being homeless. From that point on I started on a downward spiral emotionally and experienced stress-related health issues. I started looking into what rights I had .

A complicated grievance process and ambiguous guidelines left me few options. I called the local state Office of Mental Health and complained about my providers convoluted grievance process. The response I got was, and I'm paraphrasing, " That's the way we want it."

I obtained a copy of the supported housing guidelines and found these to be very ambiguous on the subject of a tenant being terminated from a supported housing program.

December 7, 2023

To the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management:

I am writing to ask that funding for community composting be reinstated urgently.

I'm a community garden member at Smiling Hogshead Ranch in Queens. Completely un-gated, open to the public, and 100% volunteer-run, it is a special place. It has been a site of community engagement, relationship building, green space access, quality food access, and hands-on environmental impact for myself and my family in recent years. Since I do not live in walking distance from any Greenmarkets, I drop off my household's compost at the Ranch weekly.

The proposed budget cuts will impact the Ranch directly. We are a food scrap drop-off site, and we receive compost give-backs from Big ReUse. We are completely volunteer run, with members contributing time and expertise as our jobs and other obligations allow. We depend on community composting to help support us in processing the volume of food scraps that we receive weekly.

I have been surprised and deeply disappointed to learn that brown bin scraps are not converted into composted soil for our gardens, but instead they release greenhouse gasses at a Newtown Creek facility. Given the extreme urgency of addressing climate change rapidly and effectively, I strongly believe that cutting community composting funding is short-sighted, and the wrong move both for the environment and for New York City.

Robust community composting is integral to fighting climate change and offers a tremendous opportunity for community engagement. Given our population density, NYC has enormous potential for impact in this area, and we must do better: both to achieve immediate results, and to set a better example of what is possible. Please do not end this vital funding.

Thank you for your attention,
Jeanette Levy

Save NYC Community compost (Grin Bins Programs)

As a New Yorker living on Roosevelt Island, the Food Scrap Drop Off every Saturday next to the green market is a beacon of community engagement. Volunteers collect food scraps that are then sent locally to the Queensboro Bridge in Long Island City. This allows tons of material that would otherwise turn into greenhouse gas to feed city trees, parks and community gardens trapping in that way more CO₂ into the soil.

By not allowing this option and relying only on the orange bins on the site, the city risks seeing more development of the rat population as these orange bins fill up quickly and people will occasionally leave food bags unattended next to the full bins. This will allow the rat population to prosper even more than before.

In addition, my wife has been able to attend the education program offered through the same program to become a Master Composter. Every session included a part on the mitigation of the rat population. This type of education program allowed by the current city budget is most valuable to spread the appropriate steps to mitigate the rat population and to develop consciousness and awareness on making our city greener.

Finally, the importance of these events and collections reinforce, with other institutions, such as the libraries, the sense of community and the integration of new populations coming to our city.

New York City needs to become more of a leader in the green economy, not less. That is why fundings for these programs that have more value added than cost as it relies on volunteers should be restored, preserved and even developed.

The earth beneath our feet holds an intricate web of life—an ecosystem often overlooked and underestimated. For far too long, this vital soil ecosystem has been disregarded. Composting emerges as the catalyst for revitalizing this neglected soil, breathing life back into it so that it can continue nourishing our communities with healthy produce. As I delved into composting, I discovered its profound impact in reducing my waste output, fostering a path towards more sustainable living. The shift towards diverting compostable waste away from landfills and towards local community gardens isn't merely about waste management; it's about forging a deeper connection with our planet.

Through composting, I realized its transformative potential beyond waste reduction—it's a gateway to healing our environment. By channeling organic waste into community gardens instead of landfills, we establish a direct link with the earth, nurturing it and enabling the growth of wholesome plants and crops. This shift in waste management practices allows us to actively participate in the regeneration of our soil, fostering a more intimate relationship with the very ground that sustains us. It's a chance to contribute to the restoration of our environment and reconnect with the natural world that we're inherently a part of.

The call to reinstate the budget for composting is urgent and multifaceted. It's not just about personal convenience; it's a collective necessity. Our plea transcends individual needs—it's for the well-being of our children, the health of future generations, and the very preservation of Mother Earth herself. Composting isn't a luxury; it's an essential step towards environmental sustainability. Reinvesting in composting isn't merely an investment in waste management; it's an investment in the future of our planet, a commitment to nurture the soil that sustains us all.

