

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON SANITATION
AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

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Wednesday, May 1, 2024
Start: 10:07 a.m.
Recess: 1:25 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room, City Hall

B E F O R E: Shaun Abreu, Chairperson

COUNCILMEMBERS:

- Chris Banks
- David M. Carr
- James F. Gennaro
- Julie Menin
- Vickie Paladino
- Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
- Sandra Ung
- Inna Vernikov
- Kalman Yeger
- Susan Zhuang
- Public Advocate Jumaane Williams

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

Jessica Tisch
Commissioner
Department of Sanitation

Josh Goodman
Deputy Commissioner
Public Affairs and Customer Experience
Department of Sanitation

Ryan Merola
Deputy Commissioner
External Affairs
Department of Sanitation

Courtney Schoeffler
Member, GrowNYC

Danielle Avisar
Citizen, New York City

Sitra Bowman
Member, GrowNYC

Lena Frey
Member, GrowNYC

Ryan Castalia
Executive Director
Sure We Can, Brooklyn

Deborah Thomas
New York City Voter

Kathryn Nazare
Founder and Chair
Lights Out Coalition

Debbie Mullins
President
Linnaean Society of New York

Margaret Lee
Citizen, New York City

Elena Gonzales White
Wisdom Good Works

Linda Mann
League of Humane Voters

Lorial Crowder
Co-Vice Chair
Manhattan's Solid Waste Advisory Board

Mary Flaherty
For Birds

Derek Schiller
Citizen, Brooklyn

Felicia Otis
New York State Wildlife Rehabilitator

Lou Dubuque
The National Waste and Recycling
Association

Nayla Costa
Citizen, New York City

Christopher Leon Johnson
Citizen, New York City

Rita McMahon
Director
Wild Bird Fund

Kate Mikouliak
Citizen, New York City

Dr. Loretta Mayer
Co-Founder
Wisdom Good Works

Professor Steven Schuster
Curator
Marine Invertebrates and Mollusks
Northern Arizona University

Edita Birnkrant
Executive Director
New Yorkers for Clean, Livable and Safe
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Nicole Rivard
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Laura Roth
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Nathan Semmel
Board Member
Voters for Animal Rights

Allie Taylor
President
Voters for Animal Rights

Arina Hinzon
Co-founder and Executive director
Urban Wildlife Alliance

Alexandria LaFata
Founder
Hamptons Muse

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 6

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Good morning, everyone.

3 Welcome to the Committee on Sanitation and Solid
4 Waste Management. Thank you members of the committee
5 for joining us today. I'd like to thank the members
6 of the public who are here to testify as well. To
7 minimize disruption. Please place electronic devices
8 on vibrate or silent. I would like to acknowledge
9 Councilmembers who are here with us today,
10 Councilmembers Zhuang, Carr, and Menin.

11 I grew up in a clean house, but I did not grow up
12 in a clean city. If you're a native New Yorker, your
13 parents probably taught you how to leap over the gunk
14 that oozes out of garbage bags at around the same
15 time they tell you how to cross our streets and how
16 bus stops work. We're experts in how to find the
17 street on our commute with the least amount of trash
18 to navigate around. We know exactly how many blocks
19 we have to walk to find a trash can to toss our dog
20 poop, and we can spot a rat burrow in a tree bed from
21 a mile away.

22 But these are not the skills you should need to
23 live in the greatest city in the world. The purpose
24 of today's hearing is to look into DSNY's work to
25 address cleanliness around our city streets and

2 sidewalks. We will also look at several pieces of
3 related legislation.

4 Having clean streets is about more than
5 aesthetics and general quality of life. It's about
6 our collective safety and health, both physically and
7 mentally. Poor sanitation increases the risk of
8 disease transmission hurts small businesses, harms
9 wildlife, deters tourism, limits our ability to
10 socialize, and weakens our emotional well being. But
11 when we clean up we uplift everyone in a community.
12 We inspire pride in our city and open whole new
13 opportunities for growth.

14 New Yorkers deserve to live in a clean city. And
15 this hearing is one of many opportunities that we'll
16 have to talk about how we make that happen.

17 In addition to oversight, we'll be hearing
18 several pieces of legislation. The first bill that
19 we'll be hearing today Intro number 3, sponsored by
20 myself, would require DSNY to remove any abandoned
21 vehicles within 72 hours of being notified of its
22 existence. After that bill, we have a bill that I'm
23 very excited about Intro 736 sponsored by myself as
24 well. This bill would establish a rat contraceptive
25 pilot program. I see we have a lot of advocates here

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 8

2 in the room today in support of that. Next up, we
3 have Intro number 281 sponsored by Councilmember
4 Menin, which would require DSNY to install and fill
5 dog waste back dispensers on public litter baskets.
6 I will now turn it over to Councilmember Menin to
7 speak about her bill.

8 COUNCILMEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much Chair
9 Abreu, and I really appreciate the opportunity to
10 speak about this bill and thank you for holding
11 today's hearing on street cleanliness, an important
12 topic for all of our districts.

13 My office constantly hears from constituents on
14 major street cleanliness problems, including one that
15 is ever present across New York City, and that is dog
16 waste. There are 74 tons of dog waste per day, or
17 27,000 tons per year in the City of New York. The
18 law clearly states that owners must, of course, pick
19 up after their dogs yet we all have to dodge this
20 unexpected obstacle on our sidewalks on a daily
21 basis.

22 Dog waste is a major health hazard. In fact, the
23 Environmental Protection Agency found that two to
24 three days of waste from 100 dogs could close a bay
25 to swimming. Parasites exist including hookworms,

2 roundworms, presidia, and whipworms. These worms can
3 enter the body easily through small scratches or
4 accidental oral ingestion. According to one study
5 from 2020, parasites can be found in 85% of off-leash
6 dog parks across the country.

7 We used to have signs in the city telling people
8 to pick up after their dogs, but the city as we know
9 remove them in 2013. In response to constituents in
10 my district requesting action, my office launched a
11 contest last year that involved constituents
12 designing a sign about reminding dog owners to pick
13 up after their dogs. We chose a winning design from
14 a constituent in my district and we erected 250
15 signs, and they're displayed throughout the district.

16 That was a welcomed start, but more needs to be
17 done through conversations with constituents. That
18 is why I am proud to sponsor Intro 281 which
19 requires the Department of Sanitation to install and
20 fill dog waste bag dispensers on all public litter
21 baskets throughout the city. In addition, the
22 Department of Sanitation, in conjunction with the
23 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, would create
24 a public awareness campaign to educate the public on
25 health hazards with dog waste.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 10

2 It's critical to have our city act and inform
3 owners that it is their responsibility, not an
4 option, to pick up after their dogs. As was done in
5 the 1970s, we need cultural change to make sure dog
6 owners scoop the poop.

7 I want to thank drafter Jared Bress, and from my
8 team Jonathan Schott, and my Legislative Director,
9 Brandon Jordan. Thank you so much to the Chair for
10 allowing me to speak today. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Councilmember
12 Menin. Next we have Intro number 52, sponsored by
13 Councilmember Moya, in relation to a street
14 cleanliness grading system.

15 For many New Yorkers, DSNY's cleanliness score
16 simply does not match up to how residents score their
17 neighborhoods. This bill would more transparency
18 into this cleanliness grading system that is critical
19 for accountability, equity, and the ability to
20 allocate resources properly.

21 After that, we have Intro number 102, sponsored
22 by Councilmember Yeager, which would require that
23 DSNY notices of violation be accompanied by a
24 photograph of the alleged violation.

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 11

2 Finally, we'll be hearing Reso number 174,
3 sponsored by Councilmember Nurse, which calls the New
4 York State legislature to pass, and the governor to
5 sign, Senate Bill 237 B, also known as the Bigger
6 Better Bottle Bill, which was Intro duced in the New
7 York State Senate by Senator Rachel Mae, and would
8 expand New York's over 40-year-old container deposit
9 law to include certain non carbonated beverages, wine
10 and liquor, and raise the deposit from 5 cents to 10
11 cents further incentivizing the removal of recyclable
12 plastic and glass bottles from New York's waste
13 stream.

14 I look forward to the dialogue regarding these
15 bills today. I would also like to thank everyone on
16 my team and the Sanitation Task Force for their work
17 on this legislation and oversight hearing
18 preparations.

19 No additional councilmembers.

20 Today we will begin to hearing with testimony
21 from DSNY, followed by members of the public. I will
22 now turn it over to our Committee Counsel to
23 administer the oath.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair Abreu. My
25 name is Morgan Barrett, counsel to the Sanitation and

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 12
2 Solid Waste Management Committee of the New York City
3 Council. Our witnesses from the Department of
4 Sanitation will be Commissioner Jessica Tisch, Deputy
5 Commissioner Josh Goodman, and Deputy Commissioner
6 Ryan Merola. Please raise your right hands.

7 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth
8 and nothing but the truth before this committee and
9 to respond honestly to Councilmember questions?

10 PANEL: I do.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, you may begin
12 testimony when ready.

13 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Thank you. Good morning
14 Chair Abreu, and members of the Committee on
15 Sanitation and Solid Waste. I am Jessica Tisch,
16 Commissioner of the New York City Department of
17 Sanitation. And I am joined today by Joshua Goodman,
18 our Deputy Commissioner for Public Affairs and
19 Customer Experience, and Ryan Merola, our Chief of
20 Staff and Deputy Commissioner of External Affairs.

21 The 10,000 New York strongest are tasked with a
22 Sisyphean undertaking, as you will find in our city,
23 collecting and processing 24 million pounds of
24 residential waste each day, only to find another 24
25 million pounds waiting for them the day after, and

2 the day after, and the day after. It is a task that
3 is literally without end, and for many decades, the
4 continuous nature of this work gradually developed
5 into a cynicism, a belief that because the trash just
6 keeps coming, that meant solutions to street
7 cleanliness were also impossible.

8 We know today that that is wrong. Choosing to
9 surrender the streets to the black bags of trash, to
10 litter and to litterers, and worst of all, to the
11 rats, is a conscious choice. But instead, waging a
12 trash revolution against filth can also be a choice,
13 a choice this administration has made clearly and
14 steadily, but one where we need your help and your
15 support.

16 We are moving forward with a once-in-a-generation
17 change to the way that trash is set out, making
18 tremendous strides in the long-discussed but long-
19 delayed process of getting every single piece of
20 trash off our streets and sidewalks and into secure
21 bins and containers. In October 2022, the Adams
22 Administration kicked off this trash revolution by
23 changing set out times for both residential and
24 commercial waste from 4 p.m., one of the earliest
25 set-out times in the country, to 8 p.m. in April

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 14

2 2023, while also allowing earlier set out if the
3 material is in a container. This incentive of
4 containerization was paired with major changes to
5 DSNY operations, picking up much more of the trash
6 far earlier, including ending a practice by which up
7 to 1/5th of trash had been left out for a full day.

8 Later that month, DSNY published its Future Of
9 Trash Report, the first meaningful attempt to study
10 containerization models in New York City and the
11 playbook to get it done. Last August
12 containerization requirements went into effect for
13 all food businesses in New York City. These
14 businesses, restaurants, delis, bodegas, bars,
15 grocery stores, caterers produce an outsized amount
16 of the type of trash that attracts rats. That same
17 month, installation of the initial 10-block, 14-
18 school, Manhattan Community Board 9 pilot containers
19 began.

20 Last September commercial containerization
21 requirements extended to chain businesses of any type
22 with five or more locations in New York City. These
23 chain businesses tend to produce a large total volume
24 of trash. Starting March 1, 2024, container
25 requirements went into effect for all businesses of

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 15

2 every type in New York City to get their trash off
3 the streets and into a secure bin. This is now a new
4 311 service request, whereby residents can report a
5 business not using bins.

6 Later this fall when container requirements go
7 into effect for low-density residential buildings,
8 those with one to nine units, approximately 70% of
9 all trash in the city will be under a container
10 requirement.

11 In the spring of 2025, installation of stationary
12 on-street containers will begin in Manhattan
13 community board 9 for the first full district
14 containerization pilot serviced by new automated side
15 loading trucks. This represents a complete overhaul
16 of an essential service that affects every
17 neighborhood, every street, and every building in our
18 city, and it is working with historic decreases in
19 rat sightings reported concurrently with this effort.

20 This work of rethinking how the trash is stored
21 does not only apply to waste set out for collection,
22 but to public space trash as well. That's why DSNY
23 is excited that New York City street corners now have
24 more than 1600 litter baskets of the future, which we
25 call the Better Bin. The old green mesh basket had

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 16

2 become an icon over decades of use, but it is an icon
3 of a different time. It's widespread presence was
4 based more on inertia than on effectiveness. The old
5 baskets are full of holes from which garbage juice
6 gets out, and through which rats get in. The new
7 baskets have no holes for the first eight inches and
8 much smaller openings throughout. They are harder to
9 misuse take longer to fill up and are far easier for
10 our sanitation workers to service. This is in
11 addition to a modular design, that means only the
12 least expensive part ever needs to be replaced.

13 We are grateful to our Council partners who have
14 purchased several 100 Better Bins over the past two
15 fiscal years with their discretionary funds. And we
16 are excited to work with your offices in the next
17 year to keep the Better Bins rolling out.

18 While the Department of Sanitation will never
19 enforce for enforcement's sake, over the last two
20 years, we have worked to hold property owners
21 accountable to the very basic requirements that we
22 have in New York City around cleanliness: The legal
23 requirements to maintain a clean sidewalk, to remove
24 litter and debris from the first 18 inches into the
25 street, and to set out waste at the proper time and

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 17

2 in the proper receptacles in 2023. Our enforcement
3 of these critical rules around cleanliness was up
4 over 60% compared to the year prior, and we target
5 ongoing enforcement in the highest density parts of
6 the city, doubling down on this Council's designation
7 around rat mitigation zones.

8 In addition to enforcing the basic rules of
9 cleanliness outside every property in the city, we
10 have implemented new strategies to combat two
11 specific quality of life offenses: The first is our
12 camera enforcement approach to the scourge of illegal
13 dumping. Illegal dumping is defined in the law as
14 the disposal of at least one cubic yard of material,
15 approximately two large trash bags, from a vehicle.
16 This occurs in areas that dumpers consider to be out
17 of the way like dead end streets, underpasses, and
18 perhaps most distressingly, alongside cemeteries.

19 For many years, the Department of Sanitation did
20 not have a meaningful enforcement strategy against
21 the crime of illegal dumping. We just cleaned and
22 cleaned over and over again, and the behavior
23 continued to afflict neighborhoods like East New
24 York, Glendale, and Hunts Point.

25

2 We have significantly stepped up illegal dumping
3 surveillance in the last two years. Last year, we
4 issued more than 300 summonses for illegal dumping,
5 an increase of about 70% over 2022. Each of those
6 summonses start at \$4,000, with the cost of cleaning
7 up to the up the mess also passed along to the
8 dumper, and we impound the vehicles involved. The
9 dumpers are on notice that they won't get away with
10 it any longer.

11 The same is true for are people who use our
12 streets as free storage for abandoned or derelict
13 vehicles. Under state law DSNY has jurisdiction for
14 the removal of vehicles identified as derelict,
15 meaning without license plates and with a value of
16 under \$1,250 with authority for removal of vehicles
17 outside this category residing with the NYPD.

18 But for the public, this distinction is
19 meaningless. Who knows the value of a car that has
20 taken up space outside their home, sometimes for
21 years, without moving? Who needs to know which
22 agency to call? That's why in 2023, DSNY, and NYPD
23 launched interagency abandoned vehicle taskforce to
24 cut through the red tape. A team of five NYPD
25 officers were assigned to DSNY to partner with our

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 19

2 derelict vehicle operations team, so that when we
3 encounter vehicles on the street that do not meet the
4 derelict criteria, but qualify as abandoned. We can
5 action them then and there. Thanks to these efforts
6 in 2023, we increased our derelict vehicle removal by
7 43% and removed nearly 8,000 vehicles that calendar
8 year. In 2024, we are on pace to dwarf that number.

9 All of you celebrate this work. And most of you
10 ask for more of this work. You speak often about the
11 concerns of your constituents related to the
12 cleanliness of commercial corridors and other dirty
13 conditions in your district. But there are gaps in
14 our enforcement authority, areas where the Department
15 of Sanitation does not have the tools that we need to
16 do our job. And yet the bills that would help
17 prevent the worst recurrent conditions are not on
18 today's agenda. Two have yet to be heard.

19 We want to get the job done. And we need your
20 partnership to give airtime at a future hearing to
21 the bills that will actually help us prevent the
22 worst recurrent conditions. That is why we are
23 calling on you to support the passage of the
24 following three Council bills that will allow us to
25 keep the city cleaner: Intro 97, sponsored by

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 20

2 Councilmember Ung will provide a meaningful escalator
3 in fines for the small number of property owners who
4 repeatedly allow filth to congregate on our streets
5 and sidewalks. Intro 11, sponsored by Councilmember
6 Bottcher, will expand the hours of the day the DSNY
7 may enforce commercial cleanliness rules, and Intro
8 57 sponsored by Councilmember Ossé, will codify and
9 clarify the penalties for failure to containerize
10 waste. One of the most successful cleanliness
11 programs underway in the city.

12 In 2023, over 1600 locations received four or
13 more summonses for dirty area, and nearly 500 were
14 issued 10 or more violations. Three dozen were
15 issued 50 or more. Imagine being a neighbor to one
16 of those properties. Clearly, the escalating fine
17 structure is not currently steep enough to act as a
18 disincentive to repeat offenders.

