

I was overjoyed when the city finally passed the composting program. Finally, a resource that would truly better the city and make it super accessible so that everyone can learn about this important initiative. And just as it's rolled out there's a threat of it being cut, along with other integral educational resources, like libraries, teachers' cuts, and gardens to name a few. These are the resources that help New Yorkers thrive when the economy is in peril, and inflation is on the rise. These are the simple joys that make us feel like a community, and give us hope for a better future. Please, please do what you can to save us from feeling the weight of the world in difficult times even more than we already do.

Sincerely,
Abigail Richards

Dear City Council Members,

I chose New York City to live in and to raise my family for a reason. My son went to universal pre-K when he was younger, and now he's enrolled in our excellent local public school. We walk in the park, take him to the playground, and borrow books from the library every week. We use public transit to get around.

It's these high-quality public services, freely available to everyone, that make this city a great place to live. They're enormously helpful for working families, a lifelong boost for children, and a literally lifesaving safety net for the poor and for refugees and migrants.

Mayor Adams has already been making headlines - and not the good kind - for his corruption and outrageous behavior. Now, in his so-called "November plan", he's calling for radical across-the-board budget cuts. There's no crisis on a scale that demands such drastic action.

If these cuts become law, they'll severely impact our quality of life, and the most vulnerable among us will suffer worst of all. They'll take away from what makes New York a world-famous city and a beacon of welcome for the homeless and the tempest-tossed from all across the world.

I'm calling on you to reject Mayor Adams' plan and to block these unprecedented cuts. Keep the things that make NYC great!

Sincerely,

Adam Marczyk

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Adam Marczyk.

Little Neck, NY 11362

December 11, 2023
Save NYC Food Scrap for Compost Program

Dear New York City Council,

Please accept my respectful plea to Save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off (FSDO) for Compost program from elimination due to budget cuts.

Since 2015, our Roosevelt Island community has benefited from the partnership with the DSNY food-scrap-to-compost program hosted by Big Reuse.

Our weekly 5-hour Saturday food scrap collection for compost has diverted over 341,000 pounds of food scraps from the costly travel to other states' landfills. Landfilled food scraps create Methane gas, a pollutant more harmful than CO2. Whereas, food scraps that are processed and decomposed down into nutrient-rich compost capture CO2 in what is called a carbon sink. When that compost is returned to neighborhood urban soils the carbon stays underground and out of NYC air. During the 2020 budget reduction, an all-volunteer resident group was formed and named HAKI by the Lenape Center.

Our grassroots Haki Compost Collective volunteer group has stood by the green bin food scrap to compost program each Saturday since September 2020 performing community outreach and education and giving back compost to neighbors in support of Big Reuse's compost processing work. Much of that Big Reuse nutrient-rich compost has returned to Roosevelt Island and fed over 100 new baby trees, numerous school gardens, community projects, and resident houseplants too.

Urban cities benefit from food scrap to compost programs in the following ways:

- Rat Mitigation. Removing food scraps from public sidewalks and school trash areas removes the food sources rats need to flourish.
- Local food scrap for compost programs reduce truck, barge, and landfill costs for NYC taxpayers.
- Compost-amended soils are vastly more water absorbent and are a city-smart strategy to stop severe, deadly, and costly storm flooding events in NYC.
- Nutrient-rich compost strengthens open space and parklands by feeding tree and shrub roots which creates land more resilient to soil erosion.
- Healthy trees in an urban landscape pull more pollutants including CO2 from the air while emitting oxygen for residents while providing shade to reduce high heat events.
- Compost returned to urban soils captures carbon underground, while costly trucking and barging organic material like food scraps to landfills does not allow the scraps to decompose naturally and worse, emits Methane gas, a dangerous air pollutant.
- Employs 115 people who will all lose their jobs if this FSDO program is eliminated.

Please do everything in your power to save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off for Compost program from currently planned budget cuts.

Sincerely,

Adib Mansour

[REDACTED], New York, NY 10044

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

12/10/2023

Dear City Council Members:

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Thank you,
Alexa Degioannini
Briarwood, New York

[REDACTED]

From: Alice Procter <aliceaprocter@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 10:56 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] cuts to GrowNYC

[REDACTED]

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.

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.

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.

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Thank you,
Alice Procter
Brooklyn

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.

During the pandemic the Compost Project was the one thing that got me outside, doing volunteer work in Red Hook, meeting with the people at the LES Ecology Center, and shopping at Big Reuse. And then, when my community garden was back up and running, we were yet another communal space that was able to help heal the land with compost while also offering these nutrients to our neighbors. The NYC Compost Project has been VITAL in improving our green spaces right here in the five boroughs. In your proposition to defund this program, you seem to be overlooking this critical part of community building and sharing that brown bin pickup simply doesn't offer.

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.

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Thank you for your time,
Alicia Berbenick
Crown Heights, Brooklyn

Dear New York City Council Members,

I am a concerned New York City resident and a city planner by profession, focused on environmental sustainability and coastal resiliency advancements. I am a graduate of Barnard College, Columbia University (with a master's in journalism), and Harvard University (with a master's in urban planning) – and I currently work as a communications-focused planner in Lower Manhattan. My husband (also a Harvard graduate who grew up in the New York area) and I were distraught to hear the recent news of Mayor Adams' proposed budget cuts to critical New York City services – including, and especially, the city's cherished community composting programs. We urge the City Council and the Mayor to halt these massive budget cuts, and to guarantee full funding to these programs for the future. These cost-effective programs contribute to a more livable city with fewer rats, cleaner streets, and healthier soils, while reducing the amount of waste that goes to landfills or incinerators.

As stated in GrowNYC's Save Our Compost petition, the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC serve millions of New Yorkers throughout NYC's five boroughs – providing food scrap collections, organics processing, composting outreach and community education. We strongly urge you to help salvage these programs by not enacting the proposed budget cuts. Community composting organizations including GrowNYC as well as Big Reuse, Lower East Side ("LES") Ecology Center, Earth Matter NY, NY Botanical Garden, Queens Botanical Garden, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden collectively a) divert upwards of 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills each year; and, b) produce and distribute hundreds of thousands of pounds of compost annually to over 325 community groups, parks, 85 street tree care events, and thousands of people.

The city's community compost organizations a) 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; and, b) operate several community composting sites that provide the most sustainable and equitable form of organics waste management. Cutting community composting and outreach programs would be devastating, because it would result in the elimination of these invaluable services as well as the loss of over 115 "green" jobs. These programs and serve as a crucial tool in combating climate change – by transforming New Yorkers' waste into valuable resources, community composting provides essential soil for our parks, gardens, and playgrounds. Furthermore, given the anticipated delays in the expansion of the NYC Dept. of Sanitation's curbside composting program, the success of such an initiative in New York City hinges on robust outreach and a strong community composting network to educate and engage residents.

On a personal note, my husband and I – who are residents of Manhattan's midtown-west – drop off our food scraps every weekend at the LES Ecology Center's food scrap drop-off site ("FSDO") at Mathews-Palmer playground, located at West 45th Street between 9th and 10th Avenues in Hell's Kitchen. A few days before Thanksgiving, a friend of mine who volunteers at that FSDO site told me that the LES Ecology Center was planning to shut down the site soon, given the impending city budget cuts. While my husband and I are relieved the FSDO site is still open (for now), we are on the edge of our seats – anticipating its closure in early 2024 (if not sooner) if these budget cuts go through. As an environmentally-focused urban planner born and raised in the New York area – and as a NYC resident for about 20 years – it saddens me to think that the City's elected officials wouldn't prioritize saving the beloved 30-year-old environmental practice of community composting. My husband and I – and other young professionals, as recently covered by various media outlets – are thinking of re-locating to a different city in the Northeast, in part because NYC isn't providing the quality-of-life that we expect from a city that has such high taxes. The passage of such budget cuts would only encourage us to move out of New York City. We don't want to live in a city that doesn't prioritize eco-friendly practices. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Aline Reynolds and M. Mughees Khan

10 December 2023

Dear Speaker Adams, Majority Leader Powers, Council Member Ayala, and Council Member Hudson,

These days it seems every time I turn around I must raise a voice for my community's well-being by opposing terrible budget cuts. I expect better from my government, and hope you and your colleagues will fulfill that expectation for my family and my neighbors. In particular, I'm urging you now to preserve two community standbys: (1) the climate-smart true compost programs of GrowNYC (and the good green jobs that are part of the program), and (2) our libraries.

COMPOST: Yes, we have brown curbside bins and big-belly machines -- but they don't support gardens, parks, soil and the best carbon reduction we can achieve. The brown bin plan to create biofuels and reduce landfill volume is admirable. But that program is different from actual composting. We should not step backward and renege on actual green jobs and critical climate-smart results we've painstakingly worked to build. Most weeks my family visits Grow NYC compost collection spots in Brooklyn on Thursdays as well as Saturdays, knowing we and our neighbors are making a bit of a difference, and also building climate-conscious habits, for a mindset that we all need in order to confront the climate crisis we see taking a toll on life in our city.


LIBRARIES: It's unconscionable that libraries keep popping up as targets for cuts. We live across the street from a library and see it bustling every single day with kids' programs, educational offerings, cultural opportunities, spots to study and learn, etc., etc. People from every walk of life use the libraries -- they are richly diverse spaces. And sometimes they are not only intellectually enriching, but also acute health-savers, as cooling centers and spots to hunker down and read on a tough, cold or smoky day.

Saving these two programs will be a palpable win for your constituents. Wholesale percentage cuts across City programs are not thoughtful or tailored to our needs. These vital programs are certainly not underutilized, and they should be preserved for our collective benefit.

Thank you for your continued work on our behalf.

Sincerely,

Alison A. Smith


Brooklyn, NY 11238

Dear Speaker Adams, Majority Leader Powers, Council Member Ayala, and Council Member Hudson,

Alongside many of my neighbors, I'm urging you to preserve two community standbys: (1) the climate-smart true compost programs of GrowNYC (and the good green jobs that are part of the program), and (2) our libraries.

COMPOST: Yes, we have brown curbside bins and big-belly machines -- but they don't support gardens, parks, soil and the best carbon reduction we can achieve. The brown bin plan to create biofuels and reduce landfill volume is admirable, yet that program is different from actual composting. We should not stop moving forward and renege on actual green jobs and critical climate-smart results we've painstakingly worked to build -- particularly in light of the NY law and associated NY statewide goals. Most weeks my family visits Grow NYC compost collection spots in Brooklyn on Thursdays as well as Saturdays, knowing we and our neighbors are making a bit of a difference, and also building climate-conscious habits, for a mindset that we all need in order to confront the climate crisis we see taking a toll on life in our city.

LIBRARIES: It's unconscionable that libraries keep popping up as targets for cuts. We live across the street from Brooklyn Central library and see it bustling every single day with kids' programs, educational offerings, cultural opportunities, spots to study and learn, etc., etc. People from every walk of life and neighborhood in the area use our libraries -- they are richly diverse spaces. And sometimes they are not only intellectually enriching, but also acute health-savers, as cooling centers and spots to hunker down and read on a tough, cold or smoky day.

Saving these two programs will be a palpable win for your constituents, while losing them will be an unforgettable loss. Wholesale percentage cuts across City programs are not thoughtful or tailored to our needs. These vital programs are certainly not underutilized, and they should be preserved for our collective benefit, as well as for future generations who will have to pay the price for our short-sightedness and unwillingness to make the harder and hardest decisions rather than the ones which are expedient.

Thank you for your continued work on behalf of our city and communities.

Sincerely,

Isaac Alston-Voyticky, Susan Alston-Voyticky, and Luani Alston-Voyticky

[REDACTED]
Brooklyn, NY 11238-5934

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

Good morning from Sunnyside, New York!

Yesterday morning I woke up, took my weekly compost from the freezer and made the trek to the Sunnyside farmers market. It was an unseasonably warm day, and as I carried my week's worth of organic waste to the market, I felt an extra heaviness in my heart.

Why? Because this would be among the last weeks I could bring my food waste to GrowNYC's amazing compost site at the Sunnyside Farmers Market, the most wonderful community hub.

As climate change knocks on NYC's doorsteps (!), the Mayor is closing the door on one of the best climate solutions we have--- community composting. What a short-sighted travesty.

Sustainably disposing of organics is **critical** to achieving New York City's ambitious climate and zero waste goals. Dumping food waste into landfills or incinerators instead of composting them adds to air pollution, accelerates the climate crisis, and will mean that the people who provide these critical composting services will lose their jobs.

The people who are employed by these services are AMAZING. They are stewards of our communities, deeply committed to the future of this city.

Reinstate funding for community composting!!!

Amy Christine

December 14, 2023

To: Committee of Finance
Meeting Date: Dec 11, 2023

From: Amy Lundeen



Email: amylundeen32@gmail.com

RE: Testimony in support of Community Compost

Hello,

I live in Hell's Kitchen and have been a regular user and volunteer for the community compost at Matthews Palmer Playground. There are 5 bins that get picked up once a week and they are always full. Not only is the community composting program used and loved in this community but it is also understood that we must support these programs financially in order to meet climate goals. It is through these programs that I talk with my kids about habits and systems that the city is working to correct. It was horrible to have to tell them the city was cutting funding.

Our cities are the key to reversing climate change and without programs like this we don't stand a chance. There is just too much data out there to dispute this. It would be unethical to cut community compost from the DSNY budget. I strongly believe there is a path to embrace these organizations that have been leading the way in real composting (not the anaerobic system at Newtown Creek). DSNY is working hard to shift the status quo but taking this support away from them will make progress impossible. Communities will suffer, the city will suffer.

Please fund these vital programs that create green jobs and help New York City be the shining example of a successful future for our kids and the world.

Thank you!

Amy

I utilized community composting when local composting did not exist nearby me in any other form, and it prevents so much food waste. When I drop off my food scraps at community composting sites, I always learn so much. Talking with the friendly and passionate staff makes me more excited to compost. It also makes me excited to talk to my friends about composting and encourage others to do it. Having compost sites staffed with trained individuals engages the neighborhood at large. I know many of my friends have landlords who refuse to use the brown bins because they do not have experience composting or don't think tenants will use it responsibly. We need a robust and passionate team of community composters to share the benefits of compost so it is widely adopted across the city. The NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC workers are the perfect people to do this, since they have been working in the community for over 30+ years. It makes no sense to eliminate their work and start from scratch with outreach, especially considering that their yearly budget is only \$7million (about 0.003% of DSNY's total budget). I cannot understand why DSNY is doing this, and it makes me suspicious about using the brown bins and orange smart bins. Community composting sites also encourage community members to venture out to green markets and should not be reduced. This city engagement and social infrastructure fostered by community composting creates a more resilient, friendly, and engaged society. The orange smart bins cannot on any level create this type of community. We are facing a climate crisis and need all the green support we can as a city.

Amy Van Wijk

Dear City Council Members,

As a recent graduate of the 10-week Compost and Farm apprenticeship at Earth Matters on Governor's Island, 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 necessary for building healthy communities and turning food waste into compost.

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,

Ana Torres

Brooklyn

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.

Losing over 115 green jobs, especially in these challenging times, is not just a loss of employment but a significant setback for our communities. I implore each council member to consider the far-reaching consequences of eliminating these programs and to advocate to Commissioner Tisch for their immediate reinstatement. Our city's commitment to sustainability and education relies on the continued success of community composting initiatives.

Anastasia Galkowski

The elimination of community composting programs is a step backward for our city's environmental education. The NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC have been vital in providing compost outreach and education to over 600,000 New Yorkers annually. The grassroots, hands-on education offered by community composting organizations is irreplaceable and serves as the linchpin for the success of the curbside organics program. Without this education, composting in NYC risks becoming a distant goal rather than an achievable reality. It's sustainable it's helping to balance a healthy ecosystem and biodiversity and its less burden on landfills and the extended environment.

As we deliberate on the fate of these programs, I urge each of you to recognize the profound educational imperative they hold. Let us not overlook the decades of success and community impact that these programs have had. Furthermore, these programs only cost \$7 million per year in total for 115 jobs. This a tiny fraction of DSNY's overall budget. It is unimaginable that they completely eliminated the funding, rather that looked for other places to reduce the budget. It does not take much to fund these programs. Your advocacy for the reinstatement of funding is crucial in ensuring a greener, more sustainable future for our city.

Andre Doyley

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.

Additionally, 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.

Another important fact to note is that this program is not expensive; coming in at only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, 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 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,
Andrea Ferguson
Brooklyn, NY (11213)

Community Composting is a small program with a mighty reach and impact. The city would not have been able to start curbside collection would it not have been for the groundwork of this program. Community Compost is essential in ensuring the continued success of curbside compost collection and moving New York to be a sustainable city. It can not be replaced by Brown and smart bins.

Community Composting(CC) needs to be a permanent fixture in the city

Why community compost is important:

- CC provides robust education & outreach to constituent
- CC engages, educates, and connects and with that creates community around sustainability
- CC beautifies our neighborhoods (street trees, parks, community gardens)
- A truly sustainable & resilient city needs to continue to advocate and educate in the communities about composting
- It is essential for people to be able to experience/see the transformation of organic waste to the most needed resource - compost
- CC is essential for climate change, environmental justice, waste reduction
- CC provides good Green Jobs and green job training

Over my close to **10 years** at Earth Matter, I have led **many, many** tours through the Earth Matter's compost site for **thousands** of New Yorkers from all walks of life and of all ages. The transformation of people's perception to waste and the instant, tangible knowledge gained is nothing but powerful!! Our tours start at the beginning of the compost process with the raw food scraps and browns. At the start most people perceive this material as garbage. Many find it icky, think it is smelling and generally wonder why they are there. But as we progress through the site seeing the development of compost and learning about composting and its benefits, people begin to become more and more interested. By the time we end the tour at our finished and sifted compost people are in awe and have transformed. They are able to see what they thought was garbage as a resource.

This is what is needed to bring people to view our waste as resources and to create a truly sustainable city! People need to be able to experience it. **Keep all of NYC community compost sites funded.**

Andrea lieske

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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.

Thank you,
Andrew Catchaturyan
Brooklyn

FY 24' Modified Budget Testimony

Andrew Engel, Esq.
andrewengel20@gmail.com

Hearing: Finance Committee, December 11, 2023.

Submitted: December 13, 2023.

Dear New York City Council Members & Staff:

I am Andrew Engel, an employee for the City of New York. All of my testimony below is strictly written in my personal capacity and not of my agency's, co-workers or supervisors.

Please unilaterally reject any further cuts to our city agencies. While City Charter Section 2604(b)(4): lays out what I am not allowed to disclose in my testimony here, I note the exception in the reference section that states "this shall not prohibit any public servant from disclosing any information concerning conduct which the public servant knows or reasonably believes to involve waste, inefficiency, corruption, criminal activity, or conflict of interest.

The newest round of budget cuts are devastating most, if not every agency already. They are "forcing" this city's agencies into the realm of unethical demands of its employees in order to cut costs or bring in more money. I have been verbally told we need to be tougher to "bring in more money." This is contrary to what all of us interviewed for were told -- that our jobs were to enforce safety and that fiscal penalties were secondary. It is not an exaggeration to tell the Council this has made most of my co-workers severely uncomfortable, in part because "being tougher" essentially meant removing some of our discretion to do certain things. There is a stricter, watchful eye over us now double checking everything we do, causing us to rethink or overthink issues that were previously second nature.

Based on the pressure I am feeling, I can only imagine what Inspectors must be feeling. The following is speculation and not based on actual knowledge, just reasonable belief. It is not unreasonable to say the hiring freeze is taking its toll on Inspectors. As we lose more, they are being asked to take on more and more jobs, write more and more violations quickly and I fear they start risking the safety and efficiency of their vital jobs. Additionally, as Inspectors are asked to do more it is becoming more difficult to get them to appear as witnesses before the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH). Usually, Inspectors' testimony are essential in proving cases. I believe these disclosures are covered by the exception in the city charter, referenced in

FY 24' Modified Budget Testimony

Andrew Engel, Esq.
andrewengel20@gmail.com

the previous paragraph. While not going into any vivid detail, I believe unethical demands are starting to be levied down to employees in order to try and make more money & inefficiencies are arising due to the short staffing, inadequate pay and increased pressure on everyone.

In addition, this is not localized to just my agency. One person from another agency has revealed the cuts to their agency will mean “thousands of poor families will receive less material and service support from us. It's been quite devastating.” My therapist revealed he also has some other NYC employees who also have told him recently of unethical demands they were asked to and are refusing to do. This may be loose, anecdotal accounts from myself but I can assure you from my discussions with others, the most recent cuts are having the most severe effects on our agents to date.

As part of these cuts, all promotions (to my knowledge) are also essentially frozen unless otherwise specially approved by the Mayor's Office. New positions have been created for those at the top to be promoted recently, while no one else has been given their due promotions. I do not think anyone who decides to go into public service expects to be paid handsomely or even competitively with similar private sector positions, however even as an attorney for the city, I do not get paid enough to actually live in the city. I make under the cost of living for NYC. I would just barely make over the cost of living if our promotions had gone through as they usually do -- but again as of now it is seemingly indefinitely frozen. My point is, how many hundreds if not thousands of other city employees are in this position; serving a city that does not support us enough to be able to live here? I do not know how anyone can expect anything other than the continual decline of staffing levels at this rate. In my own view, things must be getting to a critical breaking point sooner rather than later with how the Mayor is running this city.

The city is sitting on billions in reserves. Why are we not using any of it if we are in such dire straits as the Mayor claims? As Council Member Brannan and others point out, the city continues to exceed tax revenue projections. These cuts across the board are only designed to hurt every New Yorker. They are not being done with a scalpel, they are being done with a scythe.

FY 24' Modified Budget Testimony

Andrew Engel, Esq.
andrewengel20@gmail.com

It is unacceptable to continue cutting education funding when class sizes are already too big, schools understaffed, ESL and other disability services severely lacking, the list goes on and on. We also know education is key to helping people move up the socioeconomic ladder, stay out of our justice system, and overall better our communities.

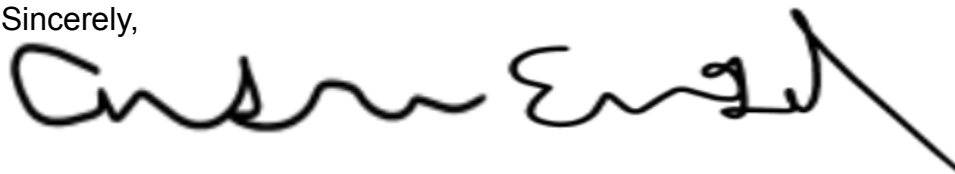
With an aging population, it is unconscionable to continue depleting the Department of the Aging whose services help thousands of families get much needed aid, support, and advice in dealing with their elders.

Many poor families rely on the Department of Mental Health and Hygiene to get mental health services. They get people the help they need to sometimes, quite literally, stay alive that they otherwise would not be able to receive from a private provider. They are being asked to cut 50% of their operational budget. How many people will die because the Department no longer has the resources to care for them?

Stop cutting our essential services. Stop letting the rich continue to benefit from the Trump tax cuts that were never reinstated; tax them their fair share. Our city agencies and its employees are indispensable to this city. Stop disregarding our quality of life and the needs of our agencies to be able to effectively serve New Yorkers. Continuing cuts at this pace is setting us up for disaster. Fund, not defund us.

Again, everything I have written in my testimony today was done so in my personal capacity and not that of my agency's.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Engel", with a long, sweeping diagonal line extending from the end of the name.

Andrew Engel, Esq.

Anita Chan's Testimony for December 11, 10 AM Committee on Finance

My name is Anita Chan, a lifelong NYC resident, a CUNY graduate, a library supporter, a composter, an Earth Matter NY board member, a member of 350NYC WasteNot, and a concerned citizen for my fellow NYers and future generations to come.

I am deeply disappointed with the severe budget cuts proposed by Mayor Adams that will set back too many social, educational, and environmental programs including those for housing, childcare, adultcare, education, parks, libraries and community composting, all of which are essential for NYers. Cutting funding in these areas means that necessary resources will not be available for New Yorkers from all walks of life to thrive.

We all should have access to proper housing and services that help to ensure that. We need libraries to operate daily to provide education and crucial resources in a safe indoor environment.

We need childcare for parents who are working and adultcare for our aging relatives to know that our loved are in safe hands. We need schools to provide for every individual the education they deserve.

I will now talk more deeply about community composting since I've been the most involved in environmental education and composting professional and personally in the past several years.

Eliminating **community composting** programs will be a loss of 115 green jobs and a huge setback to organic waste diversion, street cleanliness, rat mitigation, and NYC's progress in sustainability goals. The "brown bins" from the organic curbside collection program and "orange bins" from the Smart Bin program cannot replace the "green bins" at community food scrap drop off sites and all of the staff who engage and educate the public. 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 organizations. They 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. 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. Turning organic matter into compost locally to nourish our soils, help grow nutritious food, provide a sense of community, and serve as a tangible way for individuals to combat climate change should be prioritized as *the* method of organic waste diversion above biodigestion and certainly above landfilling and incineration.

People's jobs, access to public programs, and quality of life is at stake. I urge members of the city council to fight against the Mayor's budget cuts and restore funding to these essential services that serve as safety nets and pathways for NYers to have healthy and quality lives.

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 dropping my food scraps at community compost sites. I use the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming all the time. It has been so incredible to know I am keeping the city cleaner and healthier with compost. I am outraged by the decision to eliminate community composting programs, which have been stalwarts of sustainability for the past 30 years. The invaluable work of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC has significantly contributed to climate justice and sustainability services. 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, especially union 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. I urge the committee to let Commissioner Tisch know that this is an urgent matter and that we need the immediate reinstatement of funding for community composting programs. Our communities, our environment, and our collective future depend on it.

Anna Giannicchi

My name is Annapurna Potluri Schreiber; my children attend PS125/The Ralph Bunche School in Harlem. PS125 is located in a racially diverse, low income district. It was recently announced that PS125, like all public schools, will suffer a major loss of funding due to the Mayor's budget cuts.

I am writing to urge you to do everything you can do to restore the budget cuts to our public school system. PS125 serves a population of largely low-middle income families. Children have suffered greatly during the pandemic, with indicators for healthy socialization, academic benchmarks and social-emotional wellness not where they should be. Many children have lost parents, caregivers and other loved ones to COVID-19.

These effects are likely to be seen more deeply in communities of color and low-income communities, such as ours. It is the responsibility of the city's officials to alleviate this inequality, not exacerbate it. To blame migrant families is morally reprehensible. One can only imagine how these budget cuts will make even more difficult the lives of the most vulnerable children, like those with special needs, those with difficult home lives and those whose parents struggle to make ends meet. I am reminded of the saying that the "opposite of poverty isn't wealth, it is justice."

Given this, it is absolutely puzzling why Mayor Adams would cut funding to schools, when their budgets should be augmented to ensure that the whole child is being cared for, including programming for our youngest learners, afterschool programs, and that schools are robustly staffed with teachers and staff that are fairly compensated and treated with respect.

The parents and educators of this city are fed up. We're exhausted. And we vote. Reverse the budget cuts now. We will be holding our elected officials, from the mayor to our city councilmembers responsible. Please fight for our children.

Sincerely,

Annapurna Potluri Schreiber

Anne-Sophie Perrin

██████████
Brooklyn, NY 11215

██████████
annesophie.perrin@gmail.com

10th December 2023

Dear City Council Members,

I am incredibly disappointed to learn that the city plans 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 about building soil structure. Therefore, the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC work 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. Also, this program is affordable; coming in at only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, yet it has proven effective and immensely popular.

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

It is a shame for the city to bring most of its food scraps to the Wastewater Treatment System and make biogas. The city also needs finished compost for its parks, community gardens, and residents! Compost is an invaluable resource, and people working for community compost programs need to be valued! Please, don't destroy all their hard and valuable work because of budget cuts.

Thank you,

Anne-Sophie Perrin
Park Slope, Brooklyn

Dear City Council Members,

Hello from Arizona. 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. Managing food waste is essential as we move towards strong and healthy communities, and the U.S. government agrees. The USDA, FDA, and EPA have proposed a national strategy to reduce food loss and waste and recycling organics. To cut funding for community compost in NYC would be taking a step backwards for the whole country.

I manage a small community compost site in Arizona. This program was inspired by and modeled after compost sites in NYC. We have been very successful here, and while we may not face the same challenges as NYC, the example of success has been mighty. Reinstate funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming. Allow them to continue their vital work of education, diverting food scraps from landfills, and making the COUNTRY a healthier, cleaner, and more resilient place to live and work. If these programs are removed from the budget, other small composting programs could lose precious momentum that the movement as a whole has gained. I believe that the defunding of these programs would be a detrimental setback for the United States.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save local jobs and set a good precedent for this nation as a whole. The Council must also fight for this program and ensure sufficient funding in the 2024 budget this spring.

Thank you,
Annie Baker
Prescott, Arizona

Annie Choi

[REDACTED]
NY, NY 10003

[REDACTED]
choias@yahoo.com

Hearing: Committee on Finance Hearing
Thursday December 11, 10am

I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential impact of budget cuts on essential community services, particularly the Community Composting Program. I understand the challenges facing our city's finances and the need to make difficult decisions, but I believe that preserving funding for community composting is crucial for the well-being of our neighborhoods.

The Community Composting Program has proven to be a valuable asset, fostering environmental sustainability and community engagement. It not only diverts organic waste from landfills but also educates residents about responsible waste management practices. The benefits extend beyond environmental considerations, positively influencing the health and cohesiveness of our communities.

Community composting has also 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.

In light of recent budgetary constraints, I urge the Department of Finance to prioritize the continued funding of the Community Composting Program. This program plays a vital role in promoting a greener, more sustainable city, aligning with our shared commitment to responsible environmental stewardship.

Help New York City be a leader in environmental responsibility and community well-being.

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. Not only are you getting rid of an impactful program, you are also destroying a program that brings communities together.

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,
Antonio Lopez
Manhattan

[REDACTED]

From: Ariana Storniolo <ariana@greenify-me.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 14, 2023 9:18 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Written Testimony

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I'd like to submit a written testimony to the Committee on Finance Hearing that took place on Monday, December 11th.

Name: Ariana Rose Storniolo
Email: ariana@greenify-me.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 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. As the founder of Greenify-Me, a blog dedicated to zero waste and sustainable living, I care deeply about this setback and know we need composting to move forward if we're going to address climate change and make zero waste living more accessible.

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,

Ariana Rose Storniolo
Staten Island, NY

December 11, 2023

Please accept my respectful plea to Save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off (FSDO) for Compost program from elimination due to budget cuts.

Urban cities benefit from food scrap to compost programs in the following ways:

- Rat Mitigation. Removing food scraps from public sidewalks and school trash areas removes the food sources rats need to flourish.
- Local food scrap for compost programs reduce truck, barge and landfill costs for NYC taxpayers.
- Compost amended soils are vastly more water absorbent and are a city smart strategy to stop severe, deadly and costly storm flooding events in NYC.
- Nutrient-rich compost strengthens open space and parklands by feeding tree and shrub roots which creates land more resilient to soil erosion.
- Healthy trees in an urban landscape pull more pollutants including CO₂ from the air while emitting oxygen for residents while providing shade to reduce high heat events.
- Compost returned to urban soils captures carbon underground, while costly trucking and barging organic material like food scraps to landfill does not allow the scraps to decompose naturally and worse, emits Methane gas, a dangerous air pollutant.
- Employs 115 people who will all lose their jobs if this FSDO program is eliminated.

My community, Roosevelt Island, also benefits greatly from this program. Since 2015, Roosevelt Island has partnered with the DSNY food scrap to compost program hosted by Big Reuse. Our weekly 5-hour Saturday food scrap collection for compost has diverted over 341,000 pounds of food scraps from the costly travel to other state's landfills. Landfilled food scraps create Methane gas, a pollutant more harmful than CO₂. Whereas, food scraps that are processed and decomposed down into nutrient-rich

compost capture CO2 in what is called a carbon sink. When that compost is returned to neighborhood urban soils the carbon stays underground and out of NYC air.

And during the 2020 budget reduction, an all-volunteer resident group was formed and named HAKI by the Lenape Center. Our grassroots Haki Compost Collective volunteer group has stood by the green bin food scrap to compost program each Saturday since September 2020 performing community outreach and education and giving back compost to neighbors in support of Big Reuse's compost processing work.

Much of that Big Reuse nutrient-rich compost has returned to Roosevelt Island and fed over 100 new baby trees, numerous school gardens, community projects and resident houseplants too.

Please do everything in your power to save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off for Compost program from currently planned budget cuts.

Sincerely,

Arianna Gutierrez
Resident of Roosevelt Island

December 10, 2023

Dear Members of the Finance Committee:

I urge you to reject the proposed cuts to Community Composting in the Mayor's proposed budget.

You have certainly heard the economic reasons that cutting this is highly cost effective program that would do little to help the Mayor's purported fiscal goals. It is a miniscule amount of the overall budget, and even a negligible amount of the overall "composting" budget. But the existence of this program is tremendous, and eliminating it would be foolish—especially given its cost-effectiveness.

First, there is no other composting program in NYC. The boxes on the corners are often filled, and most importantly what's in them is NOT COMPOSTED. It is not turned into soil, you can't plant your child's bulb for her science project in it—it is turned into biosludge. Can NYC really consider itself a progressive, A-level city without an actual composting program?

Second, and relatedly, as a person with three children who went to public elementary school in this city, I can't tell you what an important teaching tool the composting portion of the farmer's market is. How many field trips did I chaperone to learn both where our food comes from—but also, where does it go? What happens to something when it goes back into the ground? Where does the garbage go? Cycle of life cannot be taught by looking at an app. Talking about things breaking down can only go so far when the end result is not soil but biosludge bricks.

Third, the compost program drives considerable regular traffic to the farmer's markets. My neighbors and I make an effort to go to the farmer's market every week—because that is the only time to actually deliver compost. I always buy things from the market vendors, substantial amounts in fact. Would I bother to go every week if I did not urgently need to divest myself of the week's foodscraps? Unquestionably not.

Fourth, this abrupt withdrawal of funds from the program means that the infrastructure will be dismantled—and GROW NYC will have no opportunity to seek grants or otherwise put in place private funding to cover NYC's contribution—which they might well be able to do given the opportunity (we are, sadly, used to the fact that many of the best services New Yorkers appreciate are privately supported and financed). Once the ACTUAL COMPOSTING infrastructure is dismantled, it is fair to say it is unlikely to be rebuilt, even when NYC finds itself less financially pressured. At the very least, a phased withdrawal of funds so that GrowNYC can see alternative support should be implemented.

I urge the City Council to reject this effort to eliminate the only actual composting program this City has.

Sincerely,

Ariel P. Cannon



Good morning, Chairperson Brannan and members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in opposition to the Mayor's budget cuts, and the elimination of the Community Compost program. I am Arif Sunmonu, Government Affairs Lead here at GrowNYC, a nonprofit that has played a pivotal role in improving the environmental quality of life in NYC for over 50 years.

We stand here before you today to vehemently oppose the termination of the Community Compost program. GrowNYC is proud to support the ambitious and equitable goals outlined in the CORE and Zero Waste Act.

However, the success of the curbside program is tied to the continuation of the Community Compost program, and our community-based outreach efforts. The Department of Sanitation says that the program is only used by the truest of true believers - but it is *only* the truest of true believers who are actively composting due to our efforts - and this number is growing. We can only expand the success of our programs and reach more New Yorkers if we are invested in - our goal is and has always been to make everyone a true believer of composting. The proposed cuts would not only eradicate the Community Compost program, but also end funding for crucial outreach and education around composting, especially for the curbside program undermining much of the progress this City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste. This would effectively terminate the GrowNYC compost program, and eliminate 65 jobs, over 50 of which union before the holidays. Though we're not the only organization affected. GrowNYC and the seven non-profit organizations that make up the NYC Compost Project represent the backbone of community-based recycling and composting in NYC. Together in FY23, we diverted over 8.3 million pounds of organic waste, and provided outreach and education to over 600,000 New Yorkers. Our presence in the city's public spaces is vital to educate the public and build their trust in municipal recycling and composting programs. Reducing funding for community composting would force the closure of 195 food scrap drop off sites, once again diminishing the public's confidence in these programs. This is short-sighted and will have long-term negative implications, setting the City back further from their climate justice goals.

Since 2006, GrowNYC's Zero Waste Programs has worked tirelessly with the NYC Department of Sanitation, and NYC Council to achieve the City's Zero Waste Goals. GrowNYC's Zero Waste Program works with communities to help them responsibly manage their waste and separate their food scraps. In FY23, we provided New Yorkers with 2,602 opportunities to drop off food scraps at our 52 sites. Through the collective efforts of over 400,000 New Yorkers, we diverted an astounding 2,574,601 pounds of food scraps. Additionally, our Zero Waste School program has worked with over 800 Schools implementing school-wide compost and recycling. We've been a major asset to DSNY, and moved our city closer towards zero waste in an equitable manner.

While organic waste collection is critical to curbing carbon emissions, and meeting our climate justice objectives, several municipalities have also cited compost as a cost effective method to decrease the rat



population. A 2015 [study](#) by the Department of Sanitation found Food scrap collection, and community composting are a cost effective tool in mitigating the City's rising rat population.

We recognize the current budget constraints, though the Community Compost program represents less than 1% of DSNY's budget. This comparatively small amount of funding in the big picture would ensure that we continue to:

- Divert more than 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills each year.
- Operate 6 community composting sites - providing the most sustainable and equitable form of organics waste management at least eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide organics collection and processing services, as well as community education, could continue their good work
- 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.
- Save 115 green jobs
- Engage over 1,000 yearly participants in Master Composter activities through food, farming, and composting opportunities across the city.
- 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.
- Operate our 195 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs, and continue to divert this potent source of greenhouse gasses from landfills
- Operate 6 community composting sites - providing the most sustainable and equitable form of organics waste management.

For these reasons, and many more, it is critical that DSNY and the Adams administration restore the Community Compost program. At GrowNYC, we envision a future where every New Yorker can thrive, and that means a future where every New Yorker is participating in composting and benefiting from the results, and so we hope to partner with the NYC Council and the Adam's administration towards these efforts.

Thank you!

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 how compost is made, why it is beneficial to apply to our soils, and the impact I am having. Talking with my neighbors and like minded people has connected me to the community in ways I could not have imagined.