Community composting produces compost a valuable additive to our soil and a valuable tool for community cohesion and for promoting physical and mental health. Additionally community composting plays a pivotal role in mitigating rat issues in our beloved city. The decision by the Department of Sanitation (DSNY) to cut these programs not only jeopardizes invaluable education opportunities but also threatens 115 green jobs that actively contribute to reducing rat problems in our neighborhoods. Community composting serves as a beacon of sustainability, fostering a sense of responsibility among New Yorkers. It transcends waste disposal, acting as an educational tool to enlighten citizens about the impact of their choices on our environment. Beyond the immediate concern of rat infestations, these programs contribute to a culture of environmental awareness and responsibility. As we deliberate on the future of our city, I implore the council to recognize the multifaceted benefits of community composting. It is not merely a matter of waste management; it is an investment in our collective well-being. I urge the council to advocate strongly for the reinstatement of funding for community composting programs and to champion the cause of preserving 115 green jobs. Let us unite in pushing Commissioner Jessica Tisch to prioritize the long-term health and sustainability of our communities.

I am testifying today in support of community composting in New York City. Having grown up in the NYC watershed upstate, I am intimately familiar with the importance of managing the city's environmental footprint for the good of all New Yorkers and all sentient life on this planet. Our city generates more solid waste than almost anywhere else in the country, and keeping biological materials out of landfills is an essential way in which we must safeguard the sacred gift that is our planet. Cutting composting is the last thing we should be doing to improve our communities. We cannot build a better world on a giant landfill, which is what our planet will become if we do not work today to find better ways to deal with our solid waste. I urge you to support community composting and fight the cuts to these programs.

**Testimony at the Committee of Sanitation & Solid Waste Hearing
Thursday 12/7 10:00 AM**

Essential role of community composting in NYC – as a community member of Ft. Green/Clinton Hill Brooklyn, 11238.

- 1. Brings my neighbors outside, gathering at local drop off sites**
- 2. My 82 year old mother takes an extra walk 2x/week to drop off her compost**
- 3. Lessens garbage likely to attract rats on my street**
- 4. Opens community members eyes to waste problems and waste diversion**
- 5. Creates a huge amount of compost used for city parks and gardens, which everyone in my neighborhood benefits from.**
- 6. Combats Combined Sewage Overflow problems in NYC.**
- 7. For apartment dwellers, gives community members access to composting; most apartment buildings don't compost. Apartment buildings put out mountains of trash 3x/week, leading to rat problems, terrible odors, and street blockage – during garbage removal. Traffic nightmare in my neighborhood.**

Community composting has given me hope for the action to be taken to mitigate climate change. As a participant, volunteer, and employee, the vast amount of commitment seen throughout each neighborhood is inspiring. Because I worked as a fill-in coordinator, I got to see sites throughout each borough, of all types of demographics. Community compost clearly unites the citizens of NYC across all types of differences as a way to contribute to the well being of our city and our planet. On top of the myriad of positive environmental impacts that compost has, separating food scraps from waste is a necessary step to mitigate pests. Each day, an unimaginable number of food scraps are thrown out in garbage bags on the sidewalk, free for rodents to feast on. The only viable solution to reducing the rodent population is to take away their food source. And the way to do this is separating food scraps into rodent proof bins. Although there is curbside composting, participation is low, and so many residents and landlords do not use their brown bin and do not know how. Community composting, through its emphasis on education and outreach, is the key to increasing usage of compost bins. The public needs community composting, and it is extremely disempowering that Commissioner Tisch and Mayor Adams have eliminated all funding for community composting. They need to hear the voices of over 40,000 community composter supporters (per the GrowNYC petition) and respond by reinstating community composting funding.

The revival of community composting programs is critical for our environment's well-being. Composting serves as a potent tool in our arsenal against wastefulness, repurposing discarded food into a resource that revitalizes our surroundings. Its role in environmental conservation cannot be overstated—it's a powerful means of reclaiming value from what was once considered waste. By reinstating these programs, the City Council has the opportunity to invest in initiatives that not only save resources but also significantly contribute to the preservation of our environment.