19 Enforcement is not about generating revenue. It
20 is about compliance. But under the law today, bad
21 actors can simply look at DSNY enforcement as the
22 cost of doing business. That has to change, and we
23 need your partnership to make that change, because we
24 all know that cleanliness is a shared responsibility.

25

2 We urge this committee to add bills that
3 recognize that to upcoming hearings.

4 I will now turn to the bills that are on today's
5 agenda. Intro 3, sponsored by Chair Abreu, would
6 set a new 72-hour window for the removal of abandoned
7 and derelict vehicles. We strongly support the
8 concept of this bill, and as mentioned earlier, have
9 developed new strategies around this issue that are
10 effective. However, we believe that DSNY is not
11 staffed appropriately to action the specific 72-hour
12 window, and there must be considerations given to
13 special circumstances that require vehicles to remain
14 on the street for longer than 72 hours, such as
15 criminal investigations.

16 We would be very happy to and look forward to
17 discussing the bill with you, Chair, and our
18 colleagues at City Hall.

19 The same is true for Intro 52 sponsored by
20 Councilmember Moya, which replaced the city's
21 existing cleanliness scorecard system with a far more
22 extensive one. DSNY has stated publicly over a
23 period of many years that we believe the current
24 scorecard system is flawed and requires significant
25 revisions. We are already in discussions with our

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 22

2 Council and City Hall colleagues on potential
3 revisions, particularly around the substantial price
4 tag associated with the bill as currently written.

5 I should be clear from this testimony: DSNY is
6 not shy about or embarrassed by our enforcement
7 actions. And so we appreciate the reasons for Intro
8 102, Councilmember Yeger's bill on pairing summonses
9 with photographs. However, the bill as written and
10 the laws guaranteeing the right to confront evidence
11 would mean DSNY officers will be taken out of the
12 field and placed into oath hearings every single time
13 a violation is heard. This would impede DSNY's
14 ability not only to enforce, but to perform normal
15 supervisory duties in the field. Given that we
16 cannot support the Intro duction as written at this
17 time.

18 Fourth, we have a perennial favorite topic, dog
19 waste collection. In Councilmember Menin's Intro
20 281. The proposal requires dog waste disposal bags
21 be placed on litter baskets. Given the dynamic
22 nature of waste disposal, i.e. that the sanitation
23 worker physically lifts and puts down the basket to
24 empty it. Litter baskets are not a practical place
25 to affix a dog waste bag dispenser.

2 However, making dog waste bags more readily
3 available is a goal that we fully support, and we
4 would appreciate the chance to discuss legislation
5 with the Councilmember and our sister agencies.

6 Councilmember Holden's Intro 43 would require
7 that public waste receptacles be emptied at least
8 once per day. DSNY engages in frequent review of the
9 average fullness of corner litter baskets, using a
10 variety of data sources, and the department is the
11 appropriate place for the decision to be made on how
12 to most efficiently allocate these resources. We
13 have concerns about the fiscal impact of this bill.

14 Finally, we have the Chair's recent proposal,
15 Intro 736. The bill's contraceptive mechanism is
16 within the purview of the Department of Health, and
17 they have submitted written testimony on this topic.

18 We look forward to taking your questions and
19 appreciate the opportunity to discuss these serious
20 issues, both what is on today's agenda, and what we
21 believe should be on today's agenda.

22 Thank you very much Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you Commissioner Tisch,
24 I would also like to recognize Councilmembers Ung and
25 Yeger, and Councilmembers Moya and Gennaro on Zoom.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 24

2 I will now begin with my set of questions.

3 Commissioner, local law nine of 2023 required
4 DSNY to install GPS technology on all of its street
5 sweepers. Can you please provide an update on how
6 these installations are going?

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes, that was done on time.
8 I believe it was supposed to be done by the end of
9 2023, and it was done on time.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And so all the Street
11 Sweepers have this technology on them?

12 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Better than that. All of
13 the Street Sweepers have the GPS on it, and we have a
14 website that anyone can go to, it's publicly
15 available, it has been for several months since the
16 end of last year, where you can go and check what the
17 street sweeping regulations are, and when the last
18 time the street sweeper has passed that location.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: That's great news.

20 How does DSNY decide where to dedicate your
21 street cleaning resources, and what technology is
22 used?

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So as you know, Chair, I am
24 a very data-driven person. I don't like to make
25 decisions in a vacuum. And so over the past two

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 25

2 years, we have taken enormous strides at the
3 Department of Sanitation to make data-driven
4 operational decisions on all sorts of topics, but
5 among them on the allocation of cleanliness
6 resources.

7 One particular initiative that I think is really
8 making a dent in the Department of Sanitation is what
9 we call trash dash, trash dash is a rip off of
10 ComStat. As many of you know, I spent the majority
11 of my career at the NYPD, and so I've sat through
12 countless ComStat meetings.

13 And so what we do at the Department of Sanitation
14 instead of using complaint reports, which is what the
15 NYPD does, we use 311 complaints about cleanliness
16 issues. So abandoned vehicle, dirty area, dirty
17 condition, those types of things that the public
18 calls into 311, and we present them citywide, by
19 borough by district, week to date, a 28-day period,
20 year-to-date, 2024 versus 2023. And not only do we
21 publish that every Monday, but we have our ComStat
22 meetings where we'll call an entire borough,
23 superintendents on up, borough chiefs to
24 headquarters, and they will be grilled on their
25 numbers. Why are your missed collections up? Or

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 26

2 better: What have you done to bring your missed
3 collections down? Hey, we see you have for dirty
4 condition 311 calls in this same location. What's
5 going on over there? Is there a chronic problem that
6 we need to address?

7 And by democratizing that data through the
8 department, presenting it in a way where it can be
9 used to measure performance: How were we doing? How
10 are we doing now? And measure using the 311 data,
11 what the community is telling us about cleanliness, I
12 think we are really professionalizing the way that we
13 allocate resources and the way that we manage our
14 resources.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How our daily records, such
16 as street sweeper logs, used to aid in identifying
17 areas with recurring uncleanliness problems?

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So now that we have put our
19 GPS technology on the street sweepers, it's nice to
20 be able to show it to the public, but we get very
21 accurate information about which segments we may have
22 missed.

23 Now, I want everyone to keep in mind: All of our
24 routes are designed to be completable. But
25 sometimes, our street sweepers or operators will

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 27

2 encounter conditions on the street that are beyond
3 their control. So, for example, double, triple
4 parking on alternate side parking days, vehicles not
5 moving, that not only prevents us from hitting that
6 street, but it backs us up and makes it so that
7 sometimes we can't complete the routes.

8 And so now that we have the the GPS technology on
9 our street sweepers, we have much better data about
10 which segments we are missing on which days. And not
11 only are we going to be including that as part of our
12 trash dash, grilling our superintendents and our
13 borough chiefs, why do you keep missing this segment,
14 but also using it to redesign, if needed, some of our
15 routes so that we can make sure that parts of the
16 city that may be at the end of a very difficult route
17 to complete, are completed in time.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How can the agency identify
19 areas with recurring problems? And how does it do
20 so?

21 COMMISSIONER TISCH: How can it what?

22 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How can the agency identify
23 areas with recurring unclean conditions.

24 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I just spoke a lot about
25 Trash Dash, and I actually would invite any of you

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 28

2 who want to come to a trash dash and observe, when
3 your district or your borough is up, it is Thursday,
4 morning at 7:30am. We can tell you when your borough
5 is up. And I think it would be very interesting, I
6 hope refreshing for the Councilmembers to see just
7 how seriously and how focused we are on the data
8 around cleanliness.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Commissioner.

10 With respect to alternate side parking, let's
11 talk about street cleanliness as it relates to pre-
12 pandemic versus post-pandemic. Have we reversed some
13 of the trends that we saw during the pandemic? And
14 have we improved from pre-pandemic levels,
15 specifically on missed collections, dirty conditions,
16 and sanitation conditions?

17 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Okay, let me start with the
18 street-- The first question was about street
19 sweeping. Sorry, the street cleaning.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yeah. My question is: With
21 respect to the pre-pandemic, I'd say before 2020, and
22 in the year '23, what have been the trends on missed
23 collections and dirty conditions and sanitation
24 connections?

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 29

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Okay. So missed collections
3 was an area of obsessive focus for me and for the
4 department over the last year. Our agency, at its
5 core, we are a customer service agency and a really
6 good way to piss your customer off is to leave trash
7 in front of their house.

8 And so we have been incredibly focused on driving
9 down the number of missed collections. Trash dash
10 has been extremely helpful to that end, because all
11 of a sudden there is full transparency in the data.
12 Our superintendents, and our chiefs, and everyone in
13 management can see exactly where the missed
14 collections were on a day by day, week by week basis.
15 We can spot patterns and trends, and this is a big
16 topic of conversation at our trash dash meeting. On
17 our most recent trash dash report, our missed
18 collections, week to date -- so for comparing
19 calendar year 2024 to calendar year 2023, this week
20 or last week -- down 50%.

21 And it just goes to show that when you focus on
22 the right things, you have good data behind them, and
23 a strategy designed based on that data, you can make
24 real progress. And missed collections is definitely
25 an area where we have really great progress.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 30

2 And I just want to say for like missed
3 collections of trash, it's not only down 50% week to
4 date, it's down 50% for the 28 day period, and 43%
5 year to date. So this is like definitely not just
6 like a one week sampling of data that I am looking
7 about.

8 Dirty conditions in the city, I would say, are
9 down since the pandemic, when there was absolutely no
10 street cleaning going on or, like, if any virtually
11 little, very little, virtually no street cleaning
12 going on at the Department of Sanitation. And now we
13 have a number of initiatives designed specifically to
14 address dirty conditions. So among them, our
15 targeted neighborhood task force. There are what we
16 call No Man's Lands, historically No Man's Lands,
17 city-owned property. That was the jurisdiction of no
18 one, no agency to clean historically. Mayor Adams
19 made a historic investment in creating this targeted
20 neighborhood task force inside the Department of
21 Sanitation, and we have about 100 sanitation workers
22 every day that spend their time cleaning those
23 historically forgotten parts of the city. They're in
24 almost-- they're certainly in every borough in
25 virtually every neighborhood in the city, underpasses

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 31

2 overpasses, greenways, side roads next to highways.

3 These are the parts of the city that have chronically

4 been very, very dirty, and now they are addressed

5 with regular service.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Commissioner. I

7 would also like to recognize Councilmembers Paladinno

8 and Banks who have joined us.

9 Can you speak to the number of tonnage of dirt

10 collected by street sweepers in 2023? And can you

11 compare that to what it was pre-pandemic?

12 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So the Street Sweepers, I

13 don't have the tonnage. But we can get that to you,

14 I assume very easily. I will tell you we have

15 significant problems with our street sweeping that I

16 think that there is a way to correct. But among

17 those problems is during the pandemic, people got

18 used to not moving their cars. During the pandemic,

19 the street sweeping was cut in half because of

20 budgetary issues. And, so people didn't have to move

21 their cars and one trend we are definitely seeing

22 post-pandemic is that people are still not moving

23 their cars for alternate side parking.

24 And it's kind of tragic, because the Street

25 Sweepers are far and away the best street cleaning

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 32

2 tool that we have in our arsenal. Every day on a
3 single shift, a mechanical broom will take 1500
4 pounds of litter off of New York's streets. If
5 everyone moved their car for alternate side parking,
6 those curb lines would be gleaming.

7 In my opinion, we need to change the way that we
8 enforce the rules around alternate side parking. And
9 if you look at what the MTA has done with the bus
10 lanes, where they have now automated ticketing
11 systems that enforce bus lanes, if we put these
12 automated ticketing systems on our street sweepers,
13 people would move their car, because the manual
14 enforcement of alternate side parking, yes, of course
15 is important. But there is no way to scale that to
16 meet the actual need or to correct the level of
17 misbehavior that we see. ,

18 So this is one where there is a very obvious,
19 very straightforward strategy that we can use. We
20 unfortunately do need a change in the state's VTL
21 law, which I understand that the state is
22 contemplating this this session.

23 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Commissioner. I'm
24 going to ask another set of questions under litter
25 basket services general category, and then after

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 33

2 that, I'll turn it over to some of my colleagues to
3 ask their questions. I don't want to take advantage
4 of their precious time for joining us.

5 Though litter basket service funding has been
6 restored, is it true that litter baskets servers for
7 park perimeters greenways bridges and other
8 pedestrian areas has not?

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes. We have been running a
10 very high level of litter baskets service funded both
11 by this council and by the mayor. And I am very
12 grateful to the mayor that that litter basket service
13 that had previously been contemplated to be part of a
14 PEG was restored. One piece of that litter basket
15 service that was not restored was the supplemental
16 cleaning of the litter baskets that the Department of
17 Sanitation was providing for litter baskets run or
18 maintained by other agencies, among them, the Parks
19 Department and the Department of Transportation. So
20 parks, these litter baskets on Park perimeters, and
21 for the DOT the litter baskets on bridges as an
22 example on the Brooklyn Bridge.

23 And so we had some extra funding to commit person
24 power to provide supplemental emptying of baskets

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 34

2 that we don't put out and maintain, and that is the
3 one piece that is yet to be restored.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How has or how does DSNY
5 anticipate the elimination of these services will
6 impact street cleanliness, and are there any
7 mitigation plans in place to ensure continued
8 cleanliness?

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So for the baskets that are
10 within our jurisdiction, the ones that the Department
11 of Sanitation puts out, there have been no PEGs and
12 no cuts, or those PEGs and cuts have been fully
13 restored. And I feel good, very good, about the
14 level of basket service that we are running now,
15 citywide. Our litter basket complaints to 311 last
16 year were way down. They've been down way below
17 pandemic levels, since the council and the mayor
18 worked together at the beginning of this
19 administration to significantly increase the
20 resources behind litter basket service.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Is it fair to say that
22 because litter basket services are not at the park
23 perimeters, greenways, or bridges, these areas would
24 probably be less clean?

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 35

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes. That will mean less
3 service to litter baskets around park perimeters and
4 on bridges. And so yes, it is more likely that you
5 could see overflowing litter baskets in those areas.
6 That follows logically.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Are there any plans to
8 establish funding for these litter basket services?
9 I mean, you spoke to it briefly, right?

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: You know, as the mayor
11 described, I think, very clearly, the city was in a
12 very challenging budgetary moment. And he is a big
13 proponent and champion of cleanliness. He calls me
14 all the time about it. And so when we are in a
15 budgetary position to be able to make additional
16 investments in cleanliness, I have every confidence
17 that it is high on the mayor's priority list.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yeah, I think the council
19 maintains that the resources are available, but
20 there'll be questions that we'll have for OMB later
21 this month with our joint hearing with finance for
22 the executive budget hearings.

23 Does DSNY have like an ideal number, when
24 thinking about the number of litter baskets that
25 would be needed to keep the city clean? I know right

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 36

2 now it's 23,000. But is it 30,000? Is it 40? I
3 mean, what is the ideal number? And, you know, I get
4 a lot of complaints in my district, saying, you know,
5 we need a little basket here and there. And look,
6 the department has been responsive. But just a
7 question if there's an ideal number.

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So I try-- I think I've
9 said this to you before. I try not to, like, let my
10 mind go to the ideal world, because it'll make me
11 crazy.

12 I'd love a litter basket on every corner of the
13 city, but like that would cost a crazy fortune and
14 would be an investment that, I think in my opinion,
15 doesn't make sense.

16 For the past two years, we have been steady at
17 about 23,000 baskets. We've run when I think is,
18 what is objectively a much higher level of litter
19 baskets service than we did during the pandemic.
20 We're running the highest level of litter basket
21 service, frankly, in the past 20 years. And I am
22 very comfortable with the level-- with both the
23 number of litter baskets that we have and the level
24 of service that we have like living in reality.

25

2 In general, what we look for when we assess
3 locations for litter baskets, is we want a high
4 trafficked park of the city. We want it not to be
5 midblock. We want them to be on the corner. And we
6 want them to be in locations where people who are
7 using the streets, or who use the litter baskets
8 would use them for walking trash, as opposed to
9 commercial trash or residential trash.

10 In the past, we've had to take litter baskets off
11 of corners where they are chronically misused for
12 dumping of commercial trash. And in that way, a
13 business or that commercial trash basically blows it
14 for everyone who would be using that litter basket on
15 the street corner. We're thinking about ways that we
16 can integrate technology to use cameras for
17 surveillance. But in practice now, those are our
18 thoughts on how we assess locations for litter basket
19 service.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you Commissioner. Some
21 of the data reviewed by the committee illustrates
22 that some neighborhoods like Flushing, have
23 relatively lower litter baskets when adjusting for
24 population as compared to Manhattan neighborhoods,
25 for example. Now I'm not advocating for Manhattan to

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 38

2 have less litter baskets. I'm advocating for
3 neighborhoods where, when you adjust for population,
4 they don't have the same number of litter baskets.
5 Can you speak to that?

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, I am very-- we are
7 very focused on equity in litter basket placement.
8 Nowhere was that clearer then, when we were
9 contemplating during, you know, the PEGs several
10 months ago. We were contemplating, I mean to take
11 off 40% of all litter baskets citywide. So, if there
12 are locations in the city or commercial corridors, in
13 particular in the city, where you feel like there
14 should be more litter baskets, we are obviously
15 always open to that. But we have to assess it on a
16 case-by-case basis.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How does DSNY decide
18 placements for the new Better Bins?

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So, two different ways.
20 One, we've tried to spread the love across every
21 borough. Second, a number of Councilmembers have
22 used their discretionary funds to purchase litter
23 baskets. Which one was my star?