Community compost organizations, like the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC are hugely important in empowering citizens to have agency in the face of climate change. Knowing that my food scraps are being processed locally and given to community gardens gives me hope for the future. It is deeply upsetting that DSNY has chosen to eliminate these programs and over 115 jobs (especially so close to the Holidays!). I want to urge you to press Mayor Adams and Commissioner Tisch to reinstate funding for community composting immediately. Thank you.

Ashlea Mayne



Dec 11th 2023 Finance Hearing Testimony by Ashley Cruce, MA, LMSW:

Re: Save Community Composting & Restore the budget for NYC Compost Project ("PEG Cuts and Elimination of NYC Compost Project")



Photos (clockwise from top left): Compost from BigReuse at Riis/Queensbridge Senior Garden--MAP N'hood Stat Program & NNORC. LIC, Queens; Free Compost from BigReuse and QBG Compost Project used by Gardeners at McIntosh Community Garden, E. Elmhurst; Ashley Cruce, Master Composter at Dunolly Gardens Co-op and with Youth Volunteers (VeggieNuggets' 69th St. Garden & Climate Emergency Mural) at JHSCRAPS Community Compost Site, Jackson Heights--both supported by NYC Compost Project orgs in Queens--QBG & BigReuse.

Dear Councilmembers of the Finance Committee,

My name is Ashley Cruce (resident of Jackson Hts) and I am an Environmental Educator at Queens Botanical Garden in Flushing, and a proud NYC Compost Project Master Composter (trained in 2012 at QBG). I am a passionate booster for community composting as a long-time gardener and environmentalist. I have directly benefited from **NYC Compost Project hosted by Queens Botanical Garden (QBG), BigReuse, and GrowNYC** for the past 11+ years.

Currently, I am an active Master Composter volunteer with 3 different community compost sites in Queens (two in Jackson Heights & one in E. Elmhurst). The proposed funding cuts to all the NYC Compost Projects and GrowNYC in Jan. 2024 are devastating and short-sighted when we need to keep NYC on track to tackle the climate emergency!

All of the 8 Organizations of the NYC Compost Project (NYCCP) are VITAL and their budgets should be fully reinstated to maintain their operations in community composting and on Curbside Organics outreach efforts. Annually, the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC collectively achieve the following:

- **Diverts more than 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills**
- **Distributes thousands of pounds of compost to green open spaces and street trees**
- **Engages more than 1,000 participants each year in the Master Composter Program, teaching the art and science of compost and providing hands-on greening opportunities**
- **Employs more than 115 people in green jobs in our city**

I want to share all the ways that 2 NYCCP organizations--QBG and BigReuse--have been essential for both my composting and gardening efforts with Queens citizens of all ages:

- 1) Trained by QBG Compost Project in 2012, I was later hired in 2015 as an Instructor/Tour Guide at QBG. Since 2015, I have used my composting know-how with thousands of kids, adults, and seniors from diverse ethnic groups in many Queens' school gardens, community gardens, co-op gardens and community compost sites.
- 2) As a Master Composter, I have volunteered with three community composting sites for over 10 years: JHSCRAPS Community Compost Site, Dunolly Gardens Co-op, and McIntosh Community Garden in E. Elmhurst, which have all been affiliated with BigReuse and the QBG Compost Project. I have also worked with 2 local Queens' schools' Green Teams (PS69Q & PS92Q) to set up compost bins and teach gardening skills and environmental science.
- 3) BigReuse assisted with Food Scraps Overflow at JHSCRAPS Community Composting Site during the pandemic when we rec'd 500-600 lbs. of food scraps weekly due to the closure of the JH GreenMarket FSDO and the overwhelming

commitment by local residents to continue to compost!! The partnership assisted us to keep up with the huge volume!

- 4) For many years, I worked as a Garden Consultant at Riis/Queensbridge Houses with senior gardeners, and we relied on BigReuse' FREE compost supplies every gardening season. Because NYCHA does not allow composting on public housing grounds, we had to rely on external sources of compost for our vegetable and herb gardens, butterfly garden and other ornamentals.
- 5) For many years, my community garden in E. Elmhurst (McIntosh Garden/Brooklyn Queens Land Trust) has also been a recipient of free bags of compost from BigReuse and QBG Compost Project.

The eight vital organizations of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC--MUST BE SUPPORTED.

Sincerely,



Ashley Cruce, MA, LMSW

Jackson Hts, NY 11372

ashleycruce1@gmail.com

QBG Environmental Educator--Flushing, Queens

NYC Compost Project hosted by QBG: Master Composter (2012)--Flushing

JHScraps Community Composting Site--Jackson Hts.[affiliated with Jackson Hts. Beautification Group (JHBG)]

Riis/Queensbridge Community/Senior Garden (MAP N'hood Stat Program)--Long Island City

*BQLT Board Member & Gardener at McIntosh Community Garden & Compost site----E. Elmhurst
[Green Thumb garden, owned by Brooklyn Queens Land Trust (BQLT)]*

Dunolly Gardens' Co-op Composting site--Jackson Hts.

PS69Q & PS92Q Green Team School Garden & Compost Volunteer- Jackson Hts. & Corona

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

I have been composting for over eight years and I believe it is a vital service to our community and our environment and we simply cannot turn away from it.

Thank you,
Ashley Vanderbeck
Brooklyn

Dear City Council Members,

I am disappointed and frustrated by Mayor Adams' plan to defund community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation.

Most of us who live in NYC do not have access to the space to practice composting at home, and we rely on GrowNYC's drop-off composting sites. The practice of composting has proven to be one of the best options for managing organic waste, and it has been promoted by respectable organizations like the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) as a part of a global strategy to reduce environmental impacts. Moreover, the dedicated staff members at the compost drop-off sites are incredibly knowledgeable about waste management and urban sustainability, and they have educated me so much about what each of us New Yorkers can do to build a healthy, clean, and resilient community. They are invaluable educators essential to the city's ongoing effort to protect the city and its residents from the effects of climate change. Cutting the funding for the NYC Project and GrowNYC's compost programming directly contradicts Mayor Adams' proclaimed commitment to protecting New Yorkers from climate threats, improving quality of life, and building the green economy.

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.

Asuka Ohsawa
Brooklyn

Barbara McClung

[REDACTED]

NY NY 10002

I am writing on behalf of strongly supporting any and every composting initiative in New York City.

I have been composting for over 5 years. I began composting at the Lower East Side Ecology Center site in East River Park before the resiliency reconstruction began. When that closed, I used the drop-off site at Grand Street and Clinton St in Manhattan. Now I am very happy to use the NYC Smart Compost Bin two blocks from me. The point I am making is that I eagerly and actively seek out places where I can continue to compost. And I know I am not alone in this endeavor.

As a NYC public school teacher, now retired, I often quoted this sentiment to my students:

“Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little.” Edmund Burke (Irish Statesman 1729-1797)

New York City has a chance to continue to do something in behalf of reducing waste and working toward a sustainable urban environment. There are so many New Yorkers who want to be a part of this. Don't let us down!

Hello,

My name is Trixie Klein, and I am writing in to testify & to express my deep concern about Mayor Adams' decision to eliminate funding for community composting programs in NYC. The elimination of these programs not only undermines our city's environmental efforts but also hinders our ability to build a comprehensive, effective, and inclusive composting system.

I am personally involved with community composting because I grew up in the Bay Area, California where my family and I composted every single day. Because of this, composting became a passionate & necessary part of my life. To me, it was always just as important as trash & recycling and I never knew any differently. When I moved to New York, I was disturbed that the majority of people did not compost and knew nothing about it. I found warmth & pride in the community composting programs & I have been actively dropping off my food scraps at my local garden drop off green bins every week. I am also a teacher who wants to share the benefits of composting with the next generation of children. I see how much food is wasted & thrown in the trash every day by my preschoolers, & I wish that I could educate them about compost & how New York provides true composting opportunities to help the earth. It makes me feel good to know that I am contributing to helping the environment & our communities by creating compost for the future.

Community composting programs like the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC play a vital role in our city. They divert over 8 million pounds of organic waste from landfills; give finished compost to over 335 community groups and thousands of individuals; and provide compost education to over 600,000 New Yorkers. These programs are unique because Brown bins and smart bins are not used correctly, which results in waste on the curb that attracts rats. We need education to teach citizens how to participate in city-wide composting without attracting pests. I was very upset to hear that the city's smart bins & brown bins are rarely ever turned into finished compost & are sent to Newtown Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant, where they are turned into engineered bioslurry, which is sent to landfill, and methane gas, which is flared into our atmosphere. This is frankly ridiculous that New Yorkers' only option now will be to still contribute negatively to the environment, after spending so much time & effort effectively separating food scraps for compost. The Curbside Composting efforts are different from community composting and the earth & New York communities deserve something that will actually make a difference.

Sincerely,

Beatrix (Trixie) Klein

Resident of Brooklyn, NY

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.

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This program saves money in so many ways for the city. Where will soil for parks come from over time without this program? How much more will need to be invested into rat mitigation that this program naturally supports.

This is critical.

Thank you,
Ben Tweedy

Beth Lebowitz

Brooklyn NY 11217

December 11, 2023

City Council of NY
Finance Committee
City Hall, NY, NY

Dear Finance Committee Members,

As your members consider the City's budget needs for the upcoming budget cycle, I would like to remind you that in addition to the extraordinary needs of every sector of the city, retired civil servants rely on you to follow the law adopted in 1967 that requires the city to include financial coverage of health insurance for city employees, and retirees.

"Section 12-126. Health insurance coverage for city employees, persons retired from city employment, and dependents of such employees and retirees

(1) The city will pay the entire cost of health insurance coverage for city employees, city retirees, and their dependents, not to exceed one hundred percent of..."

Submitted online by
Beth Lebowitz

Retired City Planner June 1973 - June 2019

Testimony for the Committee on Finance Hearing
December 11, 2023
by Beth Slepian
In Opposition to the Mayor's Proposed PEG Budget Cuts

This testimony was initially prepared to be delivered orally, in person, on 12/11/2023. Given the length of the hearing, I was unable to stay long enough to share this in person. I have made a few minor additions and am submitting here in written format. Thank you for the extended length of the hearing, for pushing back against these unnecessary and harmful budget cuts, and for continuing to accept testimony.

Good afternoon Chair Brannan, members of the Finance Committee, and all who are joining today. My name is Beth Slepian, and I am Vice Chair of the Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board, and a member of Brooklyn Community Board 12. However, today I am speaking as an individual crushed by the mayor's budget cuts to community composting.

My fellow SWAB members have shared with you the facts and figures about why these cuts are not fiscally, environmentally, or socially sound. In lieu of statistics, I am sharing *my* story about how this *community* of composters has truly changed my life.

I lost both my parents to COVID in early April 2020. My career was in flux as I'd left my full time job the summer prior and unexpectedly found myself caring for my aging parents. After their deaths and subsequent Covid in my own household, lack of childcare thrust me back into role as full time caregiver.

When I finally began to emerge from the fog of grief and pandemic parenting, I returned to my career crossroads, uncertain of my path.

I was drawn to composting because of my fascination with the process and its outcomes, but what has kept me here is the *community*. The compost outreach team at Big Reuse welcomed me as a volunteer, and immediately I realized I had found my people. There I learned about the Master Composter course, and because of this free green jobs training program, I was able to see a path forward.

Through the Master Composter program, I volunteered in every borough, and got to know people from all across this great city: people of all races, ethnicities, ages, and gender identities. From Staten Island's Snug Harbor to the Bronx's New York Botanical Garden, our differences were welcomed and celebrated as we worked together to build healthy soils, promote better waste solutions, and to mitigate climate change.

This is the magic of community in our city. And *this* is just a fraction of what we stand to lose. Without community composting, we lose talented staff and dedicated volunteers who spread knowledge and provide local environmental care that cannot be replicated by faulty technology and brown and orange "compost" bins whose end product is not actually compost.

Whether through community composting, swim classes, after school programs, our public libraries, or other community-based programs on the chopping block, these PEG cuts target programs that bring people together and offer vital skills and services that improve quality of life for all New Yorkers. These programs change lives. We cannot afford to lose them.

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.

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Thank you,
Brenna Mahoney
Brooklyn

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

■ W 52nd Street, NY, NY 10019
CaitlinNCassidy@gmail.com
■

December 11,2023

Hello, I'm Carolyn Coleman, Managing Director of It's Showtime NYC, a non-profit street dance organization based in the Bronx, New York.

I am here (via written testimony) to ask the City: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut? Nonprofits want to be a part of the solutions to our City's fiscal challenges, but this is not possible when decisions are made about us without us.

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November.

These budget cuts include a wide range of basic services, such as public schools and free afterschool programming, which heavily affect those who need it most - children and underserved communities. It's Showtime NYC provides work and teacher training opportunities for our dancers who hail from these communities. This loss of support would be devastating. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs.

Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why It's Showtime NYC joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We ask that the City:

- Provide analysis for WHY the 15 percent cut is necessary
- Give examples of plans to keep these vital programs running
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions
- AND Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

I appreciate this opportunity to be heard and of service to the arts community and culture of New York City.

LINK: [Submit written testimony.](#)

New York City Council Committee on Finance
Monday, December 11, 2023
Oversight Hearing – Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan.
Catherine Davis, Member NYC Parks and Recreation

Dear Council,

As an active member of New York City Recreation Centers, I appreciate the opportunity that City Council Committee on Finance, Chair Justin Brannan and Parks Chair Shekar Krishnan have offered New Yorkers to speak about the mayor’s November Financial Plan and how it impacts parks.

Pending parks budget cuts truly jeopardize the well-being of our communities, endangering crucial green spaces that serve as sanctuaries as well as health and fitness locations, and recreation centers that provide exercise, crafts, cultural opportunities, and social gathering for all New Yorkers. Their impact extends far beyond dollar amounts, impacting the well-being and quality of life of many thousands of our citizens. Our parks and recreation centers are invaluable resources that foster physical and mental health, provide spaces for social interaction, and mitigate the climate crisis.

Here are just a few impacts of these budget cuts that I care about deeply. Other critical losses that my fellow New Yorkers will speak about are far more numerous.

- Recreation centers and both indoor and outdoor pools are already suffering from reduced programming, reduced hours, and personnel cuts. Furthermore, quite a number of pools are closed entirely, reportedly under active construction for renovation and repairs, and are far beyond completion dates (often years). These include the indoor St. Mary's Pool (Bronx), Hansborough and Tony Dapolito Pools (Manhattan), and Brownsville Pool (Brooklyn); and outdoor Harlem Meer Center and Pool (Manhattan), Astoria Pool (Queens), and Edenwald Houses Pool (Bronx).
- Pools, especially, are critical for seniors and the disabled as they offer unique low impact and safe cardio fitness activity, and for the indoor pools – in all weathers. They are of

course equally important to families, children, and young adults. The additional impact of the next round of budget cuts will severely disable the Parks Department's **ability to provide essential services** to the public by affecting staff levels and **limiting access to public pools.** ***

- For so many New Yorkers, **parks are our backyards, as well as protected spaces for walking, jogging and in some places cycling – necessitating cleanliness, consistent maintenance, and safety measures** to ensure they remain secure havens for children and families to enjoy together. St Nicholas Park (Manhattan) is but one example of a park that is in severe need of repair. Many of the paths are blocked off, and construction materials and debris are in disarray, creating safety hazards. This park, located near City College, is heavily used and badly needs attention.

Together, we demand no more cuts to parks and recreation centers. NYC Parks and Recreation must be shielded from the next round of budget cuts as these essential services and green spaces constitute critical infrastructure, especially in the wake of the pandemic and all its and in face of the ongoing climate crisis.

I thank you for your serious consideration of the essential value of our parks and recreation centers and a decision to decline approving any cuts whatsoever to their funding.

Sincerely,

Catherine Davis
Member, NYC Recreation Centers


catdav@protonmail.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 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.

This program is not expensive; coming in at only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, 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 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,
Charlie Henzel
Brooklyn

The elimination of community composting programs is a disservice to our city's educational outreach efforts. Over the past three decades, the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC have been instrumental in fostering climate justice and sustainability services. The potential loss of over 115 green jobs, including 50 union positions, is not just a setback but a grave error in judgment. The education and outreach efforts undertaken by community composters are irreplaceable; they are the keys to unlocking widespread participation in composting across NYC. 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. This community connection is something that DSNY's curbside program cannot replicate. The centers of learning at the botanical gardens and non-profits who are part of the NYC Compost Project do unique and comprehensive outreach to teach New Yorkers why and how to compost. Without their educational efforts, curbside composting will not have widespread usage.

As we deliberate on the future of our city, I urge each of you to consider the lasting impact of these programs and to use your influence to push for their immediate reinstatement by speaking with Commissioner Tisch. Our city's commitment to environmental education and sustainability is at stake

Chloe Bergsma-Safar

To whom it may concern,

My name is Chris Chalfant. I have been a volunteer for Van Cortlandt Park Alliance since 2020. I am a trail maintainer and led a restoration project in Van Cortlandt Park from July 2022 to November 2023. I work not only on the trails but also remove trash and invasives deep into the woods.

I am writing to express my grave concern about the budget cuts to the NYC Parks, Sanitation Department and work programs that will affect the parks. Over 1500 parks employees will lose their jobs, affecting so many youth who are in high school and beginning their careers. There will be a noticeable effect on the parks in a way that will attract rats because of mounting trash. We already have a 1:3 ratio of rats to humans. There will be increasing safety issues for drug paraphernalia that will be left behind in the parks and playgrounds, much like what we saw during the crack epidemic in the 80's. Residents will be discouraged from using the parks, something that we learned from Covid is so beneficial for people's health and well-being. Being around trees in nature has been proven to help improve people's mental health. I can testify to this personally.

I have worked all over the city over the years from my advocacy and sales work. I work in low income communities and see that the parks are a lifeline for people who live in conditions that are deprived of trees, are unsafe and unclean. They need playgrounds and parks for respite and healing. They need the trees to breathe fresh air.

We have 7,000,000 trees in New York, but we do not have equity in low income areas. What will happen to the program to plant trees in these areas? It surely will disappear.

I go into the park roughly 20 hours a week. The funding for the parks is already so low, it is impossible for staff to keep the park clean. Every time I go into the park I am picking up trash and drug paraphernalia. Because of budget cuts dating back to the 1970's and even before, we are still recovering from the absence of care that has been needed in Van Cortlandt Park. There are dumping sites all over the park that we are gradually cleaning up. I have found car parts, bed frames, mattress coils, water tanks, hundred year old bottles and more. There is a bottle or can every five feet deep into the woods. Birds use plastic for their nests. And glass is everywhere. The list goes on. This problem will exponentially multiply with the budget cuts. These are just a few of the more notable trash items I have found:



In terms of the forest itself, while it may not seem important to the city, we actually need the forest to keep the city cool and reduce pollution more than one might imagine. In order to keep doing this we need extensive forest management of the 20,000 acres in New York City that includes removal of invasive species and tree plantings, all of which take staff and financial

resources. And we need more staff to train vital volunteers. With the already low budget we can barely make a dent in these goals despite planting thousands and thousands of trees a year. The budget cuts undoubtedly will strip the nurseries of necessary funds and, without the staff there will be no way to implement the planting projects.

As a volunteer I was in charge of a restoration project that required the removal of over 2000 invasive trees within an acre. This invasive growth is a result of decades of lack of funding for forest management. It takes a small army of staff and volunteers to not only maintain, but improve our forests for future generations. This project, for example, has already benefited in having over 450 trees replace the invasive trees and vines and revealed 45 species of plants in this short amount of time, but it will take funding to manage the area, otherwise all the work will be for naught. It will have long term benefits to New Yorkers because of the pollution capture and cooling effects of New York.

The proposed budget cuts will eliminate the possibility of these kinds of projects. We need more projects like this, not less. That is only 1 in 20,000 acres. Imagine the great impact we could have if there were funding throughout the city for projects like this. We would reach our 30% canopy goal and set the path for an impressive long term impact on New Yorker's health and peace of mind.

The parks need constant structure maintenance and improvement. Already, because of the low NYC budget for the parks, we are not able to keep structures necessary for trails to be safe and walkable. Hurricane Ida did extensive damage to Van Cortlandt Park. We have not recovered yet two years later. Some paths are still unpassable. Certain areas flood and structures that help hikers walk the trails and prevent erosion continue to fall apart and need to be replaced. It will be impossible to implement the necessary repairs and improvements with the proposed budget cuts.

The lake in Van Cortlandt Park needs extensive maintenance to address the invasive water chestnuts. We need more funding to use equipment that will mitigate the problem. The current staff and volunteer efforts are simply not enough. With the proposed budget cuts, the lake will undoubtedly lose all of its oxygen and kill all the fish without the staff and equipment.

I implore you to reconsider your proposed budget cuts. It is not only the Parks Department budget that affects the parks, but the work programs and sanitation, which multiplies the effects on our precious green spaces that are so vitally needed in a city full of noise and pollution.

Sincerely,

Chris Chalfant

[REDACTED]

Yonkers, NY 10704

[REDACTED]

chrissymomissy@gmail.com

December 11, 2023

Please accept my respectful plea to Save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off (FSDO) for Compost program from elimination due to budget cuts.

Since 2015, our Roosevelt Island community has benefited from the partnership with the DSNY food scrap to compost program hosted by Big Reuse. Our weekly 5 hour Saturday food scrap collection for compost has diverted over 341,000 pounds of food scraps from the costly travel to other state's landfills. Landfilled food scraps create Methane gas, a pollutant more harmful than CO2. Whereas, food scraps that are processed and decomposed down into nutrient-rich compost capture CO2 in what is called a carbon sink. When that compost is returned to neighborhood urban soils the carbon stays underground and out of NYC air.

And during the 2020 budget reduction, an all volunteer resident group was formed and named HAKI by the Lenape Center. Our grassroots Haki Compost Collective volunteer group has stood by the green bin food scrap to compost program each Saturday since September 2020 performing community outreach and education and giving back compost to neighbors in support of Big Reuse's compost processing work.

Much of that Big Reuse nutrient-rich compost has returned to Roosevelt Island and fed over 100 new baby trees, numerous school gardens, community projects and resident houseplants too.

Urban cities benefit from food scrap to compost programs in the following ways:

- Rat Mitigation. Removing food scraps from public sidewalks and school trash areas removes the food sources rats need to flourish.
- Local food scrap for compost programs reduce truck, barge and landfill costs for NYC taxpayers.
- Compost amended soils are vastly more water absorbent and are a city smart strategy to stop severe, deadly and costly storm flooding events in NYC.
- Nutrient-rich compost strengthens open space and parklands by feeding tree and shrub roots which creates land more resilient to soil erosion.
- Healthy trees in an urban landscape pull more pollutants including CO2 from the air while emitting oxygen for residents while providing shade to reduce high heat events.
- Compost returned to urban soils captures carbon underground, while costly trucking and barging organic material like food scraps to landfill does not allow the scraps to decompose naturally and worse, emits Methane gas, a dangerous air pollutant.
- Employs 115 people who will all lose their jobs if this FSDO program is eliminated.

Please do everything in your power to save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off for Compost program from currently planned budget cuts.

Sincerely,
Christina Delfico

My name is Christine Henson. I'm the mother of Andrew Henson who was assaulted by the NYPD not once but twice.

I know the impact of being abused by the police because I personally have experienced it, too.

I want to be direct. The NYPD's budget should be cut, and that money should go to the programs and services our communities need.

My son, Andrew, has autism and limited speech abilities. When he was 16, Andrew was brutally assaulted by the NYPD. Since then, he has regressed. Everyone who knows my son sees the huge shift in his personality. The NYPD's excessive force completely altered his life.

Looking at the mayor's financial plan – all I see is that Mayor Adams is investing in this kind of violence at the expense of New Yorkers' safety and health.

As the mother of a son with disabilities, I can tell you for sure that the malicious over-policing of our communities that has come with Eric Adams is not what will keep Andrew safe. He needs access to healthcare and programs for people with his kinds of challenges, which are less and less accessible.

Ever since Mayor Adams took office, police violence and harassment has increased. There is an enormous amount of officers on our streets and it should be reduced.

At the same time, people are suffering. More and more people are sleeping on the streets and going without their basic needs being met.

The mayor's Financial Plan will cause these conditions to go from dire to utterly dangerous and unlivable because it once again protects the NYPD's bloated budget while cutting other agencies.

Instead of slashing crucial services and agencies, Mayor Adams and the City Council should cut the NYPD's bloated budget and use that money for programs for our schools, community-based behavioral health services, housing, employment, and healthcare.

Thank you.

Testimony of Christine Malonzo, Earth Matter Volunteer 12/13/2023 (addendum added 12/14/23)

Discussing the many benefits of community composting and the critical roles played by Earth Matter and other such organizations in New York City would take a lot of time and space. For brevity, I will focus on three major reasons why defunding these programs would be a catastrophic misstep. I have added an addendum to address the recent private donation to GrowNYC.

Cutting funding for community composting:

- (1) Results in miniscule 'cost savings', and will ultimately increase costs over time.
- (2) Fails New Yorkers: New Yorkers currently working or volunteering, and the thousands who have dedicated their time and energy over thirty years of the New York City Compost Project
- (3) Fails the climate: Will eliminate the only working citywide option that actually produces compost, and the most transparent and participatory waste management process the city has to offer

The \$3 million in city funds for community composting is supposedly being cut to help bridge a \$7 billion gap in the city's 2024 budget. \$3 million dollars **represents just 0.003% of New York City's proposed \$106.7 billion budget.** *The New York Times* miscalculated this percentage in their article on 12/05/2023, when they reported that community composting's funds are 0.03% of the 2024 NYC budget. **\$3 million dollars addresses only 0.04% of the \$7 billion purported budget shortfall.** With such a miniscule impact on the budget, how could it be necessary to defund a successful program with large community engagement? Those 'savings' would ultimately be dwarfed by the loss of free, rich compost for our parks and community gardens and the infrastructure and informational wealth these community composting organizations have built over decades.

Cutting community compost funds fails New Yorkers on multiple levels. First, eliminating 115 green jobs (and thus the livelihoods) of dedicated, civic-minded New Yorkers involved in the 30-year-old NYC Compost Project is unconscionable. Many of these employees live paycheck to paycheck, foregoing more lucrative jobs to work on causes they truly care about. Without funding and without staff, community composting organizations will have to cut programs and volunteer projects that involve hundreds of New Yorkers, educate thousands and bring composting access to millions. **New York City's greatest asset is indisputably its people. Passion and dedication are invaluable resources that cannot be replaced by any amount of spending. The people being failed represent the best of New York: hardworking, altruistic and optimistic.** The city would also be discarding the results of countless hours of work over the last 30 years, denying future generations the opportunities that community composting efforts had secured.

Community composting is the only organics waste stream that currently produces compost. Waste from curbside 'composting' and 'smart' orange bins currently do not become

compost. Organics from brown and orange bins are sent to a Greenpoint plant where they are processed to produce natural gas (methane) and burned to capture energy, releasing CO₂ into the environment. The plant is not even functioning as intended; within weeks of its launch, it quietly began flaring off methane without energy capture. DSNY only publicly admitted the malfunction after action from concerned neighbors. Unlike many other environmental programs, like recycling, **community composting is transparent and anyone can pitch in at any point in the process; community gardens, parks and even private citizens can receive and benefit from the finished product. Eliminating these programs would shake the trust of the public, leaving New Yorkers with largely opaque waste processing options.**

Addendum: 12/14/2023

In light of the recent anonymous donation of funds to GrowNYC, the amount of money needed to keep all of our community composting organizations running has shrunk to an even more embarrassingly attainable \$1.75 million. It's a shame that we must rely on money from private citizens for public services, but it also demonstrates the commitment individual New Yorkers have towards composting and a greener future. In truth, community composting deserves more investment from the city than it has historically received, and its programs should be expanded, not cut.

[REDACTED]

From: Cindi Clark <cindimclark@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 14, 2023 12:46 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fight to Fund Community Composting

[REDACTED]

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.

I recently completed the Master Composter Program. It is a vital and wonderful community of people who really care about life in this city. I found it engaging, compelling, and healing. The Community Composting Program costs so little, yet makes such a huge change in consciousness. We need it.

Thank you,
Cindi Clark
Manhattan

Testimony for the Committee on Finance

December 11, 2023

Dear City Council Committee Members:

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the city is planning to defund community composting. 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 have been composting for over a year. It is second nature to me to compost my food scraps and bring them to my community drop off locations every week. I am helping my community by keeping it healthy and fighting climate change, thanks to GrowNYC.

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. These programs benefit all of us overall, especially when we take away food from the rat population. In my neighborhood, for example, there used to be many rats running around. It was disgusting. Having the community drop off locations nearby gave me an option to divert the food scraps away from them. It is vital to continue these programs.

We cannot allow this colossal environmental setback on our watch; New Yorkers deserve better. We deserve so much 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 exists through legislation, which would make it permanent. NYC should lead in fighting climate change, not go backwards. Please do not let these programs end and keep them permanent.

Thank you,
Cindy Martinez
Queens, NY

Dear City Council Members,

When I first started composting, I was blown away by two things. Primarily, I now took out the trash once every two to three weeks instead of once every few days. My kitchen smelled better and I was producing less waste (not as much trash out the door means not as many garbage bags [and plastic] in landfills. The second thing I was blown away by is the shift I experienced internally. Suddenly, a big part of my climate anxiety was eased. I knew that my tiny pile of food scraps in the compost bin every week meant that I personally contributed less methane to the atmosphere. And it was so easy to do. I was moved that there was a system set up in the city in which I grew up for individuals to contribute in a meaningful way to their own climate footprint.

I lead by example on my environmentalism. I find that pushing anyone to change their behavior is just going to make them resentful. But composting was always the first thing I suggested when people asked me how they could lead a more waste-free life. "It is SO EASY", I'd say, "and it makes a huge difference." Even though corporations came up with the idea of a carbon footprint to off-load the huge amount of work it is to face your own contribution to the climate crisis onto the general public, I can't help but be amazed at the power of what individual action looks like in one place when I drop off my compost every week. Bins and bins of food scraps full to the brim that would have otherwise gone to a landfill and produced heat and methane and countless other issues for wildlife and humans alike. Together, in this massive city, we could individually contribute to something together.

I understand that your committee has a huge job on their hands with these ridiculous budget cuts. Between the schools and the libraries, finding money in the budget for compost seems hopeless to me. But let me remind you, 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. And the thing that always baffles me about funding solutions to climate change is that people don't seem to understand that nothing else matters if we don't deal with this issue RIGHT NOW. And yes, there is massive systemic change that needs to happen on a global scale, but if I've learned anything from composting, every little scrap helps. Climate change affects every single other issue we care about here. And individual action builds up.

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.

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,

Colby Minifie
Brooklyn

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, Big Reuse, and GrowNYC is essential to our city.

I am a member of a local compost group that works with Big Reuse. In addition to diverting my food scraps from landfill, I've become so much more informed about a variety of local issues, gained access to and used finished compost at home, and strengthened ties in my community all through the work of the project staff.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating the funding for the NYC Compost Project, Big Reuse 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.

Community composting is among the best tools the City has to mitigate rats and other common pests. This program is not expensive; it is only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, and has proven to be both effective and popular.

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,
Corinne Brenner
Brooklyn

**Testimony by Courtney Scheffler, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
to the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Chair Justin Brannan
Mayor's November Financial Plan
December 11, 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.

GrowNYC's Compost department and The NYC Compost Project were fully funded by the City and the Mayor in the last budget, and defunding it is a violation of the contract DSNY has with GrowNYC and the NYC Compost Project partners. It is a betrayal of the public trust and the open budgeting process through which we set the fiscal priorities for the City. This program is not expensive. It constitutes only 0.3% of the City's Sanitation budget.

The Mayor's budget cuts will eliminate over 100 jobs across 9 organizations, including 53 union positions in GrowNYC's Compost Program, in less than one week. We were told only a couple of weeks ago that we would lose our jobs at the end of the year and just a few days ago were informed we would instead lose our jobs on December 18th. I live paycheck to paycheck, like many of my coworkers, and like many New Yorkers. The loss of compost programming would cut my paycheck in half. This is our livelihood.

Our workers provide essential education, outreach, and waste diversion services to neighborhoods across the five boroughs. These budget cuts are a loss to the whole city, but especially fail communities in the Bronx. We have been here before. There were budget cuts to community compost during the pandemic and every week I was asked when compost would return to the Parkchester Greenmarket and when compost would again be accessible in the Bronx. In November 2021, only a few Bronx community composting sites were abruptly restored, without the preparation or outreach needed to thrive. Food scrap drop-off sites in the Bronx were the first to be cut and the last to be restored. It was up to us workers to build trust that was broken with the communities that were meant to serve. People did not believe that we were there to stay, and we had to prove our programs were reliable so that people felt it was worthwhile for them to make composting part of their routine again after it was taken away. Investing in communities is always worth it, especially those disproportionately experiencing

environmental injustice. It is a disgrace to cut programs that are just beginning to remedy barriers to waste equity in the Bronx.

This defunding comes just as our union has entered negotiations for our first contract to make our workplace truly sustainable for all workers. This is an injustice to the communities we serve, the parks and street tree beds we nourish, and to union workers. Eliminating the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost funding is anti-sustainability, anti-environment, anti-union, and anti-New York.

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 time and consideration,

Courtney Scheffler
GrowNYC Workers Collective

Good afternoon, my name is Dana Abrassart and I am a Kings County resident in District 40. I would like to submit my testimony in opposition to the current parks budget cuts.

The current parks budget cuts jeopardize the very heart of our communities, endangering crucial green spaces and recreational areas that serve as sanctuaries for New Yorkers. Their impact extends far beyond dollar amounts, impacting the well-being, and quality of life of countless individuals. Parks are invaluable resources that foster physical and mental health, provide spaces for social interaction, and mitigate the climate crisis.

Personally, my family is in Prospect Park every single day of the year, rain or shine. I have seen first-hand how the health of the parks deteriorated during COVID, when the last round of park budget cuts occurred. I regularly came across heaps of trash, dead animals, and dangerous felled trees that took months to take care of. It has been night and day since the budget increased. The parks staff do amazing jobs and have become friends that I see regularly on my morning walks.

Please reconsider these cuts and keep our parks healthy and safe. They are gems of New York.

Sincerely,

Dana Abrassart

Dana Lobell

Brooklyn, NY 11209

December 10, 2023

New York City Council
Committee on Finance

Dear Members of the Committee on Finance,

I am writing to urge you not to cut funding for community compost programs such as those run by GrowNYC.

I have been an avid composter for twenty years, ever since I learned that putting food scraps into a landfill produces methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. If the city ever wants to meet its targets for addressing climate change, as well as reducing the food supply for rats, it is critical that we get the food scraps out of the garbage.

Unfortunately, the co-op apartment building where I live has not chosen to take part in the new curbside compost collection program. Therefore, the only option I have for composting is the GrowNYC collection site at my neighborhood farmer's market (or at the same location in winter). It truly makes me heartsick to think that I will have to put my food scraps in the garbage and add to the methane coming from our landfills.

Is ending these programs really the best option when it will only increase trash collection costs and make addressing climate change even harder? I hope you will do the right thing and restore the funding.

Sincerely,

Dana Lobell

Dear Speaker Adams, Majority Leader Powers, Council Member Ayala, and Council Member Hudson,

I am writing to express my strong support for the continued funding of New York City's public libraries and the composting program. These two services are not only essential to the fabric of our city but also play a crucial role in promoting education, environmental sustainability, and community engagement.

Public libraries are more than just repositories of books; they are vibrant community hubs that offer access to information, technology, and lifelong learning opportunities to all New Yorkers, irrespective of their socio-economic background. They provide free access to computers and the internet, host educational programs, and offer a safe space for people of all ages to learn and grow. Cutting funding for libraries would disproportionately impact the most vulnerable in our society, including children, seniors, and low-income families.

Similarly, the composting program is vital in our city's efforts to reduce waste, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and promote sustainable living. By converting organic waste into valuable compost, this program not only helps in managing the city's waste more efficiently but also contributes to the health of our urban environment. This initiative is a key component of the city's larger environmental goals, and its funding is crucial for a greener, more sustainable New York.

In conclusion, I urge the Council to consider the long-term benefits and essential services provided by our public libraries and composting program. Investing in these services is an investment in the future of New York City and its residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Daniel Slotwiner

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Daniel Slotwiner.

Brooklyn, NY 11238

Thank you Speaker, Committee Chairs, and Council members for the chance to testify today,

I am here today on my day off from work as a Parkie. I am going to talk about my experience as a former worker in the Sanitation funded NYC Compost Project, a worker at a NGO Parks Stewardship Group, a former DOE employee, a Parks employee, and a Sanitation and Parks volunteer that has been in the field on the tough side of the Bloomberg administration's cancellation of recycling and the Compost Project from 2003 to 2005, the Great Recession in 2008, Superstorm Sandy, working through the Covid pandemic, and several hiring freezes by the City Agencies. I am coming from the experience of working with these two or three Agencies, and I know that others in the chamber today will tell you the same difficulties in all of the Agencies.

My message today is one that elected officials often forget, the big capital projects and programs that you get praise for securing funding for, will fail if you don't fund the people that make the projects come to life and work as described.

For the Compost Project, I want to testify that we would not have curbside collection of compostables and curbside collection will fail without the outreach, education, and processing power of the staff of the Compost Project. Without 20 plus years of the Compost Project, residents would not know what composting is, would not be supportive of curbside compost collection, and would not be able to properly separate their waste into the brown bins. We would not have Master Composters going back into their communities to help the Department of Sanitation teach people how to recycle and compost. We would not have shown communities that compost can be collected and processed in their communities without smell or pest problems. And we will not have the outreach necessary to make citywide curbside compost collection work properly and it will fail due to lack of community support and proper separation of waste.

For Parks and Sanitation cuts, our parks and other public spaces will not be clean and safe, bathrooms will be unusable, facilities will not be locked and unlocked in a timely manner, and service requests will take much longer to be corrected. The cancellation of the Parks Opportunity Program cut thousands of staff that not only cleaned the parks, collected the garbage and litter, maintained the bathrooms, but also cut off the stepping stones that allowed for local, diverse, inclusive, and equitable hiring of our future city workers. Additionally, the loss of colleagues, the additional work, and the Play Fair staff leaving work on June 29th not knowing if they had a job the next week causes extreme loss of moral and quality of work among the Park workers that left behind.