Composting stands as a beacon of resourcefulness and sustainability. It's a simple yet effective practice that embodies the essence of environmental stewardship. By diverting discarded food from landfills, composting prevents the release of harmful greenhouse gases that contribute to environmental degradation. Instead, it transforms this waste into nutrient-rich soil that rejuvenates the earth. This process not only saves resources but actively contributes to the health and vitality of our environment.

The impact of reinstating community composting programs goes beyond waste reduction—it's about fostering a culture of responsibility towards our planet. Composting is a tangible way for individuals and communities to actively participate in environmental conservation. It instills a sense of empowerment, showcasing how every action, no matter how small, can make a profound difference in preserving our environment. By reinstating and supporting community composting programs, the City Council demonstrates its commitment to sustainable practices, paving the way for a more environmentally conscious and resilient future for our city. It's a step towards ensuring that our environment thrives, not just for our generation, but for generations to come.

The significance of community composting in nurturing community gardens cannot be overstated. Composting serves as both a practical and educational tool, offering vital lessons on sustainable waste management, particularly in repurposing kitchen scraps. This practice not only aids in reducing waste but also becomes a cornerstone for educating students on the invaluable process of composting. The resulting soil nourishes and sustains our children's gardens in Brooklyn, fostering a deeper connection with the environment and imparting critical lessons in stewardship.

As a fundamental part of our educational initiatives, community composting plays a pivotal role in shaping the learning experiences of students. By actively engaging in the process of saving and composting kitchen scraps, students gain hands-on knowledge about waste reduction and soil enrichment. Witnessing the transformation of scraps into nutrient-rich compost elucidates the interconnectedness of actions and their environmental impact. Reinstating community composting programs is not just about waste management; it's an investment in fostering a generation of environmentally conscious individuals equipped with the tools to nurture their gardens and communities.

The relationship between community composting and the vibrancy of our children's gardens in Brooklyn is inseparable. The compost generated through these programs forms the lifeblood of these green spaces, providing the essential nutrients for healthy plant growth. More than mere soil, it becomes a living lesson for students, teaching them about the circle of life, resourcefulness, and sustainability. By reinstating community composting programs, the City Council has the opportunity to empower these educational endeavors, reinforcing the connection between environmental responsibility and the flourishing gardens that serve as learning landscapes for our youth. It's a call not just for waste management but for the preservation of invaluable educational experiences and the sustenance of our green community spaces.

1. My disabled (quadriplegic) husband has had to spend \$2,000 this year to rewire his car so he can get to work because of the terrible rat problem on our block. Food scrap removal from our trash left on the street is best way to reduce rat food source.
2. Compost decomposing anaerobically - as they do in landfills - produces the worst kind of green house gas - methane - worsening climate change. Compost grows carbon-fixing plants.
3. The USP food drop off brings hundreds (thousands on weekends?) of spenders to local businesses and the green market. Healthy diet = Lower health bills.
4. AND compost collection areas are the very best places for signature collection for ballot petitioning (looking at you - Carolina Rivera and Erik Botcher!). Composters know their city and they vote!

When I learned at the beginning of this year that our city funds a free course in composting I was so excited, and immediately signed up to begin. I am just 3 volunteer hours away from my Master Composter certification, and am one of many who may never have the chance to complete it if these programs are defunded. Not only that, but the people who have taught me along the way and shared their invaluable experiences will find themselves without a job. Throughout this year I have seen first hand how important composting is as a tool to slow climate change, feed the people, and deliver environmental justice. If this city claims to share these goals, there is no path forward without community composting. There are countless people who have been doing this work for decades, and to remove them from the equation would be a grave error. They are the ones who have been providing the education, and without education and outreach you will never be able to have meaningful participation in a citywide program.

Additionally, these programs are indispensable in educating citizens about the importance of separating food waste from regular garbage, thereby minimizing food sources for rats. Community composting education efforts are not only about waste disposal but also about fostering a sense of shared responsibility for our city's cleanliness. By teaching New Yorkers to utilize compost bins, we directly address the factors attracting rats to our neighborhoods. I urge the council to recognize the educational value of community composting and push Commissioner Tisch for the reinstatement of funding. Let us invest in informed citizens capable of actively participating in the reduction of rat-related issues.