24 Councilmember Salaam is our star in this regard.
25 He purchased 123 Better Bins that are sparkling in

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 39

2 his district. And I encourage, with the use of
3 discretionary funds, if you want significantly more
4 Better Bins, that that seems like a very good place
5 to put those resources. And if you have any question
6 about that, take a walk around Councilmember Salaam's
7 district and check them out.

8 But we bought approximately so far about 2000 of
9 them. We'll do another big order at the beginning of
10 the next fiscal year, on July 1. That order is
11 prepped and ready to go. And we're always happy to
12 supplement those orders with discretionary funds
13 provided by the Council.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Do you think that Better Bins
15 something that should be continued to be paid for in
16 this fashion? Or does the city have a vision to, you
17 know, have these Better Bins be purchased for as part
18 of their capital plan, or the capital budget?

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Unfortunately, tragically,
20 the way the capital rules are written, these baskets
21 are not capitally eligible. I have fought that fight
22 and lost. And I understand why I lost. It's just as
23 the capital rules are written, the litter baskets are
24 explicitly excluded.

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 40

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: All right, something to look
3 into. So I'm going to turn it over to Councilmember
4 Carr, and then followed by Julie Menin.

5 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: Thank you so much chair for
6 this hearing. Commissioner, always great to see you.
7 I just want to start by thanking you and your team,
8 both with you and your office, and the folks at
9 borough operations as well, Chief Hancock, and
10 Superintendent Mike Paroda are great, and everyone
11 who works with them.

12 So understandably, as you can imagine, I'm going
13 to start with my passion: curbside waste. This is
14 something that's been funded in the last several
15 budgets. It's a program that's important to Staten
16 Islanders, because we do not really benefit from the
17 E-cycle program, which services buildings with 10
18 units or more. And so I was wondering, you know,
19 what is the agency's observations with respect to 311
20 data and street cleanliness since the program was
21 suspended last year? And, in particular, has there
22 been any monitoring of drop-offs at the Muldoon
23 Avenue site since the program was suspended in terms
24 of an increase perhaps, and drop offs by folks?

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 41

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: You know, I'm embarrassed to
3 tell you, I don't have the 311 data about E-waste
4 specifically, and I should have anticipated this
5 question. So, I am sorry, we will get that to you
6 today after this hearing.

7 As you know, and as I just explained, we had to
8 take some very painful cuts and make some very
9 difficult choices, given the realities of what is
10 going on with the city's budget. And unfortunately,
11 that E waste program, which we love, and certainly
12 our Staten Island team that administered it so well,
13 really loved, was one of one of them.

14 COUNCILMEMBER CARR; I appreciate that, and I
15 look forward to hearing the follow up. I think it's
16 a great program for Staten Island, I wish that it had
17 been able to expand but for the COVID cuts to other
18 boroughs so that other 1-2-3 family home communities
19 could benefit from it as well.

20 COMMISSIONER TISCH: The great thing about that
21 program is, like, we were using that, we were doing E
22 waste. But we were also saying to residents, if you
23 have textiles, like, and so we were able with the
24 same amount of resources to really make more of it
25 than just E waste, which on its own is great. But we

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 42

2 were really able to, like, put those resources to
3 great use.

4 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: And that was a great
5 addition at the start of your tenure. And hopefully
6 we can ultimately come to a way to fund it in this
7 year's budget--

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes.

9 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: --and get to that point. I
10 want to turn to lot cleaning and TNT. So much of our
11 street cleanliness issues arise from lots that are
12 neglected, whether they're city owned or privately
13 owned. Could you tell us the status of these
14 programs in the budget, and--

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So there are two different--
16 two different answers. So as part of the PEGs taken,
17 the lot cleaning and TNT were eliminated, budget
18 wise, what's reflected on paper?

19 The fact of the matter is that at the department,
20 we have lots of sanitation workers. We have a
21 historically high headcount. And so until some of
22 those sanitation workers attrit out, we have the
23 staffing to run a lot of the cleaning services that
24 on paper were PEG'ed and were cut. So are we
25 cleaning the TNT locations every day? Yes. Are we

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 43

2 cleaning some lots? Yes. ,Although because the lot
3 cleaning was a single unit, we had to disband that
4 unit. But we do have, I would say, a good amount of
5 TNT cleaning and cleaning of lots that happens in New
6 York City. But if those cuts are not restored in an
7 upcoming budget, as our attrition goes up, that level
8 of cleaning service will go down.

9 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: Okay, and are you seeing a
10 steady lumber of 311 requests or complaints regarding
11 vacant lots or city lots? Do you feel like this is
12 something that the constituencies represented are
13 demanding?

14 COMMISSIONER TISCH: There is definitely an
15 appetite in New York City, among New Yorkers, to have
16 lots cleaned. Now, lots that are-- I mean, most of
17 these lots are privately owned. And technically it
18 really, like, it should be, and it is the
19 responsibility of the property owner to clean them.

20 When we took the lot cleaning PEG, what we said
21 to other city agencies is: For lots that you own, you
22 are now responsible for cleaning them. But the hope
23 is that, if and when the budget allows, that these
24 cuts would be considered for restoration.

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 44

2 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: I always understood that for
3 private lots, sanitation was able to charge the owner
4 and it was added to the property tax bill. Is that
5 it?

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I think that's exactly
7 right.

8 COUNCILMEMBER CARR: Yeah. So listen, I think
9 it's a tremendously important program. So many of
10 the sources of litter come from these neglected lots,
11 just like with the bad actors in other parts of the
12 city. So I'm with you 100% in trying to restore
13 these programs. Thank you Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I would like to associate
15 with Councilmember Carr's comments. I'd also like to
16 recognize Councilmembers Palladino, Salamanca, and
17 Brewer for joining us. Julie Menin?

18 COUNCILMEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much Chair.
19 Thank you, Commissioner for your testimony today.
20 And I'm happy to see that you agree with the policy
21 reasons behind the bill that I've introduced. I know
22 you mentioned that there's some concerns. So, as I
23 understand that there are 23,000 litter baskets
24 throughout the city of New York, what my bill would
25 do is require DSNY to put dog waste bags on those

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 45

2 litter baskets. You testified that you had concerns
3 about DSNY workers picking up the baskets.

4 My understanding though is that some of the
5 baskets workers are picking up the interior only.

6 Can you identify what percentage of baskets are
7 interior only that they're picking up?

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: A small percent. Hopefully
9 it will grow as a percentage, as we get the new
10 litter baskets in, because the new litter baskets are
11 two pieces.

12 What I recommend, as I mentioned, I agree fully
13 with the spirit of the bill. I think in New York
14 City, we have a huge amount of street furniture that
15 doesn't move. And even the litter baskets, like they
16 move, both pieces of them for parades or big events
17 or-- they move a lot, and people let us know when
18 they move. And so my recommendation for this bill is
19 to put it on other street furniture or infrastructure
20 on our streets that don't move. I mean, we have
21 light poles. We have street poles. We have benches.
22 I think that picking a permanent structure that is
23 not movable, i.e. one that is capitally eligible, is
24 the right way to achieve the goal that we share.

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 46

2 COUNCILMEMBER MENIN: Okay. I look forward to
3 discussing that with you. I have a couple other
4 questions on dog waste. How many 311 complaints last
5 year were related to dog waste?

6 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Do you have the number here,
7 Ryan? 2306 in the calendar year.

8 COUNCILMEMBER MENIN: And is there a breakdown by
9 borough?

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We can get you a breakdown
11 by borough.

12 COUNCILMEMBER MENIN: Okay. And another part of
13 my bill requires a public health campaign around dog
14 waste, really talking about the health hazards
15 associated with dog waste. Any comments on that?

16 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Our deputy commissioner Josh
17 Goodman has some information on it.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MEROLA: Thanks so much,
19 Councilmember. DEP is running one now, and they have
20 an ongoing public health campaign about the dangers
21 of dog waste.

22 COUNCILMEMBER MENIN: And where's that being run?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MEROLA: I'm sorry. I
24 couldn't speak to that. But I saw the materials.

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 47

2 COUNCILMEMBER MENIN: I mean, I will just tell
3 you from the comments we've received from
4 constituents, people are not aware of that campaign.
5 It's just not something that's widely accessible or
6 understood. We will need to do something--

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We will get feedback back to
8 them.

9 COUNCILMEMBER MENIN: -- much bigger and bolder
10 in terms of public health campaign. In terms of
11 enforcement. My understanding is that city data
12 shows that 18 tickets were issued in 2022 for failure
13 to pick up canine waste. That's down from 72 tickets
14 issued for violations in 2019. Any sense why, and do
15 you have data for 2023 to date?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Yes. So this is a
17 very challenging issue to enforce against. You know,
18 it's a crime that has to be observed in the act for a
19 ticket to be written. We can walk up to an empty
20 store and leave something about an improper set of
21 trash. We cannot walk up to a pile of dog waste and
22 leave a ticket. And so unfortunately, it's a very
23 resource-intensive enforcement operation. The
24 enforcement did go up between '22 and '23. Although,
25 you know, we're talking about single digit amounts.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 48

2 It's not where it should be. And that's, I think,
3 why we're most inclined to strongly agree with you
4 that a cultural education campaign is going to be
5 more effective than the very heavy resource intensive
6 attempts to enforce against it.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Councilmember Yeger?

8 COUNCILMEMBER YEGER: Good morning, Mr. Chairman.
9 Thank you. Good morning, Commissioner.

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Good morning.

11 COUNCILMEMBER YEGER: Like many members, I'm
12 going to turn straight to my bill and lead with some
13 of the other interesting topics, although I'm very
14 excited to continue talking about dog poop.

15 But I do want to talk about Introduction 102, and
16 just a very brief history. This is the sixth time
17 this bill has been introduced since 2009, in every
18 session of the Council, by three of my predecessors,
19 once by me, and now a second time by me. So this
20 bill has had ample opportunity by the sanitation
21 department, by your predecessors, to be looked at
22 investigated, studied, thought about, in times when
23 the technology was much different, as you know, and
24 you have probably more skills on tech than any other
25 commissioner in the city, so you know this. In 2009,

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 49

2 asking enforcement agents to take a picture and
3 attaching it to a summons is probably looking back a
4 much more complicated and difficult task than the one
5 we're asking today.

6 Today, it's so simple. And we know it's simple
7 because we do it all the time. There are countless
8 types of summonses that come with photographs
9 attached, including your own enforcement actions come
10 with photographs attached, and you're here today
11 advocating for another type of enforcement action to
12 have photographs attached.

13 So, photographs attached are obviously a good
14 concept, right? Because it gives certainty to-- to
15 the charge and tends to diminish the chances of
16 perjury, let's be frank. And I think we do know that
17 from time to time-- I'm not going to say many or
18 most-- there are from time to time summonses that are
19 written that are lies, just not truthful. And the
20 percentage of those summonses that are able to be
21 dismissed with evidence rebutting the prima facie
22 that's written on the summons is miniscule, because
23 what are the chances that a guy has a camera on his
24 house, catching the sanitation guy at the exact
25 moment that he writes the summons for something that

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 50

2 doesn't exist? I happen to have a couple of cases
3 like that, as the Deputy Commissioner knows, but it's
4 minuscule.

5 So this is a good tool to keep the agents honest.
6 So your objection, as I understand it, I don't want
7 to put words in your mouth, so I'm just going to use
8 yours: It is tied to the citizens opportunity to
9 challenge the summons.

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Now, I agree with you
11 100%. I love the idea of photo evidence. I am all
12 for it. When I ran DoITT, I put the photo
13 attachments on 311 complaints.

14 Concept-wise, I am all in, and what I am like
15 very certain the photos will show is what a fantastic
16 job our sanitation supervisors and our sanitation
17 enforcement agents do in their work and how
18 thoughtful they are about it. My concern with the
19 bill, as written, is that when you have photo
20 evidence that goes to OATH, all of a sudden, the
21 sanitation enforcement agent and the sanitation
22 supervisor can't do their job, but have to go to OATH
23 because as I am told by OATH, and I'm happy to talk
24 with you and OATH and the law department together.
25 What I am told by OATH is when you-- Every person has

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 51

2 a right to confront evidence against them. And so
3 when you have a photo taken by a person, the person
4 has to appear at the OATH hearing. That would be an
5 outrageous drain on our enforcement resources, one
6 that I can't and will not support, and one that I
7 think that people-- that this Council cannot pursue--
8 or should not pursue. Because right now, everyone
9 here calls us all the time about dirty conditions.
10 And the vast majority of those cases, those dirty
11 conditions are on sidewalks that are the are the
12 responsibility of the property owner to clean.

13 And so what we do is we go and we issue a ticket.
14 And if all of a sudden our ticket-writing ability is
15 halved, or more than halved, that means that there
16 are going to be more dirty conditions in the city.

17 COUNCILMEMBER YEGER: So let me offer up my own
18 rebuttal if I may. One of the differences of this
19 bill from the five times that it was introduced in
20 the past is there's a-- the last several words of the
21 first paragraph say that the photo shall quote be
22 "rebuttable evidence of the facts contained therein."
23 That language was never included in previous versions
24 of the bill. When OATH tells you that, that every
25 summons with a photo must have a person show up.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 52

2 It's just not true. It's only those-- First of all,
3 it is not always factual. OATH is also a kangaroo
4 court. OATH doesn't-- If a citizen shows up in
5 OATH, the burden immediately shifts to the citizen,
6 right or wrong or whether the statute backs up that
7 that shifting of the burden, the citizen has to prove
8 that this didn't happen.

9 What I suggest is that if a summons is
10 accompanied by a photo, the number of challenged
11 department sanitation, summonses will reduce
12 tremendously, because when the guy gets the summons
13 in the mail or on the door, and it's got a picture--
14 usually, it's going to be in the mail-- and it's got
15 a picture attached, and it shows the schmutz that
16 they got the ticket for, they're not going to show
17 up, and they're just going to say, "Well, I did what
18 I did," or, "I didn't catch it in time," or, "I
19 wasn't out there at 8:05, and here's my 50 bucks have
20 a great day. It's the cost of living in New York."
21 So the number of times that an agent is challenged on
22 their ticket may increase, relative to the number of
23 photos that are taken, but-- but the overall number
24 of challenged summons is going to decrease
25 tremendously, because people are going to say, "you

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 53

2 got me". And just as an as in addition to that, how
3 many people actually challenge a red light ticket?
4 They don't, because they can't, because the picture
5 is there.

6 So I don't know how many people challenge a red
7 light ticket. But I take and understand your points.
8 And I want you to keep in mind that in concept, in
9 principle, I think I'm the first sanitation
10 commissioner to absolutely wholeheartedly agree that
11 photo evidence makes sense. From a technology
12 perspective, it's a slam dunk, it's like obvious how
13 to do it, we know how to do it.

14 I am very concerned, however, about the impacts
15 that this would have to the number of enforcement
16 agents and the number of supervisors that we could
17 have out on the street each day. That is a very real
18 thing. But I would like to continue to talk to you,
19 and talk to OATH, and talk to the law department
20 about it. Because my hope is that there is a way
21 that we could make progress without triggering the
22 problems that I am concerned about.

23 COUNCILMEMBER YEGER: Okay. So I'm happy to do
24 that. And I will say I have to turn this back over
25 to the Chair because there are other members who do

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 54

2 have questions. But I will just say that in the five
3 versions of the bill before you became Commissioner,
4 there had never been a Commissioner taking a position
5 at all. It's never come to a hearing. It's only the
6 last two, mine this session and mine the last
7 session, that's had the hearing.

8 I appreciate that you've studied the bill and are
9 willing to talk to us about it. But I do think
10 today, in 2024, with tech being so easy to achieve,
11 we've got to figure out a way to do it.

12 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Here's the thing: My concern
13 is not a tech concern.

14 COUNCILMEMBER YEGER: I get it.

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I think that if this had had
16 a hearing a few years ago, people would have said,
17 "Oh, Tech Tech Tech. I am explicit. This is not a
18 tech challenge. The technology is a home run. It's
19 a slam dunk. I just am concerned about the
20 implications for our enforcement, which is very
21 important to street cleanliness. But let's talk
22 offline, with our other agency partners, and see if
23 there's a way to make it work.

24 COUNCILMEMBER YEGER: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
25 Chairman. \ \ \ \

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 55

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I was disappointed to learn
3 that no one from the Department of Health and Mental
4 Hygiene would be available to join us for this
5 conversation on street cleanliness. DOHMH is
6 directly tasked with controlling our rat population,
7 and a conversation about street cleanliness without a
8 conversation about rats isn't much of a conversation
9 at all.

10 I also know, or at least strongly hope, that
11 DOHMH and DSNY work very closely, given the critical
12 role that sanitation also must play in reducing the
13 rat population. Which we're seeing already, lots of
14 progress with containers. So I'm going to go ahead
15 and ask some questions. Maybe someone at the table
16 will have some insight.

17 According to the mayor's management report, DOHMH
18 conducted 23% fewer pest control inspections in the
19 first four months of FY 2024, compared to the same
20 time period the year before, and that this decrease
21 can be attributed to staffing shortages. The mayor's
22 management report also states that during this same
23 time period, the first four months of FY 24, there
24 was a nearly 3% increase in properties which failed
25 the initial pest control inspection, indicating that

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 56

2 as time has gone on, we're seeing a higher level of
3 infestation. The report adds that in addition to
4 high failure rates, complaints have also been high in
5 FY 2024.

6 What I'm getting at here is that the standard
7 mitigation strategies seem to not be working overall.
8 There have been pockets of success however, in
9 mitigation zones, and particularly in the
10 containerization pilot in my district. We've seen a
11 decrease in rat sightings and have gotten positive
12 feedback from constituents. Can you talk about those
13 metrics in Hamilton Heights containerization pilot
14 and discuss what if any coordination that DOHMH and
15 DSNY has had in achieving these numbers?