In conclusion, these cuts of agency staff and budgets, will lead to all of the great projects and programs that this Council and Mayoral Administration have created to fail and not be spread to the communities that need them most: Curbside Composting will not work! Parks and public spaces will not be clean nor safe, especially in the communities that need them most! Rat abatement will not work! Pre-k and 3-k will not be universal! Bike and bus lanes and pedestrian crosswalk daylighting, which are already way behind schedule, will not continue to be built! The restaurant sheds will not be inspected or have rules enforced! Big resiliency

projects through small playground improvements will not be maintained and will not deliver the promised protection when they are most needed in the communities that need them most! I could go on and on, but I will stop and leave you with the charge: please protect the essential city funded staff that make the City work.

In solidarity,
Daniel Tainow

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 about 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.

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. Furthermore, this program is only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget – a drop in the bucket.

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 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,
Danielle Gach
Manhattan

My name is Debbie Farley, I am a retired NYC DOE employee with 30 years of service as an educator.

NYC retirees have selflessly served New Yorkers through 9/11, hurricanes, blizzards, COVID, and other emergencies. The NYC Council's indifference to senior citizens is unconscionable. Seniors live on small, fixed incomes. Ignoring this issue forces retirees to fund the litigation and lengthy court battles to fight for what was "guaranteed protections." These are earned benefits, which, up until two years ago, had been guaranteed to retirees since 1967.

The union cannot represent retirees; unions cannot "bargain" for retirees. Retirees don't vote on or ratify contracts. A few big union representatives are conspiring with the city administration to take away our benefits. How can that be? We are not employee members, The fact that several municipal unions are working against retirees, many of whom are former union members and still pay union dues, should not sit well with you.

The City Council approximately 60 years ago passed 12-126 of the Administrative Code of the City of NY which guaranteed that the city would pay Medicare eligible retirees and their Medicare eligible dependents a premium free plan.

Section 12-126 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding a new subdivision " e" which is 1099 to read as follows:

In order to preserve retiree health care choice, the city shall offer Medicare-eligible city retirees and their Medicare-eligible dependents at least one Medigap plan with benefits equivalent to or better than those available to city retirees and their dependents as of December 31, 2021. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to impair the ability of any employee organization to negotiate the terms and conditions of employment for their employee members.

The mayor does not have the legal jurisdiction to unilaterally revoke an almost sixty-year precedent guarantee of choice to all New York City's Medicare-eligible employees upon retirement.

By not moving Intro 1099-2023 to the floor for a full NYC Council public hearing, Carmen Dela Rosa and her Civil Service and Labor Committee are failing retirees, doing nothing to stop Eric Adams, Aetna, and unions from stealing health benefits from NYC retirees.

Forcing retirees into a substandard Medicare "Disadvantage" plan will compromise their health, subject them to a lengthy referral process, create delays in treatment, and possibly not provide coverage in the geographical area they may relocate to.

Dear City Council Members,

I am nurse and concerned citizen who wants to live in a sustainable New York City and I understand that community composting has been cut from the budget. Food waste that goes to landfill increases methane and other greenhouse gases in our environment. Community compost is *communal*. Citizens can use community compost to improve the health of street trees. This is a unique experience that frequently increases appreciation of the nature right outside their door.

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 petition you today to save these programs in light of announced budget cuts.

Community composting organizations, including 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 collectively:

— **Divert more than 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills each year.**

— 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.

— Engage over 1,000 yearly participants in Master Composter activities through food, farming, and composting opportunities across the City.

— 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.

— Operate 6 community composting sites - providing the most sustainable and equitable form of organics waste management.

Cutting community composting and outreach programs will result in the elimination of these invaluable services and the loss of over 115 green jobs.

Community composting programs transform New Yorkers' waste into valuable resources, providing essential soil for our parks, gardens, and playgrounds. These programs serve as a crucial tool in combating climate change. Furthermore, given the anticipated delays in the expansion of the Curbside Composting program, the success of such an initiative in New York City hinges on a robust outreach and community composting network to educate and engage residents.

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, healthier soils, and healthier citizens while cutting waste destined for landfills or incinerators.

Deborah Herdan

December 8, 2023

Dear Mayor Adams,

As a member of a community garden, due to the help, guidance, and training from the NYC Compost Project at NYBG, I've been able to help maintain a vibrant garden, taking part in engagement and education with the community.

I was also able to help maintain a community compost site when curbside collection was suspended, helping to divert many pounds of food scraps over the course of a year, and helping community members feel that they could continue this vital environmental action. Last year I completed the Master Composter Certificate Course, and continue outreach and education in the area of community and curbside composting. We stand to lose future applicants who will continue this important work.

I've also received training from the Rat Academy which has been equally valuable in trying to maintain a rat-free garden, and brown bin areas as well.

Additionally, because of the outreach and training from GrowNYC, our brown bin program at our co-op has been successful and continues to grow and improve.

As all the city agencies work together in these and other efforts, this will be an insurmountable loss if we no longer have the support of community composting programs, to developing, and to new community compost sites and gardens.

May you please not cut funding for community composting and curbside outreach?

Thank you very much,
Deborah Johns

[REDACTED]
Bronx, NY 10463-3116

[REDACTED]
dihersch@yahoo.com

Testimony for GrowNYC's Zero Waste programming

Re: Submitted to the Committee on Finance

December 11, 2023

To the Committee on Finance:

I am writing in support of GrowNYC which is a community composting organization that benefits all of NYC with their many locations throughout the boroughs and is being threatened with closure by Mayor Adams recent drastic funding cuts to city agencies. I have personally witnessed the increased number of Flatbush residents participating in the compost drop off sites in and around our Brooklyn neighborhood and it has become an integral part of daily consciousness.

GrowNYC is an essential service for food scrap drop offs that are then composted on Governors Island and distributed to the community for their food and flower gardens. In addition, these organizations like GrowNYC and The NYC Compost Project (Big Reuse, Earth Matter, Lower East Side Ecology Center, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Queens Botanical Garden, New York Botanical Garden, and Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden) which depend on city funding to operate and serve local communities is on the chopping block. Currently composting education, composting workshops and resources that exist will be severely diminished. These organizations are at risk of losing their jobs.

Between all of the composting organizations listed above they collectively:

- Divert more than 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills each year.
- 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.
- 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.

In closing, I urgently ask the Committee on Finance to support and advocate for these composting programs and to please ask Mayor Adams to restore the funding for this important programming.

Sincerely,

Deborah Latz

South Midwood Resident

I am Delilah Worrell, Educational Director at HACFS Marshall England Early Learning Center. We serve the Concourse Village East section of The Bronx through our 2K, 3K, and 4K Birth- through-Five program and Special Education Program for children ages 3 to 5 with a total student enrollment 79. I oversee 14 teaching staff.

Too many families are struggling to access affordable child care, and many providers are struggling to keep their doors open. The mayor's proposed cuts carry the potential to undermine early childhood education in the city drastically. How does this help us in the long term to advance our city's educational system or address racial disparities in education? How is this budget cut advantageous to "closing the achievement gap" in our educational system?

If early childhood education funding suffers a \$120 million cut, as proposed by our Mayor, what are other alternatives for toddlers whose mild learning and language delays do not meet eligibility for programs the NYC Early Intervention Program, and who would benefit from placement in an early childhood education center? How does this budget cut further the efforts to align the early childhood education community programs with the NYC DOE to ensure a continuity of education, curriculum, instructional strategies, and approaches? [In a recent study](#), Citizens' Committee for Children found that 80% of families cannot afford care for infants, toddlers, 3K and Pre-K, and school-age youth. Together, budget reductions will leave thousands of children and youth and their families without access to essential services at a time when services are desperately needed to help them recover from the ramifications of the pandemic.

Lastly, what is taken away must be replaced. So then, how will the city replace the loss of funding, child seats, and employment vacancies? Are early childhood education charter schools lingering in the future for us? The future is now- our children.

Hello, my name is Denise Lekowski and I am a NYC Master Composter who has volunteered with communities at Compost for Brooklyn, Q Gardens, Shore Road and Isabahlia Gardens. In many cases, these drop off sites function as the only means for residents to compost their food scraps and has helped to eliminate excess landfill waste.

Due to my current work schedule, I have been dropping off food scraps at my local Green Market/drop off site in Bay Ridge (and sometimes also Union Square) which is the only way for me to compost. I am enormously grateful to Council Member Justin Brannan and the extremely dedicated Grow NYC employees who have been there almost every single Saturday, rain or shine to make composting a reality for Bay Ridge. I am happy to see Natalie there every week and worry what will happen to these wonderful people serving our City, if their jobs are eliminated.

The proposed elimination of composting would undercut much of the progress this City has made in diverting 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills each year which has resulted in a huge reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Composting has also proven effective in reducing rats in NYC. The plan to cut this project is short-sighted and has potential to have long-term damaging implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals. We only need to look around us to recognize that composting and other sustainability projects are needed more than ever. The recent floods that shut our city down a few months ago are but just one example. Indeed, this is not a project we can afford to lose.

Today we urge the City Council to ensure that the City continues to make compost a reality and not toss away the progress we have made in the past few years. The NYC Compost Project and Coalition includes a community of 9 organizations, 115 jobs and 53 union positions. We cannot understate the urgency of this project and pray the Council ensures that this most important priority not be left behind in the budget process.

Thank you.

Greetings, I am Divad Durant, a leader in the Justice Committee, a grassroots organization committed to ending police violence and systemic racism in New York City.

As a Black man, raised in the South Bronx; one of the poorest congressional districts in the United States, I've experienced the physical and psychological harms of police violence, as well as, the violence of historical disinvestment.

Growing up, my safety was dependent on essential services like youth programs, community centers, and public libraries; institutions and organizations that nurture neighborhoods back to health, not the NYPD.

I was repulsed to learn that the consequences of **Mayor Adams mismanagement of city funds, and refusal to generate revenue from the rich**, leaves low-income **Black, Latinx and other New Yorkers of color stuck with the bill**.

The **NYPD's budget increased** by close to \$135M in the Mayors Financial plan (at least a 2.3% increase).

NYPD wastes millions on expenses like over \$1,600 per month for a robot cop (that also costs 2 cops to protect the robot), \$75K each for robot dogs, \$500M to hide radio transmissions from the public (despite it being fine for 87 years).

Moreover, NYC will payout **\$121 Million in police misconduct settlements** this year. This doesn't even include the personnel costs of keeping cops who kill, brutalize and sexually assault on payroll when the NYPD obstructs discipline and refuses to fire them. Despite this, the NYPD is already reported to not face cuts in January.

Claims that reducing police numbers will increase violence lacks evidence. Clear eyed research supports that real safety is achieved through investments in core infrastructure and services like affordable housing, childcare, healthcare, and youth programs.

We need a City Council and Mayor to prioritize New Yorkers' well-being, over further bloating the police force.

I urge the mayor and city council to stop giving the NYPD preferential treatment and invest in services that all new yorkers need to thrive.

November 29, 2023

I am writing to voice my support for the community composting program. I have been volunteering with GrowNYC every Sunday at the 79th Street Green Market collecting food scraps since I moved to New York in April. I have observed firsthand that New Yorkers are committed to composting and really enjoy the ritual of the food scrap drop off. Many have the option in their building already but prefer to drop by, say hello and have some chitchat. This is what community is all about.

Each 64 gallon Toter weighs in at around 200 lbs. and we typically collect 10-15 of them so there's clearly a broad-based commitment by the UWS. The potbelly bins are great but we hear that they are full more often than not so drop off locations are still essential to make New York City a little bit greener.

Please reconsider the budget cuts that will eliminate this program. As of this writing over 30,000 New Yorkers have signed GrowNYC's petition so I am not alone.

Thank you,

Edward D"Angio

Edward Francis Miller III

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,
Hon. Just Brannan, Chair
Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan
December 11, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I'm here to support the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities. My name is Ed Miller and I work at ArtsConnection and reside in Astoria, Queens.

ArtsConnection's programs support literacy, communication, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking, and create socially just learning environments.

Budget cuts of \$16.4 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and our students.

These budget cuts have greatly affected ArtsConnection's school partnerships. Many of the grants that we applied for were not funded. Principals with whom I work can thus not afford arts programming. There are long term consequences to these cuts; schools will end up with shifting priorities and arts partnerships with schools which we have cultivated over years and sometimes decades will disappear.

ArtsConnection was born from a desperate need for arts education in public schools in the 1970s. Cuts to the agencies that we work with spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan are compounded by the expiration of federal COVID-19 relief funds, which have funded arts programs supporting students' academic and social-emotional recovery.

Considering the trauma of the pandemic lockdown as well as the influx of newly arrived immigrants, NYC young people today have a desperate need for arts programs which have been proven to help heal trauma. Through city-funded programs such as CASA, Arts for ELLs/ and SWDs, Broadway Junior and Summer Rising, ArtsConnection has been able to provide these vital programs.

Programs that foster student engagement, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in our most vulnerable New Yorkers, our children, because the City's health and success **starts with the arts**.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

Edward Francis Miller III

Monday, December 11, 2023
NYC Finance Committee Meeting

Regarding: NYC COMPOSTING SITES

I STRONGLY URGE YOU to reinstate funding for neighborhood composting programs.

In my neighborhood there is NO compost pick-ups.

Many landlords are refusing to participate and I am told there will be NO NYC pickups begun until 2025.

So NYC will be spending lots of \$\$\$\$\$ on education and enforcement in the coming 2 years.,

IN the meantime the rats are very happy with their very nutritious meals.

Our landfills are full to overflowing , emitting polluting gases which we all know is a major factor in climate change. That is why, wisely, nyc funded these composting sites in neighborhoods t/o the city in the first place!!

And ALL of the foregoing will cost the city lots and lots of \$\$\$.

PENNY WISE POUND FOOLISH!!!!

In addition, many young people who have been employed in these programs are losing their jobs. They have been on the frontline educating nyers about the value of composting , as the overflowing green barrows in my neighborhood can attest!

Climate change is REAL! We must ALL work to reduce our carbon foot print and, yes, that will cost us some money, but it is money that is investing in our future.

REINSTATE FUNDING FOR OUR NEIGHBORHOOD COMPOSTING SITES.

elfie399@cs.com

Dear City Council Members,

I am an employee of Big Reuse hosted by the NYC Compost Project. I will be laid-off December 30th due to these budget cuts.

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the city is planning to defund the entire 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.

Speaker Adams spoke at the hearing and claimed that our program has a very “small impact”. That is ridiculous and undermines all of the hard work that us at the NYC Compost Project that has been doing for the past 10-20 years.

The city-wide composting program has a HUGE impact on our environment, in a negative way. The material is not being “composted”, as it is advertised, but rather turned into a bioslurry that still releases methane into our air.

We are facing a climate crisis, and it is the worst in highly dense areas, such as New York City. I have first-hand heard stories about how the compost the NYCCP produces helps to reduce flooding on our streets, revitalizes our historically toxic and unsafe soil, and reduces a huge amount of waste reduction. We process 2 million pounds of food scraps per year, to call that a small impact is outrageous.

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,
Elena Tinschert
Brooklyn

“”””Small impact””””

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

I live in Queens and I work for a nonprofit in Manhattan. I'm married and I have a child in NYC public school. New York City is a great place to live, work and raise a family but these budget cuts threaten our quality of life.

I urge the City Council and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-appointed powers to ensure that a budget modification does not pass unless it rollbacks cuts to composting, Summer Rising, libraries, schools, education, CUNY, childcare and early education seats, and social services, and finds further savings in the NYPD and DOC's bloated budgets.

Furthermore, the fact that these cuts were announced after an election is outrageous. The budget modification should be brought to a vote by the city council so we can all know where our members stand during a crisis of leadership by our mayor.

Elizabeth L Gonzalez

To: NYC Council
Re: PEGs
From: Elizabeth Stevenson

I'm an ASAP Advisor at City Tech, and I've been in that role since 2016. Typically, ASAP students receive benefits like Metro Cards and textbook stipends during the summer and winter sessions. This is one of the many ways that ASAP ensures our students complete Associate degrees within three years. As you know, ASAP is a proven model, with national recognition and replication efforts around the country. Our students persist and graduate at much higher rates than their CUNY peers. There are many components to our model, including dedicated advisors, but I'll focus on how the lack of winter benefits this January may impact our students. Many ASAP students balance college credits with part-time jobs and childcare or other family obligations. That means they often take 12 credits during a typical semester and supplement with a winter or summer course to accelerate graduation. Or they have to withdraw from one course and retake it during the winter or summer session. Usually, they can't afford to commit to these classes without the knowledge that ASAP will cover the cost of books and transportation. Almost all of my students qualify for Pell grants. They are often experiencing housing or food insecurity. Without these extra financial supports, they won't be able to persist or graduate at the same rate.

I'm dismayed that CUNY has created such a well-known and well-regarded program - one that wins awards and gets cited in articles frequently - yet the university and the city (the mayor!) are regularly looking for ways to cut our budget. As if the program will remain successful without adequate resources. Building a beautiful example for other colleges and then chipping away at it bit by bit, like students and staff can always do the same with less. We can't and we won't.

Dec. 11, 2023

To: NYC Committee on Finance

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 our clean, just and healthy environment. It is such a 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, air and neighborhoods healthier. Diversion of more food waste out of the black bags and into compost which helps our soils, will also significantly mitigate rat proliferation – which is a major goal of this administration. We should be INCREASING community 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 outreach education provided by the community composters is irreplaceable. They/we would be the volunteer army -- FREE LABOR -- who would support and help build 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. It is inter-racial, inter-generational, and passionate. As a dense city, green space is such a premium. Even a small pocket park provides cleaner air, an emotional respite, and a place for kids to learn about nature, grow vegetables, and for people to gather.

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. While the curbside program will divert from landfills, it will NOT make compost. It will not provide the educational support, community-building, equity, environmental (healthier parks, gardens & air), provided by the passionate and dedicated community composters.

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

Respectfully,

Ellen M. Cooper, District 2, Manhattan

December 8, 2023

Dear City Council Members,

I'm devastated to learn that the Mayor is planning to defund community composting as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts to the Department of Sanitation.

Eliminating community composting does not make financial or environmental sense. Now is the time for smart budgeting, cutting funds to community composting is not the way to balance this city's budget.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of not only reinstating, protecting funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming. The city needs to invest in their vital work of education and food scrap diversion from landfills. The 8.3 million pounds of organic material annually processed by the NYC Compost program has huge cost savings for the city. As you know, NYC exports all its waste, at a staggering expense and environmental impact. It's in the financial interest of the city to fund (and expand) the NYC Compost Project, which will reduce operational costs by saving on the hauling and tipping fees of the city's largest waste stream, organics (food & yard waste). Not only does the NYC Compost Project save the money on the front end, it also provides the city with a valuable resource - finished compost, a nutrient rich soil amendment. The NYC Parks Department, hundreds of community gardens, and countless residents alike utilize this locally made compost. Likely, the Parks Department will incur increased operational costs with the elimination of this valued resource.

Additionally, removing these programs from the budget will imperil the city's Zero Waste goals, 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,
Emily Coyne
Ridgewood, Queens, District 34

The potential elimination of community composting programs is a disservice to our city's educational outreach efforts. Over the past three decades, the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC have been instrumental in fostering climate justice and sustainability services. The potential loss of over 115 green jobs, including 50 union positions, is not just a setback but a grave error in judgment. It is extremely upsetting that such short notice was given to these folks, especially so close to the Holidays. The budget for community composting is a drop in the bucket compared to the rest of the budget. It takes only \$6 million to fund all seven NYC Compost Project partners and GrowNYC's compost programs. It is unimaginable that a program that has such a small budget, but is doing outsized work in creating social infrastructure that knits communities closer together AND pushes forward DSNY's curbside program is being defunded.

As we deliberate on the future of our city, I urge each of you to consider the lasting impact of these programs and to use your influence to push Commissioner Tisch for their immediate reinstatement. Our city's commitment to environmental education and sustainability is at stake.

Emily Greenspan

I am writing to urge the administration to reconsider the proposed cuts to public education, including 3k and prek. These cuts will be devastating for children, and for working parents like me who are already struggling to make ends meet. Please stand up for working people and fully fund public education at all age levels.

Emily Hoffman

Good afternoon,

My name is Emma and I am a resident of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. I am also a journalist who writes extensively about the intersection of climate and health.

My daily walks through McCarren park are one of the few opportunities I have to connect with nature as a city resident. Every time I enter the park, I can feel my shoulders relax, my breath slow, and my mood brighten. And I know I'm not alone: Research continuously shows that spending time in green spaces can reduce stress¹ and put a stop to negative ruminative thinking², lighting up the parts of our brain associated with empathy instead³.

Parks offer plenty of physical perks as well, thanks to the shade, pollution mitigation, and opportunities for exercise they provide. In fact, a World Health Organization-funded science review on over 8 million people found that there was a significant inverse relationship between close-to-home greenness and the risk of all-cause mortality. In other words, the more access we have to parks, the longer we tend to live.

It's not enough just to have parks, though; they need to be clean and welcoming in order to offer these benefits. Cutting the budget for park cleaning, care, and maintenance will threaten the health of all New Yorkers. NYC Parks must be shielded from the next round of budget cuts as these essential services and green spaces constitute critical health infrastructure, especially in the face of the ongoing climate crisis.

I invite you to imagine how you feel when you visit green space after a long day indoors or surrounded by concrete. That sense of calm, clarity, and peace is well worth protecting.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Emma Loewe

¹ [*Greenspace Interventions, Stress and Cortisol: A Scoping Review*](#)

² [*Nature experience reduces rumination and subgenual prefrontal cortex activation*](#)

³ [*Functional Neuroanatomy Associated with Natural and Urban Scenic Views in the Human Brain: 3.0T Functional MR Imaging*](#)

⁴ [*Green spaces and mortality: a systematic review and meta-analysis of cohort studies*](#)

The elimination of community composting programs is a cause for huge concern. The NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC have served millions of New Yorkers, providing food scrap collections, organics processing, and composting outreach. Losing over 115 green jobs, including over 50 union positions, is not just a loss of employment but a significant setback for our collective efforts toward a cleaner, more sustainable city. 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. The education done by community compost programs is the only way to increase usage of curbside composting. You're robbing Peter to pay Paul. The trouble is, given the way city government works, Paul never gets the money either. I beseech each council member to recognize the urgency of this matter and to actively advocate for the immediate reinstatement of funding for community composting programs and letting Commissioner Tisch and Mayor Adams know that this is unacceptable.

Eric Schaal

Dear Mayor Adams,

I'm writing as a Brooklyn resident and soon-to-be first time father, excited to raise our child in our beautiful and diverse city - a city that I generally regard as a leader and model of societal progress. I understand that as the mayor you must face many difficult 'no win' kind of decisions around budget cuts etc. However, I urge to please reconsider your planned budget cuts to our cities composting programs. I assure you that our composting programs represent a critical and tangible step towards countering the very real threats around climate change, which in many ways have already begun to manifest themselves in our world. I want to remind you that so many of the world's issues are interconnected - climate catastrophe interacts with resource availability, interacts with poverty, interacts global warfare, interacts with the general quality of life for New York City residents, and all of humanity at large.

Please reconsider, as there is always another way forward.

Thank you,
Evan Garfield

December 11, 2023

Please accept my respectful plea to Save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off (FSDO) for Compost program from elimination due to budget cuts.

This is a great initiative for our community, for our environment and must be maintained.

Sincerely, Fabio Vanoli

Fabio Vanoli

Faith Komlo
[REDACTED]
NYC, NY, 10012
[REDACTED]
12/05/2023

New York City Council Finance Committee

Subject: Personal Testimony in Support of Continued Funding for Community Composting in NYC

Dear Members of the New York City Council Finance Committee,

I am writing to you as an active community composter and a passionate advocate for sustainable living in our great city. My name is Faith Komlo, and I reside in NoHo. I am reaching out to share my personal testimony and emphasize the critical importance of maintaining funding for community composting initiatives in New York City.

As someone deeply involved in composting within our community, I have witnessed firsthand the positive impact these programs have on both the environment and our local neighborhoods. Community composting is not just about recycling kitchen scraps; it's a powerful vehicle for building connections, fostering a sense of shared responsibility, and creating a more sustainable future for all of us.

Through my involvement in our local composting efforts, I have seen how these programs effectively reduce the amount of organic waste destined for landfills. By doing so, we contribute significantly to minimizing methane emissions, a major contributor to climate change. Moreover, the compost generated enriches our soil, promoting healthier and more robust plant growth, which is crucial for our urban environment.

The community composting sites have become hubs of learning and collaboration. We come together to share knowledge about waste reduction, composting techniques, and the broader environmental impact of our actions. These initiatives not only benefit our city environmentally but also create a sense of camaraderie among neighbors working towards a common goal.

As a community composter, I am acutely aware of the positive ripple effects our efforts have on local job creation. These initiatives provide employment opportunities and skills training within the green sector, contributing to the economic well-being of our community members.

Losing funding for community composting programs would be a significant setback for the progress we've made in building a more sustainable and connected New York City. I implore you to consider the personal stories of individuals like me who are deeply invested in these initiatives. Please allocate the necessary funds to ensure the continuation and expansion of community composting programs that not only benefit the environment but also enrich the fabric of our neighborhoods.

Your support is crucial in preserving the positive impact of community composting on our city's environment, economy, and sense of community. I appreciate your attention to this matter and trust that you will make decisions that reflect the values of a sustainable and vibrant New York City.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Faith Komlo

[REDACTED]

From: Flo Low <florencearlow@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 10:31 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony: Community Composting in New York

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council Members,

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the city is planning to defund community composting. 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.

When I moved to New York a year ago, I was excited by the opportunity in New York to get involved with composting at a community level. The work that GrowNYC, the Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center, among many others, does is of incredible value to me and my community. I take part in the Master Composter certification program, through which I have gained incredible knowledge of urban ecological systems and great colleagues and friends. Through GrowNYC's guidance, I even had a worm bin in my kitchen this year. Moreover, it provides over 100 jobs, helps mitigate rat population, helps support NYC's clean air, and helps mitigate pollution (methane, which is produced by rotting food in landfill and by the anaerobic digestion that municipal "composting" produces, contributes to the climate crisis).

Furthermore, I am very worried at the prospect of totally replacing community composting with the municipal "composting", which in fact is not real composting (which would return nutrients to NYC's depleted soils) but anaerobic digestion. There are questions unanswered over this process: where does the methane produced go? (there were promises to divert this to green fuel, but this seems to just be an idea and not actually in practice), and where does the slurry go? (it does not return nutrients to the soil).

This program is not expensive; coming in at only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular. Its loss would be enormous to my community of lovers of our incredible New York ecology, including community gardens, and our desire to take part in a circular waste economy. Please reconsider these devastating budget cuts!

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,
Florence Low

--

Flo Low (they / them)
Visual artist and graphic designer

lowlowlow.studio

I often work outside of traditional office hours, but I do not expect you to respond to my emails outside your normal working hours.

My name is Frances Condon, and I am a composter, gardener, educator, and lifelong New Yorker. I write to this council on my own behalf and in solidarity with the people of Palestine, recognizing the ongoing US-sponsored genocide against them that as a body this council has yet to condemn.

I'm writing today to demand that this council reject Mayor Adams' proposed elimination of community composting, a program that represents one of the few meaningful ways our city is currently invested in environmental justice, and to reject his cuts on essential social services such as pre-schools and libraries.

Since European colonization of this land, which is the ancestral territory of the Lenape, Canarsie, Munsee, Mohican, Wappinger, and Schaghticoke peoples, the city has used waste to oppress working class communities and communities of color. Today, 75% of the city's garbage burden, including polluting waste transport, waste incineration, and other forms of toxic processing including anaerobic digestion, is shouldered by a small handful of neighborhoods in the South Bronx, North Brooklyn, and Southeast Queens. This form of environmental racism has devastating impacts on residents' health and wellbeing, and primarily Black- and Brown-led organizations have fought against it for decades: from Brooklyn CORE in Bedford-Stuyvesant and the Young Lords in East Harlem in the 1960s, to Mothers on the Move in the South Bronx in the early 2000s.

In contrast to this deadly system, community composting shows us not only that it is possible to manage our waste in ways that don't actively harm us, but that much of what we consider "waste" can actually benefit our communities if stewarded with care. Unlike landfills and anaerobic digestion, composting doesn't give children in our communities higher risks of asthma and cancer; instead, compost nourishes the soil, contributes to cleaner water and air, enables environmental education, and creates green jobs.

I understand some members of this council may believe there is no budget for this type of program, but I want to remind you that the New York City Police Department is currently spending almost \$400 million dollars on new, encrypted radios – technology that according to the NYC ACLU will make holding them accountable for their brutality even harder than it already is – while libraries, education, and environmental services are being cut. Those radios alone could pay for the community composting budget thirty times over. Budgets are moral documents, and it is unconscionable (though not unsurprising) that this council could choose to prioritize funding repressive police technology over environmental justice, education, libraries, and schools.

The mayor and this council have shown time and time again that you prioritize the interests of wealthy, white New Yorkers and funders over the working people who you are obligated to represent. Many of you continue to betray New Yorkers by supporting genocide against Palestinians in our names. I debated submitting this testimony because I have no faith it will make a difference – show me that in this case, I was wrong. Stand with the people of New York! Reject these cuts! Save composting, restore funding to the services that actually keep us safe and healthy, and show up for Palestine.

With urgency,
Frances Condon
December 11, 2023
Queens, New York 11101

Frank Samperi

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11231

December 10, 2023

New York City Council

City Hall Park

New York, NY 10007

Re: Support for Community Composting programs

Dear esteemed City Council members and representatives:

I was devastated to learn GrowNYC community composting operations will be ending. The disappearance of viable topsoil is one of several serious climate crises we are facing, and GrowNYC's work is one of only a handful of city-wide services taking steps to mitigate.

I acknowledge the City is strapped for funding at this precarious point in time, but defunding our investment in GrowNYC's operations is a serious step backwards that I fear we will soon regret.

Please reconsider this unfortunate decision.

Respectfully,

Frank Samperi

Frank Samperi

Gabrielle “Gabby” Vazquez

Testimony for Financial Committee Public Hearing 12/11/2023

Greetings all, my name is Gabby Vazquez—I am here today, speaking on behalf of Groundswell—an non-profit arts organization that functions in collaboration with the STARS City-Wide Girls Initiative. Groundswell brings together artists, youth and community to use art as a tool for social change.

While I feel empowered by my colleagues and the open opportunity to uplift my own voice before Public Officials, I am overcome with anxiety knowing that the mere existence of accessible youth programming needs to be continuously advocated for when it should be obvious why they are so essential.

Over the course of 26 years, Groundswell has fabricated over 600 murals across the NYC landscape. Groundswell staunchly holds onto its mission of working at the intersection of arts, social justice and youth empowerment. We offer programs to teenagers across the city including those that center portfolio development, college & career readiness.

We have served thousands of teens through our programs since our existence. We have helped teens in numerous ways from providing a safe place to learn new skills, have helped them prepare their applications for colleges and jump started some of their art careers. Beyond what Groundswell does to help our students, the students help adorn public spaces across the NYC landscape—inciting conversations on important social, political and economic issues that our communities face.

Today, we ourselves are dealing with one of the community issues we produce visual advocacy work around: accessibility to cultural and career leadership programming for young people. Large budget cuts directly impacting our teens will also impact the production of public art we can share with communities across the NYC landscape. At Groundswell, our students help to unite communities through public art and its important messaging—their murals exist as part of our extensive communities for decades and decades, becoming part of why New York City is one of the most notable cultural art hubs of the world.

We serve a diverse array of students and offer a range of arts programs. I will share some brief context on one of our programs, Voices Her’d. The Voices Her’d/STARS Fellowship cohort builds an intentional space for girls, young women, women-aligned individuals, femmes and enbies already in Groundswell programs to explore big questions through art. Our recent Voices Her’d Mural is called “the sky is not the limit,” created at and for an elementary and middle school in Cypress Hills. The purpose of this mural was created to motivate young teens and all the children that attend that school to know they can achieve their goals and it inspires them to imagine themselves in their future careers.

The opportunities we strive to create for our young people do not come easily with more and more budget cuts—in fact, they stifle us and force us into serving less young people when, of course, we wish to serve more. Budget cuts threaten our collective safety, they demotivate and uninspire. The November announcement of budget cuts have us scrambling to adjust program working plans, but the additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs.

Groundswell serves young people not just through the lens of the arts and creative thinking but through public education, human services and cultural enrichment. It teaches them to be active in their community and allows them to stay inspired while helping others. Again, as someone who directly interacts with

these young people, I see and hear firsthand how free, accessible programs between Groundswell and STARS CGI have made people feel seen, safe and empowered.

Finally, we call on the City to collaborate with the non-profit sector toward the development of creative solutions in the absence of budget cuts. We simply cannot withstand a 15% cut to the sector's budget, as it would only undermine the wellbeing, safety, and health of our city's collective student and youth body.

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.

The compost program at Mccarren park has been taking roughly 50% of my solid waste for many years. I dread to think how much that adds up to. Tons of waste.

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.

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,

Gabe Williams

Dobbin St Brooklyn 11222

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.

Gabi Welsh

**Testimony by Gem Sorenson, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
to the New York City Council Committee on Finance**

Chair Justin Brannan

Mayor's November Financial Plan

December 12, 2023

Good morning Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee. My name is Gem Sorenson, 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 Zero Waste Schools Education and Engagement Lead for GrowNYC, where I provide infrastructural and educational support to public schools with the rollout of curbside compost service. Together with our partners at The New York City Compost Project, my colleagues in the compost department serve millions of New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs, providing food scrap collections, organics processing, compost outreach, education access, and finished compost. They 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.

As a compost educator myself, I have made many connections with students and school staff between the compost bins they see in their schools and the community compost sites throughout their neighborhoods. These sites and the people who work at them are crucial to making lasting, sustainable change in our city. Community education and engagement at these sites are part of what will make the City's curbside compost efforts effective. People learn and make connections between compost and neighborhood improvement at these sites - community investment in the utilization of the curbside compost program *must* coincide with community compost sites that help sustain and engage community members in landfill diversion efforts on a personal and local level.

Much of the knowledge I've gained about compost and urban soil remediation came from my pursuit of a Master Composter certification, a NYC Compost Project program. Not only did the Master Composter program teach me so much and helped me land my current job at GrowNYC, but it also provided me with a sense of community. During volunteer days, I traveled to all five boroughs and met New Yorkers like myself who were committed to cultivating sustainable neighborhoods and giving back to our communities. The program served an incredibly diverse group of people, with Master Composters of all ages, from all five boroughs, who spoke a multitude of languages from all ethnic and racial backgrounds. Because the program is free, accessible, and has bases in every borough, they successfully achieve their goal of educating and engaging the entire NYC community. With the loss of

this program, we will lose one of the most equitable and inclusive environmental programs I've ever experienced as a lifelong resident of the city.

Not only that, but GrowNYC's Compost department and The NYC Compost Project were 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 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. The Mayor is going back on that commitment without any public process. This program is not expensive; it is a drop in the bucket of the city's budget, and has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

The Mayor's budget cuts will eliminate 115 jobs across 9 organizations, including 53 union positions, in less than one week. In fact, we were told only a couple of weeks ago that compost workers would lose their jobs at the end of the year, and then just a few days ago were informed they would instead lose their jobs on December 17th, two weeks earlier than they were led to believe. As you know, my colleagues are being fired right before the holidays and with hardly any time to seek a new job. This is wrong.

My colleagues provide essential education, outreach, and waste diversion services to neighborhoods across the five boroughs. Their work services neighborhoods that have been historically underserved by the City and other government agencies, including the Bronx. This defunding comes just as our union has begun negotiating our first contract to make our workplace truly sustainable for all workers. This is an injustice to the communities we serve, and to union workers whose labor is being devalued. Eliminating the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost funding is anti-sustainability, anti-environment, anti-union, and anti-New York.

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 livelihoods. If the Mayor succeeds in heartlessly cutting their 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,

Gem Sorenson

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,

I hope you will consider changing course and not cut funding for community composting and curbside composting outreach.

These programs are vital for increased compliance within the citywide curbside composting program, leading to less opportunities for rats to breed and take over our city.

I trust you and your team will be able to balance the budget to ensure these cuts do not have to be made.

Thank you very much,

Glenn Fleischman

[REDACTED]

Bronx, NY 10463

[REDACTED]

grfleischman@aol.com

New York City Council Committee on Finance
Monday, December 11, 2023
Oversight Hearing – Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan.
Grace McCants

Good afternoon, my name is Grace McCants. I am a resident of Kings County and live in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. We thank the City Council Committee on Finance, Chair Justin Brannan and Parks Chair Shekar Krishnan for inviting us to speak about the mayor’s November Financial Plan and how it impacts parks.

One of the city's greatest assets is our parks. It is a space to be in community with others, to spend time outdoors, and to engage in activities that are free for all to access. What I want to stress is the importance of this access. When we spend time with our community, we inherently protect our surroundings and the people in it. Things like parks and public transit are some of the key places where new yorkers from different backgrounds spend time together and investing in those spaces mean that those interactions are at base level effective, but at their best deeply meaningful. We need funding to maintain our parks and to continue to invest in spaces that bring us together. NYC Parks deserve 1% of the City Budget. And we urge you all to join us in telling Mayor Adams that our parks need that 1%!

Now for the bit you already know. Parks are invaluable resources that foster physical and mental health, provide spaces for social interaction, and mitigate the climate crisis. Below are some figures that illustrate the impact of these budget cuts:

- Our parks will lose a total of 1.3 million hours a year of cleaning, care and maintenance.
- Many parks will not be regularly cleaned and serviced, limiting many areas to just 1 to 3 times a week.
- Rats will continue to spike in our parks as 17,000 trash cans will be overflowing with garbage.
- During the pandemic we saw the impact of budget cuts on our parks. The cleanliness rating decreased by 10%. Council Members and other elected officials remember the phone calls and complaints to their office from constituent outcry of the declining conditions of our parks.
- Our sports facilities like baseball fields that park workers should be preparing for the upcoming season will not be groomed and maintained for our youth sport leagues and recreational users.
- In this housing crisis, our parks workers deserve job security, ensuring their work environments prioritize safety, prevent overwhelming conditions, and provide career advancement opportunities like the framework established by the POP program.
- The additional impact of the next round of budget cuts will severely disable the Parks Department’s ability to provide essential services to the public by affecting staff levels and limiting access to public pools.
- Our beaches will open with reduced staff and will not have the manpower to fully clean and maintain these spaces for 15 million annual visitors.