Cutting community composting would be a HUGE disservice to trying to mitigate the rat problem in New York City. Community composting is an easy, super low-cost (primarily organized by volunteers) way to keep food scraps out of dumpsters, trash bins, etc. Rats are particularly drawn to food scraps in garbage receptacles, and because those trash receptacles are not commonly monitored, it allows the rats a perfect environment to feed and breed. Whereas community composting sites are regularly monitored and specially designed to curb rat problems. We line our food waste bins with galvanized steel, we have volunteers and paid staff regularly monitoring the facilities, and implement other easy solutions (like burying the food scraps in mulch for example) specifically designed to discourage rats from making their homes.

Rat infestation is a major problem for New York City and the local officials would be making a huge mistake by cutting community composting.

Several years ago I started composting at a community garden. In the meantime I moved several times, always to rental places. Our landlady currently does not allow access to the brown bins as they represent more work/money for her, and she has the idea that they would attract rodents. We also have access to a backyard and use compost to increase the soil quality for trees and flowers (and vegetables on planters). All this to say, compost that makes soil is very important to me. Even more now, as a mother I want to leave my kid with a connection to nature, even in NYC. Please reinstate the budget for community composting programs. The people working in these programs that I have interacted with, are also incredibly nice and gentle, they do meaningful work (not some burdensome bureaucratic role) that 115 people were doing for less than 7 million dollars annually. It seems like a program with a great ROI.

The decision to cut community composting programs is a disservice to our city's educational landscape. These programs are instrumental in teaching citizens the crucial practice of separating food waste and depositing it in compost bins. This, in turn, directly addresses the excessive food sources attracting rats. Community composting education is not just about waste disposal; it is about cultivating a culture of conscientious living. By imparting knowledge about the benefits of composting and its impact on rat mitigation, we empower New Yorkers to take an active role in their community's well-being. I implore the council to recognize the significance of these educational efforts and advocate for the reinstatement of funding. Let us prioritize an informed citizenry capable of making environmentally responsible choices. Please reinstate it. Thank you!

I submit this testimony supporting keeping funding for the community compost program.

I have been leaving my food scraps in the compost bins at Queens Botanical Garden ever since composting began there. It is important to me to have these bins available as I do not participate in residential brown bin composting.

My building received brown bins at the very beginning of the residential composting program. Residents and passers-by filled the bins to overflowing with food scraps and trash so that the bins could not be properly closed and created a greater rat problem. Our super never set the bins out at the curb but put their contents in black trash bags out with our trash. So we put the bins away.

Thus, DSNY has been ineffective in educating my fellow residents, management, maintenance staff, and the general public in the proper use of the brown bins. It is easier for me to take my food scraps to Queens Botanical Garden.

I commend the compost staff at Queens Botanical Garden for the excellent work they do in processing the community's food scraps into compost which is used on its farm to grow food for City Harvest, as well as educating the public about composting. It is important for the future of our city to keep our compost experts, all 115 of them in different sites around the city, working, to divert organics from the landfill and to educate the public about the importance of composting.

The funds needed to maintain community composting is only a very small amount of the total city budget but has very important consequences for the future. Please save our community composting. Thank you very much.

I currently run a community compost site and the lower east side ecology center's master composter course allowed me to take this position and elevate my expertise to the next level.

Dear NY City Council

I'm a 35 year resident of Williamsburg Brooklyn.

In the mid 90's the neighborhood residents began a grass roots recycling effort . Locals brought their recyclables to the corner of Bedford Ave and Metropolitan . We self administered and executed the program . Years later when the city officially started recycling it was a dream come true . A necessary need was acknowledged and met by the city . It's what local governments do for their citizens .

The same holds for composting.

I urge you continue to fund composting programs even if only at select drop off points like local green markets . We as residents are not willing to let waste go to waste . I hope and trust you feel the same

Sustainability and Community Composting in NYC is vital to the development and continuance of the health and wellbeing of our Green Environment, healthy neighborhoods and interactive Community involvement in eliminating food waste from our Landfills & in trash put out daily on City Streets. Food staples via Composting form a nutritional soil supplement available to Urban Green Spaces and all NYers for free...and food debris that attracts rodents/insects/etc are removed from city streets; Composting has been a vital fiber of our Urban Environment since 1993 and must continue for a better, healthy, greener Community for ALL of US

The potential elimination of community composting programs is a detriment to our educational outreach. These programs are invaluable in teaching citizens the critical practice of segregating food waste and placing it in compost bins. This not only reduces food sources for rats but also instills a sense of environmental responsibility in our communities. Community composting education is an investment in the future of our city. It equips New Yorkers with the knowledge to make informed choices, contributing directly to the reduction of rat-related problems. As we discuss the fate of these programs, I implore the council to recognize the educational imperative and advocate for the reinstatement of funding and let Commissioner Tisch know that community composting CANNOT be eliminated. Let us build a more informed and responsible citizenry to tackle the root causes of rat infestations.