16 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Sure. I, as you know-- I
17 hate rats, the mayor hates rats, and when I started
18 this job, one of the things that I was very
19 interested in doing, the big opportunity was to
20 fundamentally rethink how we do big things that
21 matter to lots of people. And among them, how we
22 fight rats, that was like, top, like key.

23 For too long in this city, our rat mitigation
24 strategy has been extermination. And what we have
25 tried to do by programmatically, systematically,

2 citywide taking measures to reach the food source,
3 deny the rats their food source. It's working,
4 putting all the commercial trash in containers,
5 that's 20 million pounds a day, that's working. The
6 rat numbers are going down. Since we started our
7 container interventions last April, our monthly rat
8 numbers have been down for 12 of the past 13 months.
9 That doesn't happen. In New York City, rat numbers
10 only go one way, and that's up. And so the initial--
11 not even initial, the over-one-year's worth of data
12 that we have now, since our rat-- since our
13 intervention strategies on the trash began in
14 earnest, they are showing really positive results.
15 In Hamilton heights, where we're now not just going
16 after commercial trash, but also the residential
17 trash, the rat numbers are leading the city in terms
18 of their decreases.

19 I want you all to know, and I want New Yorkers to
20 know that in denying the rats the food source, we
21 have what I think is a winning strategy to bring down
22 the rat numbers in New York City.

23 I also want to say: I don't know why my
24 colleagues, the Department of Health, and the Rat
25 Czar are not present at this hearing, given that your

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 58
2 bill on rat contraception is on the agenda. But I
3 want to say that generally, I am the type that
4 embraces new, innovative ways of thinking about old
5 problems. The rats are an old problem. Clearly, we
6 need innovative strategies to address to address it.
7 The containerization thing which you have all helped
8 champion with us, is one of them. It sounds to me--
9 Not an expert on rat contraception-- But that may be
10 another one. But I do defer to my colleagues in the
11 Department of Health and the Rat Czar who
12 unfortunately aren't present today.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Commissioner. And
14 I've got to say that I wouldn't be having this
15 conversation about rat contraceptives, if we didn't
16 contain our eyes first. We have seen in past
17 experiments that rats have eaten trash. So, in past
18 experiments, there have been the contraceptive pellet
19 form that sorry-- the liquid form that has been
20 introduced like in Bryant Park, but what we saw there
21 was that the rats were actually eating the trash. So
22 now if we remove trash, and make sure it's
23 containerized, it increases the likelihood that rats
24 are actually going to eat the pellet form when there
25 are no alternative nutrition. So, I have to say that

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 59

2 we are only having this conversation because
3 containerization is coming to New York City. Without
4 containerization it would be very difficult to
5 implement erect contraceptive program.

6 I would like to now turn it over to Public
7 Advocate Jumaane Williams.

8 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr. Chair,
9 for allowing me to give my opening statement a little
10 after the opening. So, I appreciate that. My name
11 is Jumaane Williams, public advocate for the city of
12 New York. Thank you Chair Abreu and the members of
13 the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste
14 management, for holding this hearing and for allowing
15 me to share my statement. Thank you, Commissioner
16 Tisch and the New York City Department of Sanitation
17 team for being here. My office consistently receives
18 quality of life complaints about overwhelming corner
19 garbage cans and the rats that accompany the
20 overflowing garbage. This is a health and safety
21 concern for New Yorkers. Mayor Adams has been clear
22 that improving New York City sanitation is a priority
23 of his administration by appointing a Rat Czar and by
24 releasing targeted containerization policies. These
25 concentrated efforts have been effective as shown by

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 60

2 311 calls for rats decreasing in containerized zones,
3 and we must continue to implement these
4 containerization policies.

5 Containerization is a standard that all modern
6 cities rely on and New York City should be moving as
7 quickly as possible towards universal
8 containerization. However, we must make sure that
9 containerization is deployed equitably. Currently,
10 there are swaths of a neighborhood in New York City
11 without or with limited access to street garbage cans
12 during the transition to containerization DSNY must
13 make sure that low income or more suburban residents
14 are included in their plans.

15 The city must also invest in alternative waste
16 collection processes compost processes have had their
17 services reduced due to budget cuts. These nonprofit
18 normalized environmentally friendly methods to reduce
19 waste, and the city should be encouraging and
20 supporting these efforts. New York City has seen
21 long since a difference in street cleanings and
22 garbage infrastructure. And these nonprofits have
23 helped to close the gap and traditionally underserved
24 neighborhoods where the majority of residents are
25 people in more color.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 61

2 If the mayor's office is serious about reducing
3 the city's rodent population, and the Office of
4 Management and Budget must restore funding to
5 nonprofit organizations that target food waste
6 through composting and other means the
7 administration's goals are reducing the rat
8 population and improving street cleanliness across
9 the city. The budget must reflect this. We must
10 reverse all cuts in sanitation management, as well as
11 invest in modern technologies and processes to better
12 manage street waste. Additionally, DNSY should
13 expedite the hiring of roles that were previously
14 impacted by the hiring freeze, and also I would have
15 mentioned that we had, I've often seen what appears
16 to be inequitable cleaning in communities,
17 particularly communities of color and low income
18 communities. So, I want to make sure that's a
19 priority that things are clean and look better. I
20 think everybody wants clean streets and clean
21 sidewalks. So thank you very much for letting me be
22 here, and thank you, Chair. Thank you, Mr. Public
23 Advocate. Councilmember Brewer?

24

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 62

2 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. I
3 listened to your wonderful remarks, Commissioner, and
4 they were excellent. I know you prepare hard, and I
5 appreciate it. I also like Brian Quinn, who's a
6 wonderful superintendent. And of course, Ryan Merola
7 is a rock star. So my questions are, if we're
8 talking about customer satisfaction, everybody
9 complains about not having enough litter baskets.
10 That's the customer satisfaction. I think,
11 basically, they want to come from their park and they
12 want to put the dog poop in the basket. I got it.
13 And I know that there's an issue if you overdo the
14 household. That's an issue that we should remove the
15 baskets as a result.

16 Is there some way that we can address this so
17 that they can have their little baskets? And we need
18 to do some kind of-- I know they shouldn't put their
19 household in there. But not having litter baskets
20 makes them crazy, and they're already generally
21 upset.

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, actually, the
23 household trash isn't really-- isn't the real problem
24 with the corner litter baskets because people get

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 63

2 free household collection. It's the commercial trash
3 that is the problem with the--

4 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Because they have to pay.

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: --corner litter baskets
6 because they have to pay.

7 And what I would say to that is: There are ways,
8 I think, that we can pilot the use of surveillance
9 technology so that there are consequences for people
10 who misuse the litter baskets. I do have something
11 in the works now that is very much a pilot. I don't
12 want to promise anything is like a winning strategy
13 until I have a little more information. But it's
14 definitely something that I understand has always
15 been on your mind. It is on our minds too.

16 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Thank you. That would
17 help customer satisfaction.

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Wait till you see this.

19 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Customer satisfaction.

20 Number two: you mentioned that wonderful state
21 legislation that would have to pass in order to get
22 the misbehaving drivers to do alternate side of the
23 street parking. Is that something that you have the
24 budget for, if it was to pass and Albany, et cetera.
25 Because to me, that's a big issue. You just see, at

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 64

2 least, in Manhattan tons of people not moving their
3 cars.

4 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So we, as you know, we don't
5 enforce for the sake of enforcement, and we don't
6 enforce for the sake of revenue.

7 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I'm with you.

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: However, I think with
9 something like this, because it certainly at first
10 would be revenue-generating, meaning if we got this
11 authorization, we will issue a lot of violations in
12 the-- you know, the beginning time period, and then
13 suddenly people will get the point and move their
14 cars.

15 But anyway, because it is-- it would be revenue
16 generating, at least at first, I don't anticipate a
17 problem on the budget side procuring the technology.

18 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay. Finally, the issue
19 of the containers and the business: What's
20 happening-- and you know, this as well as I do--
21 they're buying (I'm making this up) two containers,
22 and it's really not enough.

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: It makes me crazy.

24 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: So they have over-- Last
25 night, I walked a long way up to Columbia, about one

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 65

2 o'clock in the morning to see what was going on. And
3 literally, almost all of the small stores had two
4 containers and then overflowing.

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah.

6 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Was that a situation where
7 they will get a ticket?

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Oh, yeah.

9 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Or do they need a third--
10 How does that work?

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: You get the same-- You get
12 the same violation for that as you would for not
13 having containers at all. Like, at this point, it's
14 been in place long enough, like appreciating the
15 effort isn't good enough anymore. You got to have
16 enough containers to containerize all your trash and
17 the lids have to seal, and if those very basic things
18 aren't met, you get a violation, and you should okay.

19 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: And then the school
20 organics. Having started that myself years ago, the
21 issue there is, I assume it's working in terms of
22 fewer rats and less complaints, but is it working in
23 terms of cleaner organics?

24 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We have contracts in place
25 for all of the organic material that we collect.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 66

2 Before it gets processed, we have ways of cleaning
3 it. Some of it is human cleaning of it. You know,
4 literally picking things out, and some of it is more
5 mechanized cleaning of it. But we have contracts and
6 processes in place for all of our organic material,
7 to take out the contamination before it gets
8 processed. And that includes the school
9 contamination from the school.

10 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: So they've been, for
11 whatever reason, a bigger challenge than others in
12 the past.

13 COMMISSIONER TISCH: The school organics,
14 however, is I think, like one of the greatest
15 investments we could possibly make in in organics in
16 New York City, because what it's doing is it's
17 training the next generation of New Yorkers to
18 separate out their food scraps. They bring it home
19 to their parents, and I just think it's a great way
20 forward.

21 [BELL RINGS]

22 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: One more question, if you
23 don't mind. Your kids hate the food, but they're
24 learning how to do the organics. The OATH-- When I
25 complain to OATH, are you collecting the funding that

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 67
2 is-- that, you know, people are supposed to pay for
3 their infractions? They say, "Talk to the agencies.
4 Not my problem." So OATH says to us, "We don't have
5 anything to do. We sit there we adjudicate. We
6 don't know whether or not the money is collected."
7 So is that something that you pay attention to? In
8 other words, if I get it fine, do I-- you know, if I
9 don't pay my fee, is that something that you keep
10 track of? Who's is supposed to keep track of that?

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: No. My understanding is
12 that that is the Department of Finance that keeps
13 track of that, but the agencies certainly do not.

14 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay, that would be very
15 helpful to understand. And than just the sanitation,
16 big Union Square, you're going to return those days
17 that people pray for, literally? They go to church
18 and say, "I pray for the day when you can go to Union
19 Square, bring my batteries and my recycling." They
20 wait four years for those days. They're like their
21 favorite day of the year. Are you going to do them
22 again?

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: As part of the-- Wait, is
24 this twice per year?

25 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: PEG, the PEG.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 68

2 Yeah. As part of the PEGs we used to do two per
3 borough per year, now it's down to one per borough
4 per year.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Because I understood they
6 were completely cut. Is that true.

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: No that's not the case.
8 They went from two to one.

9 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay. And you'll let us
10 know when the next ones are?

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: For sure.

12 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: People wait for them their
13 entire life.

14 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Well, the entire year.

15 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: No, their entire life.
16 They just want it now. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: We do-- We do love those
18 events. We want it to go back to-- We want it to go
19 back to two if we can. Councilmember Paladino

20 COUNCILMEMBER PALADINO: Wow. Oh god, that's
21 pretty funny, but it's true. People make it sound
22 like, "Oh my god, I can't wait for this day to
23 happen." And it's only about recycling electronics
24 or whatever. So yes, I understand that.

25

2 Also, I'm really wanting to talk to you about the
3 highway cleanup. That's really the only issue I'm
4 happy to say that I have in my district. We're
5 pretty fortunate, and I want to thank you so very
6 much because each and every time I come to this
7 hearing, you guys are so prepared, overly prepared,
8 and it's absolutely everybody takes something away
9 from these hearings. So, thank you very, very much.
10 And I too, agree with you, I have a tendency to want
11 to try to live in an ideal world. But the reality
12 just does not exist. I think a great many of these
13 problems can be solved if people just took personal
14 responsibility for picking up after their dogs, and
15 silly things like that.

16 When people stop caring, everything gets dirty,
17 and it gets dirty rapidly. You have since been cut,
18 your manpower has been cut, your budget has been cut,
19 and it's very difficult. I also feel that tickets
20 are unnecessary, and I mean big-dollar tickets are
21 necessary. I am not one for draining small
22 businesses. However, when you see what they put out
23 on the curb, and you do, it's absolutely horrendous.
24 And something needs to be done about that. And I

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 70

2 think hitting these small business owners in their
3 pocketbook.

4 At this time, we talk about rats, we talk about
5 just not caring. I mean, how much you guys supposed
6 to do. If people cannot do their part. This is a
7 two way street, and everybody forgets it. Okay. And
8 I don't think we'd have half the problems we had, if
9 people just gave a darn about where they lived and
10 took care of their personal business 18 inches out,
11 which they no longer do. So that's another story.
12 We'll go into that on private. But you already know
13 that.

14 Highway cleaning for my district is very big.
15 When you're getting on the Cross Island when you're
16 getting on the Clear View, when you're getting on the
17 Whitestone Expressway, the Van Wyck Expressway, you
18 just drive and the weeds are literally two feet high.

19 How does it work? And how often-- I know if you
20 cut it down real close--

21 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Are you talking about the
22 weeds.

23 COUNCILMEMBER PALADINO: Yeah. I'm talking
24 about--

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 71

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Oh. I'm going to disappoint
3 you then. So, for highway cleaning, as you know, we
4 just got a new-- a year ago, the mayor put the
5 sanitation department in charge of cleaning the
6 litter on the highways. I-- It looks-- They look
7 much better. I don't know if you remember what they
8 looked like before, but they look better.

9 COUNCILMEMBER PALADINO: I remember.

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: But we don't do the weeds
11 and the grass. And that was incredibly explicit and
12 specific, and I don't really understand the reasons
13 behind it. But I know a lot of people care very
14 deeply about that. So you-- For that, you have to
15 ask the Department of Transportation.

16 COUNCILMEMBER PALADINO: I did that. And by the
17 way, the sanitation is cleaned up. But I was just
18 hoping that in one way or another we could try to
19 figure this out. Because DOT too, being cut the way
20 they're cut, they don't have the manpower to do what
21 they're supposed to do either. So in the meantime,
22 we have the sides of just the highways that are--
23 otherwise my district is [makes okay sign] and I
24 thank you.

25 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Great. Thank you.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 72

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Councilmember.

3 I'd like to recognize Councilmember Vernikov.
4 Councilmember Zhuang, you're next.

5 COUNCILMEMBER ZHUANG: Thank you, Chair. And
6 thank you, Commissioner and also our Deputy
7 Commissioner Ryan, and also all the sanitation
8 workers.

9 You guys really put a lot of energy in my 8th
10 Avenue area. But it's still, I'm thinking-- If any
11 taskforce, like, kind of model you guys had in the
12 other districts, have a similar situation mine. The
13 illegal vendors fully packed to the sidewalk. Like I
14 see you guys did a very good job in some other areas.
15 Are you able to bring that model to my area, also? So

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MEROLA: Member, thank you
17 for the question. I'm very happy to go back to my
18 colleagues in City Hall and partner agencies, because
19 the city under this mayor has stood up a number of
20 task forces that involve many agencies to try and
21 address intractable problems.

22 So that's something that I'll have a conversation
23 first with my colleagues at City Legend IGA, and then
24 we'll talk to groups like Community Link that go in
25 and do that (we do it with them too) to try and bring

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 73
2 DSNY, DOT and other agencies to do a big blitz on
3 many issues. Because we're with you on Eighth Avenue
4 for vending enforcement, and we see as well the
5 traffic problems. We see that it makes it easier at
6 times for there to be more vending, or other, you
7 know, other issues that need to be controlled on the
8 street that go outside of our scope. So, I'm very
9 happy to do that right after this.

10 COUNCILMEMBER ZHUANG: Okay. And also, I have
11 another question. We talk about rats all the time.
12 We also have fly rats: we have pigeons. A lot of
13 time in the-- because my district is over trains, the
14 subway station is above the ground. And also,
15 sometimes on top of the roads, like-- There's a lot
16 of pigeons that live there. Is there anything you
17 guys are able to do? Or does it belong to MTA? Is
18 there anything you guys can do to deal with the
19 issue? Because the pigeons are everywhere, and their
20 droppings are everywhere. If you park in a car under
21 the train track, my constituent take pictures. They
22 said, "Five minutes, my car is covered by drops."

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Ryan got it personally, two
24 weeks ago when I was with him.

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 74

2 COUNCILMEMBER ZHUANG: So does it belong to MTA,
3 or is it Sanitation, or is it DOH? I don't know
4 which department I should go to.

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: And I laughed and took a
6 picture. Sorry, that is not unfortunately, part of
7 the jurisdiction of the sanitation department. But
8 we can help identify which agency would be best to
9 address the concern.

10 COUNCILMEMBER ZHUANG: Okay, thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Okay. Councilmember
12 Salamanca?

13 COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
14 Good morning, Commissioner. Again, I want to
15 reiterate, I really appreciate the relationship that
16 my office has with your agency, and I just want to
17 say thank you for that.

18 I just want to touch on two bills here. I want
19 to start with my colleague here, Councilmember Yeger,
20 Intro 102. I'm really-- I really like this bill,
21 Councilmember. I actually submitted this bill, and I
22 was told that someone else-- another one of my
23 colleagues had it. I just want to ask a few
24 questions about this argument here.