- Syringe collection will be impacted by the next round of budget cuts. Many in our community have raised safety concerns about user needles in parks where children and pets play.
- We demand no more cuts to parks. NYC Parks must be shielded from the next round of budget cuts as these essential services and green spaces constitute critical infrastructure, especially in the face of the ongoing climate crisis.
- For many New Yorkers, parks are our backyards necessitating cleanliness, consistent maintenance, and safety measures to ensure they remain secure havens for children and families to enjoy together.
- Our beaches serve as a crucial sanctuary during extreme heat and need to be impeccably clean and diligently maintained to provide a safe and refreshing respite for millions of New Yorkers.

Please do the right thing and allocate 1% of the budget to our cities incredible parks and the communities they serve.

Thank you,
Grace McCants

Committee on Finance, 12/11/23

Good morning council members. My name is Greta Wong, and I am a concerned resident of Brooklyn. I am here today to talk about the vital role of community composting in creating a greener New York City.

DSNY's elimination of community composting programs is not just a cut to services; it signifies the loss of invaluable climate justice, green jobs training, and education on sustainability initiatives. More than 115 green jobs are at stake, jeopardizing the New York City Compost Project and GrowNYC's ability to reach over 600,000 residents yearly across all five boroughs. By eliminating these programs, we lose a critical opportunity to educate citizens about the impact of food waste on the climate crisis and create change from the ground up.

Community composting organizations play an integral role in achieving the goals of the curbside organics program. They offer grassroots, hands-on education that fosters civic engagement, and the empowerment of community members. Through the Master Composter course, they offer green jobs training to over 1,000 individuals each year – including myself. Over the past 30+ years, these programs have demonstrated that composting can be local, sustainable, and inspire community engagement. The hands-on workshop and volunteer opportunities that create connections between residents are irreplaceable. Without engaged citizens who spread the word and create excitement about composting, the curbside composting program will fail.

I urge the council to advocate for the reinstatement of funding for community composting programs immediately and to exert pressure on DSNY Commissioner Tisch to reverse the cuts, especially given that DSNY was granted protection from further budget cuts for the January PEGs. By reinstating funding for these programs, we would uphold the foundation for a successful adoption of composting at all levels, helping us achieve the goals set forth by the Zero Waste Act. Together, let's ensure the continuation of these vital programs for the well-being of our communities and the environment. Thank you.

Testimony by Austin Arocena, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
New York City Council Committee on Finance
Chair Justin Brannan
Oversight: Mayor's November Financial Plan
December 11, 2023

Good morning Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Austin Arocena, and I am a proud member of the GrowNYC Workers collective, under the umbrella of RWDSU. I have been a Compost Driver and coordinator here at GrowNYC for about 2 years now and have seen first-hand how our work has benefited communities all across this city. My coworkers and I are the ones you see every week at food scrap drop off sites in rain, shine, or snow. We are there to answer questions from the public about all manners of compost, recycling and waste diversion issues. We are the ones, along with our wonderful partners at the NYC Compost Project, processing those food scraps into finished compost for parks, gardens, and the community.

Community Composting was fully funded by the City and the Mayor in the last budget, and defunding this program is a violation of the contract the City has with GrowNYC and other NYC Compost Project programs. This is a blatant violation of the public's trust and the open budgeting process which is supposed to set the fiscal priorities for the City. Now, the Mayor is going back on that commitment and demolishing years of progress made in building the infrastructure and necessary public awareness, needed to divert food waste from mainstream waste, and rebuild nyc soil in the process. This beloved program is not expensive, and constitutes only 0.3% of the City's Sanitation budget.

Again, these budget cuts mean the loss of 115 green jobs, including 53 union jobs. It also means the loss of essential education, outreach, and waste diversion services to neighborhoods our workers provide to all 5 boroughs. Our work services neighborhoods that have been historically underserved by the City and other government agencies. This defunding comes just in time for the holiday season, putting an unjust burden on New Yorkers that have done nothing but provide for this city. This is an injustice to the communities we serve, and to union workers who serve them. Eliminating the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost funding is anti-sustainability, anti-environment, anti-union, and anti-New York.

The Mayor needs to find the money to keep this program running, and keep union workers, like me, employed. The City Council must vote against the Mayor's proposed budget cuts to the community compost program, and fight to restore funding for our communities and our jobs.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Austin Arocena, Queens

Testimony by Giselle Ladino, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
New York City Council Committee on Finance
Chair Justin Brannan
Oversight: Mayor's November Financial Plan
December 11, 2023

Good morning Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Giselle Ladino, 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 more than a year now, 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

The Mayor's budget cuts will eliminate 115 jobs across 9 organizations, including 53 union positions. Just a few days ago we were informed we would lose our jobs on December 17th, two weeks earlier than we were led to believe. As you know, we are being fired right before the holidays. This is not right. This is not fair. Our program is not expensive.

The elimination of our program has brought feelings of devastation, desperation and anxiety. I feel stressed, anxious and ultimately devastated at the thought of knowing that I am now about to be unemployed in just a couple of days. Days before the holidays, which are meant to bring joy to us. Not only do my co-workers and I feel this way, but our participants who we get to serve every week feel this way too. Just the other day I was having a conversation with one of our participants at our Ridgewood site in Queens. Who was expressing how extremely upset she is because our program will no longer serve her and her community. As a frequent participant she has seen first hand the impact that our drop off site does to her community by beautifying it. As we know, rats are a huge issue in all of New York City, not just certain neighborhoods. Our participant stated that after she started separating her food scraps from her regular trash, and dropping it off at our site, she saw the impact that it had on her block. There were less rats that would chew through her bags meaning there was less of a mess on our city streets. I am positive that with the cut of our program, the rat population will only get worse. We need MORE of these sites, not less.

She realized that it takes more than one person to make a neighborhood clean. While at our site she would witness the constant flow of weekly participants doing the same act that she was doing each week. She would also be educated and would experience seeing the fruit of her labor that is our finished nutrient filled compost soil that we would give away. Her heavy grief at the news of our closure brought her to be grateful for all the hard work that we do but she also expressed that she will miss having weekly interactions with the coordinators at the Ridgewood

site. Social interactions that she won't have if she drops off at a city smart bin or the brown curbside composting bins.

Dropping off at our sites is easy and accessible to all New Yorkers. It does not require an app on a smartphone, unlike the city smart bins. Our service does not exclude our elderly participants who do not have a smartphone to open a city smart bin. And yes this is a concern that has been brought to us by many of our participants who do not know how to operate a smartphone or who just don't simply own one.

Mass budget cuts hurt not only those directly impacted, but it impacts all of New York City. We need an actual solution that guarantees the best for OUR city. The Mayor needs to find the money to fund community compost, so we can keep our jobs, keep serving our communities and keep moving forward to beautify our city.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Giselle Ladino, Queens

Testimony by Ruth Groebner, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
New York City Council Committee on Finance
Chair Justin Brannan
Oversight: Mayor's November Financial Plan
December 11, 2023

Good morning Chairperson Brannan and members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Ruth Groebner, and I am a proud member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective, represented by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, RWDSU.

I became a Master Composter in 2012 through the NYC Compost Project at Queens Botanical Garden. I was hired in October 2021 by GrowNYC as a Compost Coordinator. This is truly my dream job - talking to New Yorkers about all things compost. People want to do something to fight climate change; bringing food scraps to a drop-off where they can connect with a human face, ask questions, share ideas and sometimes plants, gives them a sense of belonging and purpose. But I've received a layoff notice and had to inform participants that the last day for collecting food scraps is next week.

If the community drop-offs cease operations, thousands of pounds of food scraps will end up back in the garbage. I say that because not everyone can use a smart bin. Not every building is using curbside composting. The habits people have developed of saving their scraps until the weekly trip to the market or a nearby drop-off will fade away leading to increased food scraps in trash bags which will lead to an increase in rats. All of the work community compost programs have achieved will be lost to this disruption.

My coworkers at GrowNYC and all the workers whose jobs are on the line are passionate about this work and the future of NYC. We've taken jobs whose purpose is to help the environment. Ending the livelihood of people who eagerly work- in all kinds of weather - to make sure the food scraps are collected, delivered and processed to help the city and our planet is such a heavy blow. But we are here to fight for our jobs and a sustainable NYC.

The cuts Mayor Adams wants - the complete elimination of the NYC Compost Project and all of the organizations' compost collection and processing operations - are the wrong direction for NYC. The Finance Committee and City Council must stop these cuts, take a stand for our jobs and for community composting.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Ruth Groebner
Queens

A testimony from Schervier Community Garden member and a steering committee leader:
Saving NYC Community Composting, No Cuts To The Program.

I, Henriette Nadler Cohen, Schervier Community Gardener and Luane Kohnke, Steering Committee leader both strongly urge the City Council to maintain NYC Community Composting programs.

The Schervier Garden, is on the grounds of the Schervier Nursing Home at 2975 Independence Avenue, in Riverdale, the Bronx. The Schervier Gardeners' are 55 years and older, many learning to garden for the first time. Each member has their own area to garden. We have members from all walks of life in the Riverdale and the Kingsbridge area of the Bronx. We create a healthy community learning environment.

The first thing gardeners learn is that good soil is essential to growing vegetables, flowers and herbs. They learn how good soil is made through composting their food scrapes and plants from our garden. Members learn that no food should go into landfills and that the composted materials will become rich soil for next year's garden plots

Jodie Colon, a Master Composter at New York Botanical Gardens, taught us Composting in 2009, and helped us build a 3 bin compost system. In 2010 an additional food compost system was added. In 2011, the Garden was certified as a compost learning site by The New York Dept. of Sanitation, the New York Botanical Gardens as well as NYC Compost Project. In 2019 a new 3 bin composter was installed to replace the original one which was deteriorating.

Schervier Gardeners actively participate in cutting up garden plants at the end of the gardening season in our 3-bin system. Many also compost their food scraps from home, through the current compost program.

In 2022 and 2023, we received bags of Big Apple Compost from DOS. It was full circle for the gardeners to remediate their garden plots with compost from the NYC composting program. As gardeners, we have learned the enormously benefits from Community Composting. It is essential that the City Council and Mayor Adams continue this Community program that enriches the lives of so many communities across all the counties of NYC.

SAVE NYC COMMUNITY COMPOSTING

Sincerely,
Henriette Nadler Cohen, Schervier Community Gardener
Luane Kohnke, Leader of the Steering Committee at Schervier Community Garden

My name is Hikma Abdulghani, I am a resident of Clinton Hill, Brooklyn, a constituent of resolution cosponsor, Council Member Hudson, and I am writing in support of City Council Resolution 423.

This resolution has the support of peace activists and community leaders who came together around the issue of military spending because they believe that every dollar spent on the military is a dollar taken away from other vital services.

In light of that, I believe that the public has a right to know about, challenge, and ideally redirect the excess military budget towards community needs and what actually contributes to human flourishing. Our mayor demands budget cuts at a time when we should be investing in communities, health, safety, education, climate and our quality of life. We see that there are many needs and this resolution is an opportunity to shed light on military spending and what our city misses out on due to national priorities that are out of alignment with the everyday reality of working people and families.

My children's after school clubs have been cut—my middle schooler will not be playing soccer or chess this year. Our local libraries are set to be closed on Sundays. And even where there is afterschool, the workers are underpaid and overworked. When I talk to young people, they are struggling with rent, food, and even the cost of a subway ride to work. I'm trying to teach my young sons to be stewards of the earth, but community composting is being cut. When we go to the park we are surrounded by garbage because trash pick-up has been cut. I look forward to them pursuing higher education but CUNY is being cut. These are policy choices made from on high, and we want accountability. NYC needs answers from Mayor Adams and City Council, but also from our President and Congress which continues to rubberstamp military spending even as it approaches a trillion dollars.

The Pentagon has failed an audit for the 6th straight year, and they admit to having no idea where half of \$3.8 trillion assets are. NYC tax dollars paid \$1.6 billion to Lockheed Martin just this year. There are entire fields in the desert of old discarded military equipment because of their culture of waste and impunity. Our politicians, locally and nationally, need to answer for the social spending that is cut to the bone, the dilapidated subway stations, the uncollected trash, and the people who are spending the holidays homeless, hungry, and cold while Military Contractors commit price-gouging and delight in increased profits from every new conflict.

I urge City Council to pass Resolution 423 because ordinary New Yorkers like me deserve the chance to hold our federal government accountable.

Testimony for the finance hearing on the Mayor's budget cuts (this time to ASAP). Speak to any knowledge you have of CUNY's budget situation, the pain caused by ASAP cuts, and/or the cuts in general.

Hillary Miller
Associate Professor
English Department, Queens College

I write this testimony as a proud alum of the CUNY Graduate Center as well as the daughter of two Brooklyn College alums; I have worked as an adjunct at Baruch, as an advisor at KBCC, and now, as a full-time faculty member at Queens College. I am deeply saddened that we are yet again publicly enumerating the many reasons why proposed cuts to our beloved institutions will do great harm to our students, the quality of their education, and their future opportunities. I implore you to halt the proposed cuts, which are aimed squarely at one of our most effective innovations, ASAP. I was employed as an advisor in Student Development at Kingsborough Community College when ASAP was first being piloted. I saw up close how it was designed to address the *exact* challenges that stands in the way of our success: student retention, graduation rates, job-readiness. We in CUNY are tired of being celebrated as an engine of economic mobility but then asked to endure the diminishment of the programs we painstakingly built: engines do not run on their own, they need fuel!

It is not hyperbole to say that New York's public city university system has been and continues to be hollowed out. We experience this as a daily reality in our workplaces: at QC we contend with depressing, crumbling facilities; a crisis in staffing in nearly every office, from Buildings and Grounds to the Registrar; increased labor placed on fewer and fewer individuals; an insufficient number of advisors to help students find their way through the maze of requirements and administrative hurdles; too few resources to shepherd them into employment pipelines; cuts to faculty travel funding; constant pressure on class size and availability; continual reliance on a contingent workforce that cannot provide students with the support they need; limited hours and limited options for food and/or community spaces on campus. Morale is low; another round of cuts will drag it even lower.

Most CUNY educators could describe in detail the myriad ways in which students continue to struggle in the aftermath of the global pandemic. We serve the same working-class communities that have been the hardest hit by the pandemic recession and its attendant stresses. Our students endure—while so many cope with mental health challenges, family instability, learning loss, and increased hours spent at work to cover inflationary costs of housing, childcare—but they need our support in return. Cuts to programs like ASAP will slice into the heart of the very services designed to support them. Protect the future of our city by protecting CUNY now.

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in objection of the recently proposed budget cuts that will affect NYC's community composting programs. I'm a horticulturist at Friends of the High Line, a public park that draws millions of visitors every year to enjoy our gardens. To say that we rely on our partnerships with community composting programs like Big Reuse and Earth Matter is an understatement- they are integral to the lifeblood of our horticulture operations. They take thousands of pounds of plant debris from us every year, process it and give us back amazing compost that we can reapply to our gardens for nourishment. This is a closed loop cycle between community partners, a beautiful example of a mutualistic relationship that has been forged and can exist between organizations in the city.

I was an educator for 7 years in the city before working at Friends of the High Line. I coordinated my school's garden program and helped manage the Children's Garden at Campos Community Garden in the East Village. Both gardens allowed people the experience of growing their own food in an urban environment, allowed for all the healthy and therapeutic benefits that come with being in touch with nature at such a level. My students were always ecstatic to be in the garden, to pick herbs and berries off plants and eat them on the spot. I was inspired by their excitement, they were inspired by the plants, and who is to say who they will go onto inspire with the experiences they had. The Lower East Side Ecology Center and Earth Matter gave us the compost to build thriving gardens- these experiences would not have happened if not for them.

For organizations like Earth Matter to be canceled because of budget cuts would be a tremendous loss. They are an organization that has inspired me and countless others with their dedication toward producing incredible compost and education around their process. Their impact is far reaching. Before your decision, visit Earth Matter yourself. Speak to Charlie or David or Sammy and you will understand how valuable they are to NYC. Please reconsider these budget cuts. Thank you for your time in reading this.

Sincerely,
Ian

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

Also, rats! So many rats! 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 only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

Thank you,
Indira Vaidy
Brooklyn

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, Isaac Clerencia

Brooklyn, 11222

Dear City Council Members,

I am extremely disappointed, actually appalled, 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.

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 only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

It is truly baffling to me that our city's representatives would choose to cut this most forward, useful, progressive and exemplary program that provides so much when they claim to do all that is best for this city. Please, DO THE RIGHT THING and KEEP FUNDING.

Jean Brassard
Manhattan, NY 10011

My name is Jeff Ballerini, an academic adviser for F-1 visa and undocumented students at Queensborough Community College, and I wish to speak out against the cuts the city seeks to level against CUNY and in support of forging a new contract. During my decade-long tenure, the College's Center for International Affairs, Immigration, and Study Abroad has struggled under great adversity that has been the direct result of pervasive austerity and chronic structural underinvestment that has continually plagued our system of higher education.

For a long time, the office ceiling above the desks in the reception area leaked whenever it rained. Despite several months of outreach to our Buildings and Grounds department, they were unable to address the problem until the water-logged tiles disintegrated and fell onto the floor, desks, and chairs below. Thankfully, no one was hurt as the collapse happened overnight, but the event served as a stark reminder of CUNY's perennial under-resourcing. In 2019, our department physically shrank when management moved the entire complement of academic advisers from their offices across campus to the Library Building, triggering a cascade of relocations that pushed me into my colleague's office space and her into the cramped reception area with the secretary where she operates to this day.

When COVID-19 shut down the world in March 2020, we had to abandon our participation in the Global Citizenship Alliance, a prestigious leadership training program held every spring break in Salzburg, Austria where CUNY students convene with peers from other universities across the United States to discuss issues of worldwide importance and learn how to become agents of change in their communities. We thought that our absence was temporary and looked forward to the day when we would rejoin the program. Sadly, this was not to be; the crowning glory of our study abroad disappeared in the blink of an eye when, soon after the pandemic began ravaging the globe, the College took away the funding to cover participants' expenses. Despite dedicated lobbying by our department head, the College has not restored this support, nor given any indication that it ever will be.

On a hot summer day in June 2021, I, along with other College employees, visited staff offices to ensure that the campus was properly equipped and adequately prepared to welcome community members back to in-person learning for the fall semester. To our surprise, the HVAC systems in the Library Building were inoperative, resulting in a sweltering environment that made work almost impossible. The staff in the Continuing Education department, whose offices are on the first floor, huddled next to tiny plastic fans and were soaked with sweat. We promptly notified Facilities of the matter and it was resolved, but only weeks later.

As we enter the third academic year of resumed on-campus operations, austerity continues to undermine our basic administrative functions. Our OTPS budget has been slashed repeatedly and we sometimes must wait weeks or more to receive much-needed supplies to keep the office running. Last spring semester, I spent over thirty minutes using a paper cutter to convert a stack of legal paper to letter size so we could print immigration documents our international students need to conduct their affairs in the U.S.

However, all this pales in comparison to the potential hardships ahead of us. This past June, our secretary left for a full-time job, resulting in a devastating twenty-five percent staff reduction. Such a loss has been especially problematic because at this time we are working to onboard over one-hundred international students for the spring 2024 semester, more than triple the thirty or so we would have prior to the pandemic. Now that U.S. embassies and consulates around the world have reopened, students overseas no longer must defer their dreams of pursuing an American higher education and are

again able to obtain an F-1 visa. All at once, three years of pent-up demand have been unleashed, producing a population surge the likes of which we have never seen. To cope with this massive influx, I have had to lean on my advisement colleagues to supply desperately needed capacity by advising and registering some of my advisees. As there are almost two months left before the start of the spring term in late January, the number of new arrivals will undoubtedly continue to grow, increasing the strain on our already overtaxed resources, force us to take on ever-burgeoning workloads, and degrade the high quality of service we have striven to give our caseload. Since this past July, I have been regularly working ten and twelve-hour shifts at the office, shortening my lunch break or skipping it altogether to keep up with the flood of emails, appointments, and walk-ins that come in every day. Further compounding such difficulty is that Queensborough has been increasing the number of admitted students but not creating more class sections to accommodate them. As a result, both new and continuing students have had difficulty finding classes commonly needed for their degrees far earlier than in previous enrollment cycles. If we cannot offer enough seats for the increased number of students, we will be unable to close our budget gap and be forced to make further reductions in available sections, worsening the budget deficit further and leading to a self-perpetuating cycle of retrenchment that will seriously compromise

It doesn't have to be this way. Instead of pushing for spending cuts, the mayor must lead the charge for further investment in CUNY. [The state legislature in Albany rejected Governor Hochul's proposed tuition hike and sought to increase our operating expenses by \\$103 million. The New York City Council responded to Mayor Adams' Program to Eliminate the Gap \(PEG\) with calls to restore the \\$36.9 million in cuts](#) and allocate additional funds to hire the faculty and staff needed to provide the high-quality education students deserve. In addition, [the Council has projected \\$1.2 billion more in tax revenue for the 2024 fiscal year than the mayor's estimates and estimates a \\$2.6 billion budget surplus for fiscal year 2024.](#)

We must join together and speak with one voice to say "NO" to the cuts Mayor Adams is preparing to levy against our beloved and beleaguered institution. Call/write/email/tweet your local, state, and federal legislators and tell them we need full funding to provide the world-class education for which we are known and which our students justly deserve. Budgets are not simply the products of external forces, but the results of deliberate choices made by those in power. Let your friends and family know about need for PSC funding; tell them to contact their reps. Union support is on the rise; unjust labor conditions have led to numerous high-profile strikes and major pushback against corporate interests; let's add our strength to this groundswell

Put down the bone saw and pick up the bandages!

December 11, 2023

Please accept my respectful plea to Save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off (FSDO) for Compost program from elimination due to budget cuts.

Since 2015, our Roosevelt Island community has benefited from the partnership with the DSNY food scrap to compost program hosted by Big Reuse. Our weekly 5 hour Saturday food scrap collection for compost has diverted over 341,000 pounds of food scraps from the costly travel to other state's landfills. Landfilled food scraps create Methane gas, a pollutant more harmful than CO2. Whereas, food scraps that are processed and decomposed down into nutrient-rich compost capture CO2 in what is called a carbon sink. When that compost is returned to neighborhood urban soils the carbon stays underground and out of NYC air.

And during the 2020 budget reduction, an all volunteer resident group was formed and named HAKI by the Lenape Center. Our grassroots Haki Compost Collective volunteer group has stood by the green bin food scrap to compost program each Saturday since September 2020 performing community outreach and education and giving back compost to neighbors in support of Big Reuse's compost processing work.

Much of that Big Reuse nutrient-rich compost has returned to Roosevelt Island and fed over 100 new baby trees, numerous school gardens, community projects and resident houseplants too.

Urban cities benefit from food scrap to compost programs in the following ways:

- Rat Mitigation. Removing food scraps from public sidewalks and school trash areas removes the food sources rats need to flourish.
- Local food scrap for compost programs reduce truck, barge and landfill costs for NYC taxpayers.
- Compost amended soils are vastly more water absorbent and are a city smart strategy to stop severe, deadly and costly storm flooding events in NYC.
- Nutrient-rich compost strengthens open space and parklands by feeding tree and shrub roots which creates land more resilient to soil erosion.
- Healthy trees in an urban landscape pull more pollutants including CO2 from the air while emitting oxygen for residents while providing shade to reduce high heat events.
- Compost returned to urban soils captures carbon underground, while costly trucking and barging organic material like food scraps to landfill does not allow the scraps to decompose naturally and worse, emits Methane gas, a dangerous air pollutant.
- Employs 115 people who will all lose their jobs if this FSDO program is eliminated.

Please do everything in your power to save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off for Compost program from currently planned budget cuts.

Sincerely,
Jenna M. Longo BSN RN

New York City Council Committee on Finance
Monday, December 11, 2023
Oversight Hearing – Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan.
Jenna Shapiro

Good afternoon, my name is Jenna Shapiro. I live in Brooklyn and I thank the City Council Committee on Finance, Chair Justin Brannan and Parks Chair Shekar Krishnan for the opportunity to speak about the mayor’s November Financial Plan and how it impacts parks.

The current parks budget cuts jeopardize the very heart of our communities, endangering crucial green spaces and recreational areas that serve as sanctuaries for New Yorkers. Their impact extends far beyond dollar amounts, impacting the well-being, and quality of life of countless individuals. Parks are invaluable resources that foster physical and mental health, provide spaces for social interaction, and mitigate the climate crisis.

Here are the talking points about the impact of these budget cuts:

- Our parks will lose a total of 1.3 million hours a year of cleaning, care and maintenance.
- Many parks will not be regularly cleaned and serviced, limiting many areas to just 1 to 3 times a week.
- Rats will continue to spike in our parks as 17,000 trash cans will be overflowing with garbage.
- During the pandemic we saw the impact of budget cuts on our parks. The cleanliness rating decreased by 10%. Council Members and other elected officials remember the phone calls and complaints to their office from constituent outcry of the declining conditions of our parks.
- Our sports facilities like baseball fields that park workers should be preparing for the upcoming season will not be groomed and maintained for our youth sport leagues and recreational users.
- In this housing crisis, our parks workers deserve job security, ensuring their work environments prioritize safety, prevent overwhelming conditions, and provide career advancement opportunities like the framework established by the POP program.
- The additional impact of the next round of budget cuts will severely disable the Parks Department’s ability to provide essential services to the public by affecting staff levels and limiting access to public pools.
- Our beaches will open with reduced staff and will not have the manpower to fully clean and maintain these spaces for 15 million annual visitors.
- Syringe collection will be impacted by the next round of budget cuts. Many in our community have raised safety concerns about user needles in parks where children and pets play.
- We demand no more cuts to parks. NYC Parks must be shielded from the next round of budget cuts as these essential services and green spaces constitute critical infrastructure, especially in the face of the ongoing climate crisis.

- For many New Yorkers, parks are our backyards necessitating cleanliness, consistent maintenance, and safety measures to ensure they remain secure havens for children and families to enjoy together.
- Our beaches serve as a crucial sanctuary during extreme heat and need to be impeccably clean and diligently maintained to provide a safe and refreshing respite for millions of New Yorkers.

Dear City Council Members,

My name is Jennifer Bombardier and I live in Flatbush, Brooklyn. I work in the Lower East Side at the LES Ecology Center as the Environmental Education Manager. I moved to New York 10 years ago for grad school - I earned my M.A. in Environmental Conservation Education at NYU. After grad school, I decided to stay in NYC and build a life and career here because I was so impressed with the number of incredible people and organizations working to build a sustainable city.

I am appalled, heartbroken, and so disappointed that yet again, the Compost Program is being treated as expendable. After decades of advocacy for this program and lives dedicated to this important work with the flick of the Eric Adams pen, it is being wiped away.

Community Composting, and specifically the NYC Compost Project, is an essential city resource that not only tackles the climate crisis, reduces organics in our waste stream, and supports rat mitigation, but it also provides waste and climate education to New Yorkers of all ages. In some ways we can count the impact of community composting: 8.3 pounds of food waste diverted from landfills, 115 green jobs, 6 compost sites, 325 community groups receiving nutrient rich organic matter, etc. But there are impacts far beyond what we can quantify - How many children grow up learning about our city's waste streams and what it means to be a climate steward simply by helping their parents sort their food waste and dropping it off at a collection site? How many New Yorkers learn about composting by passing through a community garden and having a conversation with a composter supported by the Ecology Center, Big Reuse, or GrowNYC? As an experienced environmental and climate educator, I can say confidently that these programs are the kind that have real, meaningful impacts. They are tangible, community-based, hyper-local and provide immediate rewards for those who participate.

This is not an "ineffective" program as Director Jiha repeatedly claimed. Community composting is more effective at combating climate change, educating New Yorkers, mediating our contaminated soil, and building community than the curbside program will ever dream of accomplishing. This is not by any means an underutilized or failing program - it is a thriving program that has far-reaching impacts. It is an investment in our communities, in our climate, and in our future and on top of all of that, it is only 0.3% of the entire Sanitation budget.

I am highly disappointed at the approach the Mayor has taken with these budget cuts - they are short sighted and will ultimately cost the city so much. I am calling for this funding for Community Composting to be restored in full and with continued funding for years to come.

Thank you,
Jennifer Bombardier
Brooklyn, New York

Dear City Council Members,

I am extremely disappointed and frankly upset 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. The work of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC is essential to our city. Not all buildings (including mine) participate in the brown bin program and without the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC, I wouldn't have access to resources to compost.

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. This program is not expensive; coming in at only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, 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 need to prioritize making this city livable for its residents!

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. The Council should work to slash things like the subway police robot, wasteful NYPD spending, and make sure there are the appropriate checks and balances to prevent city funds from being diverted by Mayor Adams' cronyism.

Thank you,
Jennifer Kwok
Resident of Brooklyn

Good Morning everyone, my name is Jeremy Soto representing El Puente and MS50 Community School in Williamsburg, Brooklyn!

The proposed cut of \$546.8 million from the Department of Education will administer a blow to the education of our young people that will further increase the achievement gap our educators are tasked with closing. The ill intent of divesting from our young people's education does not promote an equitable learning environment for our students, nor does it equip teachers, administrators and staff with the resources to meet our students and families needs. As civil servants, it would be irresponsible of us to support these budget cuts that will severely undermine the proven solutions that would address both the educational and mental health concerns we've encountered since the emergence of the pandemic.

In our Community School partnership, we've raised student achievement by working with our students and families physical, emotional and social health. Specifically, our funding has allowed us to hire a social worker to work with our Spanish speaking students on the weekends, primarily students who have a refugee status. The cuts to Community Schools would not allow us to hire this bilingual social worker. The Community School model was a priority of the Council and a mechanism in the Mayor's Violence prevention blueprint. Yet, a \$10 million dollar cut to a model that is considered a priority to our Council does not align with sustainable growth and equitable development of our students and public school systems.

Since when did it become acceptable to negotiate our young people's education? When did it become acceptable for our civil servants to create the problems we aim to solve?

We do not stand on this narrative that education is expendable in our city and will always fight for the future leaders of this city, our young people! We demand that you block the Mayor's Budget. It is your responsibility, just as much as it is ours, to provide an accessible and equitable education to all of our young people by blocking this budget. Thank you!

Jeremy Soto

Dear City Council Members,

I am a volunteer at my local community garden where every Saturday we collect hundreds of pounds of food scraps from neighbors. Our program relies on the partnership we have with Big Reuse. We create a robust community resource that rebuilds our soil health, diverts waste from landfills, and moves our city one step closer to meeting our climate goals.

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.

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,
Jesse Vogel
Brooklyn

New York City Council Committee on Finance
Monday, December 11, 2023
Oversight Hearing – Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan.
John Krinsky, Professor, The City College of New York and CUNY Graduate Center

My name is John Krinsky. I am a professor of political science and public policy at the City College of New York and the CUNY Graduate Center. I am testifying today on my own behalf and not on behalf of any of my affiliated organizations. Thank you, City Council Committee on Finance, Chair Justin Brannan and Parks Chair Shekar Krishnan for inviting testimony about the mayor’s November Financial Plan and how its impact on Parks.

I am the co-author of a book, *Who Cleans the Park? Public Work and Urban Governance in New York City* (University of Chicago Press, 2017). My co-author, Maud Simonet, and I assessed the system for parks maintenance and the real effects that decades of austerity have had, not just on the quality of the parks, but also for the workers who maintain them. We noted that successive mayoral administrations, since Mayor Ed Koch, have reshaped the parks workforce so that (1) proportionately—and sometimes absolutely--fewer workers are public workers, publicly accountable, unionized, and paid decently with decent benefits; (2) the inequalities in the labor force have led to situations, most clearly with the Work Experience Program under Giuliani, but also with the Parks Opportunity Program, in which sexual harassment of the largely female labor force is endemic; and (3) the maintenance system as a whole becomes more unpredictable as it relies on private initiative (e.g., Friends of groups, volunteers, and conservancies) and managing a workforce that is there as a result of programming by peripheral agencies (e.g., HRA and alternative sentencing programs).

The temptation to rely on private initiative—who doesn’t like volunteers or appreciate philanthropy?—is great at times of budgetary contraction. So is the temptation to bring back compulsory work programs for those in poverty depending on public benefits. My concern is that the POP program’s demise will usher in a revivification of the WEP program, which was baldly exploitative and bad for participants, and was, thankfully, discontinued under Mayor De Blasio and Commissioner Banks. Nevertheless, it remains on the books. In conjunction with greater reliance on volunteers and philanthropy—Mayor Adams has already signaled this move in his proposed cuts to schools—bringing back workfare would result in crushing inequalities,

where neighborhoods with parks conservancies and the capacity to support them will get a much higher level of maintenance (retaining, by the way, the benefits of clean parks for their real estate values) than neighborhoods where people will be thrown into greater crisis via compulsory work, or blamed for not “stepping up” if their own parks suffer catastrophic maintenance losses.

You will certainly hear testimony today from New Yorkers for Parks, whose members and allies will talk about the real consequences of not maintaining parks for public health, mental health, public safety, rat control, etc. All of this is true.

In addition to this, however, it will be important to make sure that tree care is not further deferred, since undermaintained trees are a real danger to the public. One year, while working on my book, I stopped allowing my kids to play in the parks on snowy days, since that year, in particular, the situation had gotten critical, and people were paralyzed and killed by falling trees. Indeed, when Maud Simonet and I volunteered in one park early in our research to get acquainted with the work, a tree fell yards from where we were working in an area of the park then reserved for maintenance by volunteers.

Further, as we learned about parks maintenance, we also learned about the inadequacies of the current system of playground maintenance, where “fixed post” employees were replaced—beginning in the 1980s—by “mobile crews” who move from park to park cleaning the garbage. While these crews bring some surface-level efficiency, they are not on hand to see the parks being used, and to catch things like rattling slides or squeaking swing sets that can indicate dangerously worn play equipment.

What this means, of course, is that cuts can very easily become penny wise and pound foolish. Both in terms of possible lawsuits from avoidable injuries or worse, and in terms of the long-term costs of replacing park features that would not need replacement if well-maintained, the proposed cuts are short-sighted.

In other words, our parks were already deeply underfunded. Work systems and parks funding have been fractured and reshaped to adjust to what can only be described—oxymoronically—as a situation of chronic crisis. Deepening this crisis makes no sense at all, and I urge the City Council to challenge the

mayor's revenue assumptions, and to find, if necessary, more sensible places to cut.

John Krinsky



New York NY 10025

Dear City Council Members,

I am very disappointed and annoyed to hear that mayor Adams has cut funding to the NYC composting program (GrowNYC).

We have come to rely on the great services of this group of dedicated workers and will miss it dearly..

This program is not some luxury service but an essential part of our commitment to a greener world.

NYC should remain an example to the world of how we can deal with food waste and promote good environmental policies.

Please reconsider and reinstate this funding. The cost of this program is relatively tiny.

Thank you for listening,

John Medley

Brooklyn, NY.

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,
John Waggener
Queens

December 11, 2023

Dear Committee of Finance,

Please accept my respectful plea to Save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off (FSDO) for Compost program from elimination due to budget cuts.

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the NYC Food Scrap for Compost Program, a crucial initiative that significantly benefits our Roosevelt Island community. This program has been instrumental in fostering a sense of environmental responsibility and unity among residents.

The program not only reduces waste but also contributes to the overall health of our local environment.

I kindly urge you to recognize the importance of the NYC Food Scrap for Compost Program and consider the positive impact it has on our community's well-being. Your continued support for this initiative will undoubtedly contribute to a greener, healthier, and more resilient community for years to come.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Jose Ignacio Herrera

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Jose Ignacio Herrera.

Community composting produces compost a valuable additive to our soil and a valuable tool for community cohesion and for promoting physical and mental health. I am profoundly disheartened by Mayor Eric Adams' and Commissioner Tisch's recent decision to eliminate community composting programs. This marks the end of a remarkable 30-year journey with the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC, organizations that have been instrumental in fostering climate justice and sustainability services. The potential loss of over 115 green jobs, including more than 50 union positions, is not merely a setback but a grievous error in judgment. The education and outreach initiatives conducted by community composters are irreplaceable. Without them, the very foundation of composting in NYC is at risk of failure. As we discuss the future of our city, I implore you to reconsider the elimination of funding for community composting programs and to advocate fervently for their reinstatement. The NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC are pillars of environmental education and sustainability, and their continued existence is integral to the well-being of our communities. Please pass this request on to Commissioner Tisch. She needs to hear that this is wrong and that New York City residents are upset.

Joyce Bialik

Dear City Council Members,

New York City thinks it is so great, and in many ways, it is, but when it comes to making eco-friendly strives, I believe we are coming up short and falling behind other cities. Cutting community composting is just another example supporting this viewpoint.

I have lived in New York City for 12 years, except for 2 years when I moved to Dallas, TX for grad school. When after trying, and failing, to compost on my Dallas balcony, I literally paid to drop my compost at a private organization because that's how strongly I feel about composting. Why would I go through this effort and pay money for something that I believe should be funded by the government?

- Composting diverts food scraps from landfills where they would break down and emit methane gas.
- Composting makes food waste a reusable product that goes back into the city through community gardens and tree beds.
- Composting allows people to have a direct effect on their climate impact.
- Composting helps fight the rat problem.
- Composting means I can actually fill up my garbage can and take out it out less because it's not stinky.

Other benefits specific to New York City's community composting programs include:

- Teaching young students to be stewards of their communities through its educational programming.
- Bringing neighbors together and creating community engagement.
- Serving as a strong visual and physical example of an easy way we can all fight climate change.

My understanding is that New York City has a goal of sending zero waste to landfills by 2030.¹ Here's a tip that will save you some of your budget money: DEFUNDING COMMUNITY COMPOSTING IS NOT GOING TO HELP YOU ACHIEVE THIS GOAL.

New York City is full of overachievers and yet we are already so far behind. We cannot allow this colossal environmental setback to further hinder our work towards a more climate-friendly future in this city. The Washington Post published an article on December 5, 2023 titled "The surprisingly simple way to convince people to go green"² in which the "simple way" is becoming a mirror for others to see themselves. Community compost does just that on both a micro and macro level.

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

Thank you,
Julia Farina
Queens

1. *Zero Waste Design Guidelines*, <https://www.zerowastedesign.org/>.
2. *Washington Post*, *The surprisingly simple way to convince people to go green*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2023/12/05/improve-sustainability-help-climate-change/>.