The Master Composter Program is one of the greatest investments the City can make to help ourselves. I started a composting program at my kid's elementary school 15 years ago. I tried to initiate a composting program in my apartment complex but, honestly, I didn't really know what I was doing. In October I was lucky enough to begin the Master Composting Program and I've learned so much. I know how to compost, why it's important, and what are the best way to create a composting system. I have to attend 3 more workshops before I can complete the Master Composter Program. When I graduate, I will be able to confidently address the board of directors at my apt complex, East Midtown Plaza, and explain what composting at EMP could look like. I will be respected and believed because I am a Master Composter. This is a teach the teacher program. People complete this program and take it to the people and teach others.

I am never surprised by the dedication average NYers. We know it's a big City and if we don't work together it doesn't work. The people I've met during the past few months volunteering at community gardens and attending Field Trips never disappoint. We KNOW that composting will help with the RAT problem. We KNOW that greenhouse gasses contribute to climate change. We KNOW that eliminating food waste from our garbage means less garbage.

The Master Composter Program is a minuscule portion of the City budget and the benefits that come from it are HUGE.

As a vehement supporter of our city as a leader in climate change mitigation and adaptation, it makes me physically sick to learn the city was removing such an essential tool from new yorkers. As individuals, we have so few opportunities to make a sizable impact on community generated emissions. Composting is one of the few opportunities we have to make an individual effort that has, and you're removing that from us. I urge you to consider alternative ways of funding reduction. In a time where everything feels a little bit hopeless, please give us hope.

I want to emphasize critical importance of community composting in our ongoing battle against rat issues. The DSNY's decision to eliminate these programs not only jeopardizes valuable education opportunities but also endangers 115 green jobs, which serve as the backbone of our efforts to create cleaner and healthier neighborhoods.

Community composting is a powerful force for change, transcending the mere disposal of organic waste. It is an educational cornerstone, enlightening New Yorkers about the profound impact of their choices on our city's ecosystem. The elimination of these programs would not only strip our citizens of educational opportunities but also undermine the very foundations of a sustainable and rat-resistant city.

As we collectively address the challenges facing our city, I urge the council to recognize the interconnectedness of community composting, education, job creation, and rat mitigation. These programs are not expendable; they are the essence of a cleaner, safer, and more informed community. Let us unite in urging Commissioner Jessica Tisch to reinstate funding for community composting programs, understanding that this is an investment in our city's future.

I've learned so much about how the local connects to the global, from getting a Master Composter certificate and working at NYC Compost Project Hosted By Queens Botanical Garden. Saving community composting programs save important programming for the greater NYC community to be involved in moving our cities closer to zero waste and recycling food scraps to form finished compost to enrich soils, as we face soil extinction worldwide (the growable portion of soils has been eroded so much around the world that eating an apple today has less nutrition than in the past, due to less organic matter/nutrients in the soil). This not only affects soil health, climate health, ecological/environmental health as soil is habitat to so many organisms as well as human health. The programming connects people to form more eco conscious communities which is so needed in the world today. Also, the steps NYC has taken to roll out food scraps collection borough by borough was a start, but community composting has existed for a long time through community gardens, botanical gardens as part the NYC Compost Project. So many important programs are being cut here nationally and locally, yet there is so much money going internationally for proxy wars and military governments abroad for fossil fuels. We need to stop funding apartheid state (Israel) and genocide of native people (Palestinians) and make that funding available for social and environmental good here. Stop funding Israel, and Free Palestine. Our federal tax dollars should be used federally and locally in our states and cities. Community composting moves the USA closer to greenhouse gas emission goals, as rotting food in landfills produce methane, a very potent gas responsible for the climate crisis. Composting takes care of that.