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 75

2 Um, you know, I've experienced where I've
3 received a violation between the 8:00 and 9:00
4 period. And, you know, I feel like the language,
5 when we got that violation was just very basic, a
6 wrapper, a piece of plastic that they found.

7 And so my question is: When someone challenges
8 it, right? Because when you challenge it, it goes to
9 OATH. Does that enforcement officer have to appear
10 at OATH automatically?

11 COMMISSIONER TISCH: No.

12 COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: So how does OATH
13 determine if there was actually a piece of wrapper in
14 front of someone's home?

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I am not sure how they do
16 that, but I get my OATH dismissal report every month,
17 and a lot of them are dismissed.

18 COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: So if currently at the
19 moment, there is no picture, there is no proof other
20 than the enforcement officer saying, "I physically
21 saw it," and that enforcement officer is not required
22 to go to OATH. Why would an enforcement officer be
23 required to go to OATH, if we do implement this bill,
24 and there is this actual picture showing that there
25 is garbage in front of someone's home?

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 76

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So what I am told is -- and
3 I'm not a lawyer, by-- in practice, but I did go to
4 law school and pass the bar. So you weren't here for
5 my conversation, I think, with Councilmember Yeger.
6 But I support the bill and concept very much. It's
7 easy to do from a tech perspective. I think it would
8 be a great thing to do. My concern with it is one
9 specific thing, which is that I am told that the fact
10 of including a picture changes something about
11 someone's ability or right to confront evidence
12 produced against them. And that would then require
13 that our enforcement agents or our supervisors would
14 have to appear at OATH for every violation that is
15 heard that they've taken a picture of.

16 So, what I said to Councilmember Yeger is that I
17 want to like push on this, and see if there is a way
18 to achieve the same outcome without requiring our
19 enforcement agents and our supervisors to go out of
20 the field.

21 But, I will say, if we had to take them all out
22 of the field to appear at OATH, it would be highly
23 problematic for the department, and I think for the
24 city.

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 77

2 COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: Yeah, no. I just-- I
3 just find it strange that at the moment, since
4 there's no photos being taken, I can challenge it,
5 and the enforcement officer is not required to appear
6 in OATH. It is just not making sense to me. But I
7 hear you loud and clear. You're going to dig more
8 into it--

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I am.

10 COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: --because I really
11 think that this is a-- I really think that this is
12 the right approach that we should have in terms of
13 showing evidence that you actually did not clean your
14 sidewalk.

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: And I will report back to
16 you, given your interest, and Councilmember Yeger, on
17 our progress.

18 COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: And then finally, in
19 terms of dog waste. Dog waste is a problem. You
20 know, one of the challenges that I have in my
21 district and on my blog is individuals that choose
22 not to pick up after their dogs. You know, I'm a big
23 fan of having our trees. But, you know, with this
24 million-dollar tree campaign that prior
25 administrations have put in. And so the city of New

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 78

2 York, if you're not aware, as they're fixing
3 sidewalks, or as development being built throughout
4 the city, what I've noticed is that the parks
5 department is tagging sidewalks as to there's a tree
6 pit coming with a tree being installed.

7 And one of the issues that I'm having is
8 individuals are either not picking up after their
9 dog, or what I experienced this morning, was someone
10 picked up after their dog and they left their plastic
11 bag full of waste right in front of my home, all
12 right? And so I have to pick it up, because if not,
13 I get the violation. How many enforcement officers
14 does sanitation have focused on just dog waste, or
15 not picking up after the dog?

16 [BELL RINGS]

17 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So we tried having a
18 dedicated pooper scooper team. And for reasons that
19 Josh can explain it was not the most effective use of
20 our resources. Josh, do you want to just give a
21 summary of what you discussed with Councilmember
22 Menin.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Of course, thanks
24 very much, Councilmember. This is a violation that
25 must be observed in the act in order to write the

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 79

2 summons, which meant that when we tried running
3 dedicated teams on this, we would use 311 complaints,
4 send an enforcement agent to an area where we know
5 this is a big problem, and they would spend all day
6 they're watching the people who are walking the dogs
7 trying to catch them. And they had to sort of do it
8 undercover to make sure they didn't get seen, because
9 of course people don't do it in front of someone who
10 they-- you know, if they were doing it in plain
11 clothes. And in an eight-hour shift, they might
12 catch someone. It was not an effective use of
13 resources, because it's a violation that must be
14 enforced against in person. And I think that your
15 point makes-- you make a really excellent point that
16 the issue is not lack of access to the plastic bags.
17 People who do this, it's not because, you know, once
18 in a while, "I forgot my bag at home". That happens.
19 But the scale of the problem clearly indicates that
20 this is a cultural and education-based issue. It's
21 not just people, "I didn't know I have to." They know
22 they have to, and they've been able to get away with
23 it, and we'd love to continue to work on education
24 campaigns around this.

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 80

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: What's the penalty for it?
3 Make it like something outrageous.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GOODMAN: Jail time.

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: People will stop. It
6 doesn't have to be jail time. But, like, raise the
7 penalty. Like illegal dumping \$4,000 summons? Why
8 is that different than leaving your dog's poop on the
9 sidewalk? There has to be-- Because enforcement is
10 so time intensive and so inefficient, there has to
11 be, in my opinion, a real crazy disincentive to doing
12 it.

13 COUNCILMEMBER SALAMANCA: I just want to leave
14 with this. I know that throughout many hearings,
15 we've had conversations on how do we mitigate or
16 address the rat problem that we have in the city of
17 New York. And in one hearing, I heard that rats are
18 attractive to dog poop, that they eat, you know--
19 And so it's an issue for me, where it we are
20 addressing, and we're trying to address the rat issue
21 that we have in the city of New York, and if they are
22 attracted to dog waste, and then there has to be a
23 more focused conversation on how do we address dog
24 owners who are not picking up after the dogs.

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 81

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Councilmember.

3 I'll turn it over to Councilmember Sandra Ung.

4 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Thank you Chair and thank you
5 Commissioner. I want to thank you and your whole
6 team for always being very responsive, of working
7 with my office, with dealing with the ever-
8 challenging problems of downtown Flushing.

9 I do just have a quick question about another
10 problem that has not been brought up yet.

11 I do have a tremendous amount of sidewalk
12 littering of cardboard boxes by both brick-and-
13 mortar-- I believe it's both brick-and-mortar and
14 vendors. I actually-- I sent one over this morning
15 where it actually fell into, I have to say one of the
16 busiest crosswalks of my entire district in Downtown
17 Flushing.

18 So, I'm just asking what are the ways we could
19 deal with these challenges? Because what happens is
20 overnight, I would see-- It really happens right,
21 these cardboard boxes which I believe where they're
22 putting fruits that's being sold, fruits and
23 vegetables by both, you know they're both guilty
24 parties here, just dumping it right on the sidewalk.

25

2 Is there-- What is the difference between
3 littering and dumping, and is there any way we could
4 do-- You know, I realized enforcement, as we were
5 talking about is a big topic of conversation that we
6 just had right now. But what else can we do? Can we
7 differentiate that? And you know, just asking for
8 ideas.

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: That one, I have seen also,
10 as like most New Yorkers have seen. For that we need
11 the Council to pass, or to hear, Eric Bottcher,
12 Councilmember Bottcher's bill about extending routing
13 times.

14 Fact of the matter is, the sidewalks and 18
15 inches into the street are the responsibility of the
16 property owner to keep clean, and there's like two
17 hours a day where we are able to enforce that
18 responsibility. And so other than those two hours a
19 day, we have no ability to enforce against it.

20 So you have legislation in front of you. It's
21 been here for two sessions, and I urge, as I
22 mentioned in my testimony, this committee and this
23 council to action it.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 83

2 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Thank you. And is there any
3 way to address if there's illegal dumping by the
4 vendors?

5 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes, illegal dumping is
6 something that we have the ability now to enforce.
7 And we can work with you and your office to find the
8 locations where you're having specific pain points,
9 and see if we can't use our various successful
10 strategies that we've deployed elsewhere there.

11 COUNCILMEMBER UNG: Thank you.

12 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Sure.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Councilmember. I
14 have two more rat-related questions, rat mitigation
15 strategies rather. Can you provide concrete examples
16 of how the Rat Czar collaborates and coordinates with
17 DOHMH and DSNY, respectively, for more effective rat
18 mitigation interventions?

19 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I don't know how the Rat
20 Czar collaborates with DOHMH, since I am at the
21 Department of Sanitation. But what I can say is, in
22 my opinion, the best, most expansive rat mitigation
23 strategy that we have in New York City is getting the
24 trash into containers, which we are doing with your
25 support very aggressively. And I, myself, am very

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 84

2 open to new ideas for how we can test new ways to
3 complement that strategy, including the bill that you
4 put forward. And I think that the city should be
5 undertaking pilots generally that makes sense to
6 combat some of the biggest quality of life problems
7 that we have.

8 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Can you speak to like the
9 frequency with which the Rat Czar works with DSNY?

10 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Oh. Works with DSNY? Sure.
11 She has a regular coordination meeting with all
12 agencies that would be involved. So, everyone comes
13 together and generally gives updates but I would say
14 DSNY's part, the part we play in the fight against
15 rats is, like, clearly our war on the black bags and
16 our war on trash, which I think is the cornerstone
17 and the centerpiece of the fight against rats in New
18 York City.

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: When was the last time that
20 there was a meeting between DSNY and the Rat Czar.
21 Can you speak to that?

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, there's-- Is it
23 monthly meetings? There's monthly meetings with all
24 of the agencies. The reason I couldn't answer the
25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 85

2 question before is like, I don't know beyond those
3 meetings what type of interaction she has with DOH.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Sure. I have a question also
5 on outdoor dining structures which have become a hub
6 for rats. What is the process for DSNY to remove--
7 to remove these outdoor dining sheds?

8 TCOMMISSIONER TISCH: he Department of
9 Transportation does that. We sometimes assist when
10 they don't have enough person power to get it done.
11 But they would be the agency to ask that question to.
12 They have a number of, like, criteria, I believe
13 that, you know, render an outdoor dining shed
14 suitable for to be taken off the street.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Commissioner, you've
16 mentioned that surveillance tech-- or you suggested
17 the use of surveillance tech to catch misusers of
18 litter baskets. Do you imagine limiting the use of
19 this type of technology for civil enforcement only?
20 And how would you be able to show residents that
21 their privacy is protected from other levels of local
22 and federal enforcement?

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: It's a good question. And
24 historically, because the Department of Sanitation
25 hasn't really been in the surveillance business, I'll

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 86

2 say that that's not something that I've thought
3 deeply about.

4 But given my policing background, and in
5 particular, my background building surveillance
6 systems, I think I like somewhat uniquely understand
7 the needs to put in place thoughtful policies around
8 how that video data is used and/or shared. And so if
9 we decide to move forward with a litter basket
10 strategy, we'll definitely have to think through
11 those issues.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Commissioner,
13 Councilman Vernikov.

14 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Thank you very much.
15 Hi, Commissioner. Thank you again, for your work.
16 Quick question: In my district, we have a problem
17 with trash buildup under the trestles. And we were
18 just-- I was just wondering if you think that cameras
19 would be something that would be helpful as a
20 deterrent?

21 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So, it depends where those
22 trash bags are coming from. If they are illegal
23 dumping from a vehicle. If they're-- If someone is
24 illegally dumping them from a vehicle, then the
25 answer is absolutely. And it's a strategy that we've

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 87

2 deployed in, you know, hundreds of-- on hundreds of
3 streets in the city to great effect. But every
4 location is different. So, we'd have to look at this
5 specific location that you're talking about and make
6 sure that it works. If it doesn't-- If the bags are
7 not coming from a car, and then it won't work because
8 we pair the camera with a license plate reader, and
9 we see the bags, and the camera will-- we'll rewind.
10 We'll look when the bags got put there. And then
11 we'll look at the license plate reader and find the
12 vehicle and then track the registered owner.

13 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: So would cameras help
14 figure out where it's coming from?

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: It works when the dumping
16 comes from a vehicle. It's-- Because we don't and
17 are not contemplating using, you know, technology to
18 read and scan and identify faces. I think just a
19 camera on its own, looking at people carrying bags
20 would not be the most effective thing to do citywide.

21 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: So how do we-- What's
22 the best way to figure out, you know, where it's
23 coming from?

24 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: In those situations,
25 what we do if there's a chronic problem is that we

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 88

2 can send some of our sanitation police to do
3 stakeouts, which they do fairly regularly in
4 different parts of the city. Now those stakeouts are
5 time intensive. It's important to do. We will
6 dedicate the time to do it. I just don't want to
7 promise that that is a-- that will be a programmatic
8 end to the problem. Meaning that will catch someone
9 doing it, but not everyone doing it. And I'm not
10 sure that it's a real deterrence to repeat offenders.
11 But we will dedicate-- work with you and dedicate
12 some of our enforcement resources to try and get a
13 hold of what's going on at that specific location.

14 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay. Because DSNY
15 definitely comes to clean it up. That's not the
16 issue. I think the issue is that the next day-- what
17 happens the next day is that it comes back.

18 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Right. And so my sense is
19 that maybe some dedicated enforcement stakeouts there
20 for a period of time will be more fruitful than, just
21 like, regularly coming in and cleaning it up.

22 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOV: Okay, and since it's MTA
23 property, is there any responsibility on MTA or DOT
24 on this? Or is this solely the responsibility of
25 sanitation?

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 89

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: No. If it's MTA property.

3 It's the responsibility of the MTA. However, we will
4 work with you, and with the MTA, and with the MTA
5 police to figure out how to address this.

6 COUNCILMEMBER VERNIKOS: You always do. Thank
7 you.

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Thanks.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Councilmember. I
10 have two more broader questions, and within them,
11 sub-questions.

12 So the first one is: The 2023 Mayor's management
13 report announced the suspension of street cleaners
14 grading program administered by the Mayor's Office of
15 operations. The report also promised a successor
16 program. I think in your testimony you were talking
17 about that. Can you please describe how the
18 successor program will work, and what your
19 conversations have been like with the Council and the
20 Admin?

21 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Sure. That is still being
22 worked out. I know that there are conversations
23 going on now between Councilmember Moya, who
24 sponsored the bill, and City Hall and the Department
25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 90
2 of Sanitation to work out some of the particulars on
3 it.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Any idea on when the admin
5 expects to begin operating this successor program?
6 And what agency will perform this program?

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I don't know. But I know
8 that the conversations have --been have really, like,
9 ratcheted up of late, and I know that it's a goal of
10 the Councilmembers and the Administration to make
11 sure that whatever this Council passes in regards, is
12 thoughtful and the right thing to do.

13 I think, everyone or anyone who saw that the old
14 scorecard, knew that it was an absolute joke. I
15 mean, no one in New York City-- or I'd like to meet
16 the person in New York City who thinks that the
17 streets are 90% to 94% clean. I mean, I'd love-- I'd
18 love for that to be a reality, but like to deploy
19 like people and time and energy and money. It's just
20 a waste. It's not giving us an accurate picture or
21 actionable information to use to guide our cleaning.

22 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I'm delighted that
23 conversations are ratcheting up. As soon as you have
24 an understanding as to when the successor program
25 will be implemented, if you could just let us know.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 91

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Will do.

3 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Let's talk about
4 containerization. I'm sure it's a topic you'd like
5 to talk about.

6 DSNY recently contracted with a single
7 manufacturer to sell trash containers to city
8 residences. Homeowners will be required to purchase
9 and use these DSNY approved containers. Does DSNY
10 intend to provide any sort of assistance to low-
11 income households for this purchase?

12 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So the requirement is for
13 one-to-nine unit buildings, and the requirement is on
14 the property owner, not the resident. And so the bin
15 requirement for one-to-nine unit residents is to use
16 wheelie bins for their trash will go, or is
17 contemplated to go into effect this fall.

18 Prior to that the standardized New York City
19 wheelie bin will be available for sale. Those
20 wheelie bins are going to be very high quality and
21 dramatically discounted, like way below standard
22 market rates.

23 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Do you have a price per bin?

24 COMMISSIONER TISCH: The price that we had set up
25 in the RFP was \$50 for the most standard size, and

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 92

2 the price is going to come in at below \$50 for the
3 most-- for the most commonly used size.

4 The requirement to use that specific bin, though,
5 that the standardized one will not go into effect
6 until two years later. And the reason why is that we
7 wanted to make sure that people who had recently
8 bought bins-- you know maybe they heard all of our
9 stuff about how bins are effective or rat deterrent,
10 maybe they just bought bins. And so, we didn't want
11 them to have to throw out brand new bins to buy the
12 New York City standard model. But the bins that we
13 are going to unveil soon, that will go up for sale
14 soon, are very high quality at already significantly
15 discounted rates.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: That leads me to my next
17 question, which I imagine households would probably
18 have to dispose of their old bins for the new bins.
19 Is that-- Would that be correct then?

20 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Well, not for two years.
21 So, if a household is currently using a bin and they
22 don't want to dispose of a new bin that they bought,
23 they should use it for the next two years. And at
24 that time, they will be required to use the

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 93
2 standardized bill. It's actually like two and a half
3 years from now.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And how would that be
5 promoted so that they don't have to dispose of them
6 until two years?

7 COMMISSIONER TISCH: We are going to be sending a
8 mailer to every one-to-nine unit residents in the
9 city shortly, and that mailer will include all of the
10 information about, like, what's required in November
11 in the fall, and then what will be required two years
12 later as with information about how to buy the
13 standard discounted New York City bin.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What is the standard size of
15 the bins? Do you have that information?