December 11th, 2023 To: City Council Hearing on Finance. From: Julia Ferguson
NYC volunteer for Haki Food Scrap Drop Off, Roosevelt Island Community Garden, and Master Composter Program participant 2023

Save all the NYC Community Compost programs from financially short-sighted and unwise budget cuts!

This means saving **all the green bin** food scrap drop off sites, **all the important NYC compost producing sites** (Earth Matter site, Big Reuse sites, Queens Botanical Garden site, the future LES site, **as well as the Master Composting program**.

The top reasons are the following:

- These programs are part of very steady **people to people social infrastructure** across NYC. These are places where thousands of New Yorkers volunteer, learn, and connect, thus keeping us all safer and more resilient in the face of future crises. They help mental health, equity issues, and reduce loneliness. New York City needs our neighborhood sites for connection and health. Read the research on urban health and the importance of these kind of people engagement opportunities and sites as compared to very broken “broken window” policing practices and philosophies that have been proven ineffective.
- These programs are essential parts of NYC’s green infrastructure and are needed to meet NYC climate goals. Food scraps sent to landfill in faraway states are expensive and release methane gas into the atmosphere, a pollutant worse than CO2. However, removing food scraps from sidewalk street trash prevents rats by eliminating their food source. Green bin programs process food scraps hyper locally with constant volunteer resources, thus reducing more greenhouse gases and providing a carbon sink in healthier urban soils with the compost give backs. Composting is one of the top 100 solutions to reversing global warming.
- Urban soils with compost amendments are proven to boost absorption of flood waters during storm surges and a strong flood mitigation strategy. Study NYC websites about combined sewage overflow and rain gardens. Study what wiser cities are actively working on and achieving with rain gardens and composted soils. Why remove something that works for problems that will only increase in severity in coming years? This should instead be an area of investment not complete decimation.
- Saving the green bin food scraps for compost program will protect 115 NYC jobs. As a 2023 participant who completed the Master Composting program, I have witnessed first-hand the high-quality work of these jobs at sites across the city. The energy and professionalism are unmatched. The people who fill these jobs are amazing in their work that combines a passion for earth, people, equity, and solutions! I would be proud to work with these people and I also find that they are constantly trying to do better in their jobs. Quite unfortunately, I cannot say the same about some city leaders or some other city or some DSNY funded initiatives in NYC. In 2023, I learned and connected with people and sites across the boroughs due to this Master Composter program which meant that I completed 45 plus hours of workshops, volunteering, and visits. I am a teacher with 30 years’ experience and a master’s in education and feel qualified to say that the Master Composter program is a very high-quality educational program. To gut this program, which is running so well and teaching so many people about ways to compost, ways to volunteer regularly, ways to reduce global warming, ways to rebuild local soils, to connect appropriately and wisely with neighbors, and to mitigate rat proliferation in NYC – this is an extremely unwise decision financially.
- The misleading orange and brown bin programs have no people connections and no education and do not produce any real compost locally to rebuild local parks, street trees, and community spirit.

Restore the Community Compost green bin programs to the city budget. Listen to the New Yorkers who vote, who volunteer, who mitigate climate change at no cost to NYC, who actively work for the people and the health of this city alongside the people in the jobs that you are about to gut unwisely. Listen to the people who voted for this Mayor and who are so very disappointed. Listen to the people living close to and caring for urban nature, parks, garden sites and neighbors. We are the people who will put in volunteer time on top of our full-time jobs to help NYC. We are the New Yorkers who make this city a great place to live and this is shocking.

We are New Yorkers who care about our NYC neighbors and neighborhoods far more than the Mayor and DSNY Commissioner seem to care. Please listen to us and save the financially wise and high-quality programs that make up Community Composting (green bin programs and jobs) in NYC.

Thank you to the amazing Community Compost programs and to these NYC workers in the 115 jobs of Community Composting. Gratitude to all for making all of these programs possible with their commitment to community, equity, pollution reduction, and health. This participation in composting has contributed to making our NYC neighborhoods more sustainable and more livable in incredible ways.

Below is my Testimony Letter from 2020 –Not too long ago, in 2020 community composting faced similar challenges and your support restored compost funding, and we believe that together we can continue to preserve these essential environmental programs.

Good morning,

My name is Julia Ferguson and I serve with the Roosevelt Island Garden Club as chair of Outreach. We are a 40-year-old volunteer run community of gardeners on Roosevelt Island who have actively supported, benefitted from, and worked alongside NYC Compost (for education, advice, food scrap drop off programs, and compost give backs) through both Big Reuse and GrowNYC. Our gardens and our broader community have been revitalized through this work. We have learned so much in our community and connected with so many neighbors both on Roosevelt Island and city-wide as a result of these programs. In this testimony, we ask that the city not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for organics recycling and composting. Composting has brought all ages of our gardening group and also broader community or 15,000 people on Roosevelt Island together. Because of NYC Compost programs our community has diverted over 100,000 pounds of food scraps from landfills.

Please reinstate 7 million into the budget to reopen NYC Compost programs. Composting connections and is a wise use of our fiscal and natural resources. In addition, the ripple effects for our environmental health and our children's futures are priceless. This is an equitable solution that is cost effective.

Please be clear in a 2020 vision for NYC and our planet. This vision should be one with healthy people, healthy air, healthy soil and filled with climate justice solutions that will save money long term and save lives. Please listen carefully to @SaveOurCompost goals and plans.

Below are only a few examples of how important this work is to our Roosevelt Island community and to NYC:

Partnerships and More Partnerships through Composting

<http://www.rigarden.org/ri-garden-blog/ri-day-partnerships-for-compost-and-planting>

<http://www.rigarden.org/ri-garden-blog/full-circle-from-food-scraps-to-school-garden>

<http://www.rigarden.org/ri-garden-blog/nyc-compost-project-and-big-reuse-on-roosevelt-island>

Outreach/Service Events for all Ages: Cornell Tech to P.S. 217

<http://www.rigarden.org/ri-garden-blog/nyc-compost-official-pumpkin-smash-on-roosevelt-island-2019-third-annual-event>

<http://www.rigarden.org/ri-garden-blog/cornell-tech-volunteers-with-roosevelt-island-garden-club>

<http://www.rigarden.org/ri-garden-blog/compost-connection-worms>

Sincerely,

Julia Ferguson

volunteer with

Roosevelt Island Garden Club

www.rigarden.org "RIGC - In Earth We Trust"

rigardenclub@gmail.com RIGC Board

Testimony of Justyna Jagielnicka, Licensed Mental Health Counselor

New York City Council's Hearing – Finance Committee

DECEMBER 11, 2023

My name is Justyna Jagielnicka, I am a CUNY Alumna and I currently work at the Borough of Manhattan Community College. I am a licensed mental health professional and it is because of my CUNY education I have reached a middle class status. I am very proud to work in CUNY where, I get to support students on their educational journeys. So as a former CUNY student and a current counselor in a cohort program I know first-hand how investing in CUNY and its cohort programs means investing in our students.

Today I am asking the city council's finance committee to vote against cutting ASAP's budget. ASAP students need access to well-funded program and its services so they can graduate!

I do not have to convince the committee how in the post-pandemic world academic and related services, as offered by ASAP in CUNY are absolutely critical. It can be very challenging to excel in school while dealing with academic problems. Reducing the budget allocation might have drastic effects on students enrolled in ASAP looking forward to receiving metrocards and book vouchers.

Academic advisement services offered to ASAP students are the very services students rely on to graduate. **To cut ASAP's budget allocation it means there are less advisors available to assist students in their quest to graduation.** Students, especially first generation college students need essential information such as how to enroll in classes, apply for financial aid and to generally navigate the CUNY system. ASAP advisors in CUNY play a crucial role: they de-mistify the higher ed experience so students can take advantage of all the resources CUNY has to offer. Cutting ASAP's budget means there are insufficient numbers of academic advisors to help students file readmission applications, complete financial aid appeals, and transfer advisement.

Without proper ASAP academic advisement services, students may experience major delays in receiving assistance with registration. Students on academic probation are at a greater risk to get dismissed from college. Cutting funding to ASAP can be very detrimental to students' experience in CUNY. It might result in students stopping out of college and never receiving their college degree.

If "it takes a village to raise a child" then it takes an 'ASAP village' to help a student graduate. For poor New Yorkers the decision to go to college can both stressful and exciting. Many CUNY first year students are committed to their academic career and being a part of a cohort program is priceless. Student cohort programs tend to be highly successful when it comes to retaining and graduating students. Without adequately funded ASAP to provide aforementioned services, student cannot advance to credit bearing courses needed for their majors. Without accessible services students are less likely to graduate and transfer to a senior college. Our communities, and local economy, need students to graduate on time.

I urge you to recognize the need to FUND ASAP! Students' lives depend on it!

December 11, 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Please **SAVE** the **NYC Green Bin Composting Program** from elimination due to budget cuts.

Since 2015, Roosevelt Island has benefited from the partnership with the DSNY food-scrap-to-compost program hosted by **Big Reuse**. Our weekly 5-hour Saturday food scrap collection for compost **hosted by resident volunteers** has diverted over **341,000 pounds** of food scraps from the costly travel to other state's landfills.

Landfilled food scraps create **methane gas**, a pollutant **more harmful than CO2**! Food scraps, by contrast, are processed and decomposed into **nutrient-rich compost that captures CO2** in what is called a **carbon sink**. This compost has been returned to neighborhood urban soils and **the carbon stays underground and out of NYC air**.

During the 2020 budget reduction, an **all-volunteer resident group** was formed on Roosevelt Island and named **HAKI** by the **Lenape Center**. Our grassroots **Haki Compost Collective** volunteer group has stood by the green bin food scrap to compost program each Saturday since September 2020 performing community outreach and education and giving back compost to neighbors in support of Big Reuse's compost processing work.

Much of the nutrient-rich compost produced by Big Reuse has returned to Roosevelt Island and fed over 100 new baby trees, numerous school gardens, community projects and resident houseplants.

Urban cities **benefit** from food scrap to compost programs in the following ways:

- **Rat Mitigation.** Removing food scraps from public sidewalks and school trash areas removes the food sources rats need to flourish.
- Local food scrap for compost programs **reduce truck, barge and landfill costs** for NYC taxpayers.
- Compost amended soils are vastly **more water absorbent** and are a city smart strategy **to stop severe, deadly and costly storm flooding** events in NYC.
- Nutrient-rich compost **strengthens open space and parklands** by feeding tree and shrub roots which creates land **more resilient to soil erosion**.
- Healthy trees in an urban landscape **pull more pollutants including CO2 from the air** while **emitting oxygen** for residents while providing shade to reduce high heat events.
- Employs 115 people who will all lose their jobs if this FSDO program is eliminated.

Thank you for your support of the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off for Compost program!

Sincerely,
Jutta Corinna Kell

Restore NYC Community Compost green bin programs to the budget

Save NYC Community Composting!!

Green bin programs city-wide give back real compost and connect thousands of New Yorkers as we reduce CO2 greenhouse gases and rebuild soil!

Jutta Kell

Dear City Council Members,

I write to you to voice my extreme disappointment at learning 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. Composting is one of the few tangible and accessible ways for individuals and neighborhood communities to engage in sustainability practices.

Adjacent to its environmental impact, 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.

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. This program is not expensive; coming in at only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular. 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,
Katharine Maness (they/them)
Manhattan


Testimony on Planned Budget Cuts

I, like many New Yorkers, was outraged to learn of Mayor Eric Adams's plan to slash essential city services outside of the usual budget process. Under Mayor Adams, New Yorkers have already suffered the effects of two years of harsh austerity budgets, and we cannot afford more. The planned across-the-board cuts, which the mayor is pushing despite the fact that the city hold's \$9 billion in reserves, appear to be an effort by our scandal-plagued mayor to score political points by foisting the blame for his fiscal mismanagement on newly arrived immigrants. This cruel and xenophobic tactic will harm New Yorkers in every neighborhood, who use our city's vital resources, including public transit, housing services, public libraries, public schools, arts programs, community composting, community colleges, childcare, senior centers, and city jobs. New Yorkers need care, not cuts. All New Yorkers should have access to housing, sustainable livelihoods, and the resources to thrive.

The planned cuts will have serious, real-life impacts. Public libraries have already announced that they will be forced to cancel all Sunday service. Most community composting organizations have said they will have to close their doors, leading to the loss of an estimated 120 green jobs and leaving New Yorkers like me, whose landlords are unwilling to participate in curbside compost collection, with no option but to return to sending our food waste to landfills. The popular Summer Rising program, which has been a savior for so many families, will be forced to cut hours for middle school programs. Schools, which are already suffering, will face new budget cuts. And while Governor Hochul has promised to use state funds to make up for city budget cuts to the NYPD, she has made no such commitment to helping to make up this unexpected budget cut for schools, libraries, or other impact social services on which New Yorkers depend.

As a New Yorker and an NYC public school parent, I demand that the mayor fully fund composting, Summer Rising, schools, CUNY, libraries, childcare and early education seats, and social services and find further savings in the NYPD's and Department of Corrections' bloated budgets. If he does not do this, I demand that the city council and Speaker Adrienne Adams use all of their charter-granted powers to ensure that a budget modification does not pass unless it rolls back cuts to these essential programs.

Sincerely,
Katherine Herman


Brooklyn, NY 11218

[REDACTED]

From: Katherine Welsh <katherine.welsh1@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 7:43 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Community Compost budget cuts testimony - Committee on Finance
12/11/23

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council Members,

I am disappointed and frustrated 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. As someone who is deeply concerned about the impacts of climate change, I rely weekly on community composting to drop off my food scraps because my building management does not want to maintain a city compost bin due to pest concerns. Community composting is among the best tools NYC 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.

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. This program is not expensive; coming in at only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, 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 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,

Katherine Welsh
Brooklyn, NY

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

12/12/2023

It is with extreme dissatisfaction that I'm writing to the Committee on Finance. The budget cuts which harm nonprofit organizations and community services are shameful. The reductions impacting local library hours and community composting services in Greenpoint are especially tragic. It's a sad day to be a New Yorker.

Kayla Dowd

[REDACTED]

kayladowd@gmail.com

[REDACTED]

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. Not only is there high level of participation in community composting programs, but it engages other neighbors and creates a strong social infrastructure, resulting in more engaged citizens that feel connected to their city. Unlike curbside composting, community composting has high participation because of the civic engagement. In order for curbside composting to have higher engagement, we need community composters to spread their love of composting, reaching more and more New Yorkers that DSNY cannot give individual attention to. The NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC know the neighborhoods they work in and had deep connections there that they can leverage to increase participation in compost, helping reach the goals set forth by the Zero Waste Act. 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. I urge the committee to let Commissioner Tisch know the irreplaceable role that community composting plays in the city.

Kayla Yee

Hello, my name is Keturah Thorpe, I am a constituent of district 45 in Flatbush Brooklyn and I am a participant in the Master Composting program. I'm testifying today to share why funding community composting, and associated programming is essential for our city to flourish. Composting leaves our city with fewer rats, cleaner streets and healthier soils, while cutting waste destined for landfills or incinerators.

Personally, I have been utilizing community composting since 2019 to help decrease my carbon footprint and be a more responsible citizen. I got further involved this year through the master composter program, which I have yet to complete due to these budget cuts. This program has changed my life; it has greatly expanded my knowledge, allowed me opportunities to serve my community, and act as steward to my environment. While my personal loss from these budget cuts is devastating to me, the greater community loss is unconscionable. The NYC Compost Project in conjunction with GrowNYC divert **over 8 million pounds** of organic waste out of landfills each year, and create a usable and needed product for the community. Hundreds of thousands of pounds of compost is freely distributed to community groups, parks, street trees and residents. Among many environmental benefits, this work helps to mitigate NYC's issue with flooding by combatting our complete lack of absorbent soil. To insinuate that this program is inefficient, as was suggested in this hearing, is unequivocally incorrect. In addition, to insulate low impact or interest, as was also done, is wildly ignorant and untrue. When master composting programming drops, whether that be workshops, field trips, or community service opportunities, slots fill up within days, if not hours. There is a clear desire for this programming, and its benefits have been invaluable to me. As a train the trainer program, I have been empowered and able to have informed conversations about composting with coworkers and friends, educating and empowering people to adopt composting practices in their own life. This is how knowledge and change happens. Through community.

The composting programs you have eliminated provide outreach and education to the populace, raising awareness on issues such as rats and climate, while also offering a solution. These programs teach people why and how to compost. The new brown bin pick up and orange bin drop off are great plans to supplement and expand existing compost programs in the city. However, they cannot function if people are ignorant as to WHY they are important or HOW to participate. These programs are also NOT functioning as promised, and are widely inaccessible to many New Yorkers. They are not even city wide programs as they have only been rolled out in only two of our five boroughs, and plans to expand have been postponed. I ordered a brown bin for my apartment building and it sits unused in the corner of the basement. My building has decided not to participate as many others have, from lack of education. My partner's building in Sunset Park was eager to participate, but after several weeks of having NO pick up occur, they have been forced to filter organics back into waste and abandon the initiative. Neither of our neighborhoods have access to orange bins as they have not been installed south of Eastern Parkway or west of Flatbush ave in Brooklyn. That's three miles away from either of our neighborhoods. With the elimination of community composting, even the die-hards like me will be forced to stop composting altogether from lack of accessibility, and the pool of composters will shrink further with the absence of outreach and education to pull more people in.

These cuts are short sided, misguided, and damaging to our city. Killing 115 green jobs is not efficient. Taking away avenues to divert organic waste from landfills is not efficient. I urge you to re-examine this budget and find a more efficient and reasonable way to structure it. We have a two billion dollar rainy day fund and a so-called "crisis" on our hands, it's clearly raining. Use what is in the purse before you steal from the citizens of NYC. Thank you.

Kevin Jackson
Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens
CCNS Peter. J. DellaMonica Older Adult Center

I would first like to ask the City: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut?

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November.

With these budget cuts, we are afraid of the below programming changes:

- Program, Kitchen, & Custodial supplies.
- Quality of meals being served.
- Quality of Program and Services
- The number of meals is reduced per day.
- Physical activity programs include exercise to help balance, fall prevention, etc.
- In staff to that provides essential services.
- On transportation services and group trips for Older Adults.
- On special events, birthday parties, and holiday celebrations.
- On arts and crafts, Digital Literacy and inclusion, Health Promotion, evidence-based, Benefits, and homebound services, Outreach and partnership, Nutrition education, and many more programs and services.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why CCNS Peter J. DellaMonica Older Adult Center joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We ask that the City:

- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

Please take my above Testimony into consideration!

CCNS Peter J. DellaMonia 23-11 31st Road
Older Adult Services Astoria, NY 11106

(718) 626-1500

December 9, 2023

Dear Mayor Adams,

I hope you will consider changing course and not cut funding for community composting and curbside composting outreach.

These programs are vital for increased compliance within the citywide curbside composting program, leading to less opportunities for rats to breed and take over our city.

I trust you and your team will be able to balance the budget to ensure these cuts do not have to be made.

Thank you very much,
Kevin Johns

[REDACTED]

Bronx, NY 10463-3116

Committee on Finance Hearing – 12/11/23

Written Testimony of Kristin Beelaar in support of refunding community composting

I live in the East Village and work in Flatiron. My husband and I have been composting by bringing food scraps to the farmer's markets composting drop-off sites for several years now. Before we participated in this valuable program, we had to take our garbage out multiple times each week because we, like most Americans, were throwing away food scraps to go into landfill where it contributes to pollution, including methane gas that worsen global warming. Since I started saving my food scraps and taking them to the City's composting drop-off sites, I take out a small bag of garbage once every 7-10 days, and I know that the food scraps I take to the farmer's market once a week are being turned into compost that helps keep our City's parks and other green spaces healthy. I myself often purchase potting soil and compost from the drop-off sites for my house plants. In contrast, it is my understanding that food waste collected by the Sanitation Department—a program that has not come to my neighborhood yet—is converted into natural gas (i.e., methane) for piping into homes, much of which gets burned over the Greenpoint neighborhood.

It is my understanding that the proposed budget cuts will eliminate the entire NYC Compost Project, including the Ecology Center, Big Reuse, Earth Matter NY, the four botanical gardens and GrowNYC's compost programs. If this happens, there will be no more food scrap drop off sites, local processing, free compost distribution, Master Composter training, and many other activities that support a just and sustainable NYC. All of those programs will be terminated over the next 2 weeks. 115 staff, including 47 union staff, will be laid off by New Year's Day. This would be a tragedy and cut costs in a way that harms local communities and terminates jobs.

Community composting is a valuable service that brings communities together and helps us all participate in making our city greener and more sustainable. Please don't approve budget cuts that will terminate them.

[REDACTED]

From: Laura Genovese <fairstars@aol.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 14, 2023 7:44 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] My testimony for the Monday, 12/11/23 Finance Committee's Budget Hearing

[REDACTED]

Evening. My name is Laura Genovese. I am a NYC retiree. I was a school secretary and have done 21 years of city service.

I join so many in their outrage of the brutal budget cuts this Administration thinks it can foist on workers and the vulnerable.

Just hearing the number of billionaires that reside in NY should make it clear that something is fundamentally wrong with the choices that this Administration believes it can make off of our backs to "save money."

With the budget the Administration has now left at your doorstep, I urge City Council Members to fight to help us NYC retirees preserve our vetted city healthcare plans. - Benefits we ALREADY paid for and depend on. Some of us are in our 90's and even older. Many are first responders and have gotten disabled.

As many Council Members have come to know, there's a great deal wrong with how this Administration and MLC Heads have felt they could violate, mishandle and choose healthcare for us. There's too much to say about this but I will conclude with ...:

The pro-profit Aetna Medicare Advantage plan which the the Mayor and MLC Heads have wanted retirees to roll into would cost lives. In addition, privatizing Medicare is draining our essential Medicare safety net. Insurance companies are becoming increasingly powerful, obscenely overcharging, and causing increasing numbers of doctors to leave the profession. This is not only a gold rush for the Medicare Advantage Industry but alarmingly changing the face of medicine.

As we fight these horrid cuts please also fight to preserve the retirees' current City Medigap. As we enter the new year please co-sponsor our bill and conduct an Oversight Investigation Hearing into the Health Insurance Stabilization Fund that is being used to justify the diminishment of our earned benefits.

Thank you

Laura Genovese
NYC Retiree of 21 years
[REDACTED]

NY, NY 10002-5623



Thank you for having us to testify today. My name is Laura Tanenbaum and I teach English at LaGuardia Community College, where I also serve as chapter chair of the Professional Staff Congress. At LaGuardia we have about 30,000 students, over half of whom come from households earning less than \$30,000 per year. CUNY schools consistently rank among the highest in the nation for fostering economic mobility. But our students not only transform their own prospects, they give back to this city many times over. In the 15 years I have been at LaGuardia, I have worked with thousands of talented young people who have gone on to serve this city as teachers, nurses, artists, EMTs, social workers, community leaders, engineers and much more.

The mayor's proposed cuts would devastate our ability to serve these students. Among the schools at CUNY, the six community colleges serve those with the most need of additional academic, social, and economic supports, and these community colleges are particularly dependent on the city for funding. I have worked with students who have experienced homelessness and hunger, who faced the worst of the pandemic and zoomed into class while caring for elderly relatives or younger siblings. We offer some of the most affordable quality college education in the country, and many students are able to attend thanks to PELL and TAP funding. But this counts for little if our schools do not have the counselors, advisors, course offerings, and physical infrastructure to serve our students. At LaGuardia advisors serve have caseloads running into the many hundreds of students and students must often wait hours in line for the appointments they need. It is particularly outrageous that these cuts target the ASAP program, a nationally recognized model for student success and retention. Taking advisors, metro cards and books away from students is petty and cruel; for many of us, these expenses seem small but for our students they mean the difference between being able to pursue and education and not. It is unconscionable that this mayor who claims to be a proud CUNY graduate and speaks for the working people of this city has targeted one of the city's greatest resources for its working people. I urge the members of this council to do everything in their power to reverse these cuts.

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

[REDACTED]
Brooklyn, NY 11230

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. Having equitable access to local composting is a climate justice issue. It is unfair that once again, communities that have long been ignored are once again the last to receive access to composting and now are losing out on important educational opportunities that community compost programs offer. The NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC work in all five boroughs, connecting with residents from all walks of life to share information and stories about 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. I implore each council member to recognize the urgency of this matter and to actively advocate for the immediate reinstatement of funding for community composting programs. Our communities, our environment, and our collective future depend on it.

Lauren Wansker

Save Community Compost Testimony

To: Committee on Finance

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. In the face of global climate change and environmental degradation, it is irresponsible and frankly unacceptable to defund sustainable programs. Community composting provides numerous benefits to our city. For example, composting is a form of responsible waste management and offers a simple and effective solution to the city's rat infestation. Food and organic matter is also a major contributor to landfill waste, where it becomes a problem—it must be transported long distances, 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

**Testimony by Leah Butz, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
to the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Chair Justin Brannan
Mayor's November Financial Plan
December 11, 2023**

Good morning Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Leah Butz, and I am a proud member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective, represented by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, RWDSU. I work as an Inspections and Compliance Program Coordinator for GrowNYC, and previously worked in the Compost program for 2 years. Furthermore, I previously worked for the Lower East Side Ecology Center as a Compost Associate, and I am, as of November 16th, 2023 (the very day the Mayor's PEG was announced), a Certified NYC Master Composter.

Clearly, I am passionate about compost, zero waste, environmentalism, and local agriculture — and the November plan budget cuts make it clear that New York City is not the right place for opinions such as those. Eliminating as many services as the plan does, including community composting, Parks Department programming, library service, and so much more, sets the City far, far back. This testimony will focus on community composting.

Director Jiha's repeated assertion on Monday that community composting is "inefficient" was inaccurate and, quite frankly, insulting. "Inefficient" is a methane production technology that goes offline within weeks, releasing harmful gases into our environment. "Inefficient" is hauling thousands of pounds of waste states away, spending millions of dollars each year and costing even more in environmental effects. "Inefficient" is hundreds of "Smart" Bins either too full to drop scraps into or too complicated to properly open for older adults. "Inefficient" is the DSNY's abysmal record on outreach and even worse record on mandatory waste separation enforcement.

City Hall lied when they told the Council that there would be no layoffs in this PEG. Sure, no City employees were laid off, but 115 individuals employed by nonprofits the City holds years-long contracts with faced the threat of unemployment mere weeks before Christmas. The City has a long history of outsourcing community-driven work (including, but by no means limited to composting) to nonprofit organizations and paying pennies on the dollar, if payment is ever made at all. When the Adams administration claimed that there were no layoffs in the PEG, it showed that the work of these nonprofits, and the people — the New Yorkers — employed by them are not valued or appreciated by the City.

On Monday's hearing, the Council's support for community composting was obvious and uplifting. We need this continued support going into the next fiscal year, and doubtless each and every year after. While GrowNYC may be spared from this devastating move for now (thanks to a stroke of luck and a generous community member), the NYC Compost Project (NYCCP) — the Lower East Side Ecology Center, Earth Matter, Big Reuse, Queens Botanical Garden, Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and the New York Botanical Garden — are under threat. With the elimination of the NYCCP comes the elimination of the Master Composter Certificate Course, a too-good-to-be-true resource and incredible example of free, equitable public education. The NYCCP employs dozens of dedicated activists and educators who have done nothing but work tirelessly to make NYC a better, cleaner place to live, work, and play.

We cannot count on the philanthropy of the wealthy or the limited capacity of volunteer labor to keep our city clean. Relying on the *deus ex machina* of an "anonymous donor" is not a tenable model to keep this vital programming alive. I implore the City Council to continue to fight for community composting and take legislative action to make this program permanent.

Thank you for your time,
Leah Butz

Dear City Council Members,

My name is Lee Stark and I am testifying in support of continued funding for community composting programs and staffs, including funding for the NYC Compost Project, Big Reuse, Earth Matter, GrowNYC, LES Ecology Center, the city's botanic/al gardens, and in effect the many smaller local composting groups that these programs service, the Master Composter Program, the Governor's Island Zero Waste Island project, the parks and gardens that use the free compost the programs produce, and every volunteer and community that benefits from the programs.

As the long list shows, those impacted go far beyond these programs and their staffs. The word "community" in "community composting" couldn't be more apt. These programs are cornerstones of our healthy neighborhoods, providing critical ecological services, rat and pest mitigation, city-wide landfilling and trucking cost reductions, climate change mitigation, low-cost public park and garden materials, waste education green jobs, and healthy interpersonal connection.

If these benefits don't ring true, please visit a site and see. See how many pounds of food would go to waste, put your hands in the rich finished compost and feel how gracious those involved are with their time and expertise. There is critical, caring work happening here and it's as close to magic as I can understand.

These organizations and individuals are the ones that built our city's composting culture, well before any city programs took form. To see them discarded in little more than a mid-year budget trim is an insult and disservice to our city's health.

Thank you,
Lee Stark
Brooklyn resident

Written Comments to the NYC City Council Committee on Finance Hearing - December 11, 2023

Thank you for this opportunity to submit comments. I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed budget cuts to the Greenmarket composting program.

Personally, I am a devoted composter. Every Sunday, I roll out my shopping cart of frozen fruit peelings and vegetable cuttings to my nearby market. It is an impressive sight to see the number of big green bins being filled with food scraps going to recycling and not into regular garbage. These composting stations are a strong visual messenger of composting as a way of life even to those who are not active participants — building awareness, creating a sense of community, and setting an example of a better way to handle garbage.

The orange composting bins now appearing in scattered spots around the city cannot possibly supplant what the Greenmarket system accomplishes in terms of collection volume. Individual building curbside collection is still in a rollout phase with some boroughs not scheduled to start implementing programs for some time. Where is all that compostable garbage going to go in the meantime? To landfills? It will also be difficult to make any headway in curbing rat populations if more food garbage is sitting out on the street awaiting Department of Sanitation collection.

Professionally, I am a building manager. I know first-hand how difficult it is to educate some tenants about recycling and to get them to change habits. It will take time for residents to adjust to new routines and separate their garbage in even more ways than they do now. It will not be helpful to have a successful example of composting disappear.

I would argue that if you want NYC to be a national model for composting then you need all these various venues up and running, working in tandem with each other. It flies in the face of logic to eliminate this program when the city is trying to encourage composting along with trying to conquer our rat problem. To say that this is counterproductive is an understatement.

I know some tough and painful budgetary decisions are going to be made but I urge the Committee to find a way to continue this program.

Lesli Rice
leslirice@me.com



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 toters 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

Hello, my name is Leslie Gauthier and I have lived in New York for 16 years. Parks have always been a haven: I've benefited from living near Morningside Park, Herbert Von King Park, Central Park and Fort Greene Park. The latter has been my sanity since a Popeye's began construction in the mixed-use building I moved into in June. Every day since June 1st, I have gone to Fort Greene Park at least once a day to escape the incessant noise in my building. To put it plainly, the park is what makes my life feel humane.

Even without budget cuts, there are issues. Just before Thanksgiving, I was assaulted in the park. It was only 5pm and there were no park workers around I could immediately access. A violent act went completely unnoticed, and it has seriously jeopardized my feelings of safety in the park. It was awful, though I managed to get away just in time. I can only imagine how much worse it would be if there are further budget cuts. How many more workers will be laid off? How many more criminals will feel they can get away with things there?

Combined with the horrific cuts to the compost program, the rat situation will be untenable. And while there is apparently money for a plan to raze 83 mature trees at the NW corner of the park, there's no money to pay park workers? Perhaps the issue is not cutting the parks budget, but making sure the money is being allotted appropriately, and with the priorities of the community in mind.

The current parks budget cuts jeopardize the very heart of our communities, endangering crucial green spaces and recreational areas that serve as sanctuaries for New Yorkers. Their impact extends far beyond dollar amounts, impacting the well-being, and quality of life of countless individuals. Parks are invaluable resources that foster physical and mental health, provide spaces for social interaction, and **mitigate the climate crisis**. Again, without a compost program, the city needs to do everything possible to maintain other ways of alleviating the effects of global warming.

Some other areas of concern:

- Our parks will lose a total of 1.3 million hours a year of cleaning, care and maintenance. Many parks will not be regularly cleaned and serviced, limiting many areas to just 1 to 3 times a week.
- Rats will continue to spike in our parks as 17,000 trash cans will be overflowing with garbage. Without composting, that garbage will include foul-smelling food that attracts every type of pest—waste that could have been avoided by not cutting the compost.
- During the pandemic we saw the impact of budget cuts on our parks. The cleanliness rating decreased by 10%. Council Members and other elected officials remember the phone calls and complaints to their office from constituent outcry of the declining conditions of our parks. 2020 is proof that parks budget cuts are detrimental to the community. Why repeat a mistake? And why cut a budget already too small, and already slashed?

- Our sports facilities like baseball fields that park workers should be preparing for the upcoming season will not be groomed and maintained for our youth sport leagues and recreational users.
- In this housing crisis, our parks workers deserve job security, ensuring their work environments prioritize safety, prevent overwhelming conditions, and provide career advancement opportunities like the framework established by the POP program.
- The additional impact of the next round of budget cuts will severely disable the Parks Department's ability to provide essential services to the public by affecting staff levels and limiting access to public pools.
- Our beaches will open with reduced staff and will not have the manpower to fully clean and maintain these spaces for 15 million annual visitors.
- Syringe collection will be impacted by the next round of budget cuts. Many in our community have raised safety concerns about user needles in parks where children and pets play.
- For many New Yorkers, parks are our backyards necessitating cleanliness, consistent maintenance, and safety measures to ensure they remain secure havens for children and families to enjoy together.

I've always imagined I'd raise my family in this city. With these cuts to the budget, my future will be altered. I don't want to live or raise children in a city that doesn't value its green spaces, or its inhabitants' mental and physical well-being. To cut the parks budget is to declare a lack of values: value in community, in health, in well-being. The parks are the city's lungs. Cut their budget, and we won't be able to breathe.

Sincerely,
Leslie Gauthier

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.

As someone who takes my food waste to be composted every week, to prevent it from contributing to landfills, I do my part. Please do your part, by making this program accessible and investing in the future of New York.

Thank you,
Lindsey Otterbourg
Manhattan

December 11, 2023

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

This program is not expensive; coming in at only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

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,
Lisa Chin
District 1, Manhattan New York

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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. I know personally that after removing food scraps from my garbage in favor of composting and then recycling what I can, the amount of actual trash that goes out for collection is vastly reduced.

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,
Lisa Jaeggi
Brooklyn

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

As someone who has dealt with rat problems for years, I am also disappointed in what this means for our city's street and neighborhood sanitation. 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.

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Thank you,
Lucy Hollier
Brooklyn

12/2/23

Save NYC community compost

Restore the community compost program to the city budget. These sites and jobs are needed. Compost is part of our future health and safety for our people and our world, we can no longer wait on this!

Thank You,
Lynn Marfey

Dear City Council Members,

Composting has helped me feel more connected to my neighborhood and community and has inspired me to take additional steps towards helping NYC meet its climate goals. It is with great frustration and sadness that I write to you to implore you to reinstate the funding necessary to continue this vital and important work.

NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programs employ my friends and neighbors in the exact types of jobs we talk about when we talk about funding a just transition to a green economy. They are the future of the city and to leave them behind in this round of funding cuts is antithetical to the progressive values that comprise NY's bedrock.

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,
Maggie O'Donnell
Brooklyn



December 11, 2023

Hello my name is Andres Munoz, my pronouns are he/him. I'm in 9th grade and from Staten Island. I am a youth leader at Make the Road NY. I am here today to demand that the city STOP the harmful cuts to our education. Instead of making these cuts, the city should cut from the NYPD budget and invest in services that support young people like me in our schools.

I've seen social media videos of students getting into fights at my school. In one of the videos, two girls started fighting and three school cops came in and broke up the fight by pushing both of the students up against the wall at the same time. I'm frustrated at seeing the response of the school police using such violence. Issues between those students could have been prevented or addressed by a guidance counselor having a conversation with them. School police consistently escalate conflict and make my school environment feel unsafe. When I see students fighting in my school, it makes me feel like it's a reflection of the lack of emotional guidance that young people receive in their lives.

School cops don't interact with students in a positive way, I have constantly heard the ones in my school talking bad about students, judging their looks and gossiping about drama that goes on in the students' lives. It feels weird to me because these are grown adults that are supposedly in charge of our safety.

With the cuts that Mayor Adams is doing, we see what his priorities are. He does not have our best interests in mind. We already have the biggest school police force in the country. There are more school cops than guidance counselors, social workers, or restorative justice coordinators in our schools. New York City must remove police from schools and instead invest in the staff and practices that will create long-term safety.

We continue to see people in this city not being able to pay their bills, feed their families, get kicked out of their homes, and attend already underfunded schools. These cuts only worsen these situations. Stop cutting essential services we need and cut the bloated NYPD budget.

When the city announced it was canceling the new class of 250 school cops it was a step in the right direction. Then just last week they turned around and said they were hiring 135 new school

BROOKLYN
301 GROVE STREET
BROOKLYN, NY 11237
TEL 718 418 7690

QUEENS
92-10 ROOSEVELT AVENUE
JACKSON HEIGHTS, NY 11372
TEL 718 565 8500

STATEN ISLAND
161 PORT RICHMOND AVENUE
STATEN ISLAND, NY 10302
TEL 718 727 1222

LONG ISLAND
1090 SUFFOLK AVENUE
BRENTWOOD, NY 11717
TEL 631 231 2220

WESTCHESTER
46 WALLER AVENUE
WHITE PLAINS, NY 10605
TEL 914 948 8466

cops! This is unacceptable while our schools are facing a hiring freeze and can't hire support staff we truly need. There should be an immediate hiring freeze on school police and the rest of the vacant school cop positions should not be filled - EVER. All that money should then go right back to our schools where it belongs.

Mayor Eric Adams should stop putting the NYPD and its budget before the mental and physical wellbeing of young people.



Hello, my name is Camilla Vaquero, and my pronouns are she/her. I'm a youth leader at Make the Road New York, and the Urban Youth Collaborative. I'm currently a junior at a community school in Brooklyn. I'm here today to demand that Mayor Adams prioritizes students' education, not their surveillance and criminalization.

Young people like me fought for years for what I now have in my school - a community school that centers care and support. A Student Success Center that runs by youth leadership, helping students prepare for their futures. And restorative justice - to build community and have a positive school culture. I feel lucky to have a place in my school to go to where I feel safe. The space run by our community school team is a space where I can be myself without any judgment, I can use the computers when I need to, I can find feminine products when emergencies occur and most importantly I can find support from the team that works there. It's infuriating to hear that Mayor Adams wants to cut all that too! Why do we have to continue to fight to fund our schools and programs like these year after year after year?