The elimination of community composting programs not only jeopardizes our fight against rat issues but also risks the removal of a critical educational tool. These programs play an indispensable role in enlightening citizens about the importance of segregating food waste from regular garbage. By teaching New Yorkers to put food scraps in compost bins, we directly address the root cause of rat infestations—unrestricted access to food in our waste. Community composting education efforts are the bedrock of our strategy to reduce the food sources attracting rats. These programs not only offer practical solutions but also instill a sense of responsibility among residents. I urge the council to recognize the educational aspect of community composting and push for the reinstatement of funding. By doing so, we invest in a more informed citizenry, capable of actively participating in the reduction of food waste and, consequently, rat-related issues in our neighborhoods. We need to urge Commissioner Tisch to reinstate funding for community composting immediately!

I believe community composting is essential for environmental reasons and that is a simple thing every New Yorker can do to improve our communities. There are so many things in this world that need fixing or help and often there isn't much on the individual level that can be done. Composting gives community members agency and the knowledge that we are doing it has impact on the world and our behavior. Please don't take this away from us. We need this on a social, sustainability, environmental, and just plain common sense level. Thank you

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kazimir Vilenchik, P.E.

Address: first Deputy Commissioner

I represent: DOB

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Javier Lopez Lujan

Address: first Deputy Commissioner

I represent: DSNY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Corinne Schiff

Address: Deputy Commissioner for

I represent: Environmental Health.

Address: DOHMA

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: Dec. 7, 2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ERIC GOLDSTEIN

Address: _____

I represent: NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE

Address: 40 W 20 ST NY NY COUNCIL

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/7/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Roy Arizzo

Address: [REDACTED] ST 11238

I represent: NY Harbor School of Brooklyn Boats

Address: 135 South St NYC contact card for Arizzo
BK

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/17/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christopher Leon Johnson

Address: [REDACTED] BURFALO AVENUE [REDACTED] HTS/CNS

I represent: Self

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/07/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Haylee Hernandez

Address: _____

I represent: New York Harbor Highschool

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: December 7th

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jayleen Garcia

Address: _____

I represent: New York harbor.

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/7/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shkurte Lajqi

Address: _____

I represent: New York Harbor School

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 12/07/2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mariena Kiplan

Address: _____

I represent: NY Harbor School

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rocco BELLA

Address: [REDACTED] SAINT MARKS AVE

I represent: DISTRICT 25 RAT TASK FORCE

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 12/7/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Andrew Winfrey

Address: [REDACTED] Sterling Pl Brook N.Y. 11238

I represent: SCRAM

Address: Sterling Pl Brook Assn

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joshua Goodman
Address: Deputy Commissioner, Public
I represent: Affairs & Customer Experience
Address: DSNY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kathleen Corradi
Address: Director of Rodent Mitigation
I represent: NYC Mayor
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jesse McLaughlin
Address: [redacted] Decatur St, [redacted] Brooklyn, NY 11237
I represent: NYC Audubon
Address: 71 W 23RD ST, New York, NY 10010

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[Empty box]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/7/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Erik Menjivar

Address: Queens

I represent: Grow NYC Workers Collective

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[Empty box]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12-7-12

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Robert Markuske

Address: [Redacted] Van Buren St 11221

I represent: New York Harbor Shipt

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[Empty box]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/7/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Thomas Kamitsis

Address: _____

I represent: (UANYHS) New York Harbor Scho

Address: _____



Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/7/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Madison Matthias

Address: _____

I represent: New York Harbor School

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/7/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Carol Perry

Address: to

I represent: New York Harbor School

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/2/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cristiano Cornell

Address: _____

I represent: NY Harbor School

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/7/2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Grace Arnold

Address: _____

I represent: NY Harbor School

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/7/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Juan Villavicencio

Address: _____

I represent: Urban Assembly New York Harbor School

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dillon Pierre

Address: NY Harbor School

I represent: New York Harbor School

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12-07-03

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Steve Morrison

Address: _____

I represent: NY Harbor School

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kayla Bursor

Address: _____

I represent: NY Harbor School

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ryan Trainer

Address: _____

I represent: New York Harbor School

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/7/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sommer, Stevenson

Address: [redacted] Bedford Ave [redacted]

I represent: New York Harbor School

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/07/2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lina Lajqi

Address: [redacted] Grace Court Brooklyn, NY 11201

I represent: Harbor School

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 12/7/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CLARE MIFLIN

Address: _____

I represent: CENTER FOR ZERO

Address: WASTE DESIGN