16 COMMISSIONER TISCH: There's two sizes-- well
17 there's-- yeah, there's two sizes. There is one
18 that's like closer to 40 gallons, and one that's
19 closer to 50 gallons.

20 So a single one-- a single family home would
21 probably use the smaller size, and larger residents
22 would use the larger size. But, yeah.

23 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And that's up to the
24 discretion, which of the two they want.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 94

2 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes, the website where you
3 can order from, or the hotline that you can call or
4 you'll be able to call to order it will have all of
5 that information. Like stuff like what it's
6 recommended for, what type of residence or building
7 it's recommended for. How many trash bags-- how many
8 like standard kitchen trash bags fit in it. What the
9 size is, the height, all of that information. But
10 we're trying to be very practical in how we present
11 the information so that people buy the right thing.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And I think I know the answer
13 to the next question. Does the manufacturing
14 contract require that the manufacturer produce
15 containers that are rat resistant?

16 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: How frequently should
18 residents expect to have to replace their DSNY
19 approved containers?

20 COMMISSIONER TISCH: These are high quality bins.
21 So you can go and buy bins of very different quality,
22 and they last very different amounts. Generally like
23 depends on how much you pay for it. What I would say
24 is I can't give you a specific timeframe. But this

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 95

2 is a high-quality bin made out of thick material that
3 is designed not to break or get holes.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yeah, if at any point, you
5 have knowledge of what the-- you may actually know
6 now the material of these bins. But if you don't
7 have that, I would appreciate it if you could send
8 that to us.

9 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I'll send it to you. I'll
10 get you all the information for that.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Also, if you can get us the
12 life period of these bins, you know when they are
13 more likely to wear and tear. That would also be
14 helpful information.

15 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yeah, this is all, like,
16 public information in the RFP, but I will get it for
17 you. And we'll send it directly to your office.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And my last question on
19 containers is: Why did DSNY decide to work with a
20 single manufacturer as opposed to multiple
21 manufacturers?

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Oh, that's easy. Because we
23 wanted to be able to sell the bins at remarkable
24 price discounts. And the way that we're doing that,
25 the way that we are able to have a high-quality New

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 96

2 York City bin that would retail for well above \$100
3 being sold at below \$50 is by creating so much price
4 competition in our RFP, and awarding it to a single
5 vendor because that's just the way markets work.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And my last question is on
7 neighborhood cleanups. The Sanitation Foundation has
8 engaged in neighborhood cleanups which make a big
9 difference when they happen, but they aren't really a
10 sustained solution.

11 An area that is clean one week ends up with new
12 with new trash the next week because we don't always
13 have follow up. Does DSNY have any plans were closer
14 with Sanitation Foundation on these neighborhood
15 cleanups to ensure that the impact is long lasting?

16 COMMISSIONER TISCH: So the neighborhood cleanups
17 are what they are. They're a bunch of neighbors
18 generally getting together to keep the neighborhood
19 clean. And the Sanitation Foundation is a wonderful
20 501C-3 organization that helps facilitate
21 neighborhood cleanups. But there is truly nothing
22 that stops a bunch of neighbors with or without the
23 sanitation department, or the Sanitation Foundation
24 President, to do what is done in those cleanups every
25 day, every week, whatever.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 97

2 And as far as the continued cleaning, we do have
3 our cleaning programs, like our targeted neighborhood
4 task force that clean city-owned property.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Colleagues have
6 any further questions? Councilmember Yeger?

7 COUNCILMEMBER YEGER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
8 Commissioner, I just want to follow up on some
9 questions that Councilman Vernikov brought up and
10 also others regarding dumping and people misusing the
11 corner waste bins.

12 A number of years ago, I think in the 2018
13 session of the Council, a law was passed that gave
14 the sanitation department authority to write
15 summonses based on information contained in the
16 dumped material. Sifting through the household
17 trash, you find envelopes with names on it, you can
18 surmise that they came from that home, and summons
19 based on that is rebuttable evidence, but it's a
20 place to go to. Do you utilize that tool? And is it
21 successful?

22 COMMISSIONER TISCH: No.

23 COUNCILMEMBER YEGER: Because let me let me add
24 to-- before you answer it. What I've seen in
25 reporting an overflowing bin and 15 bags around it is

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 98

2 the district will send out a truck and go get the--
3 go get the trash and have a nice day. But I don't
4 see anything more than that. Then they throw it in
5 the back of a truck. So-- I'm not saying that maybe,
6 we shouldn't ask sanitation guys to go through the
7 bags and report.

8 COMMISSIONER TISCH: No. It's gross. And God
9 bless, they do it. Not every time. So what I would
10 say about that is: It's a tool we can, and from time
11 to time do use, but there is no way to scale that up
12 and have it be a regular thing or a regular practice
13 that is done every time there is an overflowing
14 litter basket in the city.

15 COUNCILMEMBER YEGER: Do the do the districts get
16 told that if you get a complaint about a particular
17 corner, every week, two three, from the Councilmember
18 or the District Manager, then you know, rip those
19 bags open and see what's in it? Because it's the
20 same home-- we know it's the same-- it's the
21 apartments on top of the stores. We know what they
22 are.

23 COMMISSIONER TISCH: I hear you on that. And,
24 you know, that has not come up in the times that I
25 have been at Trash Dash, but I will be sure that for

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT 99

2 the next seven weeks-- That's how we get through
3 seven or eight weeks. We get through all of the
4 boroughs, and we see everyone, that they are reminded
5 that for locations where they have chronic problems
6 with commercial or other-than-walking trash clogging
7 up a litter basket, that that be something that we
8 employ.

9 Thank you for the reminder on that.

10 COUNCILMEMBER YEGER: I stress that this tends to
11 be specific around locations where there are-- there
12 commercials on the on the first floor, and the second
13 and third story is residential.

14 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Yup.

15 COUNCILMEMBER YEGER: And there's commercial
16 pickup, but the resident-- the residents don't want
17 to wait until after eight or whatever. So, they take
18 it. They throw it in the corner. But the thing is,
19 they're not throwing a shopping bag. They're
20 throwing out these big Hefty bags. And you see it.
21 It's not just in my neighborhood. Wherever I go, I
22 see-- That's the kind of location that gets that
23 problem.

24 All right. Thank you.

25 COMMISSIONER TISCH: Thank you.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT100

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Seeing no further
3 questions, this panel is excused. Thank you for your
4 testimony.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you we'll be taking a
6 five minute break before proceeding to the next part
7 of our hearing.

8 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: And I promise I'm very
9 excited for this next phase. Just need a little
10 break. Thank you.

11 [8 MINUTES SILENCE]

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I now open to hearing for
13 public testimony. I remind members of the public
14 that this is a government proceeding, and that
15 decorum shall be observed at all times. As such,
16 members of the public shall remain silent at all
17 times. The witness table is reserved for people who
18 wish to testify.

19 No video recording of photography is allowed from
20 the witness table. Further members of the public may
21 not present audio or video recordings as testimony,
22 but may submit transcripts of such recordings to the
23 Sergeant At Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

24 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please
25 fill out an acceptance card with the sergeant at arms

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT101
2 and wait to be recognized. When recognized you will
3 have two minutes to speak on today's hearing topic.
4 I would like to repeat, on today's hearing topic,
5 street cleanliness or any of the legislation on our
6 agenda today. If you have a written statement or
7 additional written testimony you wish to submit for
8 the record, please provide a copy of that testimony
9 to the sergeant at arms. You may also e-mail written
10 testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72
11 hours of this hearing. Audio and video recordings
12 will not be accepted.

13 The first four among our first panel will be
14 Danielle Avisar, Lena Frey, Sitra Bowman, Courtney
15 Schoeffler.

16 You may begin when ready, thank you

17 MS. SCHOEFFLER: Good morning Chair Abreu, and
18 the Sanitation Committee. I'm a proud member of the
19 GrowNYC Workers Collective, a labor union represented
20 by RWDSU, the retail wholesale department store
21 union. I'm accomplice, coordinator, and driver for
22 GrowNYC until May 20. This is the date that begins
23 the layoffs for 80 of my coworkers. Together with
24 our partners at the New York City compost project, we
25 work to provide New Yorkers with waste equity access

2 through food scrap collections and processing
3 outreach, education and finished compost. We keep
4 the city clean by removing pests' food sources from
5 the sidewalks and provide by providing finished
6 compost and programming for communities to attend to
7 street trees.

8 It is the workers and volunteers who keep our
9 neighborhoods clean through our labor. Due to the
10 defunding of our program, I now deliver food scraps
11 collected at GrowNYC drop offs to Staten Island
12 compost site for processing. There, the workers
13 gesture to the trash bags piled high in their Bay as
14 they describe the high rates of contamination
15 received from curbside bins in the public school
16 systems. They told me that much of what is next to
17 the organics we bring is just trash.

18 Because there is not a worker to audit during the
19 curbside or smart bin collections the operations
20 workers have to take time to audit from their work or
21 discard the collections entirely due to the high rate
22 of contamination of non-organics.

23 This indicates a stomach failure of a hasty
24 rollout with insufficient funding for outreach and
25 education necessary to build and during practices.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT103

2 Right now, participation of these programs is
3 insignificant.

4 The undervaluing of our efforts to give our
5 neighbors a cleaner city are demonstrated by the
6 defunding of community compost, curbside service gaps
7 and inadequate outreach that are counterintuitive to
8 the green and clean messaging we hear but have yet to
9 see.

10 Curbside and smart bins alone will not realize
11 the waste equity needs of our city. If this
12 administration were earnestly committed to its
13 reported environmental objectives the services
14 provided to the public would be funded and legislated
15 beyond or year to year contracts with DSNY. Every
16 neighborhood deserves waste equity. Our work is part
17 of making that possible.

18 MS. AVISAR: Hello, my name is Danielle Avisar.
19 I am a resident and mother on the Upper East Side.
20 Julie Menin is my local councilwoman. About a year
21 ago, me and various other mothers and caretakers got
22 together to propose solutions to Julie Menin for the
23 dog waste issue that is affecting our neighborhood.
24 It has significantly got worse since COVID. I think
25 there's just a lot of irresponsible pet owners that

2 are not taking care of their animals, that are just
3 leaving dog waste all over the place. It really
4 degrades our neighborhoods. We're constantly looking
5 down. We can't look up. We can't look up at the
6 buildings, appreciate any of the beauty around us.
7 I'm constantly telling my kids to dodge buckets of
8 waste that we see on the street. It's very
9 excessive, and it gives the city a horrible
10 reputation.

11 Children are playing with it, they're bringing it
12 home, they're bringing it into their schools, they're
13 a very vulnerable demographic. Some have gone to the
14 ER because of it. So it's spreading a lot of
15 disease. Whatever is currently in place, the
16 strategy, it's not working. It's just simply not
17 working. So we have to make this change. We either
18 need to increase the fines, enforce it, but at least
19 the bags and the public health awareness campaign
20 that we're setting forth is a step towards progress.

21 The health campaign that we're proposing needs to
22 be aggressively, and I mean aggressively, pushed
23 because I don't think people understand the impact
24 that the dog waste is having on communities,
25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT105

2 especially an area with a high concentration of young
3 kids and babies.

4 Thank you very much for Julie Menin to have
5 listened to us. We do feel that we have been heard,
6 but now it's a serious time for change.

7 MS. BOWMAN: Good morning, everyone. Thank you
8 for this opportunity to testify. My name is Sitra
9 Bowman, and I am a member of the GrowNYC workers
10 collective represented by RWDSU.

11 I currently work in education and outreach at
12 public schools through the Zero Waste Schools Program
13 at GrowNYC. As you can imagine schools produce a
14 large amount of waste that needs to be picked up
15 every day. Based on the waste characterization study
16 by DSNY. In 2023 49% of all waste produced by
17 schools can be composted, and another 35% can be
18 recycled. The Zero Waste Schools Program supplies
19 schools with important infrastructure such as brown
20 bins and orange tilt trucks that allow students to
21 compost, and schools to store their organic waste
22 until DSNY pickup. These containers are instrumental
23 in decreasing the number of rodents, especially in
24 neighborhoods that are rat mitigation job zones.

25

2 Unfortunately, not all schools receive the
3 infrastructure that they need. And my job is to fill
4 in the gaps to ensure that schools get all the
5 supplies they need. The outreach that I do is not
6 only for students, but also for faculty and staff. I
7 have folks asking me about how to get a brown bin for
8 their home, what goes in the brown bin, and when you
9 can put it out.

10 Businesses such as hotels and supermarkets get
11 even less outreach than schools. Many of them are
12 completely unaware that that it is required by law
13 for them to separate their compost from their regular
14 trash.

15 Without better education and outreach
16 initiatives, composting will continue to have low
17 rates of participation and high rates of
18 contamination.

19 I am asking today for the City Council to
20 reinstate the funding for the community composting
21 programs, Zero Waste Programming GrowNYC, and the New
22 York City compost project.

23 It's kind of incredible today to sit here and
24 hear the Commissioner champion the Zero Waste Schools
25 program while simultaneously defunding it. These

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT107

2 programs are instrumental in providing education that
3 will not only reduce the amount of garbage we
4 produce, but also keep our city cleaner and
5 healthier. Thank you for your time.

6 MS. FREY: Okay, good afternoon, Chair Abreu and
7 Councilmember Brewer and staff. My name is Lena
8 Frey, and I am here today as a proud community
9 compost worker and member of the GrowNYC workers
10 collective, a labor union with RWSU. The recent
11 defunding of the community compost program and the
12 city's failure to renew the contracts for the Zero
13 Waste schools and stop-and-swap programs will leave
14 millions of New Yorkers without vital Waste Reduction
15 Services. It also means 79 union workers like myself
16 losing our jobs.

17 Community compost is one of the best ways to keep
18 our city clean and mitigate the rat problem. Food
19 waste sitting out on the street in plastic bags is a
20 feast for rats, and diverting this waste through
21 community composting is the most cost-effective,
22 preventative measure that the city can take.

23 We have a sanitation commissioner who has
24 publicly stated that she doesn't care about reducing
25 trash. That isn't her job. Well, it is my job, at

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT108

2 least for the next two weeks, and it should be a
3 priority for the city.

4 Without the education and outreach efforts of
5 zero waste workers school compost programs in the
6 city brown bins will continue to be contaminated and
7 ineffective. You cannot defund these waste reduction
8 programs laying off union workers and expect the city
9 to be clean and functional. We already have a
10 winning strategy to address rat infestations, and it
11 is community compost. I implore the City Council to
12 reinstate the funding for the Zero Waste programs at
13 GrowNYC, and for the New York City compost project.
14 Funds must be made immediately available not just to
15 save jobs but also the 30 plus years of progress that
16 we have made towards a clean and sustainable New York
17 City for all. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you.

19 This panel is excused. I like your hat too.

20 The next panel will include Ryan Castalia, Renee
21 Del Carmn, Deborah Thomas and Kathryn Nazare.

22 I mean to say Castalia. Or is it Castalia?

23 MR. CASTALIA: Castalia.

24 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Castelia, okay.

25 MR. CASTALIA: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I guess I got it wrong both
3 times.

4 MR. CASTALIA: No worries.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You may, you may begin.

6 MR. CASTALIA: Alright, thank you. Good
7 afternoon. My name is Ryan Castelia. I'm Executive
8 Director of Sure We Can, a Brooklyn-based redemption
9 center and nonprofit serving independent recyclers.
10 Thank you to Chair Abreu for the opportunity to
11 testify today, and I want to commend the Council for
12 recommending that action-- recognizing that action
13 needs to be taken to ensure our communities aren't
14 buried underneath the overwhelming burdens of
15 pollution and climate change.

16 The consequences of inaction are evident.
17 Millions of New Yorkers are in real danger of losing
18 their lives or livelihoods while sensible waste
19 policy has been trapped in political paralysis, even
20 as the most effective recycling system that exists in
21 our state, the bottle bill, crumbles around us. The
22 bottle works. Period. It's demonstrated its
23 efficacy continuously for decades, resulting in the
24 diversion of millions of tons of waste and vast
25 reductions in litter in our communities, without

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT110

2 costs of the city or state. In fact, it generates
3 revenue. It's even become a mechanism for
4 environmental justice, creating a low barrier way for
5 marginalized people from all kinds of backgrounds to
6 become independent recyclers who work, contribute to
7 their communities, and earn a livelihood. In a very
8 basic way the system makes our communities cleaner
9 and stronger.

10 A study done by Sure We Can in 2023 indicated
11 independent recyclers in New York City earn an
12 average wage of around \$5 an hour, less than a third
13 of minimum wage, for essential workers on the
14 frontlines of waste diversion and recycling.

15 With three simple updates, an already working
16 system could reach new heights. A 10-cent deposit
17 would push our return rates. It would mean more
18 income for independent recyclers, and more revenue
19 for the state from unredeemed deposits. Redemption
20 centers across the state are also closing. There are
21 no redemption centers right now in in Manhattan, and
22 an increased handling fee would allow redemption
23 centers to flourish instead of suffer creating new
24 access points and driving local economic activity.

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT111

2 I'll say it again, canners are essential workers,
3 a green army on the frontlines of the struggle
4 against climate change environmental injustice, ready
5 to work in partnership with the city to make our
6 communities healthier, cleaner, and more just. In
7 order to do so, they need respect and support and to
8 be included as stakeholders in issues that affect
9 them like containerization.

10 New York City's in a unique position to provide
11 accountability to the state around passing the bottle
12 bill, and improving conditions for canners and today
13 I call upon you to continue pushing like you did last
14 year, passing another resolution supporting bottle at
15 the state level, and working together with the
16 independent recyclers of New York City to keep our
17 system alive and our communities clean.