A school like mine must exist because community schools level the field for all students and their families helping those that need support and resources. Any attack on that funding is an attack on our whole community. Research says that real safety comes from deep investments in things like affordable housing, childcare, healthcare and youth programs.

BROOKLYN
301 GROVE STREET
BROOKLYN, NY 11237
TEL 718 418 7690
FAX 718 418 9635

QUEENS
92-10 ROOSEVELT AVENUE
JACKSON HEIGHTS, NY 11372
TEL 718 565 8500
FAX 718 565 0646

STATEN ISLAND
161 PORT RICHMOND AVENUE
STATEN ISLAND, NY 10302
TEL 718 727 1222
FAX 718 981 8077

LONG ISLAND
1090 SUFFOLK AVENUE
BRENTWOOD, NY 11717
TEL 631 231 2220
FAX 631 231 2229

WESTCHESTER
46 WALLER AVENUE
WHITE PLAINS, NY 10605
TEL 914 948 8466
FAX 914 948 0311

The safest communities are communities where basic needs are met and where communities are resourced to thrive – not where there are more police. New Yorkers are struggling and what's the Mayor's response? More money for police in our streets and in our schools.

The Mayor needs to fix things without messing up programs, agencies, and institutions crucial to growing the next generation of scholars and their families. Our schools and education shouldn't be at the forefront of these cuts! Especially when not all city agencies are being held to the same standard and by all city agencies I mean NYPD.

While funding for my community school is on the chopping block, the city just hired more new school police. So now the place that gives me real safety, which provides mental health support, social workers, restorative justice and so much is not protected from these budget cuts while the NYPD is. This is yet another example of the Mayor funding criminalization over social and emotional support. This is beyond unacceptable.

Today we are here, calling on the Mayor and the city to prioritize our education and care. You can start by putting in place an immediate hiring freeze on school cops. You can also cut the funding for the hundreds of remaining vacant school cop positions. Then use this funding to both protect and expand community schools like mine, restorative justice, mental health and our futures.



December 11, 2023

Hello, my name is Esther. My pronouns are she/her. I go to school in Staten Island and am in the 9th grade. I am a youth leader with Make The Road NY.

All students should have access to safe, supportive and well-funded schools! The Mayor is slashing the budget to our education by 1 billion in the next two years. At the same time the NYPD and the DOE are spending more than \$400 million dollars policing our schools. We have the biggest school police force in the country and more school police than social workers, guidance counselors and restorative justice coordinators combined. The city is investing in the things that do not help us students or make us feel safe.

I've seen school police treating students unfairly, hurting and arresting them and not actually solving any problems. We know that the safest schools have the most resources, not the most cops. After all we've been through over the past few years, we need more care than ever. A guidance counselor and social worker can and should be who we have in our schools to help resolve conflict between youth.

Schools already are having to make cuts to art, music, drama and more. These are classes students enjoy and help them prepare for a better future. I chose art as an elective in my school. I feel at peace when I draw and do 3D art. Creating helps with expressing myself and can help me in the future to continue with my passion. What if all these cuts impact my school being able to offer this class?

Budget cuts are also going to make it harder for families like mine to get food stamps - one of our sources of food. Having this resource makes my mother's life easier by not having to worry about what we will eat. It is unacceptable to put families like mine in a position where we would struggle to put food on the table. A lot of parents have to struggle with balancing how to pay rent, buy food and get school supplies. If the city invested in students and their families' needs, it would decrease a parent's stress and struggles.

BROOKLYN
301 GROVE STREET
BROOKLYN, NY 11237
TEL 718 418 7690

QUEENS
92-10 ROOSEVELT AVENUE
JACKSON HEIGHTS, NY 11372
TEL 718 565 8500

STATEN ISLAND
161 PORT RICHMOND AVENUE
STATEN ISLAND, NY 10302
TEL 718 727 1222

LONG ISLAND
1090 SUFFOLK AVENUE
BRENTWOOD, NY 11717
TEL 631 231 2220

WESTCHESTER
46 WALLER AVENUE
WHITE PLAINS, NY 10605
TEL 914 948 8466

The city must stop taking money from our schools and stop funding and filling in the positions for empty school police and instead use that money to invest in restorative practices that are proven to support young people. We need to act now before more students lose academic opportunities, and provide us with the services that will benefit our growth. Students do not deserve to be treated unfairly, we deserve justice and respect.



December 11, 2023

Hello my name is Julieta Da-Cruz. My pronouns are she/they. I am in the 8th grade, from Staten Island and I am a youth leader from Make the Road NY and the Urban Youth Collaborative. I am here today to call on the city to reverse these harmful budget cuts to our schools and fund our futures.

As a young person in NYC, I am always so frustrated to see that my school cannot afford simple resources like clean water in our drinking fountains and fixing broken items in classrooms and bathrooms. In my school, we have only 2 guidance counselors and only 1 social worker for close to 1,000 students. If I need to talk to someone or go to someone for support I can only go during my free periods which would mean missing art, music or my lunch. Even then, both of my guidance counselors are always booked. I wish instead of treating me and all the youth in my school and all NYC schools like the problems, that our school would work to find out more about what we students are going through and provide support to address it completely before it becomes a more serious issue.

Two years ago, a boy joined my school in the middle of the year. He wrote a note threatening me and other students by name. Many of us were terrified. I told the social worker at the school hoping they would help. The school called the NYPD who arrested the student though eventually they let him go when it was determined he wasn't going to harm anyone. He had some serious things going on at home. The school worked with his family to get him some mental health support and he is doing much better now.

I believe that having more mental health support in schools can help prevent situations like these from happening. Young people from any age would be able to go to someone to talk about the issues they have inside of school, making them enjoy coming to school after getting help with issues they thought they couldn't resolve or de-escalate. It would be great to see more guidance counselors and social workers in my school and be able to get the advice and stability I need to feel safe.

I believe that if the money was put back into the DOE budget it would help improve school environments both physically and mentally. I want to see the millions of dollars in the police

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budget invested in more social workers and guidance counselors, because all New York City students deserve to feel safe and comfortable in a positive school environment. We don't need more police in our schools. We are calling on the city to stop hiring any new school cops, and cut the funding for the hundreds of remaining vacant school cop positions in the budget. Then take that money and invest those millions into more restorative justice and mental health supports. The safest schools have the most resources, not the most police. Show the students of New York that you care and fund our futures now.

I am submitting this written testimony to plead for continued funding to support community composting. I am a regular at the community composting site on 3rd Avenue and 95th street in Brooklyn. With DSNY pickups having a reputation for being irregular, I prefer going to the site to drop off my compost bag. I have more confidence that the compost I drop off gets processed. I have been to other countries where they have dedicated collection sites for trash and recycling. We need continued community composting to promote a greater culture of doing this to reduce waste.

Malik Rashid

Dear City Council Members,

In a time of drastic climate change, it is so shortsighted and destructive to defund community composting, which is one of the most immediate ways New Yorkers can participate in reducing their food waste and a win-win for the environment.

I take our household's food waste every single week to Lower East Side Ecology Center's compost bins set out every Thursday at Corlears Hook Park. I love knowing that I am reducing my trash as well as fighting climate change on the most local level. I also love knowing that our scraps are going to be turned into soil that in turn will enrich the community gardens and parks that we enjoy so much in the East Village and Lower East Side. It is such a beautiful cycle, and so much better than thinking that my food scraps going into an impersonal city compost bin and then trucked over to a biogas plant in Brooklyn (or is it Queens) to be turned into yet more carbon emissions. That makes no sense to me at all. Instead, the Lower East Side Ecology Center is a community connection—they compost my leftovers, but I also go birdwatching with them, and took my son to their educational programs, like fishing on the East River. They complete our community and to take that away weakens one more connection to the city, taking away one more reason to participate in my own neighborhood.

As someone who grew up in Lower Manhattan near Federal Plaza in the 1970s, I know what it is like to live in a city that doesn't care about community or environment—there were few parks, no nature, and no compost. It was tough. So it was wonderful to see New York City start to change in the 2000s, with more trees planted, more funding for parks, compost programs taking root, red-tailed hawks and other wildlife returning. So I am so disappointed and sad to see this regressive turn back that will do little to curb waste and carbon emissions, make it impossible for local environmental organizations to work, and weaken community engagement. I often think that is why New York City is so dirty compared to other cities—people feel unconnected to their surroundings. If the city cares about the environment, and shows it through funding necessary community-based programs that give back, then people care more about it too. Knowing what we do about reducing food waste and climate emissions, it is incomprehensible that the city is planning to cut the community-based compost programs that are most successful in doing so.

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,

Marcella Durand



New York, NY 10002

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

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. The education and outreach that is done by the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's composting programs are so important for changing the minds of people like my landlady. So many New Yorkers do not know what compost is or are misinformed. Without community outreach, these folks will not use curbside composting. Community composting, through its organization and Master Composters, can help address this gap and share why we should compost and how to compost.

Luckily, I also have access to a backyard and use compost to increase the soil quality for trees and flowers (and vegetables on planters). Getting to make and use compost locally is so special. Unlike curbside compost, community composters keep composting local.

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 7million dollars annually. It seems like a program with a great ROI. Please reinstate it. Thank you!

Mariana Cordoso

Dear Honorable Finance Committee:
Thank you for the hard work you do.

Mayor Adams' proposed cuts to the DSNY are short-sighted and not necessary as a way to deal with the City's budget shortfall. The proposed funding cuts will jeopardize NY City's vital community composting program. Composting operations managed by Big Reuse, GrowNYC, LES Ecology Center; Botanical Gardens and others are essential for Zero Waste goals set by the city. More importantly, these community composting programs provide employment to over one hundred hard working individuals. They also help to mitigate methane release which as you know has a major impact on global warming.

These cuts to community composting, proposed by the mayor, must not be implemented. There are better ways.

Thank you,
Mark Hellermann
Assistant Professor
New York City College of Technology

TESTIMONY FOR THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE

Good day – My name is Mark Laster and I am Co-Chair of the Forest Hills Green Team. We have been running a food scrap drop off site since May 2021, in partnership with Queens Botanical Gardens; GrowNYC and the Big Reuse. We initially filled in until GrowNYC restarted their Food Scrap Drop Off Site by MacDonald Park in December 2021. When they restarted their site, we partnered with Commonpoint Queens by their food pantry in Forest Hills, in April 2022 until now, never missing a week.

I am testifying today to address feedback we are receiving at our weekly site. We are surrounded by coops and few of them have implemented the mandated curbside composting in Queens. When we speak to people, they tell us their coop boards and management companies do not see the need, since penalties do not kick in for awhile. With this reluctance, coupled with the expectation that coops provide their own containers to collect the food scraps, this makes it even more challenging. The brown bins that were distributed when the initial trial program started in Queens back at the end of last year were nowhere near sufficient for some large buildings to collect their food scraps even if they implemented the program.

When people ask for support and education for their coop boards, resources for this education are few and far between. In Forest Hills, there are no Smart Bins that I am aware of.

One final point: my own coop hid the brown bin when we received it; when it became mandatory, I let my board know and was emailed that we are in compliance. When I attempted to report my coop to 311, I was told enforcement does not start until the program is fully rolled out, which will be delayed if the cuts the Mayor is making are fully implemented.

I am highlighting these issues because I have been seeing reports that once Community Composting is stopped on January 2024, these options will fill in for the huge gap created by the end of this program. I stand here testifying to the fact this will not happen.

I thought we are the City of Yes; not the City of No.

No to community composting

No to full implementation to LL97

No to Congestion pricing

No to Wind Farm

No to replacing gas stoves

No to closing Rikers

No to the Climate Change superfund

No to a clean and healthy environment

No to recycling plastic bags

Yes to Rising tides

Yes to global records for heat

Yes to historic fires

Yes to other extreme weather

Yes to melting polar caps

Yes to windfall profits for oil companies not shared

Yes to insured loses in 2022 hitting \$120 Billion

Yes to emerging illnesses

Is this the City of Yes we are looking to create?

I implore the City Council to please find the \$3 million needed to keep Community Composting going;
lets say yes to something that is fighting climate change!

13 December 2023

Dear New York City Council Members,

My name is Mary Jo Burke, and I am a resident of the Lower East Side in Manhattan. I have been a devoted composter with the Lower East Side Ecology Center since 1998, when I discovered their compost drop-off program in the NYC Greenmarket in Union Square. Because of the LESEC's community compost program, I have had very little organic waste since 1998. With the recent addition of the DSNY's Orange Bin program, I have no organic waste. That's 25 years, a quarter century, of turning my organic matter into compost, not methane in a landfill!

As you might imagine, I am extremely saddened and disappointed to learn that the city is planning to defund community composting via its cuts to the Department of Sanitation as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG). 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 and residents.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of reinstating the funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost programming that will enable 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. (Yesterday, it was announced that the GrowNYC's program received an anonymous donation to fund it through June.) 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. All New Yorkers deserve better.

There are many positive aspects of community composting:

- Organic materials are not waste, but valuable resources to create compost that can be used in New York City parks and in tree beds. Organic material makes up approximately 1/3 of NYC's waste stream.
- Community compost programs divert organic matter from trash bins which reduces the weight of material being tipped at the landfill which reduces the tipping fees and hopefully, truck traffic to and from landfills.
- Composting the organic material locally will create green jobs for New Yorker City residents. As mentioned above, if these budget cuts are approved and implemented, 115 workers will lose their jobs.
- Separating organic waste from the waste stream will reduce the food stock available to rats, and this will help to reduce their population in NYC.

- Removing organic material from landfills will reduce methane production. Methane is a short-lived climate pollutant and is 86x more potent a heat trapping greenhouse gas than CO2 over a 20-year period. Reducing methane now will have a large positive impact on the reduction of GHG emissions.

Please reverse these cuts to community composting programs and vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program 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 a permanent New York City program.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my testimony.

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Burke (Manhattan)

12/11/2023 - Committee on Finance Hearing

Dear Representatives,

I am a resident of New York City, residing in zip code 10010. I am submitting my written testimony to express my concerns on the budget cuts for community composting. I am writing to ask that you save The New York City Compost Project and GrowNYC programs in light of announced budget cuts.

One of my small joys in life, and a bright part of living in this city, is being able to compost. I'm an avid composter, stopping by the Union Square Greenmarket multiple days a week to drop off my food scraps, a ritual I've had for the last six years. I feel fortunate that residents of our city have organizations such as LES Ecology Center, GrowNYC, and more that allow for New Yorkers like myself to have access to this valuable resource. I am one of just millions of people who are positively impacted having composting organizations in New York City. In a city as vast as ours, especially in Manhattan where we're surrounded by concrete, it is a way for me to make a direct and positive impact to combatting climate change and be connected to nature. Further more, it provides me community with other New Yorkers. The experiences I've had with the people attending the stands and fellow strangers over our mutual appreciation for composting has been such a great impact to me and is something I look forward to.

There is no question about the positive parts of composting. As you all know, and I am sure will hear endlessly in many other testimonies, it helps to divert 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills each year. If you compost, you can see how much less you are putting into and taking out your trash! Composting helps to transform our waste into valuable resources, providing essential and healthy soil for our parks, gardens, and playgrounds. It helps keep rats out of our trash - something Mayor Adams seems to find important so I'm quite confused as to why he is cutting these programs! Sustainably disposing of organics is critical to achieving New York City's ambitious climate and zero waste goals. Dumping food waste into landfills or incinerators instead of composting them adds to air pollution, accelerates the climate crisis, and will mean that the people who provide these critical composting services will lose their jobs. It is shameful to see New York want to cut these programs and jobs. I'm unable to compost from my home and I know and trust the way the composting is done by the LES Ecology Center is a helpful and beneficial part of our environment.

I urge the Mayor and City Council to halt these massive cuts and to guarantee full funding to these programs in the future. I hope that you advocate and vote for a better New York, which includes composting services. I will be watching and remembering come election time - the only way a candidate will have my vote is if they prioritize composting.

Thank you,

Maura O'Neill | [REDACTED] Gramercy Park New York, NY 10010 | [REDACTED]

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.

Maureen Chen

December 11, 2023

Please accept my respectful plea to Save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off (FSDO) for Compost program from elimination due to budget cuts.

Since 2015, our Roosevelt Island community has benefited from the partnership with the DSNY food scrap to compost program hosted by Big Reuse. Our weekly 5 hour Saturday food scrap collection for compost has diverted over 341,000 pounds of food scraps from the costly travel to other state's landfills. Landfilled food scraps create Methane gas, a pollutant more harmful than CO2. Whereas, food scraps that are processed and decomposed down into nutrient-rich compost capture CO2 in what is called a carbon sink. When that compost is returned to neighborhood urban soils the carbon stays underground and out of NYC air.

During the 2020 budget reduction, an **all volunteer** resident group was formed and named HAKI by the Lenape Center. Our grassroots Haki Compost Collective volunteer group has stood by the green bin food scrap to compost program each Saturday since September 2020 performing community outreach and education and giving back compost to neighbors in support of Big Reuse's compost processing work.

Much of that Big Reuse nutrient-rich compost has returned to Roosevelt Island and fed over 100 new baby trees, numerous school gardens, community projects and resident houseplants too.

Urban cities benefit from food scrap to compost programs in the following ways:

- Rat Mitigation. Removing food scraps from public sidewalks and school trash areas removes the food sources rats need to flourish.
- Local food scrap for compost programs reduces truck, barge, and landfill costs for NYC taxpayers.
- Compost amended soils are vastly more water absorbent and are a city smart strategy to stop severe, deadly and costly storm flooding events in NYC.
- Nutrient-rich compost strengthens open space and parklands by feeding tree and shrub roots which creates land more resilient to soil erosion.
- Healthy trees in an urban landscape pull more pollutants including CO2 from the air while emitting oxygen for residents while providing shade to reduce high heat events.
- Compost returned to urban soils captures carbon underground, while costly trucking and barging organic material like food scraps to landfill does not allow the scraps to decompose naturally and worse, emits Methane gas, a dangerous air pollutant.
- Employs 115 people who will all lose their jobs if this FSDO program is eliminated.

Please do everything in your power to save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off for Compost program from currently planned budget cuts.

Sincerely,
Melissa A. Wade
Roosevelt Island, NYC Resident

My name is Meropi Peponides. I am a New Yorker, a nonprofit worker, an artist based in Flatbush Brooklyn, and a member of the Justice Committee, a grassroots organization working to end police violence in NYC.

I am deeply disappointed and worried about Mayor Adams' financial plan.

As a remote worker, I rely on public libraries, as one of the few places in the city I can access a quiet space and internet. I was especially disappointed to learn that all local branches in my predominately Black and Latinx neighborhood are being forced to cut hours and other services that provide supportive, and safe places.

When I see Mayor Adams increasing the NYPD's budget by close to \$135M, while libraries, schools and accessible housing have faced 5 rounds of cuts, it tells me that the Adams administrations priority is to criminalize and suppress the needs and voices of Black, Latinx and other low-income communities of color in NYC over providing the support and services that keep New Yorkers healthy, safe, and thriving.

While not a parent, I have several young people in my life who I care about deeply and who attend our public schools. I am worried about them getting the education and opportunities they deserve.

- Nearly 500 school cops leave their jobs each year. A hiring freeze could amount to about \$40 million divested from school policing. This can help prevent more schools cuts and help fund school support staff such as restorative justice coordinators, social workers, counselors, and other evidence-based positions and practices that keep students safe and learning.

I have also watched members of my community struggle with losing their housing as rent in NYC continues to skyrocket and unaffordable fancy developments continue to be built.

Meanwhile, the NYPD buys robot dogs, regularly flies its helicopters and drones over our heads and has unnecessary officers on my block who mostly chat with each other and scroll their phones.

I urge the mayor and city council to stop giving the NYPD preferential treatment and invest in services that serve all new yorkers.

Hello Members of the Committee on Finance,

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

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,
Michael Kleban
Brooklyn

Michael Singh
Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens
CCNS Peter. J. DellaMonica Older Adult Center

I would first like to ask the City: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut?

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November.

With these budget cuts, we are afraid of the below programming changes:

- Quality of meals being served.
- Quality of Program and Services
- The number of meals is reduced per day.
- Physical activity programs include exercise to help balance, fall prevention, etc.
- In staff to that provides essential services.
- On transportation services and group trips for Older Adults.
- On special events, birthday parties, and holiday celebrations.
- On arts and crafts, Digital Literacy and inclusion, Health Promotion, evidence-based, Benefits and Entitlement services, homebound services, Outreach and partnership, Case Assistance, Nutrition education, and many more programs and services.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why CCNS Peter J. DellaMonica Older Adult Center joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We ask that the City:

- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

I hope that you consider the above accounts. I wish everyone a happy holiday!

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

Written testimony for NY City Council Committee on Finance Hearing December 11, 2023

Submitted by: Dr Miriam Basilio, Assistant Professor NYU and Clinton Hill resident since 2005

I am writing to express my dismay at the cuts to NYC parks, a vital public space for all New Yorkers. Fort Greene Park is a haven for everyone (including providing a safe recreational gathering space for our NYCHA homes neighbors). The park is vibrant, welcoming, always filled with people: families, people walking pets, practicing sports, hosting parties of all kinds from small gatherings to Halloween (including our annual pet costume contest) or our holiday tree. Vendors gather and the farmer's market has lines down the block on Saturdays. During the worst days of COVID lockdown it was the only place of refuge for anyone who left home. It is an **essential** part of our community, that if the cuts are made, will be dirty, filled with rats, and uninhabitable, dangerous for children who come there to play or for pets, and our elders, among others. Mayor Adams' cuts, including those to libraries, are **cruel** and **unjustified**. New York will be for the wealthiest who have private terraces/gardens/homes outside the City. There are SO FEW public spaces that are free and pleasant, Fort Greene Park builds community, please prevent it from becoming a neglected and unwelcoming wasteland.

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.

Moirá Delaney

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.

This program is not expensive; coming in at only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, 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.

As the nation's largest city, we should be leading in our Zero Waste initiatives, not taking a step back by defunding programs like this. **Ever since moving to the city in December 2019, I have been a strong advocate and participant of this program. It has been something that has made me proud to live in this city.**

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,
Monica Mielke
Manhattan

New York City Council Committee on Finance
Monday, December 11, 2023
Oversight Hearing – Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan.
Nancy Brunung, MPH

Good afternoon, my name is Nancy Brunung. As a public health professional who encourages New Yorkers to maintain their mental and physical well-being by spending time in our parks, I am dismayed and outraged that, yet again, parks are high on the list of budget cuts. Parks has been hanging on by its fingernails for years, and we can’t imagine going back to the days of the 70’s and 80’s when residents were fearful of entering parks—and rightly so.

The current parks budget cuts jeopardize the very heart of our communities, endangering crucial green spaces and recreational areas that serve as sanctuaries for New Yorkers. Their impact extends far beyond dollar amounts, impacting the well-being, and quality of life of countless individuals. Parks are invaluable resources that foster physical and mental health, provide spaces for social interaction, and mitigate the climate crisis.

Need I remind you that during the pandemic lockdown, public outdoor spaces were the places that kept us from going insane? We could move, breathe fresh air, enjoy nature, and feel part of a community in the only place it was safe to socialize with people outside our pods.

The nitty-gritty impacts of proposed budget cuts include:

- Our parks will lose a total of 1.3 million hours a year of cleaning, care and maintenance.
- Many parks will not be regularly cleaned and serviced, limiting many areas to just 1 to 3 times a week.
- Rats will continue to spike in our parks as 17,000 trash cans will be overflowing with garbage.
- During the pandemic we saw the impact of budget cuts on our parks. The cleanliness rating decreased by 10%. Council Members and other elected officials remember the phone calls and complaints to their office from constituent outcry of the declining conditions of our parks.
- Our sports facilities like baseball fields that park workers should be preparing for the upcoming season will not be groomed and maintained for our youth sport leagues and recreational users.
- In this housing crisis, our parks workers deserve job security, ensuring their work environments prioritize safety, prevent overwhelming conditions, and provide career advancement opportunities like the framework established by the POP program.
- The additional impact of the next round of budget cuts will severely disable the Parks Department’s ability to provide essential services to the public by affecting staff levels and limiting access to public pools.

- Our beaches will open with reduced staff and will not have the manpower to fully clean and maintain these spaces for 15 million annual visitors.
- Syringe collection will be impacted by the next round of budget cuts. Many in our community have raised safety concerns about user needles in parks where children and pets play.

NYC Parks must be shielded from the next round of budget cuts as these essential services and green spaces constitute critical infrastructure, especially in the face of the ongoing climate crisis.

For many New Yorkers, parks are our backyards -- necessitating cleanliness, consistent maintenance, and safety measures to ensure they remain secure havens for children and families to enjoy together.

Our beaches serve as a crucial sanctuary during extreme heat and need to be clean and maintained to provide a safe and refreshing respite for millions of New Yorkers.

**Testimony to the NYC Council Committee on Financing- Oversight Meeting on the
Mayor's November Financial Plan, December 11, 2023**

My name is Natalia Sucre, and I am a Master Composter of ten years, a founder and co-coordinator of a community composting program in Flatbush (Q Gardens), and a proud graduate and beneficiary of the farm apprenticeship at Earth Matter. I am also an adult librarian at the Brooklyn Public Library.

I urge the City Council to reject the 100% defunding of community composting proposed in Mayor Adam's budget. This is a short-sighted mindless cut that completely sets back the clock on achieving a livable, environmentally just city.

Since 2015, Q Gardens -- a small sliver of land over the Church Avenue Q line MTA station-- has diverted **188,784 pounds** of food scraps from landfill to date. Our 24/7 Community Food Scrap drop off serves **300+ neighbors**. Our open community compost shifts engage **25-30 volunteers** a year. We provide regular compost giveaways open to all, and our own and Big Reuse's compost combined have supported 4 street tree care events and two neighborhood wide beautification days in collaboration with the Church Flatbush Community Alliance.

QG Composting began partnering with Big Reuse in the fall of 2020 because, with city and market drop-off options shut down, we were receiving 700-900 pounds of food scraps weekly. Our small garden and volunteer crew simply did not have the capacity to process such volume on site. In 2021, through our partnership with Big Reuse, we diverted 40,305 pounds of food scraps from landfill. Big Reuse processed 60% of that.

Without our partnership with Big Reuse and with limited other community drop off sites once more eliminated, Q Gardens will be forced to shut down our community composting program at our current scale. The neighbors we serve --many of whom live in high rises where they report curbside is simply not happening-- will have no way to divert their food waste from landfill to do their part in shaping a livable and environmentally just city.

I also urge the City Council to fully fund public libraries citywide. As a librarian on the frontlines, I see every day the wide range of community needs the library serves. The library is essential in the lives of New Yorkers who are striving to survive and to contribute to their communities.

Closing libraries even one day a week is a waste of resources which are meant to support all, especially the most vulnerable. In the same way, eliminating community composting is a waste of all the work, infrastructure, expertise, and network-building that the New York Compost Project has produced for the public good over these past 30 years.

These cuts are a shameful betrayal of those who voted the Mayor into office. Please do all you can to reverse them.

SUBJECT: DECEMBER 11, 2023 HEARING - SAVE COMMUNITY COMPOSTING IN NEW YORK CITY

Dear Committee on Finance 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,

[REDACTED]

6

@gmail.com

[REDACTED]

2023

NATALIE C. PERGAM

WEST END AVENUE.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10024

TO: FINANCE COMMITTEE

This is a strong plea to
continue the compost recycling
PROGRAM THROUGHOUT N.Y.C.

It is important that individuals
take action to lessen effects of
climate change.

My building has bins for
composting as does my daughter's
in Washington D.C. I also have a bin
my daughter who lives on the east

side actually uses the bin at
the farmers market (W 77th) or the
one on the street near her library.
The cost of this program can be but
a minute part of the budget
worth much more.

I trust your good
sense will come to the
right decision

Natalie C. Pergam

**Testimony by Nathalie Huang, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
to the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Chair Justin Brannan
Mayor's November Financial Plan
December 11, 2023**

Good afternoon Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony. 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 have worked as a Compost Coordinator for GrowNYC for the past two years, 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. 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.

I, along with 114 others, will lose our jobs in less than a week, unless the Finance Committee and City Council take a stand to protect this program. This includes 53 good, union jobs. In fact, we were told only a couple of weeks ago that, due to the budget cuts, we would lose our jobs at the end of the year, and then just a few days ago on December 5th we were informed we will instead lose our jobs on December 17th, two weeks earlier than we were led to believe. As you know, we are being fired right before the holidays and with hardly any time to seek a new job. This is not right.

Our workers provide essential education, outreach, and waste diversion services to neighborhoods across the five boroughs. Our work services neighborhoods that have been historically underserved by the City and other government agencies, including the Bronx. This defunding comes just as our union, the GrowNYC Workers Collective, has begun negotiating our first contract to make our workplace truly sustainable for all workers. This is an injustice to the communities we serve, and to union workers whose labor is being devalued. Eliminating the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC's compost program funding is anti-sustainability, anti-environment, anti-union, and anti-New York.

Some people may believe that the inclusion of the Department of Sanitation's curbside composting program through the brown bins and the abundance of the orange smart bins means that community composting is no longer needed. This is NOT true. Community composting keeps the processing of our food scraps local to New York City, and yields nutrient-rich finished compost for parks, gardens, street trees, and participants of our composting programs. This process cannot be replicated with the brown bins or the orange smart bins, where most of the food scraps collected through these two programs are converted into biogas and not compost, with excess biogas being flared back into the atmosphere and contributing to a worsened, unhealthy environment. The compost created because of community composting goes BACK into communities to improve their soils, the biogas produced from brown bins and smart bins do not. I implore you to ask, as citizens of New York City, why the Department of Sanitation is marketing their curbside program as "composting" when much of the organic waste they collect is not actually being made into compost? This is greenwashing and they have not been entirely transparent or honest with the public about what is happening to people's organic waste and exactly how much organic waste they collect is truly being composted.

We, the employees in community composting, are the ones who have been doing decades worth of composting education and outreach and giving people from of all ages and all walks of life with tangible opportunities to learn about composting through hands-on workshops, volunteer activities, internships, and jobs. We are the ones collecting food waste from residents in all neighborhoods, as far south as Bensonhurst in Brooklyn and as far north as Norwood in the Bronx, and transporting the materials to our partner composting facilities like Earth Matter on Governor's Island, Big Reuse in Queensbridge Park, and the Queens Botanical Garden, where everything is composted locally on-site, and we return that compost to the very people we collected from to nourish their gardens, lawns, street trees, houseplants, and rejuvenate local soils. We are the ones providing the in-person, face-to-face daily and weekly interactions in all five boroughs of New York City to answer people's questions about composting methods, recycling initiatives, and innumerable ways to be less wasteful and more sustainable in this urban environment of almost nine million people. Now, because the Mayor is cutting 100% of funding for community composting, we can no longer collect food scraps from our weekly participants and our partner composting facilities won't be able to process food scraps locally and make compost ever again.

My own knowledge about composting came from being an intern at Earth Matter, and then becoming a Master Composter through the Lower East Side Ecology Center's Master Composter program. It's because of this wealth of knowledge I can empower my Bensonhurst, Bay Ridge and Flatbush participants in southern Brooklyn on food waste diversion, composting methods and the stewardship of street trees, plants, and community green spaces. I'm devastated at the thought of failing these underserved communities who I have cultivated meaningful, personal relationships with and soon I can no longer provide for them. Both Earth Matter and the Lower East Side Ecology Center are affected by these budget cuts, and the wonderful composting education opportunities I was afforded may not be available to others in the future because these organizations won't have funding to continue their composting operations at full capacity.

I live in fear and uncertainty that if community composting is eliminated, my participants in Brooklyn will have no options for separating out their food waste except through curbside

“composting”, which, as I stated earlier, is greenwashing and people deserve more transparency. Many of my food scrap collection participants in Bensonhurst, Bay Ridge, and Flatbush also face ongoing challenges with curbside “composting”, as it has not been implemented well. They live in apartments with more than 100 units where other tenants don’t participate in separating out their organic waste into the brown bin, or their landlord is disgusted with the idea of rotting food sitting in a bin and forbids them from using it, or they utilize the brown bin correctly and put it out for collection on the curb but the organic waste doesn’t get picked up from a sanitation truck. They come to my collection sites and bring me their food scraps because they want to do their part for a better environment, but also to engage with an actual, live person who they talk to, whether about composting or just to have that person-to-person interaction. It has been heartbreaking for me during these past few workdays to inform each and every participant at my worksites of the last day our composting program is meant to finish on December 17th.

The Mayor needs to restore the funding for GrowNYC and The NYC Compost Project programs, and to keep union workers employed through the holiday season to keep a roof over our heads. We deserve to remain at the very jobs we have the heart and passion for, and to continue serving the local communities who depend on us for community composting options. By cutting 115 community composting employees, people’s accessibility to composting education will be diminished significantly. Please give community composting another chance; we do immense, lifechanging work on such a small budget.

We are not in competition with the brown bins or the smart bins, however, it’s fair to say that community composting provides what the latter programs cannot: consistent and recurring education, outreach, and community engagement that are essential to bettering all of our communities. It does not make sense to only give people the option of using the brown bins and the orange smart bins for separating out their food waste. While it can be argued those bins are convenient, there is no existing infrastructure in the city to actually compost all the organic waste that these programs take in, and this necessitates why local community composting facilities funded through the city budget is still a much needed service for the remainder of this year and beyond into 2024.

The Council must vote NO to the Mayor's cuts to this essential program in order to save union jobs and livelihoods. 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,
Nathalie Huang
Bensonhurst, Brooklyn

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 about building soil structure, and the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC work 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.

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 itself is also inexpensive; coming in at only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

I am a young New Yorker. Every single day, I worry about my future. I've decided not to have children because our climate crisis will likely make their world completely unlivable. I suffer from dread at the prospect of Earthly destruction I was born too late to fight. This composting work and community was one of very few bright lights in my fight for my own future.

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,
Olivia Senghor
Brooklyn

SUPPORT FOR FUNDING FOR NYC PARKS AND PROGRAMS

My name is Paul Jones. I am an Assistant Scoutmaster for Scout Troop 396 in South Brooklyn. The Troop wants our voice to be heard about how much the NYC Parks staff, especially the Trail Maintainer program, has helped our Troop and our community.

The Scouts have learned about trail maintenance, invasive species and plant identification. We have participated in maintaining parks in other boroughs as well. This has given them the confidence to teach other Scouts what they have learned. Seeing the Scouts pass down this knowledge to the new members of the Troop, to other Scout Troops, and to people in the neighborhood has been truly priceless, and we owe it all to NYC Parks programs.

We now help maintain a community garden in our neighborhood and we continue to use all the knowledge we have gained from the NYC Parks programs. We hope to continue volunteering and attending educational programs offered by NYC Parks.

We would love to see this programming continue and help educate our citizens about our public spaces and help keep them beautiful. It is important for people to appreciate and respect the world around them.

On behalf of all the adult leaders and youth in Troop 396 we would like say a big "Thank you" to everyone in the Trail Maintainer program, NYC Parks staff, and to everyone fighting to keep these programs going.

December 12, 2023

Dear Mayor Adams and the New York City Council,

As a proud public school parent and as a faculty member of NYU and Hunter College, it seems to me that the way to strengthen the foundation of our community is by nurturing and developing leadership, critical, and creative thinking from a young age. There is a simple math equation that meets this demand: adding to the educational budget rather than subtracting from it. This will support the kind of growth that sets New York City up to provide the much needed and in demand resources for leveling the playing field and open the doors to opportunity.

Based on my research of well-being and what I am seeing in my classrooms, adjusting to the learning in-person environment continues to be extraordinarily difficult for students. Social, isolation, social, anxiety, and social media have increased barriers to learning because students needed to be connecting with one another rather than going inward during Covid. As a result of closing students off, they lack the ability to adapt basic coping skills and build resilience at the college level. This continued problem will almost certainly heighten the already exacerbated widening gap for POC and lower income students.

After school programs and luxuries such as ballet and soccer have gone by the wayside for many students whose families simply lack the means. Therefore, it is crucial to uplift these struggling students and fill in the gaps where students' families are unable to do so. By slashing the budget and removing these programs, you are creating a dangerous environment where students are left to wander their neighborhoods or go onto their devices even more, causing families who are already struggling to struggle more. However, structured programs help kids to develop other types of learning and fill in the gaps between when the bell rings and a parent's work schedule. This has been proven in the seminal ten-year longitudinal study, *Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art* by James S. Caterall.

You need to ask yourself, why did I take this public service position in the first place? What is my purpose in this role? Would it be possible to create a meaningful and just legacy narrative that is larger than myself and what could that look like?

Right now, myself and many other parents are not seeing this. We voted you in and let me tell you something: we will vote you out. Yesterday. We are very unhappy with the decisions you have made with the educational budget since you took office. We are doing unnecessary gymnastics just to keep the teachers in place and provide the services that you are continue to cut.

Kids need guidance and support throughout their lives, especially at school – the place where they spend the majority of their time. I have watched my daughter and her friends flourish as a direct result of these programs! It takes a village and very brave leaders to recognize their flaws and turn their decisions around in a different impactful direction. Let your legacy stand for the future leaders who are our children. Keep the Integrated Arts programming that provides opportunities to learn curriculum hands on, the mentoring programs that aim to combat chronic absenteeism and meet students where they are for their social-emotional learning, and the experiential learning opportunities for students to grow civically and culturally by expanding and adding to the educational budget.

With Respect and integrity,

Dr. Peggy Suzuki

I am Peter Tarson, and I am testifying against Mayor Adams's proposed spending cuts. I am deeply concerned by the slashing of library funding, such that Sunday services will be forced to be cancelled, the midyear budget cuts to the school system without preparation, forcing teachers to scramble to provide for their students, and, most of all, the targeting of Pre-K programs. When the services of childcare, education, and eldercare community (as library services) are cut, the result is not that these populations self-sufficiently meet their own needs, but that their unmet needs bottle up and burn into a cycle of desperation. Without good education comes a deficit in test performance, leading to lower employment possibilities and a greater likelihood that youth will end up enmeshed in gang violence due to a simple lack of other ways to make a living.

A study done with two government-funded pre-K programs in Chicago in 2001 showed that by age 27 children who did not receive government-funded pre-K were 5 times more likely to have been arrested than those who had. This is not a simple case of post hoc ergo propter hoc—the release of stress and logistical burdens on the parent side make legal and sustainable employment possible, and eliminate major sources of uncertainty and trauma. Disposing of this social service will only swell New York City's law enforcement costs, damaging the very fiscal responsibility it aims to resolve. These costs are already unsustainably high, especially for groups like the Strategic Response Group whose budget swelled from on the order of 10 to 90 million in its first year of deployment despite being almost exclusively used to repress peaceful protests and homeless settlements, and essentially *losing* responsibilities for terrorism, which it now no longer covers.

But we've been socialized not to care. As long as the money we spend is on force, punishment, the defense of the objects—turnstyles to not be jumped, windows not to be broken—against the soft and vulnerable bodies that inhabit them, we justify the expenses of police and punishment and the traumas they cause. Why? Why don't we justify the joys of reading with children easily and only pay for pain-inducing sprays on the faces of our siblings when there is no alternative? Can we not trim the fat from these police units like the SRG that no longer serve public safety objectives? Do you want to perpetuate a cycle of alienation, or invest in the reconciliation of our city's intergenerational wounds? And why, Mayor Adams, do you want another generation to be fed Nutraloaf as adults when they could be reading storybooks today?

TESTIMONY of
Philip A. Pecorino, Ph.D.
Professor, Queensborough Community College, CUNY

December 11, 2023
New York City Council Committee on Finance

The Mayor has proposed three 5% budget cuts to CUNY. In the November City of New York November 2023 Financial Plan Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) the report from CUNY as to how the current 5% cuts would impact mostly the Community Colleges of CUNY the University indicated it would amount to a \$23 million dollar cut and would dramatically impact the most successful program at CUNY that has national and international attention for its success with supporting students and retaining them through to graduation: the [Accelerated Study in Associate Programs \(ASAP\)](#)

042 - City University	City Personnel as of 6/30/25	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
November 2023 Plan PEG Initiatives					
ASAP Lease Savings Lower than expected spending in the lease budget associated with the ASAP (Accelerated Study in Associate Programs) program.		(959)	(1,011)	(1,003)	(994)
Fringe Savings Less than needed budget for fringe.		(16,308)	(18,962)	(19,022)	(19,080)
Savings Restoration Restoration of prior savings initiatives because funds were not utilized.		(5,900)	-	-	-
Total		(23,167)	(19,973)	(20,025)	(20,074)

The cuts would remove the most attractive and most appreciated features of the program that provide funding for book and METROCARDS as well as counsellors and advisors.

The cuts would be devastating to those most in need of assistance and would have been most likely to succeed. These cuts should not be upheld.

Thank you.

Dear Finance Committee

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

Philip M Smrek

My name is Queen Arsem-O'Malley and I am a New Yorker and parent in Brooklyn. All New Yorkers deserve access to the public services and resources that they need, and the mayor's budget cuts will drastically alter our ability to live in a supportive and safe city.

New York is home to the most billionaires in the world, but Eric Adams wants to cut vital services for vulnerable populations. NYC's priorities must be centered around welcoming and supporting new New Yorkers, not slashing services.

Eric Adams serves his own interests instead of serving our city. The Mayor's mismanagement of city funds and handing out large salaries to his friends are blights on his leadership - but New Yorkers should not be punished for his missteps. The Mayor has overstated the financial impact on the city of migrant arrivals in order to justify his terrible choices, but we are not falling for it.

Our kids deserve a bright future and a bright education. Cutting half a billion dollars from the Department of Education - cutting \$60 million from school food services that our kids rely on, cutting 3K seats that working families desperately need - does not serve our city.

Cutting \$22 million from libraries - one of the only free public spaces left - does not serve our city.

Cutting \$25 million from the parks department - places where people of every walk of life find peace, and activities, and amenities - does not serve our city.

All of this happens as the NYPD overspends and overpolices our neighborhoods.

The people of New York demand that the Mayor fund the programs that actually serve our city - sanitation, CUNY, social services, education, services for immigrants and new arrivals - and prioritize the people's needs over his own. The Council must use its power to ensure that these budget cuts do not pass unless they are rolled back or taken from the bloated budgets of the NYPD and DOC.

New York City Council Committee on Finance
Monday, December 11, 2023
Oversight Hearing – Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan.

Good afternoon, my name is Rachelle Dang and I am a resident of Brooklyn, living near McCarren Park in Williamsburg and Greenpoint. Thank you to the City Council Committee on Finance, Chair Justin Brannan and Parks Chair Shekar Krishnan for the opportunity to share my testimony about the Mayor’s November Financial Plan and how it impacts parks.

Regular maintenance of public parks positively impacts issues of stormwater damage and flooding across the city. Please do not defund this essential service - we need daily cleaning and maintenance of the parks as an important element to strengthen the city’s resistance to flooding. Trash overflow from the parks ends up clogging the catch basins, storm drains, and sewer grates on all nearby streets and surrounding neighborhoods. This prevents proper drainage of streets during periods of heavy rainfall, as recently as September 29, 2023, when the streets around McCarren Park flooded with over 10-12 inches of water. The sewer system of New York cannot function as an underground trash chute; trash cannot block the drains and catch basins. It is too costly for the DEP to constantly unclog catch basins when that trash could have easily (more cheaply) stayed inside trash cans that got emptied daily.

McCarren Park, like many other beloved public parks in the city, is a major destination for all New Yorkers. Since the pandemic, more people than ever are enjoying the outdoor space that parks provide, and this requires more service than before. NYC Parks are every person’s happy place, where we go to do the thing we love. Parks keep New Yorkers healthy – this cuts down on costs related to health care and mental health issues. The grass and trees help to absorb heat, making summers less fatal. Children need somewhere safe to play and exercise; families need a place to gather; everyone needs the park for their well-being.

Our parks need better upkeep and maintenance – serving the parks well has positive ramifications across the city, with the end result of saving money across so many sectors and contributing to the city we love so much. Please do not cut back on these important jobs.

Thank you,
Rachelle Dang
Brooklyn, New York

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,
Rajan Kaur
Brooklyn

New York City Council Committee on Finance
Monday, December 11, 2023
Oversight Hearing – Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan.
Rebecca C. Monroe

Good afternoon, my name is Rebecca C Monroe. I thank the City Council Committee on Finance, Chair Justin Brannan and Parks Chair Shekar Krishnan for inviting us to speak about the mayor’s November Financial Plan and how it impacts parks.

The current parks budget cuts jeopardize the very heart of our communities, endangering crucial green spaces and recreational areas that serve as sanctuaries for New Yorkers. Their impact extends far beyond dollar amounts, impacting the well-being, and quality of life of countless individuals. Parks are invaluable resources that foster physical and mental health, provide spaces for social interaction, and mitigate the climate crisis.

Here are the talking points about the impact of these budget cuts:

- Our parks will lose a total of 1.3 million hours a year of cleaning, care and maintenance.
- Many parks will not be regularly cleaned and serviced, limiting many areas to just 1 to 3 times a week.
- Rats will continue to spike in our parks as 17,000 trash cans will be overflowing with garbage.
- During the pandemic we saw the impact of budget cuts on our parks. The cleanliness rating decreased by 10%. Council Members and other elected officials remember the phone calls and complaints to their office from constituent outcry of the declining conditions of our parks.
- Our sports facilities like baseball fields that park workers should be preparing for the upcoming season will not be groomed and maintained for our youth sport leagues and recreational users.
- In this housing crisis, our parks workers deserve job security, ensuring their work environments prioritize safety, prevent overwhelming conditions, and provide career advancement opportunities like the framework established by the POP program.
- The additional impact of the next round of budget cuts will severely disable the Parks Department’s ability to provide essential services to the public by affecting staff levels and limiting access to public pools.
- Our beaches will open with reduced staff and will not have the manpower to fully clean and maintain these spaces for 15 million annual visitors.
- Syringe collection will be impacted by the next round of budget cuts. Many in our community have raised safety concerns about user needles in parks where children and pets play.
- We demand no more cuts to parks. NYC Parks must be shielded from the next round of budget cuts as these essential services and green spaces constitute critical infrastructure, especially in the face of the ongoing climate crisis.

- For many New Yorkers, parks are our backyards necessitating cleanliness, consistent maintenance, and safety measures to ensure they remain secure havens for children and families to enjoy together.
- Our beaches serve as a crucial sanctuary during extreme heat and need to be impeccably clean and diligently maintained to provide a safe and refreshing respite for millions of New Yorkers.

December 11, 2023
NYC City Council Committee on Finance
Testimony from Rebecca Elzinga

My name is Becca Elzinga and I am a resident of Sunset Park, a former employee of Partnerships for Parks, and an alum of the 2019 Master Composter class hosted by the Lower East Side Ecology Center through the NYC Compost Project. I am testifying today to oppose the devastating budget cuts to NYC Parks and community composting.

The proposed budget cuts are heartbreaking for our natural areas and our communities. Greenspaces are critical infrastructure for New Yorkers and the pandemic has further reiterated that fact. Mayor Adams campaigned on a promise to increase the Parks budget to 1% of the city budget; not only is this administration neglecting that promise, they are actively rolling it back. The city needs to protect our parks and increase funding for the critical staff that work tirelessly to maintain them.

At a time when parks are more utilized than ever, extra precaution should be taken to care for soil health. Local composting is the best and most effective way to rebuild soils while diverting tons of organic waste from landfill. Not only does compost strengthen the resiliency of our parkland, it fosters community involvement and empowerment. Park and garden groups create their own compost and rely on free donations of local compost to revitalize their spaces. Our neighborhoods thrive when these community groups have the resources they need to succeed. The technical support and education that city programs provide is critical in sustaining these groups and building the next generation of environmental stewards.

I welcome the expansion of DSNY curbside composting but recognize that the rollout of this program has been slow and ineffective. Even though residential composting is “mandatory” in Brooklyn, my building and many others have yet to implement any organics collection. In the meantime, I rely on the GrowNYC organics collection at my weekly green market. I cannot overstate the value of programs like the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC Zero Waste; these programs make me proud to be a New Yorker. Participating in the Master Composter course was an extremely rewarding experience that solidified my commitment to composting for life. It pains me to think of the livelihoods lost by these cuts, in parks and composting, and the sudden destruction of New Yorkers’ ability to live out their values and reduce their environmental footprint.

New York City cannot be a leader on climate if our natural areas, our compost yards, and our environmental programming are the first to be cut at every turn. This testimony is very similar to one I gave in 2021 when the same composting programs were put on the chopping block. Our city will continue to encounter immense challenges, but a climate-centered community-informed response is the only way forward. I urge the City Council to restore funding for NYC Parks and community composting.

Thank you,
Rebecca Elzinga

December 9, 2023

Dear Mayor Adams,

I hope you will consider changing course and not cut funding for community composting and curbside composting outreach.

These programs are vital for increased compliance within the citywide curbside composting program, leading to less opportunities for rats to breed and take over our city.

I trust you and your team will be able to balance the budget to ensure these cuts do not have to be made.

Thank you very much,

Rebecca Johns

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11214

Dear City Council Members,

Composting belongs in our community. Composting belongs in my family life.

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.

Diverting food scraps from landfills is 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. My family deserves better.

I go to the Union Square drop-off site at least twice a week. My small freezer can only hold my family's food scraps for a day or two before I need to head to the compost bins. Since my children were born I have committed to this lifestyle of dropping off our food scraps and prioritize it daily. My children watch me pack up our garbage and walk it over to the drop-off bins, and have watched me since they were babies. They know the volunteers who work there and they understand that our trash has the power to help the earth.

My children do not know a world where organic materials go to the landfill. It is confusing to them why someone would not make use of their food scraps. They understand the value in what we did not use. They are 6 and 9 years old. They know that our food scraps can give back, to our community gardens and to the earth. Without a proper curbside composting program, we would be forced to return to throwing food scraps in the trash. This is not where food scraps belong and it would be devastating to our family to do so. Let's all work to keep organic waste out of the landfill.

Composting allows our family to be of service to our community. My children thrive on this sense of community and duty to others and to our planet. It is an actionable item you would be taking away from them and our entire family. They will not understand the budget, the lease agreements or the space management issues. They will only know the disappointment and that will be your legacy. Please don't take this away from our community - from our family.

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

This program is not expensive; coming in at only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular. Your initial commitment to zero waste were what allowed us to engage in programs like this. Let's keep it going! Composting supports the city's goals. You can be the leaders who stand behind your environmental plans . You have the power to allow these programs to remain in place and find a way to make it work. It only does good. Let's make things work. Please be flexible and change your current budget plans. Things can evolve. Community composting only does good! It is too shortsighted not to realize the power it has. Allow these existing and successful programs to continue . You have the power to save our neighborhood composting. We are counting on you!

Sincerely,
Rebecca Loweth

Testimony for the Committee on Finance

Dec 11, 2023 10am

Rebecca Naegele

Community composting 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 education 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.

Community composting education programs throughout the city have taught me real-life applicable skills to process my 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. 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 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 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!

Community composting education programs throughout the city have taught me real-life applicable skills to process my 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. 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 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 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! I urge you to tell Commissioner Tisch that without community composting, the curbside program will fail and we will not reach the Zero Waste Act goals.

Rebecca Naegele

As someone who's been in the space of climate action for more than a decade, I urge you not to eliminate funds for community composting. For decades there's been misinformation about climate change, and now that the science cannot be denied, I'm disappointed that it's still not being taken seriously. The defunding of green programs that work is a HUGE step backwards.

Community composting has been paving the way for New York City to become a city that composts. LES Ecology Center, Big Reuse, Earth Matter, the botanical gardens and GrowNYC have created an invaluable network of composting advocates and educators. Should the \$0 budget for community composting move forward, this network that has taken over 30 years to foster will crumble.

These organizations help distribute high quality compost to schools, non-profits, and community groups. They also provide composting education and outreach, as well as food scrap collection sites. In addition, they provide community groups with guidance on how to compost on-site.

I am concerned that this valuable resource is being destroyed without much thought of the consequences. The City cannot replicate the outreach and education that is provided by these organizations in order to advance composting efforts. I am also concerned that the remaining options for composting are misleading. I prefer for my food scraps to be composting locally rather than flared off as methane into the atmosphere via anaerobic digestion. I'm upset that the by-product of this system, which is bioslurry, is being landfilled. I'm also upset that this is benefiting very few people and that a large waste corporation is benefiting from infrastructure paid by taxpayers money.

Furthermore, the loss of 115 green jobs, including union jobs, is going to hurt the green economy and individuals and their families relying on livable wages.

The six million dollars that was shared among the aforementioned organizations is so little compared to the \$500-million budgeted to keep NYPD radio communications away from public ears. I don't understand why it needs to be eliminated. I urge this administration and city council to eliminate non-essential projects/expenses in the pipeline before taking away a penny from community composting. We need more, not less funding for community composting programs.

Rosalia Lucero



Brooklyn, NY 11218

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. This program is not expensive; coming in at only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular. It also keeps the rats at bay by removing food waste from regular trash that sits on the curb, further rotting – it has been much more effective than hiring a “Rat Tzar” has in any case.

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,

Roya Haroun
Greenpoint, Kings County Resident

Testimony by Ruth Groebner, Member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective
New York City Council Committee on Finance
Chair Justin Brannan
Mayor's November Financial Plan
December 11, 2023

Good evening Chair Brannon and members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Ruth Groebner, and I am a proud member of the GrowNYC Workers Collective, represented by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, RWDSU.

I became a Master Composter in 2012 through the NYC Compost Project at Queens Botanical Garden. I was hired in October 2021 by GrowNYC as a Compost Coordinator. This is truly my dream job - talking to New Yorkers about all things compost. People want to do something to fight climate change; bringing food scraps to a drop-off where they can connect with a human face, ask questions, share ideas and sometimes plants, gives them a sense of belonging and purpose. Unfortunately due to the PEG's budget cuts, I've received a layoff notice and had to inform participants that the last day for collecting food scraps is next week.

If the community drop-offs cease operations, thousands of pounds of food scraps will end up back in the garbage. I say that because not everyone can use a smart bin or has one near them. Not every building is using curbside composting, including in the two boroughs where the program is in place. Many buildings are not using the brown bins. The habits people have developed of saving their scraps until the weekly trip to the market or a nearby drop-off will fade away leading to increased food scraps in trash bags which will lead to an increase in rats. All of the work community compost programs have achieved will be lost to this disruption.

My coworkers at GrowNYC and all the workers whose jobs are on the line are passionate about this work and the future of NYC. We've taken jobs with a purpose - to help the environment. Ending the livelihood of people who eagerly and efficiently work- in all kinds of weather - to make sure food scraps are collected, delivered and processed in order to help our city and our planet is such a heavy blow and has ripple effects on community gardens, education programs and more. Still, we are here to fight for our jobs and a sustainable NYC.

The cuts Mayor Adams wants - the complete elimination of the NYC Compost Project and all of the organizations' compost collection and processing operations - are the wrong direction for NYC. The Finance Committee and City Council must stop these cuts, take a stand for our jobs and for community composting.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Ruth Groebner
Queens

My name is Ryan Davis, and I am writing to oppose cuts to the budget for parks. Every New Yorker deserves safe, clean, green and parks and open space.

The current parks budget cuts jeopardize the very heart of our communities, endangering crucial green spaces and recreational areas that serve as sanctuaries for New Yorkers. Their impact extends far beyond dollar amounts, impacting the well-being, and quality of life of countless individuals. Parks are invaluable resources that foster physical and mental health, provide spaces for social interaction, and mitigate the climate crisis.

The cuts would mean parks would not be cleaned, they would be overrun with rats and littered with syringes, pools would not be staffed, and parks would not be the calming respite all New Yorkers need them to be

Parks are essential to life in NYC, and deserve to be treated that way. I remember the grim state our parks were in after similar budget cuts just a few years ago. Dirty, unsafe and poorly-maintained parks send a clear and visible message that the city doesn't care about its citizens. Please do everything you can to invest in parks and make them the havens New Yorkers deserve.

We demand no more cuts to parks. NYC Parks must be shielded from the next round of budget cuts as these essential services and green spaces constitute critical infrastructure, especially in the face of the ongoing climate crisis.

Dear Council,

I am writing to express my enthusiasm and support for the initiative to make composting a basic and necessary public service norm in our city. As a fellow New Yorker, I have been volunteering to compost at our local community garden Lydia's Magic Garden for a few years and have witnessed firsthand the benefits it brings to our environment. Composting is not only a great way to dispose of unwanted food, but it also produces a valuable soil additive that can enhance plant growth and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills.

I believe that implementing universal composting practices can make a significant impact on our city's waste reduction efforts and contribute to a cleaner and more sustainable environment. By diverting food scraps from landfills, we can reduce the amount of waste that ends up in our streets that attract unwanted pests like rats.

I am a solution-oriented, adaptable, and creative individual who is passionate about finding practical and sustainable solutions to environmental challenges. I believe that composting can play a crucial role in achieving our common human ideals of beauty and cleanliness in our city. By making composting a norm, we can create a cleaner and more sustainable environment for all New Yorkers.

I would be honored to have the opportunity to contribute to the New York City Council's efforts in promoting composting and reducing waste. Thank you for considering my support and for your dedication to improving our city's environmental sustainability.

Sincerely,
Saba Hamidi Coleman

December 9th, 2023

I Sage Finkle, am submitting this written testimony to advocate against budget cuts and the elimination of the community compost program. The removal of this program will not only cause the erasure of many green jobs with some of the most dedicated workers I have ever seen but will negatively impact our city financially. Composting cuts the amount of waste sent to landfills, therefore effectively reducing solid waste management costs. Composting turns MILLIONS of tons of food waste into dirt that we can put back into our soil. The loss of these programs would be devastating to our community.

December 11, 2023

Please accept my respectful plea to Save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off (FSDO) for Compost program from elimination due to budget cuts.

Since 2015, our Roosevelt Island community has benefited from the partnership with the DSNY food scrap to compost program hosted by Big Reuse. Our weekly 5 hour Saturday food scrap collection for compost has diverted over 341,000 pounds of food scraps from the costly travel to other state's landfills. Landfilled food scraps create Methane gas, a pollutant more harmful than CO2. Whereas, food scraps that are processed and decomposed down into nutrient-rich compost capture CO2 in what is called a carbon sink. When that compost is returned to neighborhood urban soils the carbon stays underground and out of NYC air.

And during the 2020 budget reduction, an all volunteer resident group was formed and named HAKI by the Lenape Center. Our grassroots Haki Compost Collective volunteer group has stood by the green bin food scrap to compost program each Saturday since September 2020 performing community outreach and education and giving back compost to neighbors in support of Big Reuse's compost processing work.

Much of that Big Reuse nutrient-rich compost has returned to Roosevelt Island and fed over 100 new baby trees, numerous school gardens, community projects and resident houseplants too.

Urban cities benefit from food scrap to compost programs in the following ways:

- Rat Mitigation. Removing food scraps from public sidewalks and school trash areas removes the food sources rats need to flourish.
- Local food scrap for compost programs reduce truck, barge and landfill costs for NYC taxpayers.
- Compost amended soils are vastly more water absorbent and are a city smart strategy to stop severe, deadly and costly storm flooding events in NYC.
- Nutrient-rich compost strengthens open space and parklands by feeding tree and shrub roots which creates land more resilient to soil erosion.
- Healthy trees in an urban landscape pull more pollutants including CO2 from the air while emitting oxygen for residents while providing shade to reduce high heat events.
- Compost returned to urban soils captures carbon underground, while costly trucking and barging organic material like food scraps to landfill does not allow the scraps to decompose naturally and worse, emits Methane gas, a dangerous air pollutant.
- Employs 115 people who will all lose their jobs if this FSDO program is eliminated.

Please do everything in your power to save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off for Compost program from currently planned budget cuts.

Sincerely,
Saima Toppa

Samantha Gore

[REDACTED]
Brooklyn, NY 11231

[REDACTED]
sgorester@gmail.com

10th December 2023

RE: MY SUPPORT OF COMMUNITY COMPOSTING

New York City Council
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Community Composting in Brooklyn and NYC

To Whom it May Concern,

The Compost Project in NYC is incredibly important to me, to New Yorkers and to our environment.

At an individual level, composting is a way to be the change I wish to see - for taking responsibility for my carbon footprint on the planet and to care for the environment.

Please reconsider re-funding this program that is working in humanity's benefit.

Sincerely,



Samantha J Gore

New York City Council Committee on Finance

Monday, December 11, 2023

Oversight Hearing – Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan.

Good afternoon, my name is Sandy Tran and I am a NYC resident, taxpayer, property owner, and parent.

The budget cuts proposed by the mayor are incredibly troubling as the city gets back on its feet. These are essential programs that must absolutely be protected from budget cuts:

Education: Our children need more! How sad is it that we can afford robot police dogs but not recess for our children?

Parks: invaluable resources for green-space starved New Yorkers. We already struggle with cleanliness, bathroom resources, and the unhoused in our parks - budget cuts will exacerbate existing problems.

Libraries: A safe place for new yorkers of all life. Cooling centers, public restrooms, internet access, safe play spaces for children. They are the unseen lifeline of the city!!

Composting: During a climate crisis, how backwards is it to reduce our composting program? Especially now as outdoor dining has caused rat populations to explode - this is one simple thing that can keep them out of our trash and benefit our parks at the same time. Cutting this program is short-sighted.

Please do not allow any further budget cuts to these essential New York programs! They will greatly affect quality of life for your average new yorker.

Thank you

Sandy Ley Tran

Dear City Council Members,

I am extodinarily 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.

How can we claim to be a world class city if we eliminate this kind of basic programming?

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.**

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,
Sarah Krauss

Sari Nordman

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,
Hon. Just Brannan, Chair
Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan
December 11, 2023

December 7, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I'm writing to support the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities. My name is Sari Nordman, and I work at Marquis Studios for PS352X@75X in the Bronx.

I am a 70's child and grew up in Finland. Finland was quite poor back then. However, I still enjoyed plenty of arts education. I think that studying music, visual arts, dance and doing many handcrafts as part of my comprehensive school was essential to my ability to learn math, science, reading and writing. The arts can help one understand space, time, the interrelation of things (essential for science,) make one a critical and creative thinker (as well essential for science) and a wholesome person. In today's Finland students enjoy one of the best educational systems in the world excelling in math, science and reading, and I truly believe that a key factor for that has been the continuous arts education.

I just received a NYSCA grant which I am very grateful for, and Governor Kathy Hochul says, "Research confirms what we've always known here in New York: arts and culture are a powerhouse, with a staggering return on investment for our economy and our communities. Nonprofit arts and culture organizations and their audiences generated \$151.7 billion in economic activity nationwide in 2022 and New York's unparalleled arts and culture sector is leading the way to benefit our residents, our students and our visitors every day. I commend these grantees on their achievements and look forward to their contributions in the coming year." Please don't give up arts education funding. It would be for the poverty of all.

Budget cuts of \$16.4 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and our students. Cuts to these agencies spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan are further compounded by the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds, which has funded considerable arts education programming to support student's academic recovery and social-emotional wellbeing.

Let us not take it out on our students or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster student engagement, mental health, tourism, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success **starts with the arts**.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

Sari Nordman

KEY TALKING POINTS

Specifically, we believe it would be helpful for the Council to hear:

- Talk about the impact of city funding on your ability to reach students and engage with new/returning partner schools (and that this level of funding should be continued).
- Specific results and examples of successfully providing arts and cultural education this year will be the most impactful for continuing to let the City Council know that Arts Education is Essential (i.e. trends they saw in learning, outcomes that tell the story of how arts ed can reach students in important ways);
- Specific examples of how you are currently experiencing or anticipate seeing the negative impact of budget cuts on your organization and students (to help create urgency to prioritize funding these areas).
- Stress the well-documented research showing that kids engaged in vibrant arts programs have markedly better academic and social-emotional outcomes.
- Thank the City Council for their investment and commitment to arts, culture, and arts education (this is the floor not the ceiling, when it comes to funding the arts in schools!)
- Universal access to arts education is an issue of equity in education; we still have a long way to go and these cuts stand to set us back considerably to reaching a point where all students have access to arts education.
- We encourage you to uplift messages of other coalitions as it relates to you and your work! Here is some additional written testimony language from other advocates:

Nonprofit New York: The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why **[YOUR INSTITUTION HERE]** joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

Advocates for Children: In addition to the \$600 million in cuts to education explicitly listed in the November Financial Plan, there is a slew of additional education programs on the chopping block. Over the last few years, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) has been using around \$1B per year in temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds for important long-term programs that were necessary long before the pandemic and will continue to be critical long after, such as 3-K, preschool special education, Summer Rising, 450 school social workers, community schools, school nurses, restorative justice, 60 school psychologists, 75 coordinators working in homeless shelters, bilingual staff, translation and interpretation, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, and more. While the federal funding will run out in June, the need for these supports will continue. Unless elected officials act, we are at risk of seeing cuts to each of these programs—cuts that are *on top of* the cuts laid out in the November Plan. Please do not let these programs end on your watch.

New Yorkers for Culture & Art: Check out [NY4CA's one-pager](#) for information about their talking points and how to testify.

Dear City Council Members,

I am a community gardener, environmental educator and land steward in NYC. I've had my hands in the soil here for years and have seen the incredible, abundant, life-affirming community and possibilities that grow from it. Compost is at the heart of that. 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. I have personally learned so much through this program and seen how huge of an impact it and the staff members who run it have had on communities across the city.

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.

Composting brings this city LIFE. Don't let this awful mayor do even more than he already has done to harm life in this city. Don't take away from us one of the few good things (including school, libraries, public health, etc) that our tax money is being spent on. This program is not expensive; coming in at only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular. When the NYPD is getting \$10 BILLION dollars, a tiny \$3 million can absolutely be spent on composting. Also it is absolutely wrong and violent for the city to claim that migrants are causing these program cuts. Don't let that fly.

Thank you,

Sebastian Bouknight

Astoria, Queens

Testimony from FIGURE SKATING IN HARLEM

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations Figure Skating in Harlem touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access.

We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further.

The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

Sharon Cohen

My name is Shawn Williams. I'm the father of Antonio Williams, who was murdered by the NYPD's Anti-Crime Unit in a hail of 15 bullets, shooting so recklessly from over 55 feet away in the dark that they killed their own cop too.

My son was just a Black man waiting for a cab. The NYPD had no legal justification to stop him. His only crime was "standing while Black."

It's infuriating to learn that Mayor Adams' financial plan is once again not only giving the NYPD preferential treatment but also **increasing the NYPD's budget by close to \$135M** in the name of some twisted dangerous approach to public safety.

My son Antonio Williams was safe until he was approached by the NYPD. The same way Kawaski Trawick, Allan Feliz, Eric Garner, and countless other New Yorkers were safe until the NYPD engaged with them. Kawaski was in his own home.

How dare you increase the NYPD's budget as you subject life-saving non-police services to yet another round of cuts, and while you prepare to **payout over \$100M in NYPD misconduct settlements from tax payer dollars**.

- This doesn't even include the personnel costs of keeping cops who kill, brutalize and sexually assault on payroll when the NYPD obstructs discipline and refuses to fire them for years.

It's been over 4 years and I'm still waiting for the CCRB to complete its investigation. One of the cops has already resigned.

NYPD abuses against New Yorkers is commonplace - again without consequence (e.g. unconstitutional and abusive stops like the one that resulted in the death of my son are increasing.

The NYPD's Strategic Response Group that has a long and documented history of abuse, misconduct, and racial profiling that has cost the city an **estimated \$135M** so far.

Unlike most other city agencies, the NYPD routinely blows its annual budget - without any consequences or penalty. **Treating the NYPD's bloated budget as untouchable while crucial city services are being slashed makes us less safe.**

In my daily work, I see the impact of people not having access to proper mental healthcare. It is backwards and barbaric to prioritize policing and criminalization over the mental health of New Yorkers, especially when the majority of people killed by police and people being caged in prisons have mental health issues.

New Yorkers are suffering while the NYPD waste millions on things like over **\$1,600 per month for a robot cop** (that also costs **2 cops to protect the robot**), **\$75K each for robot dogs**, and **\$500M to hide radio transmissions** from the public (despite it being fine for 87 years), true safety means investing in New Yorkers.

NYC should be investing in community-based mental healthcare, not police. We need quality police free education, food programs, real affordable housing, and safe spaces like libraries and community centers.

As a family with two full-time working parents, we have already been pushed to the outskirts of this city due the administration's refusal to invest in real affordable housing. This isn't right!

The only way to ensure what happened to our son does not happen again is to hold abusive officers accountable, divest from the NYPD, and invest that money into the programs, services and infrastructure that will enable our communities to be safe and healthy and to thrive.

END

IGNORE THIS

My name is Shawn Williams. I'm the father of Antonio Williams, who was unjustly murdered by the NYPD. Antonio was a loving son, twin, brother, and father. Because of the violent actions of the NYPD's Anti-Crime Unit, Antonio's babies have to grow up without their dad.

For over four years, my family and I have been calling for the mayor and NYPD Commissioner to fire the officers who murdered Antonio, but none of them have been held accountable in any way. Instead, they remain a threat to public safety as gun-carrying cowboy cops and have been collecting paychecks, paid with city funds that could have been used to hire teachers, guidance counselors, and healthcare providers. The same is true for the cops who killed Delrawn Small, Kawaski Trawick, Ronald Anthony Smith, Allan Feliz and too many others because the NYPD regularly obstructs discipline for officers who kill and abuse people and it's our communities that pay the price.

Along with all the money the City pays out to keep abusive officers on the force, NYC is also on track to spend over \$100M again this year for police misconduct lawsuit settlements, while the kinds of institutions and services that will help keep communities safe and healthy – like libraries, pre-K and affordable housing programs – are slashed.

This is Mayor Adams' twisted approach to public safety and addressing the needs of New Yorkers and his November Financial Plan takes it to the extreme by projecting a \$135million increase to the NYPD's budget, while subjecting life-saving non-police services to yet another round of cuts.

On September 29, 2019, Antonio was simply waiting for a cab in the Bronx, when plainclothes Anti-Crime officers drove up and jumped out at him. They had no legal justification to stop him. His only crime was "standing while being Black."

The NYPD had no reasonable suspicion for stopping Antonio. Antonio had the right to leave, but when he did, officers chased him, beat him, and gunned him down in a hail of 15 bullets. They were so reckless that when they shot at our son from over 50 feet away in the dark, they also murdered one of their own. NYPD claims Antonio had a gun, but my son never pulled a gun and that gun was never fired. My son was never a threat to anyone.

The Anti-Crime unit that killed Antonio was disbanded the next year because of its brutality, but Mayor Adams brought it back and rebranded it as "Neighborhood Safety Teams". The Mayor has been patting himself on the back about these teams - which are contributing to the rise of unconstitutional stop-and-frisk - while at the same time whittling away and New Yorkers' social safety net.

Now Mayor Adams has put these teams in more neighborhoods along with drones, robots, and encrypted radio transmissions. None of this increases our safety. It only means that the NYPD is draining resources from the programs that will keep us safe while further criminalizing us.

In my daily work, I see the impact of people not having access the proper mental healthcare. Rather than funding these extreme policing tactics, NYC should be investing in community-based mental healthcare, among other non-police services.

The only way to ensure what happened to our son does not happen again is to hold abusive officers accountable, divest from the NYPD, and invest that money into the programs, services and infrastructure that will enable our communities to be safe

We should be doing all we can to do our utmost to address the greatest challenge of our time, global warming. Methane is a huge contributor to the problem. By taking a large part of one of the causes of methane production- food in our waste system headed for landfill- we are addressing this problem in the most effective way possible. By composting we are also creating soil, something else we are starting to have great need for in the world. Although I have not looked at the monetary implications in the budget, making compost and selling or using it for park, rather than buying it, combined with spending less for garbage disposal is a money saver. I am personally an avid composter. My regular garbage is cut in half and dry. I do not even need a plastic bag for it. Furthermore, my landlord refuses to put out a brown bin for our building because he thinks it is gross and people won't use it. We NEED community composting programs like Big Reuse, LESEC, Earth Matter and the botanic gardens to do education and outreach. Many people are averse to compost, and they need to be educated in culturally appropriate manners. These organizations that have been working in their communities for 30+ years are the footing there and therefore their outreach efforts will be much more successful. As far as the Big Reuse facility, once again reusing rather than landfill is much more efficient and is a benefit to the community as it offers cheaper materials to enterprising and smart people, of which there would be many more where it publicized more. I get regular emails from the Ecology Center and feel that education of our children, which is one of its major functions, should be a priority. For all these reasons and more, cutting out all these enterprises is extremely short sighted.

Sheilah Goodman

I am deeply troubled by the potential loss of community composting programs, which have been a cornerstone of environmental education. 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 NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC have been indispensable in providing compost outreach and education to over 600,000 New Yorkers annually. The grassroots, hands-on education offered by community composting organizations is irreplaceable and serves as the linchpin for the success of the curbside organics program.

Furthermore, the budget for community composting is a drop in the bucket compared to DSNY's total budget. It makes no sense to completely eliminate the over 115 community composting jobs, when no other program has been completely eliminated. Compared to DSNY's other spending, these programs take up such a small portion of the budget, yet have an outsized impact on the ground, in communities. As we deliberate on the future of our city, I urge each of you to consider the lasting impact of these programs and to use your influence to push for their immediate reinstatement. Our city's commitment to environmental education and sustainability is at stake.

Shell Shetty

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

Shutting down, defunding the already skeleton fund for composting community organization, would be 2 steps back when we had 1 step forward.

We would not save NYC money when over one hundred jobs would be lost. Not to mention hundreds of volunteers not participating. We would have to spend money buying probably inferior compost to amend the soil in community gardens, parks, schools and street trees.

New York City should be the greatest city for communities especially not for profit organization where most people are not paid to work. We were heading toward a zero waste city when the then Mayor Bill de Blasio in 2010 implemented a plan to progress until we have zero waste.

At this time to stop progressing in community composting shutting us down would mean poor soil which means poor plants, food through lack of rich compost, education in the schools, NYCHA gardens and Master Compost certification in the 5 boros. The impact would hurt us now and generation to come. Our city should include us in the budget like other cities who has less income and surpass us in composting. Are healthy plants and trees important?

Shirley Chai
Master Composter
Astoria, 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. 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.

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 only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular.

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,
Shyanne Washington
Bronx, New York

December 12, 2023

Please accept my respectful plea to Save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off (FSDO) for Compost program from elimination due to budget cuts.

Since 2015, our Roosevelt Island community has benefited from the partnership with the DSNY food scrap to compost program hosted by Big Reuse. Our weekly 5 hour Saturday food scrap collection for compost has diverted over 341,000 pounds of food scraps from the costly travel to other state's landfills. Landfilled food scraps create Methane gas, a pollutant more harmful than CO2. Whereas, food scraps that are processed and decomposed down into nutrient-rich compost capture CO2 in what is called a carbon sink. When that compost is returned to neighborhood urban soils the carbon stays underground and out of NYC air.

And during the 2020 budget reduction, an all volunteer resident group was formed and named HAKI by the Lenape Center. Our grassroots Haki Compost Collective volunteer group has stood by the green bin food scrap to compost program each Saturday since September 2020 performing community outreach and education and giving back compost to neighbors in support of Big Reuse's compost processing work.

Much of that Big Reuse nutrient-rich compost has returned to Roosevelt Island and fed over 100 new baby trees, numerous school gardens, community projects and resident houseplants too.

Urban cities benefit from food scrap to compost programs in the following ways:

- Rat Mitigation. Removing food scraps from public sidewalks and school trash areas removes the food sources rats need to flourish.
- Local food scrap for compost programs reduce truck, barge and landfill costs for NYC taxpayers.
- Compost amended soils are vastly more water absorbent and are a city smart strategy to stop severe, deadly and costly storm flooding events in NYC.
- Nutrient-rich compost strengthens open space and parklands by feeding tree and shrub roots which creates land more resilient to soil erosion.
- Healthy trees in an urban landscape pull more pollutants including CO2 from the air while emitting oxygen for residents while providing shade to reduce high heat events.
- Compost returned to urban soils captures carbon underground, while costly trucking and barging organic material like food scraps to landfill does not allow the scraps to decompose naturally and worse, emits Methane gas, a dangerous air pollutant.
- Employs 115 people who will all lose their jobs if this FSDO program is eliminated.