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you Ryan.

19 MR. CASTALIA: Thank you. I'll be also
20 translating interpreting for my friend Renee.

21 MR. DEL CARMEN: [SPEAKS SPANISH]

22 TRANSLATOR / MR. CASTALIA: My name is Rene Del
23 Carmen. I used to be a recycler and today I'm one of
24 the managers of Sure We Can. Our community doesn't
25 have a lot of economic resources, yet we're still

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT112

2 called upon to pay for food, health, rent, taxes and
3 other basic needs. Our mental health is increasingly
4 consumed by the knowledge that the price of
5 everything is rising, especially fuel, food, and
6 electricity.

7 As recyclers, we are keenly aware of the huge
8 amount of pollution in our environment. We do the
9 hard work of collecting bottles and cans. And of
10 course, we're not talking about one or two recyclers
11 here. In New York City, there are thousands and
12 thousands of recyclers collecting a huge amount of
13 material.

14 It's evident from the amount of bottles and cans
15 that are redeemed at Sure We Can alone, over 13
16 million containers each year, we feel that we are
17 helping to save the planet, not to mention helping
18 reduce expenses and impact of gas and energy for
19 waste hauling and mechanized sorting using heavy
20 machinery.

21 I know it's easy to think that machines can do
22 anything a human can. But these machines can be very
23 inefficient and are prone to contamination. We are
24 looking to promote a human-oriented approach to this
25 work, starting with financial stability for canners.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT113

2 We ask that we are paid a decent wage. Other states
3 have already increased their deposits from 5 cents to
4 10 cents. The community is in great need and will be
5 so relieved with this change, not just for the
6 financial benefit, but also because it is just and
7 because it helps the environment.

8 Thank you very much to the Chair and the Council
9 for your time.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Now thank you, Sure We Can.
11 It was a privilege visiting Sure We Can yesterday,
12 and the work that you do is an extension, really, of
13 our city's recycling efforts, making sure our
14 environment is cleaner and more green, and the
15 dignity that this work provides for canners,
16 loteros... I mean, we love to see it.

17 Thank you for your testimony.

18 Deborah?

19 MS. THOMAS: Good afternoon. My name is Deborah
20 Thomas. I'm an animal lover and advocate, a
21 volunteer at the New York City animal care centers,
22 and a member and supporter of many animal welfare
23 organizations, as well as a New York City voter.

24 I'm here today to testify in support of Intro 736
25 also known as Flaco's Law. Unfortunately, I live in

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT114

2 a neighborhood on the Upper West Side near
3 Morningside Heights. That's home to many, many rats,
4 and I see them daily helping themselves to contents
5 of garbage cans outside of the apartment buildings on
6 my street.

7 Although I dislike these rats as much as anyone
8 else does, I must admit that the continued efforts
9 over the past few years to get rid of them by using
10 rat poison has not been very successful. It's for
11 that reason that I'm very much in favor of employing
12 the pilot program proposed an Intro 736, which would
13 use contraceptive pellets to lessen the rat
14 population rather than poison.

15 Besides being much more humane, the proposed
16 contraceptive method would also be much safer for use
17 around children, pets and wildlife, including birds
18 like our friend, Flaco, the owl who died from
19 ingesting a poisoned rodent.

20 And I also want to thank my city Councilmember,
21 Sean Abreu, for proposing this bill. And I urge all
22 humane City Councilmembers to stand on the right side
23 of history to please support, vote for, and pass
24 Intro 736. Thank you very much.

25 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Deborah.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT115

2 Cathy?

3 And it's very important that we-- you stay within
4 your two minutes. You did great Deborah. Let's keep
5 it within two minutes because there's a hearing after
6 this will take place in this room. But please get
7 through your testimony as well.

8 MS. NAZARE: Okay. Good afternoon Chair Abreu
9 and Councilwoman Gale Brewer. I'm Kathy Nazare,
10 Founder and Chair of the Lights Out Coalition a
11 diverse group of animal, avian, environmental,
12 activists, scientists, rehabilitators, legal medical,
13 economic and design professionals, as well as the
14 vice president in the United Nations system, some of
15 whom you'll hear today are via written testimony all
16 united to protect urban wildlife through science
17 based and common-sense strategies. I am thrilled to
18 be testifying today in support of Intro 736 Flaco's
19 Law.

20 Mayor Adams declared a war on rats. Yet while we
21 waste literally millions of dollars on rodenticides
22 the rat population has exploded. There is currently
23 nearly one rat for every three people living in New
24 York City the rats are winning. For two years we
25 sought a political partner to pilot a rat

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT116

2 contraception program and could not be happier to
3 work with Councilmembers Sean Abreu, who has broken
4 with tradition by being proactive and preventative,
5 and using a scientific approach to what is an issue
6 of biology.

7 To use the councilman's words, we can't kill our
8 way out of this problem, nor should we try.

9 By reducing the number of births we can
10 successfully significantly reduce the population
11 without causing harm to rats, wildlife, pets, or
12 human children, the latter of which is so often
13 omitted from discussions despite millions of sick
14 children and thousands of deaths from rodenticide
15 ingestion.

16 And let's not forget the damage it does to the
17 soil and water is anyone testing out drinking water
18 for the presence of rodenticides?

19 Lights Out is proud to have as one of our members
20 Dr. Loretta Mayer, who invented rat contraception and
21 her wisdom good works they develop the first solid
22 easily deployed contraceptive rodent feed in the form
23 of a non poisonous pellet called Good Bites. Studies
24 show up to 98% population reductions. Poison was
25 never so efficient. The pellets are very sweet and

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT117

2 appealing to rats, who carry it back to their burrows
3 to other family members. It renders both males and
4 females infertile within a few short days of
5 ingesting their first--

6 [BELL RINGS]

7 (I'll just finish up)-- serving with the minimum
8 of weekly returns to feed and fertility continues.
9 Made completely from nontoxic natural ingredients.
10 These pellets will not harm animals, humans or the
11 environment. Following the heartbreaking and
12 completely avoidable death of Flaco from rodenticides
13 New Yorkers have indicated they want humane
14 solutions. Policy needs to reflect changing times.
15 In less than three weeks this bill has bipartisan
16 support from the majority of the Committee Council
17 majority and is well on its way to a supermajority--

18 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you Kathy. We have 29
19 sponsors, right?

20 MS. NAZARE: 29. Yeah. We're told is the
21 fastest moving animal bill ever in the Council which
22 says our lawmakers are ready for change. New York
23 will make history by being the first not only in the
24 nation, but in the world to mandate ran contraception

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT118

2 leading with science, not violence. Our heartfelt
3 thanks to all of you.

4 MS. NAZARE: Thank you, Kathy. You're a very
5 critical partner in this effort.

6 Our next panel will include Margaret Lee, Elena
7 Gonzalez White, Rockwell Schwartz, and David Lee.

8 Are we missing someone?

9 Margaret Lee, Elena, Rockwell, and David. Who
10 are missing?

11 We'll do it in the order that people came to
12 testify. So our next person, if David isn't here,
13 we'll do Deborah Mullins.

14 Deborah Mullins? Okay, you may start.

15 MS. MULLINS: Chairman Abreu, and members of the
16 Sanitation Committee, I'm Debbie Mullins, president
17 of the Linnaean Society of New York and a member
18 organization of the Lights Out Coalition. I'm here
19 to express our support for Intro 736. Raptor
20 populations have increased dramatically since DDT was
21 banned in 1972. In New York City, we're privileged
22 to have many raptors nest here and raise their young.
23 Charismatic birds like Flaco, the Eurasian eagle owl
24 and Barry the barn owl, spent time in the city and

25

2 captured the hearts of the public. Rat poison
3 contributed to the death of both Flaco and Barry.

4 Rats are one of the main food sources for raptors
5 in New York City and while providing a reliable
6 source of food, many of the rats consumed by Raptors
7 have anticoagulant pesticides in their bodies that
8 are passed on to the birds. As a result, many
9 raptors living in the city meet the same fate as
10 Flaco and Barry.

11 Rodenticide poisoning is widespread. scientists
12 at the Cornell University College of Medicine
13 estimated that 68% of the red-tailed hawks in the
14 state have rat poison in their systems.

15 Councilmember Abreu's bill calling for the use of
16 non-toxic rat contraception is an alternative to the
17 anticoagulant rodenticides currently in use could
18 provide a proof-of-concept needed to phase out the
19 use of rodenticides that are so dangerous to raptors,
20 pets, and even children.

21 A landmark study published in 2019 found that 3
22 billion birds have been lost from North America since
23 1970. It's imperative that government at all levels
24 act now to mitigate the deadly effects of human
25 altered landscapes and toxic chemicals on birds.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT120

2 I urge the city council to establish a rat
3 contraceptive program as a first step towards phasing
4 out the use of toxic rodenticide. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. If you could also
6 bring the mic up closer please.

7 MS. LEE: I'm Margaret Lee, a longtime resident
8 of lower Manhattan and an astute observer of New
9 York's non-human beings, including rats. I felt it
10 important to be here in person to support Intro 736,
11 the rat contraception bill and to personally thank
12 the New York City members-- New York Councilmembers
13 who initiated and co-sponsored this life-changing
14 action for wildlife. It has the potential to make
15 New York City a more compassionate place for urban
16 wildlife, and may inspire other urban areas to do
17 better for their underappreciated residents.

18 I'm excited by Flaco's Law, named for New York
19 City's beloved owl, who tragically died as a result
20 of rodenticide poisoning. Like many New Yorkers, I
21 was deeply moved by the life and death of Flaco. He
22 had a year of freedom out of captivity, but
23 ultimately succumb to the city's perils, most
24 tragically, our city's war on rats.

25

2 As one of the rare New Yorkers who actually
3 admire rats for their lovely, quirky, fascinating
4 qualities, and the incalculable ways we are indebted
5 to them. I'm saddened by the ways they are vilified
6 and so viciously treated when they're simply
7 struggling to survive against all odds.

8 Rats never experienced the freedom Flaco had.
9 They are under constant attack in a city that
10 considers them pests to be destroyed by any manner of
11 diabolical methods and products, no matter how cruel
12 and insidious, all because humans regard them as
13 unworthy of respect in a hostile environment we
14 created.

15 I was in high school on Long Island when I was
16 introduced to Rachel Carson's landmark book, Silent
17 Spring, required reading many years ago. It opened
18 my eyes to the horrors of insecticides and
19 rodenticides, and to the ways we are all connected
20 and impacted by how we treat other beings.

21 Rats live (if we can call it living) distinctly
22 separate but also very much with us they don't
23 receive adulation like Flaco, except by those--

24 [BELL RINGS]

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT122

2 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Appreciate it.

3 Next one.

4 MS. SCHWARZ: Good afternoon. I'm Raquelle
5 Schwarz, a resident of Brooklyn, where for the past
6 eight years I've operated an animal sanctuary from my
7 home. It is in this capacity that I interact with
8 New Yorkers as they navigate challenges of rodents in
9 the urban environment. This ranges from trying to
10 find solutions to the rodents in and around there in
11 New York City residences, to finding orphaned babies,
12 to calling me at all hours of the night and a panic
13 when they find a rat who is slowly bleeding out after
14 consuming poison, which can take between 12 hours and
15 an entire week to slowly and excruciatingly kill
16 them.

17 I do not hate rats. I love them. But it's for
18 that reason that I am aligned with those who despise
19 rats and would like to find an actual effective
20 solution to the New York City rat population. I
21 would like us to have a city that does not have rats,
22 not just for human welfare, but because the rats
23 themselves suffer. We-- Next week we'll be
24 celebrating 64 years since the FDA approved human
25 contraceptive was approved, the birth control pill,

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT123

2 and we are marking many decades of human
3 contraceptives being tested on rodents in
4 laboratories.

5 With that in mind, I have brought with me the
6 over-the-counter rat edible contraceptives that I
7 have been distributing around my home in Brooklyn.
8 This is not something that I should be having to do
9 as a New York City resident from my own pocket, and
10 this is why I support Intro 736 and the
11 implementation of contraceptives at a city level.

12 Thank you for supporting this bill.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Next up.

14 MS. GONZALEZ WHITE: Good afternoon, Chairman
15 Abreu and esteemed members of the committee. Thank
16 you Councilmember Brewer, for sticking around to hear
17 our testimony.

18 My name is Elena Gonzales White and I represent
19 Wisdom Good Works in New York City and on the East
20 Coast at large. Wisdom Good Works as a 501C3
21 nonprofit established to provide alternatives to
22 lethal and poisonous approaches to wildlife
23 population management, which have been the failing
24 status quo for the last several hundred years. We do
25 this by investing in scientific research and sharing

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT124

2 expertise in the development of real-world
3 applications of fertility control measures, measures
4 which aim to make this world a safer place for all
5 inhabitants, including my fellow New Yorkers, our
6 children, our pets, the endangered members of our
7 food chain, and yes, even the rats.

8 We rely on science, not violence. We believe you
9 must rely on data, focus, transparency, and learning.
10 Past attempts to apply fertility control to rats in
11 New York City have failed, because available products
12 at the time of study failed to follow the science,
13 the behavior of the world's fastest breeding mammal.
14 We stand at the ready to do better.

15 Any product used must meet the requirements of
16 the intended target. An urban rat requires the same
17 things a human seeks food, shelter, and water. While
18 we appreciate Commissioner Tisch's efforts at
19 containerization across the city, we need to take it
20 a step further. For a product to compete amidst our
21 city's esteemed restaurant offerings, you must make
22 continuously easily available the best tasting to the
23 rats and of course it must be effective.

24 Above all, it must be safe for anyone that comes
25 into contact with it. We must provide food that

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT125

2 contracepts them makes them infertile, not poison,
3 which barely and only temporarily slows the growth of
4 their population. Our solid pellet good bytes have
5 been developed these imperative metrics in mind. We
6 urge you to stand in support.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much. Thank you
8 for bringing the pellets as an example. Thank you.
9 The next panel please, Linda Mann, Lorial Crowder,
10 Mary Claire Flaherty, and Derek Schiller.

11 You may begin. And please keep it to two
12 minutes. Thank you.

13 Good afternoon Chair Abreu, and my Councilmember
14 Gale Brewer. Thank you for both being here. My name
15 is Linda Mann, and I am reading the testimony on
16 behalf of the League of Humane Voters, Sherry Reisch.

17 As a resident of New York City and the coalition
18 liaison for the League of humane voters of New York,
19 a proud member of the Lights Out Coalition. I am
20 urging the New York City Council Sanitation Committee
21 and the full council to vote in favor of Intro 736
22 That would establish a rat contraceptive pilot
23 program. Wildlife rehabilitators have long known
24 through sad experience as their poison has been
25 killing not only rats, but also raptors and carry on

2 feeders. Flaco's untimely passing has let the world
3 know that rat poison in New York City must go. The
4 victims of the poison are not only wildlife.
5 Domestic animals are at risk as well. And sadly some
6 New York City residents have lost their companion
7 animals to rat poison. Just one of many sad stories
8 was Callie, the adorable seven-month-old Rottweiler
9 puppy who died from eating rodenticide during his
10 walks in Washington Heights. Despite extensive
11 medical intervention, he suffered incredible pain and
12 died. Both the ACC and Wild Bird Fund, the latter
13 also a member of Lights Out have seen more than their
14 share of domestic animals poisoned by rodenticide.
15 The League of Humane Voters of New York is in full
16 support of Intro 736. It offers hope that a harmless
17 means of reducing the population of rats in New York
18 City will spare the lives of many other species.
19 Let's lead with science, not violence. Thank you for
20 your time.

21 Miss Crowder.

22 MS. CROWDER: Good afternoon, Chair Abreu and
23 Councilmember Brewer. My name is Lorial Crowder, Co-
24 Vice Chair of Manhattan's Solid Waste Advisory Board
25 and a member of the Lights Out coalition.

2 I'm reading testimony on behalf of Jessica
3 Savanti, attorney and co-founder of a fellow
4 coalition member organization. They All Want To
5 Live, a New York City based animal rescue and
6 advocacy group is in support of Councilmembers Sean
7 Abreu's bill that would mandate a rat contraceptive
8 pilot. We have had the opportunity to review the
9 scientific evidence, demonstrating that the compound
10 is extremely effective, and when deployed according
11 to the protocol developed and tested by wisdom, the
12 nonprofit founded by Dr. Loretta Mayer, is expected
13 to succeed.

14 Past attempts utilizing rat contraceptive
15 contraception have not been effective due largely due
16 to user error, and as well as the fact that other
17 compounds were not as effective or delicious as what
18 will be used in the pilot pursuant to this bill.

19 Poison is not working. It is not controlling the
20 rat population. It is putting wildlife, pets, and
21 even children at great risk and causing great harm.
22 And it's not cheap. The city is throwing its money
23 away doing enormous damage and not achieving
24 anything. It is time to let science, reason, and
25 compassion guide us as we do better for the city and

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT128

2 all of its residents, human, and non-human alike.

3 Thank you for your time.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Next up

5 MS. FLAHERTY: My name is Mary Flaherty, and I
6 volunteer at For Birds. I want to thank Lights Out
7 Coalition for posting about the opportunity to voice
8 support for Intro 736. It's great that we have a
9 chance to develop a humane way to control the rat
10 population while protecting our birds that are so
11 essential to the ecosystem.

12 Currently, the city uses poison to control the
13 rat population. The problem is that the poison
14 travels up the food chain, because birds of prey eat
15 the poison rodents and they are poisoned. This
16 causes birds to experience internal bleeding, a
17 weakening of the immune system, a loss of
18 coordination, disorientation, neurological symptoms,
19 and reproductive problems. The poison may ultimately
20 cause death as it did for New York City's famous
21 Flaco the owl.