Please do everything in your power to save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off for Compost program from currently planned budget cuts.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Herlihy

December 11, 2023

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Please do everything in your power to save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off for Compost program from currently planned budget cuts.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Johnson

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. As a graduate student working towards an MBA in Sustainability, I see that we have solutions to so many problems, but we struggle to enact them. The fact that we have a good program in place, and are choosing to disband it is unacceptable. This program is not expensive; coming in at only 0.3% of the Sanitation budget, it is a drop in the bucket, and yet it has proven to be effective as well as immensely popular. Not only does composting have a lot of benefits, having organics in our garbage has a lot of disadvantages, causing increased emissions from landfills.

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,
Stephanie Walker
Brooklyn, NY

ood morning, Chair Brannan, and members of the Committee on Finance:

My name is Sue Ellen Dodell and I worked for the City for 44 years as an attorney and administrative law judge. As a City retiree, I volunteer to ensure that the City keeps its promises on healthcare. I'm here today to make sure that the Council continues to comply with its obligations under Admin. Code Section 12-126, which, for more than 50 years, has required the City to provide retirees with a choice of traditional Medicare with a Medigap plan.

Please support Int. 1099, which provides that the City must offer at least one Medigap plan to its retirees, and that nothing in the legislation will interfere with the City unions' ability to collectively bargain for their employee members.

As you know, the Mayor and the MLC want to put retirees into an inferior so-called Medicare Advantage Plan, because of a Ponzi scheme: in 2014, the MLC took money from the City's Health Stabilization Fund and used it to pay for teacher raises and hasn't paid it back. If we are forced into the so-called Medicare Advantage Plan, we will lose access to our doctors, hospitals, and treatments. **This literally is a matter of life and death.**

NYC Retirees have been fighting for two years in the courts to keep our earned Medicare benefits from being stripped away and we've had seven court decisions in our favor.

But litigation is expensive, and retirees live on fixed incomes. We've been financing our lawsuits ourselves with small contributions and the City keeps appealing our wins. Some Council members are telling us to wait until the lawsuits conclude, but lawsuits can drag on for years. That's why we need Intro. 1099: to protect us now!

Please don't stand idly by and refuse to help retirees who dedicated their lives to the City: other states and cities are watching, and a refusal to help us will hasten the end of traditional Medicare. Thank you.

December 11, 2023

Dear City Council Members,

I write as a master composter to urge you to save community composting in NYC. NYC has the opportunity to lead in environmental sustainability, but is now taking the track of what we call “greenwashing,” that is pretending that you are actually supporting and growing sustainability but it’s mostly a public relations stunt that is not doing what it claims to. We are aware that the industrial scale curbside composting that the city is rolling out has not, as of yet, delivered on its promise to capture methane for energy or convert the bulk of food scraps into compost. It is laudable that you have that as an aim, but none of this would be possible without the existence, for decades, of community composting in the city. The organizations you are set to defund do the majority of composting in the city. They contain the knowledge that will make larger scale composting possible. Their work builds a community of citizen composters who will aid in the success of larger scale initiatives. This summer my building in Queens almost gave up curbside composting until I, with my training received through the master composter program, stepped in and problem solved so that we could continue. We need to grow community composting, not slash it. It is where people come together, revision their garbage into a source of gold, and contribute to reversing the disastrous impact that our city makes on mother earth with our tons of garbage. Community composting is such a drop in the NYC budget. Rather than treating it as one you can wipe away, understand that it is the seed that makes further growth possible. Do the right thing. The generations to come will thank you.

Respectfully,

Dr. Sujani K. Reddy
Jackson Heights, Queens, NY

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."

Susan Boyle

[REDACTED]

From: Susan Evans <susanmevans3@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 14, 2023 9:21 AM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Written testimony - Budget Committee Hearing December 11, 2023

[REDACTED]

Good morning,

I am writing in opposition to the Department of Sanitation's proposed budget cuts wherein the entire community composting budget is cut. Community composting is a necessary, long-standing, and cost effective program in NYC. It SAVES the city money and it is one of the lowest cost programs in DSNY. Historically, DSNY has a snow budget of just under 100 million dollars. To fund community composting across multiple sites, employing over 40 staff, is just around 2 million dollars. How is this budget cut fair? How are you justifying it? Community Composting is one of the easiest ways for the city to meet its sustainable food waste goals. Time and time again DSNY's brown bin program has proven ineffective is actually combating food waste effectively— it needs more time, more outreach, and more expertise from COMMUNITY COMPOSTERS.

I have completed urban gardening courses in NYC, was in process of completing the Master Composter program before it is cut in this proposal, and have been caring for NYC gardens and parks since I was in high school on Staten Island. Please, listen to the people of NYC and reinstate funding for one of the most cherished, beautiful, and cost effective programs the city has ever supported: community composting.

Sincerely,
Susan Evans
Big Reuse

Monday, December 11, 2023

Dear Members of the New York City City Council,

I hereby submit my written testimony to urge the City Council to vote to continue fully funding New York City's community composting programs for the foreseeable future.

As a resident of New York City, I have been proud to see the city embrace composting in recent years as a way to minimize waste sent to landfills, reduce our carbon footprint, and improve sustainability. Additionally, community composting initiatives have provided well-paying green jobs for New Yorkers, who will lose their livelihoods if these programs lose their funding.

Living in an area of Brooklyn that has not yet implemented the use of brown bins for compost collection, I have relied on my local GrowNYC farmers' market to serve as a compost drop-off point for the past 10 years. Every Sunday, I take my compost to the Cortelyou Road farmers market, where I am greeted by the friendly faces of GrowNYC employees and volunteers who work tirelessly to keep the compost donation center running. I am overjoyed to see the popularity of this program - I witness bins overflowing with compost drop-offs given by people from all ages, races, and ethnicities. It seems that our shared commitment to composting is something that ties New Yorkers together.

Without continued funding of GrowNYC community composting drop-offs, and other similar programs led by Big Reuse, the Lower East Side Ecology Center, and others, there will be nowhere for myself and many of my fellow New Yorkers to donate our compost. I, and thousands of other New Yorkers, will be forced to put our compost into the trash, where it will sit on sidewalks to become infested with rats and contribute to litter on our streets, and then sent to landfills where it will ultimately release methane and carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to the warming of our planet, with 80 times greater warming power than carbon dioxide, according to the Environmental Defense Fund. According to the EPA, municipal solid waste (MSW) landfills are the third largest source of methane emissions in the U.S., producing 14.3% of the methane emissions that are released into our atmosphere.

Conversely, when food waste is composted, it can be turned into healthy, nutrient-rich soil that can be used in community gardens and urban farms. Community gardens are a pillar of many New York City neighborhoods - I myself am a proud member of the Newkirk Community Garden in Kensington, Brooklyn. We annually receive compost from the NYC Department of Sanitation which we use in our garden beds, and we donate hundreds of bags of compost to residents to use in their own gardens.

If New York City wants to become a beacon of climate responsibility and resiliency, we must continue to fully fund composting initiatives across the city. We have the opportunity to provide employment, encourage sustainability, and improve the wellbeing of the residents of our city. If we cut funding to these crucial community composting programs now, we will have more garbage clogging our streets and landfills, more pollution in our air, and we will lose the benefits that compost can provide to our city's parks and gardens.

I urge you to vote to continue funding community composting initiatives in New York City in perpetuity.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

Respectfully yours,
Talía Steiger,
NYC District 40 Resident

Hello, my name is Tamara Tucker and my children attend public school in New York City. It continues to appall me and my fellow parents, that the Adams administration continues to try and raise funds on the backs of our children and most vulnerable community members. The idea that we have to cut public school budgets for the third year in a row, when enrollment has shown to be increasing, defies logic.

While progress and innovation are important, they should not come at the expense of our most crucial services that directly impact the safety and quality of life of those of us who call New York City home. When I read that millions are being invested in an electric ferry to Governors Island and robots monitoring the subway, while people continue to sleep on the street, libraries are cutting hours, and schools can't afford basic programming, I seriously question this administration's priorities. In one of the wealthiest cities in the world, why do we continue to rely on the reduction of desperately needed public services to fill budget deficits, especially when departments like the NYPD and the DOE Central Office routinely overspend their budget by hundreds of millions of dollars without repercussion or future budget adjustments for improved accuracy?

Given the current state of the world, New York City should be a leader in public investment, we should have the strongest public schools, the most beautiful parks, the most accessible libraries, and one of the strongest social safety nets. Yet we continue to strive for the status quo and then wonder why things aren't improving.

I am not alone in my frustration. Please allow this testimony to reflect my most sincere objections to these budget cuts. I do not understand why Eric Adams wants to be remembered as one of the worst mayors in New York City history, but he seems committed to that being his legacy. I urge my own City Councilmember, Shaun Abreau, and every other member, to stand up for what is fundamentally right and reject these cuts and fight for alternative solutions to raise revenue. These choices and decisions will not be forgotten when the next election comes around.

December 11, 2023

Testimony for Finance Committee by Tanesha Grant ED Parents Supporting Parents NY

Hello my name is Tanesha Grant and I am the executive director for Parents Supporting Parents NY. Thank you Chair Brenann for holding this important meeting. We have been listening to testimony since 10AM. We feel it is really irresponsible for the Office of Management to come her and provide no answers to vital questions asked by the NYC Council members. We heard a repeated response of blaming asylum seekers for these outrageous proposed budget cuts to all our essential public services which includes education, housing, mental health services, social services etc. We keep hearing our leaders say we don't have the money. Yet we live in the richest city in the world. We have the money for millions in wasteful spending and wasteful contracts for for profits. We also have a reserve so it's not really believable to hear we don't have the money to fund essential public services resources. We believe this is bad leadership and mismanagement is the cause of these bad calls by the current administration. We need NYC Council to hold the line and say no to these cuts. WE need you to choose care not cuts on the backs of our communities.

We have heard countless agencies, unions, non-profits, cultural and arts organizations, community activists, students and parent leaders object to this madness in budget cuts. This is the voice of the city. Not only did the people speak but we also came with solutions. We need to tax the ultra rich and stop over funding the NYPD. All these services connect to better public safety for our city. As our community partner Advocates For Children stated, we have essential school programs that were funded by Federal Covid'19 funds that should be permanently funded in the DOE budget. Programs like school nurses, school counselors, pre K and 3 k, Special education funding ETC are on the chopping block but our students will still need these services and more. We agree with CM Charles Barron. We have billions in reserve and unexpected revenue that we can use to fill the budget gap. We have heard no good reasons as to why this money can't be used in our NYC budget. Chair of the education committee CM Joseph mentioned how parents are having to go outside of the DOE to find schools that can support their children's needs because D75 is already underfunded and the city has to foot the bill of private tuition instead of our D75 schools being fully funded,

We have had several clients who did not receive their food stamps on their pickup day. When they went to HRA they were told that the system is working slow. We believe its more than that. We know that HRA is understaffed and it is already affecting people's benefits that they depend on to survive. These budget cuts will further impact services in a negative way and that has real effects on our families and community members. We ask the finance committee to look into these numbers that the Office Of Budget Management have on people returning to shelters after 30/60 days. The director stated that ist was 16%. We believe it may be only 16% allowed to return because we know people who have been turned away from shelter. People with children at that, The under investment in real affordable housing and NYCHA public housing has caused

a real housing crisis in the city of New York. Yet at the same time we are cutting funds to Arts & Cultural centers which bring in revenue and help our children learn about different cultures. The people of NYC need responsible administrations that curbs useless spending and fully funds public agencies to provide all the services New Yorkers deserve. That's what we pay very high taxes for. We pay taxes with the understanding that money will be used for the collective good of the people of NYC.

The rich aren't leaving NYC. Our community members are because they can't afford to raise their families in NYC. This should be a clear sign of the awful situation New Yorkers have been put in. Stop hiring for profit organizations to do the work community based organizations do daily with significantly less funding. We do it because we love our communities and our schools. We love the people and the people should be serviced by fellow community members who have the same lived experiences and their best interest at heart. In closing we implore our NYC Council as a whole to say no to all cuts to our essential public services. Thank you for reading my testimony.



Parents Supporting Parents NY
Executive Director

Tanesha Grant
Tanesha Grant

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.

The elimination of community composting programs is a disservice to our city's educational outreach efforts. Over the past three decades, the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC have been instrumental in fostering climate justice and sustainability services. The potential loss of over 115 green jobs, including 50 union positions, is not just a setback but a grave error in judgment. As we deliberate on the future of our city, I urge each of you to consider the lasting impact of these programs and to use your influence to push Commissioner Tisch for their immediate reinstatement. Our city's commitment to environmental education and sustainability is at stake. In a time where everything feels a little bit hopeless, please give us hope.

Taylor King

TAYLOR VALENTINE
Arts Educator / Peer Facilitator / Instructional Coach
Theatre Artist

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,
Hon. Just Brannan, Chair
Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan
December 11, 2023

12/7/2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I'm writing to support the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities. My name is Taylor "TV" Valentine and I work as an Instructional Specialist at Learning through an Expanded Arts Program (LEAP) and as a freelance educational consultant, all across NYC and countrywide.

LEAP partners with school communities to offer creative arts programs that encourage New York City youth to pursue their passions, develop their strengths, and amplify their voices. We envision a city where education is equitable, and the arts are accessible for youth in communities that are rich in culture and capability and have been intentionally and unintentionally excluded and under-resourced. Today, though, I'm writing to you from a personal perspective. As an artist myself, and through my work as a teaching artist, coach & consultant with many schools and community based organizations across NYC, I have seen the transformational power of the arts firsthand.

With the arts comes a strong and inherent connection to Social Emotional Learning, a robust framework that helps people build & maintain relationships with themselves, with others, and with the world. To say it plainly, **cutting funding from the arts in NYC schools is detrimental to the social and emotional well being of our youth**. The arts foster so many foundational learning elements that are essential to being well-rounded individuals and robust communities: Empathy, Belonging, Creativity, Confidence, Curiosity, Authenticity, Passion, Storytelling, Critical Thinking, Comprehension, Communication, Collaboration, Leadership, Systems Thinking, Discernment, and so much more. Pointedly, the arts and their inherent processes, allow people **to heal, regulate and work through trauma so they may better navigate the world around them**.

I'd like to tell you a story of a 6th grade student I taught after school drama to in Cypress Hills Brooklyn. She was not a great student, according to her administrators and teachers. She often missed class and got in fights. But when she learned about the musical being held after school, she started attending school every day, because that was a requirement to be in the show. Even though she had a small role, she didn't miss a rehearsal; she learned all the lead roles without asking, and sure enough had to take one over at performance time. This alone shows us the power of the arts. But it doesn't stop there: after the performance, she came up to me with a thick, printed out *sequel that she wrote herself!* She was so inspired that she took the story and kept going with it.

Years later, after I had moved into coaching, I found myself supporting a teaching artist at a high school, and this student was in one of the playwriting classes (of course!) I was observing. They truly had transformed! They had stepped into their authentic non-binary identity, were brimming with joy, and spoke about the local colleges they were considering. I was blown away! I believe in every fiber of my being that access to theater,

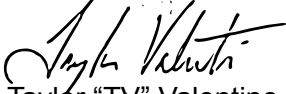
and all the learning it brings with it, had everything to do with that transformation and allowed this young person to become the adult they were meant to be. And while this is only one student out of hundreds of thousands, I am willing to bet every art teacher and teaching artist has at least one of those types of stories...

Budget cuts of \$16.4 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and our students. Cuts to these agencies spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan are further compounded by the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds, which has funded considerable arts education programming to support student's academic recovery and social-emotional wellbeing over the past three school years.

Let us not take it out on our students or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster student engagement, mental health, tourism, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success **starts with the arts**.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Taylor Valentine', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Taylor "TV" Valentine

Lifelong Arts Educator & Advocate

December 12, 2023

To Whom it may concern:

Please accept my respectful plea to Save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off (FSDO) for Compost program from elimination due to budget cuts.

Since 2015, our Roosevelt Island community has benefited from the partnership with the DSNY food scrap to compost program hosted by Big Reuse. Our weekly 5 hour Saturday food scrap collection for compost has diverted over 341,000 pounds of food scraps from the costly travel to other state's landfills. Landfilled food scraps create Methane gas, a pollutant more harmful than CO2. Whereas, food scraps that are processed and decomposed down into nutrient-rich compost capture CO2 in what is called a carbon sink. When that compost is returned to neighborhood urban soils the carbon stays underground and out of NYC air.

And during the 2020 budget reduction, an all volunteer resident group was formed and named HAKI by the Lenape Center. Our grassroots Haki Compost Collective volunteer group has stood by the green bin food scrap to compost program each Saturday since September 2020 performing community outreach and education and giving back compost to neighbors in support of Big Reuse's compost processing work.

Much of that Big Reuse nutrient-rich compost has returned to Roosevelt Island and fed over 100 new baby trees, numerous school gardens, community projects and resident houseplants too.

Urban cities benefit from food scrap to compost programs in the following ways:

- Rat Mitigation. Removing food scraps from public sidewalks and school trash areas removes the food sources rats need to flourish.
- Local food scrap for compost programs reduce truck, barge and landfill costs for NYC taxpayers.
- Compost amended soils are vastly more water absorbent and are a city smart strategy to stop severe, deadly and costly storm flooding events in NYC.
- Nutrient-rich compost strengthens open space and parklands by feeding tree and shrub roots which creates land more resilient to soil erosion.
- Healthy trees in an urban landscape pull more pollutants including CO2 from the air while emitting oxygen for residents while providing shade to reduce high heat events.
- Compost returned to urban soils captures carbon underground, while costly trucking and barging organic material like food scraps to landfill does not allow the scraps to decompose naturally and worse, emits Methane gas, a dangerous air pollutant.
- Employs 115 people who will all lose their jobs if this FSDO program is eliminated.

Please do everything in your power to save the NYC Food Scrap Drop-Off for Compost program from currently planned budget cuts.

Most sincerely:

Thom Heyer



Roosevelt Island NY 10044

December 11th 2023

Hi

I'm Thomas Cleary, an Assistant Professor in the Library at LaGuardia Community College, CUNY, where my role is College Archivist. I've been a CUNY student and have worked at CUNY libraries for over 10 years in different titles.

I'm here again to talk about the state of CUNY libraries today. At the May CUNY Board of Trustees meeting I came to talk about underfunded libraries. Since then we've only received cuts. Because of those cuts we have had to cut hours due to loss of staffing.

With an expected 5% cut on top of the last cuts, our staffing and ability to support students is looking even more grim.

At LaGuardia we only have 3 out of 11 units fully staffed, including 1 missing Department Admin and 4 missing faculty lines. A 5% cut to this means we will lose more adjunct and college assistant hours, the difference in keeping our doors open in the evenings on the weekends.

In May I talked about how students have gotten so fed up with library understaffing that they began complaining to their City Council reps, you might have heard from these students already. A 5% cut means these complaints will come back.

Campuses still are faced with extremely limited purchasing budgets. We can't buy books or subscribe to new databases for required for students, barely getting enough money to keep essential collections for accredited programs to run in good standing. These are the programs that teach NYC nurses and teachers.

A 5% cut to this means we lose essential databases students need for their classes. Without these resources students are more likely to be led by Google to misleading and biased information, devaluing CUNY education standards.

If you believe in a successful CUNY that's both affordable and moves people into the middle class, we need your help. I encourage you to advocate aggressively for fully funding CUNY's annual budget, show us you care.

This makes CUNY a better place to work and will help us stay open, with the lights on, for students.

Thanks

Thomas

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,
Veda Carmine-Ritchie
Brooklyn, NY

I am outraged by the decision to eliminate community composting programs, which have been stalwarts of sustainability for the past 30 years. The invaluable work of the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC has significantly contributed to climate justice and sustainability services. The potential loss of over 115 green jobs, including over 50 union positions, is not just a step backward but a grave misstep in our commitment to a greener, more sustainable future.

I believe it 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. The education that the community compost programs provide empowers individuals and connects them to neighbors and the earth. Without these individuals that are passionate about composting, the curbside compost program will not see adequate usage. I implore each council member to recognize the urgency of this matter and to actively advocate to Commissioner Tisch for the immediate reinstatement of funding for community composting programs. Please don't take this away from us. We need this on a social, sustainability, environmental, and just plain common sense level. Thank you.

Wendy Gimán

My name is Yvonne Roen, I am an artist, I am a Teaching Artist, and I am the Development Director for New York City Children's Theater, known legally as Making Books Sing. I thank this Council for its current and former support of NYCCT and our programs. I see many friendly faces here today and I thank you for your continued advocacy of the arts.

Each year over 12,000 NYC school children in all five boroughs of this city experience an NYCCT production or education program. For many it is their first experience of theater. For most it builds an immediate and perpetual connection to the arts as a means of story-telling. In short it builds the artists and audiences of this city's future.

Because of City-funded programs over 12,000 children experience what it means to see themselves and their concerns presented as the center of a story, song or play. They create their own plays and songs and experience what it means to have their voice amplified through a work of art of their own creation. Through this process, they build literacy, social emotional wellness skills, community, a sense of agency, and a connection to life-long learning.

Don't take it from me,

Take it from the teacher in Coney Island who squealed for joy the first time an immigrant student in her class uttered a full English sentence in one of our programs.

Take it from the refugee from Hurricane Maria who spent the first 30 minutes of an afterschool program in Hell's Kitchen hiding under a desk, only to jump out for an acting activity and say "I want to do that!"

Take it from the Kindergardener from the shelter program in Brighton Heights who grabbed my hand when I showed up in his DOE classroom for a different program and yelled "Teacher! This is HER! This is the reading lady!"

Take it from 1st – 4th grade students in a shelter in Claremont Village who viewed similar images in two picture books and turned them into a song about what it means to stand together as a community against a monster.

Take it from the girl in South Richmond Hill who never spoke out loud through 17 weeks of an afterschool program, even while she helped script the most amazing adaptation of a story book, but who chose on week 18 to give one of those lines to herself and deliver it to an audience of over 100 people.

Take these stories. Share them. Remember them.

Don't take away 15% of the budget that funds these programs.

Thank you.

Growing a Better Future: The Importance of Composting and Community Outreach in NYC

As a resident of New York City, I can attest to the importance of composting in our urban landscape. With over 8 million people living in just 300 square miles, our city generates an astonishing amount of waste - including food scraps and yard trimmings that could be turned into valuable nutrient-rich compost. But instead of letting these resources go to waste, we can harness the power of composting to create a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable city. By composting, we can divert a significant portion of our waste stream from landfills, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the financial burden of transporting and disposing of trash.

But composting isn't just about waste management - it's also a critical tool in the fight against climate change. As global leaders, we know that the climate crisis requires immediate and drastic action. By composting, we can sequester carbon in our soil, support biodiversity, and create healthier ecosystems that can withstand the challenges of a changing climate. And by engaging in community outreach and education, we can empower everyday New Yorkers to become part of the solution. Whether it's teaching kids about the magic of decomposition, or working with community gardens to create composting hubs, education and outreach are key to unlocking the full potential of composting in NYC. By spreading the word and sharing best practices, we can create a citywide culture of composting that benefits us all.

But it's not just about the compost itself - it's also about the people who make it happen. The workers at Grow NYC, who tirelessly collect and process food scraps, yard trimmings, and other organic materials, are the unsung heroes of our city's sustainability efforts. They are the boots on the ground, working daily to turn waste into gold, and their dedication is integral to the success of our composting programs. And it's not just about the compost - it's also about the community. Grow NYC's workers are often the face of the organization in underserved communities in Queens and the Bronx, where they work with local residents, schools, and community gardens to build a more sustainable future. They are trusted neighbors, friends, and mentors, who not only provide technical expertise but also build relationships, trust, and capacity in these communities. They are the ones who make sure that the benefits of composting reach the people who need it most.

That's why it's so important that our city leaders prioritize composting infrastructure and education in their climate plans. By investing in community composting initiatives, expanding curbside pickup programs, and promoting innovative technologies like in-building composting systems, we can make composting accessible to every New Yorker. And by recognizing the valuable contributions of Grow NYC's workers, we can ensure that our composting programs are not only effective but also equitable and just. As we face the unprecedented challenges of the climate crisis, composting is a shovel-ready solution that can make a real difference in our city's carbon footprint. Let's work together to make NYC a leader in urban composting, and build a more sustainable future for generations to come.

Testimony

Hello,

I am a Master Composter and one of the 115 of the city's employees providing the essential service of community composting to our great city. I am about to lose my new job, having only been employed 2 months ago. This was my 1st job in 3 years, as the pandemic found me burntout and making the switch from the fashion industry to a more sustainable direction. I have always praised our great city for the amount of resources available and accessible for any person to drop their food scraps off and turn them into compost. Community Composting is an Essential service. Ask any one of the 44k participants and supporters that have signed the circulating GrowNYC petition in the short 3 weeks since we found out about these hasty cuts proposed and passed by mayor Eric Adams. If the city goes through with the budget cuts to Community Composting, it effectively eliminates ALL of the green jobs, operations and infrastructure that these organizations have created, maintained. It laysoff their dedicated employees which kept serving communities in every borough, in all weather, making compost, giving it back to the community, educating, bringing joy and greening NYC. This all served to make participants feel like they are making a difference in climate change in whatever small but accessible and still so meaningful and significant way that they can. You will be taking away the city's inhabitants' sense of empowerment in a looming climate catastrophe that will affect NYC just as much as it is affecting India and other distant nations, and has already been affecting the city with unpredictably severe weather events in the last 10+ years. 2023 was the hottest year on record. Community Composting is an ESSENTIAL SERVICE now, more than ever and it should be incorporated in a sustained NYC budget plan going forward, instead of being cut prematurely. I hope the council reconsiders and appeals the mayor's budget plan. Thank you.

To the Finance Committee:

I am writing this letter due to the proposed budget cuts that would completely eliminate the community compost program in NYC. This program is a vital resource for New Yorkers for so many reasons. Above all, in the current era of climate collapse, preventing food scraps from entering landfills (or being used to capture methane gas—which is a greenhouse gas regardless of being “renewable”) where they will rot and release greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere is of the utmost importance. Our city soils desperately need the compost that is created by these community composting locations due to years of pollution, neglect, and continuous compaction.

In addition to the benefits to the environment, community composting has a human benefit on so many different levels. The funding creates spaces for kids and families to learn more about this incredible process, get involved with community gardens, and get a glimpse at what a greener future looks like. The education aspect that these funds support are even more vital, allowing youth and adults to receive necessary training to enter into green jobs. I myself am an alumni of the Master Composter Certificate course which these budget cuts would eliminate entirely. Through this course, I was able to make connections within the environmental field and use the experience to change job fields and get a full time job as an urban farmer, where I now steward more than 20 locations throughout the boroughs. With the economy in a deep depression, paid classes and certificates are unattainable for many. The free Master Composter program is a lifeline for so many of us to get the training we need to get the careers we want. **Cutting this funding would be cutting off so many people from opportunities for upward mobility and meaningful careers.**

In that same vein, cutting this funding will also directly cause the lay-offs of countless New Yorkers. In an era of increasing climate collapse and economic uncertainty, one has to wonder why the police budget remains in the billions, while programs such as community composting which provides jobs, education, and environmental benefits are cut entirely. Unfortunately, we all know why the city chooses time and time again to prioritize police funding over anything that actually *benefits* New Yorkers, but nonetheless we persist in asking you all to do the right thing for once in your careers.

I hope you all will find it in you to have the courage and decency to do what is right for New Yorkers and find another budget item to cut (namely the obscenely bloated NYPD budget) rather than the necessary and incredibly beneficial community composting.

Dear Mayor Adams and Commissioner Tisch,

I am submitting my testimony as a concerned resident, as a sustainability researcher, and as a proud composter. It is my understanding that city funding for GrowNYC's Zero Waste programming, which includes their composting program, has been cut. The New York City Compost Project is an important program that allows millions of New Yorkers throughout all five boroughs to properly dispose of food waste that would otherwise decompose in landfills and produce significant greenhouse gas (CO₂) emissions. In 2021, the [EPA](#) published a report on the environmental impact of food waste which estimated that US food loss and waste creates an additional 170 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent annually. This amount of CO₂ is equal to the annual emissions from 42 coal-fired power plants. While the NYC Compost Project is a local program, it is an easy way for New Yorkers to help reduce their carbon emissions and fight back against climate change. Cutting back on community composting and other types of outreach programs is regressive and will eliminate critical public services and result in the elimination of 115+ green jobs.

I urge the Mayor and City Council to halt these massive budget cuts and to think about what is truly important to keep local communities happy, healthy, and thriving. The value of free and accessible community environmental programs, public education, and public libraries cannot be understated especially in a city as expensive to live in as New York City.

Sincerely,
A Concerned New Yorker

The cuts to the NYC Compost Project are foolish. The Compost Project makes up such a miniscule amount of the NYC budget that cutting them is nothing more than intentional cruelty towards the people who have worked so hard to bring sustainability to everyday New Yorkers, often in the face of rain, snow, heat, or cold. It saves the city budget next to nothing at the cost of goodwill and jobs. Cutting Community Composting efforts actively harms our city and sets our environmental movement back years.

Food scrap drop-off sites represent for many the only way to responsibly dispose of their food waste. It also represents a dedicated grassroots community that has grown over the last 30 years. While the Curbside program is a great and necessary step forward, to believe that there is no place for Community Composting is silly. People need options when it comes to composting. Some people just want to get rid of their food scraps, so the brown or orange bins work for them, but others want the sense of community that can only come from drop-off sites.

I also want to call out the outreach team at Big Reuse especially. That group has made tremendous efforts to educate New Yorkers over the last few years. The scale and scope of their events is huge. They have done everything from compost distributions, to presentations to buildings, to tabling events – all throughout the city. Their dedication and hard work is truly astounding.

The loss of Community Composting and Big Reuse's outreach team will be devastating, and the budget cuts concerning them should be reversed immediately.

My partner and I, as well as my parents, live on Roosevelt Island. Every Saturday, we drop off our compost for collection, two buckets' worth in total. We are grateful for the opportunity to make good use of something that isn't waste and which should not be landfilled, and do not take for granted the time and effort required of all the volunteers who make it possible -- because our infrastructure does not.

The Mayor's decision to defund this program is a step backward for our City and our planet. If the budget must be balanced, let us cut those things which no longer align with the goal of a sustainable and equitable future. Tax the producers of single-use plastics, all the corporations whose litter I pick up after on a nearly daily basis, who are buoyed by our policies. We should be expanding our composting programs, not derailing it, and do everything we can to keep our planet habitable and thriving.

I have been using community composting for close to 30 years. The work these caring and knowledgeable people do is superb. And the compost and potting soil made from the TONS of food scraps is like manna from heaven. Now add in the savings in sanitation costs, and the priceless benefits to the environment made as we try to stop climate change- you see, community composting is ESSENTIAL. The little kids have learned this, so we simply cannot stop the program. Plz fully fund community composting. Thank you.

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, 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.

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. A lot of people dropping off food scraps on Roosevelt Island are elderly people who are able to connect with the community and for whom this outing is important.

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.

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 petition you today to save these programs in light of announced budget cuts.

Community composting organizations, including 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 collectively:

- Divert more than 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills each year.
- 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.
- Engage over 1,000 yearly participants in Master

Composter activities through food, farming, and composting opportunities across the city.

- 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.
- Operate 6 community composting sites - providing the most sustainable and equitable form of organics waste management.

Cutting community composting and outreach programs will result in the elimination of these invaluable services and the loss of over 115 green jobs.

Community composting programs transform New Yorkers' waste into valuable resources, providing essential soil for our parks, gardens, and playgrounds. These programs serve as a crucial tool in combating climate change. Furthermore, given the anticipated delays in the expansion of the Curbside Composting program, the success of such an initiative in New York City hinges on a robust outreach and community composting network to educate and engage residents.

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.

I oppose the deep cuts proposed by Mayor Adams in the November Financial Plan. I ask NYC Council to put to a vote, and vote down, any budget modification that contains these drastic cuts to essential services.

I, like many New Yorkers, am deeply concerned about this fifth round of cuts that cut about \$1.4 billion and 2,000 jobs from essential services in FY24. These services were already starved to begin with, and these cuts are completely unnecessary.

Governmental and independent budget watchdogs have pointed to a number of strategies for managing the city's fiscal issues without requiring such severe cuts to public services, including curtailing uniformed overtime, undoing the hiring freeze at revenue generating agencies, and using some of the city's \$8B reserve fund.

Due to the latest Mayor's cuts, essential composting programs are shuttering their doors, libraries are cutting their hours, people are losing their jobs, education is being slashed, CUNY ASAP is being gutted, childcare seats are being cut, thousands of housing and service agency positions are being eliminated, and New Yorkers and our children are the ones paying the price.

Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC are escaping the brunt of the Mayor's cuts once again, despite wasteful spending in their overtime and uniformed budgets.

I am especially concerned by the complete elimination of the community composting program. The city's brown and orange bin food waste systems are not available city-wide, and the food scraps collected through these systems are not actually composted – they are processed through anaerobic digestion creating biogas that is meant to go to nearby homes but is often burned off instead. This process leaves behind solids, over half of which are sent to landfills. The community compost program, which supports food scrap drop-off sites at farmer's markets and gardens across the city, is much more sustainable and critical to NYC's climate goals.

I have volunteered for three years at the food scrap drop off on Roosevelt Island, which is possible only through a partnership with Big Reuse. These budget cuts threaten to completely eliminate Big Reuse's DSNY funding and will require them to give up their equipment and compost processing space. This cut, which is only a few million dollars of DSNY's budget, will completely shut down this program. Big Reuse is only one of many organizations across the city who will be affected in this way. A total of 115 people will lose their jobs, and tons of food waste will go to landfills.

At our drop-off on Roosevelt Island, over 200 households bring their food scraps every week, and since 2015 we have diverted 170 tons of food waste from landfills. The food scrap drop-off is also a community space, where we also host educational events and other activities like clothing drives. I have seen the benefit of neighbors, many of whom are elderly and living alone, connecting and socializing when they come to drop off their compost.

I urge the City Council to halt these massive cuts and to guarantee full funding to community composting 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.

New Yorkers need a functioning, well-run city government and city services and social safety net now more than ever. Members of the NYC Council, we especially need you to stand up against all of these unnecessary cuts in upcoming budget modification negotiations.

I'm here both as a private citizen and as a Board member of Conscience & Peace Tax International, which is granted Non-Governmental Organization (or NGO) "special consultative status" with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. This confers rights to attend and make contributions to certain UN meetings, especially those concerned with human rights. I'm Conscience & Peace Tax International's NY UN representative to take part in the New York NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

I'm also a Conscientious Objector to war in any form and a public War Tax Resister. I cannot in good conscience pay for war, killing, rape, and the destruction of the Earth. That would make me complicit. If I pay for murder, I become a murderer. The USA's nuclear weapons violate the Nuremberg principles. I cannot assist that, claiming I was only following orders. I'd LIKE to have a Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Bill passed so I could pay my taxes in full, knowing that they'd go for all the good things, all the human needs, that our taxes pay for, WITHOUT violating my conscience. Anyone who'd like more information about this is welcome to contact me. My email is EEFWWW@yahoo.com. Please put your subject line in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS to stand out in my inbox.

The Move the Money resolution supports

lessening the ills that Federal taxes currently fund, as the USA has the largest military in the world though it faces no threat of invasion and makes more weaponry than any other country, selling it to others to spread destruction and misery. The Move the Money resolution states well what is wrong with this emphasis, as human needs suffer, and both Conscience & Peace Tax International and I support it.

Since COVID, my family has been involved with Astoria Pug, volunteering and dropping off food scraps for composting. Composting is an Integral part of my daily life and now all of my food scraps go directly into my freezer, and I bring as much as possible to the drop off sites within Astoria, Queens. I have learned so much about composting from community composting programs. The education and outreach that these programs provide is an essential part of getting more New Yorkers on board. If it were not for Astoria Pug, I would not feel as integrated into my community and passionate about spreading the benefits of compost to my fellow neighbors. If we cut composting in our community, it will not only destroy 100+ jobs, but also send more food scraps to the landfill, and also to the digesters, which release carbon dioxide and even methane, which is what we're trying to avoid in the first place. Do not cut the budget for community composting. Community composting is the integral part of our community and the steps we should be taking to reduce our greenhouse, gas emissions, since food waste is a major source of methane emissions, which are 28 times more powerful than carbon dioxide. Composting cannot be eliminated. I just recently read that we have about seven years to reduce our carbon emissions in order to attempt to reverse the effects of climate change, and composting is one of the most powerful ways to do so. It is an immoral decision to cut composting from our community.

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,
Hon. Just Brannan, Chair
Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan
December 11, 2023

12/12/23

****NYC's Soul at Stake: Why We Can't Cut Arts and Education****

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I'm writing to support the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities. My name is Sunaina, and I have worked for many nonprofits and art institutions across NYC

The mission of [ORGANIZATION NAME] is [INSERT MISSION]. [INSERT 1-3 sentences about your / your organization's programs and reach. If available, use data to quantify and define the populations you serve].

Imagine New York City without its vibrant art scene, the thunderous applause at Broadway shows, or the joyous melodies echoing from school music rooms. This isn't a dystopian nightmare; it's the potential reality if we allow the proposed \$17.3 million cut to the Department of Cultural Affairs and the staggering \$1 billion cut to NYC Public Schools. These aren't just budgetary line items; they're an assault on the very soul of our city.

****Gutting arts education isn't just about missed paintbrushes and silent pianos; it's about erasing the spark of creativity from our children's eyes.**** Studies show that arts education improves academic performance, boosts social-emotional well-being, and fosters critical thinking skills—assets crucial for success in any field. With the temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds expiring, these cuts leave a gaping hole in programs that have been lifelines for students during the pandemic.

****But the damage extends beyond our classrooms.**** New York's vibrant arts scene is the heartbeat of our economy, generating over 400,000 jobs and attracting tourists from around the globe. It's the tapestry of ethnic traditions, the canvas of street art, the pulse of Broadway. These aren't luxuries; they're the lifeblood of our city, drawing in residents and businesses alike.

****This isn't just about budgets; it's about priorities.**** Do we want a city where children are left to navigate a world devoid of artistic expression? Do we want a city where tourists find a sterile wasteland instead of a kaleidoscope of cultures?

****No! We say invest in our future, invest in our students, invest in our soul.**** Let's prioritize programs that foster creativity, community, and economic vitality. Let's not be the generation that dims the lights on New York's vibrant spirit.

****Together, we can raise our voices and demand a budget that reflects the true value of arts and education. Let's make sure the future of New York City remains as bright and inspiring as its past.****