22 The literature on rat birth control called Contra
23 Pest indicates that it won't travel up the food chain
24 in a meaningful way due to the small dosage and the
25 way it metabolizes. Intro 36 would require the

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT129

2 city's Health Department to sterilize rats into
3 neighborhoods as a part of a pilot program.

4 New York City also has plans in place to fight
5 rats in other ways too, including upgrading proper
6 garbage disposal. Those measures and rock
7 contraception should be very effective in controlling
8 the rat population. New York loved Flaco. Let's
9 honor his legacy by protecting our wonderful owls,
10 eagles, hawks, falcons, and vultures from the dangers
11 of rat poison. Intro 736 is an important and
12 exciting project. And people are relieved to know
13 that our Raptors may be moving towards less perilous
14 lives. Please vote for 736. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Mr. Schiller.

16 MR. SCHILLER: Hi, my name is Derek Schiller.
17 I'm a community member in Brooklyn, and I am a
18 philosopher who specializes in consciousness.

19 So I wanted to say something in on behalf of the
20 rats and in favor of Introduction 736. So rats are
21 sentient creatures. That's the scientific consensus.
22 They have a brain plan that is shared with us and
23 with all other mammals. But rats are actually more
24 closely related to us than we are to dogs and cats.

25

2 Poison is not a nice way to reduce the rat
3 population. I agree that we should try to minimize
4 the population of rats for our shared interests, but
5 I think that we should continue to explore ways that
6 will allow us to do this without having to routinely
7 and persistently poison them.

8 I don't know if contraception are the best way to
9 do this, but I want to applaud the explorational
10 effort, so thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Next panel.
12 Felicia Otis, Leah Dubuque, Nayla Costa, and
13 Christopher Leon Johnson.

14 And if there's anyone here who would like to give
15 in person testimony, you'd have to fill out this form
16 if you haven't already.

17 Starting with Felicia.

18 MS. OTIS: Good morning and thank you for this
19 hearing. My name is Felicia Otis, and I'm here in
20 support of Intro 736. I'm a New York state wildlife
21 rehabilitator, so I've seen many hawks die from
22 secondary anticoagulant rodenticide poisoning. In
23 other words poisoning by ingestion of rats who have
24 consumed anticoagulant rodenticides.

2 These beautiful birds, who are our allies in
3 keeping rat populations down come in with swollen
4 seeping legs, widespread bruising, blood in their
5 mouth because they're literally bleeding out from
6 everywhere, totally incapacitated. It's a terrible
7 way to die.

8 We know that this poison is killing our native
9 wildlife. We know it's happening regularly,
10 frequently. We know that we are doing this to them.
11 And we know that this deadly poison is all over our
12 sidewalks in front of everyone's yard. We have to
13 find a better way.

14 I'm also someone who has direct experience with
15 rats and contraceptives because I work at a sanctuary
16 upstate, where we deploy them in areas where we see
17 evidence of mice and rats. And I can tell you that
18 this stuff works. We've been using the rat
19 contraceptive for several years, the mouse
20 contraceptive only for several months, and in all
21 locations where it was where either one was deployed,
22 there was a significant reduction in the rat
23 population to the point where there was no physical
24 evidence of their presence, no very few sightings,
25 and no feces.

2 I believe that the use of rat contraceptives
3 along with more investment in sanitation and Parks
4 Department's efforts to keep our streets and parks
5 clean, and investment in organizations and programs
6 diverting food waste from the trash to compost over a
7 cruelty free way to significantly reduce rat
8 populations. And I think everyone who is making
9 those efforts happen.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you.

11 MR. DUBUQUE: Hello, I'm Lou Dubuque. And I'm
12 here today representing the New York City Chapter of
13 The National Waste and Recycling Association. NWRA
14 represents the hard working men and women of the
15 industry who collect and manage the waste,
16 recyclables, and organics produced by the more than
17 10,000 commercial entities in this great city. I
18 would like to thank Chairperson Abreu and the rest of
19 the Sanitation and Solid Waste management committee
20 for the opportunity to speak here today.

21 I'm here today testifying in opposition to the
22 resolution calling for the expansion of the state's
23 bottle bill law. Any bottle bill expansion will only
24 further duplicate the state's recycling process.
25 Recycling technologies have advanced significantly

2 since the bottle bill was originally introduced over
3 40 years ago. Now there are two redundant recycling
4 systems: A bottle bill system recovering a limited
5 percentage of the recycling stream and material
6 recovery facilities, otherwise known as MRFs,
7 recovering all recyclables.

8 Materials considered under the Bottle Bill
9 expansion are already being recycled by MRFs.
10 Solutions are needed for hard-to-recycle materials
11 that MRFs can't process (i.e. carpets, tires,
12 mattresses, and lithium ion batteries), not plastic
13 bottles or aluminum cans. New York City residents
14 and businesses will still pay for two recycling
15 systems, a per-container fee under the expanded
16 bottle bill system, and a residential and commercial
17 curbside service for solid waste and recycling.

18 States instituted bottle bills as litter
19 abatement programs before curbside recycling was
20 initiated and is now used by just ten states as they
21 are inefficient methods of managing post use of the
22 product. New York State would be better served by
23 investing unclaimed deposit money in performance
24 standards, existing infrastructure, education, litter

2 cleanup, enforcement, and recycling systems for
3 municipalities.

4 An expanded bottle bill system will harm
5 recycling due to the fact that containers targeted
6 for the expansion are currently being managed
7 efficiently in local recycling programs. They are
8 key items in the recycling bin that have been
9 positive commodity value.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much for your
11 testimony.

12 MR. DUBUQUE: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Next.

14 MS. COSTA: One day, I saw rats dying of poison
15 in my backyard. As the super from the building next
16 to me to kill the rat, his mild eager to help and
17 throw him alive in the garbage. "No, he's suffering.
18 I want to kill him." I said, I got a gardening tool
19 from my landlords and I thought I would decapitate
20 the rat like Shogun, quick and his pain. I squished
21 his throat with the metal. The rat was quaking with
22 all his strength. His head didn't come off.

23 It took about one very long minute for it to die
24 of suffocation. My hands applying force and his tiny
25 throat squished against the asphalt, he finally died.

2 All my rat stories are unforgettable. We don't
3 want the rats, but I don't want them to suffer. This
4 program is a dream come true for me. It is the only
5 humane solution so far that I have. And I thank you
6 for considering it.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for your testimony.
8 Mr. Johnson?

9 MR. JOHNSON: Hello, good afternoon, Mr. Abreu.
10 My name is Christopher Leon Johnson. And I know
11 you're the Chair for the Sanitation Committee, so you
12 deal with trash. And I want to make a opposition to
13 a trash bill that you introduced to the City Council.
14 That Intro 737 2024 That will amend administrative
15 code of the city you're to making the apps put a tip
16 option.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Please stay on topic.

18 MR. JOHNSON: This is happening--

19 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: It's unrelated to trash.

20 MR. JOHNSON: It's a crappy bill, it's--

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I'm going to give you an
22 opportunity to correct, if not they're going to have
23 to escort you out.

24 MR. JOHNSON: All right, no problem. Alright,
25 so, um, the key-- I'm going to say right now the bill

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT136

2 is garbage. And that's all I got to say. Stop being
3 captain to the to the nonprofits. Stop being captive
4 to trans-open plans. Make the world--

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: This is off topic.

6 MR. JOHNSON: So that's all I got to say. I
7 mean, but by letting them-- you could let-- you let
8 the [inaudible] speak.

9 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You got to be on topic. My
10 apologies.

11 MR. JOHNSON: I'm on topic and it's a trash bill.
12 You're on committee for the Trash Committee, right?
13 So I'm saying you introduced a trashy bill, because
14 your a captive and the nonprofit's into the unions,
15 and this is a trashy bill. So that's all I got--
16 That's the truth. You know, do you need to repeal
17 this bill, you can't force the apps to do what they--
18 what you want them to do. You're a lawyer, you know
19 this. You know that this is a-- this is a stupid
20 bill. And all it's going to do is hurt the workers
21 more. So because they deal with-- they run around
22 with trash all day. So you're the Trash Chair, you
23 know the deliveristas, they have to drive with their
24 E-bikes over garbage and trash all day. So you know
25 this. So, like I said, this bill is a bad bill. You

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT137

2 need to repeal this bill, stop being captive to the
3 nonprofits. Oswald Feliz and Shekar Krishnan are
4 both lawyers. They should have told you this. So
5 stop being captive to the open plans and all these
6 nonprofits, and serve your community. Your community
7 is against the stuff. So, that's the truth and
8 that's all I've got to say. You're to Trash Chair.
9 Trash your bill. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Mr. Johnson. Have
11 a good day.

12 All right, we are now moving over to zoom.

13 First up is Rita McMahon, you have two minutes.

14 MS. MCMAHON: I am Rita McMahon, Director of the
15 Wild Bird Fund New York City's only Wildlife
16 Rehabilitation Center.

17 When a bird or other wild animal becomes sick or
18 injured in the city, the Wild Bird Fund is their only
19 emergency room. Last year we admitted over 11,500
20 patients, mostly birds, from all five boroughs. From
21 our vantage point, we are uniquely positioned to see,
22 intimately, the devastating collateral damage of the
23 city's war on rats.

24 While Flaco was flying free in New York City,
25 consuming meal after meal of the poisoned rats that

2 would contribute to his death, hundreds of wild
3 native raptors across the city were meeting the same
4 fate, red tail hawks, Cooper's hawks, peregrine
5 falcons, owls. We know this because they are brought
6 to the clinic week after week. The signs of
7 anticoagulant rodenticide ingestion can be
8 disturbingly clear: bleeding excessively from an
9 insignificant wound, bleeding from the mouth and
10 other orifices, blood pooling beneath the skin in the
11 chest, abdomen or legs from internal hemorrhaging.
12 We administer vitamin K to counteract the effects of
13 the anticoagulant, but by the time these birds are
14 brought, lying down in a park on the sidewalk and
15 brought to the clinic, it's often too late.

16 In March alone, two hawks from Williamsburg and
17 one from Chelsea, all died before or soon after
18 reaching the clinic. A famous pair of nesting hawks
19 at Columbia University were both found facedown on
20 campus, dying or dead from rodenticide.

21 One study at Cornell found that 68% of the New
22 York State red tail hawks tested had anticoagulant
23 rodenticides in their systems. In the normal course
24 of feeding themselves and their families, these
25 native raptors are helping us in our battle against

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT139

2 rats, but instead of welcoming their assistance, the
3 city is killing them. This situation is simply
4 unsustainable. So we are in full support of 736
5 Thank you very much.

6 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Next up is Kate
7 Mikouliak.

8 MS. MIKOULIAK: Hello, Jerry Abreu and members of
9 the sanitation committee. I write in support of
10 Intro 736 Because the city's current practices of
11 rodent mitigation are inhumane.

12 As a cyclist, I am overexposed to the gruesome
13 roadkill that rat poison causes. After seeing one
14 too many disturbing rat carcasses on the street, I
15 began to document them in late March. As of April
16 27, I documented 16 dead rats on the street, 7 of
17 which were found in just one trip from Williamsburg
18 Bushwick. And on Monday, I found another one in my
19 neighborhood who sadly was still alive, even though
20 it had been crushed.

21 New York City should not have roadkill of any
22 kind. Not only are rats sentient animals, which
23 means they can feel negative and positive emotions,
24 they are a small group of non-human animals that have
25 been proven to have metacognition, which means they

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT140

2 are aware of their thinking. And it means they can
3 suffer. And at the hands of this city, they do so
4 extremely. Rats also have empathy. There is
5 documentation that they experience distress when
6 another rat is in distress. And at least one study
7 found that rats repeatedly took action to help
8 another rat even if it means having less treats.

9 Lastly, I learned in National Geographic that a
10 study published in Current Biology trained rats to
11 pull levers to get tasty sugar pellet. When the
12 lever delivered a mild shock to a neighbor, several
13 rats stopped pulling it, and switched to another
14 lever. I call this compassion. Something I want
15 more from, from the city of New York for these
16 emotionally intelligent animals. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Dr. Loretta
18 Mayer? Dr. Loretta Mayer.

19 DR. MAYER: Yes. Can you hear me?

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: We sure can. You have two
21 minutes?

22 DR. MAYER: Okay, thank you. Clearly, I'm Dr.
23 Loretta Mayer, and I am the Co-Founder of Wisdom Good
24 Works, and inventor of the only EPA registered
25 fertility control products. But the one that we

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT141

2 propose for you is a brand-new product. And I'm here
3 to speak in support of 736, and to commit the
4 resources of our nonprofit, Wisdom Good Works, to the
5 city of New York, for your contraceptive work.

6 I've been working globally for the past 25 years
7 in rodent fertility control, because not only is it
8 the most humane approach, but it is sustainable.
9 You've been killing rats for hundreds of years, and
10 it's not working.

11 I do want to say that our organization is
12 comprised of scientists. We are not a commercial
13 endeavor. We are a scientific endeavor, and we
14 continue to learn every day. We have amassed over
15 4000 data points that show that the particular
16 pellets we are suggesting to you are effective in
17 open, semi-open, and closed environments and safe for
18 all handlers and all animals. It's 100% plant
19 derived and it's very attractive.

20 So when we have been working with this, we've
21 learned fertility control requires monitoring, we
22 have developed a web based monitoring system so that
23 you can tell your success at reducing the rodent
24 population in real time. This is absolutely vital

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT142

2 for an integrated pest management program. We're
3 providing that to you with the pellets.

4 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for your testimony.
5 Dr. Steven Schuster's next.

6 DR. LAYER: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Dr. Steven
8 Schuster.

9 PROF. SCHUSTER: The host is not allowing me to--
10 There we go. Can you hear me fine?

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yes, we can.

12 PROF. SCHUSTER: Yeah, my name is Professor
13 Steven Schuster. I'm curator of Marine Invertebrates
14 and Mollusks at Northern Arizona University, and my
15 research concerns genetics and evolutionary biology.

16 I'm a fellow of the American Association for the
17 Advancement of Science and I'm chair of the
18 Scientific Advisory Board of Wisdom Good Works, a
19 501C3 sharing scientific research and expertise to
20 restore ecological balance around the world.

21 I'm speaking in support today for Bill 736. I've
22 written and co-authored over 30 Publications
23 stressing the importance of species interactions for
24 maintaining species diversity and ecosystem services.
25 I've also co authored several additional publications

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT143

2 on the efficacy of fertility control for managing
3 rodent populations, and the evolution of resistance
4 to pest and pathogen treatments that involve
5 rodenticides and other lethal measures.

6 These contributions argue strongly against
7 reductions in genetic variation underlying foundation
8 species and natural ecosystems associated with
9 agricultural and development. They also indicate
10 that rodenticides and antibiotics impose the
11 strongest evolutionary forces now known favoring
12 evolved resistance, that is resistance to rodenticide
13 treatment. And this is an additional problem
14 associated with rodenticides. As you use them,
15 natural selection favors individuals who are
16 resistant to their use.

17 Most researchers agree that the rapid and
18 catastrophic evolution of pests and pathogen
19 resistance to the measures designed to control them
20 are among the most significant problems of modern
21 times. Our results indicate that contraceptives such
22 as a good bites pellets developed by Loretta Mayer
23 and Cheryl Dyer of Wisdom Good Works are more
24 effective in controlling rat rodent populations and
25 slowing the evolution of rodenticide resistance than

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT144

2 treatments that cause sterilization or death in
3 target species.

4 These findings have significant implications--

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for your testimony.
6 Edita Birnkrant is next.

7 Thank you, Councilmember Abreu and the committee.

8 My name is Edita Birnkrant. I'm the Executive
9 Director for New Yorkers for Clean, Livable and Safe
10 Streets, and a proud member of the Lights Out
11 Coalition. NYCLASS has had a tremendous amount of
12 positive feedback from our tens of thousands of
13 supporters and members across the five boroughs for
14 the rat contraception bill, and for implementing
15 policies to protect our wildlife like Flaco, instead
16 of poisoning them.

17 The good bites right infertility pellets created
18 by Dr. Mayer are not only incredibly effective at
19 lowering rat populations when deployed, but they are
20 importantly 100% nontoxic to all other animal animals
21 as humans, as has already been said.

22 Look, if the rat poison worked, we wouldn't be
23 losing the endless war on rats. We know that
24 rodenticides are simply ineffective at controlling
25 the rat population. What they are incredibly

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT145

2 effective at doing unfortunately, is poisoning birds
3 like Flaco and other wildlife.

4 But we have a better way now and when you know
5 better you can do better. Intro 736 does better. We
6 urge the committee to vote yes, on the rat
7 contraception bill and for the entire Council to pass
8 it into law and we thank Councilmember Abreu for his
9 leadership on this issue, and we really look forward
10 to working with him in the Council and making our
11 city safe and humane for all. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Edita. Thank you,
13 NYCLASS. Next is Nicole Rivard.

14 MS. RIVARD: Hi, thank you very much for the
15 opportunity to speak. I'm here on behalf of Friends
16 Of Animals and international animal advocacy group
17 founded in New York in 1957. We're also a member of
18 the Lights Out Coalition.

19 As you know, Flaco was not the first of New York
20 City's celebrity owls to be poisoned by rodenticides.
21 Not to mention anticoagulants were detected in 84% of
22 dead birds of prey found in New York City. That's
23 according to the New York State Department of
24 Environmental Conservation.

25

2 That's why we're asking the sanitation committee
3 to not only pass Intro 726, but also restrict the use
4 of second generation anticoagulants in New York City,
5 as California and British Columbia have done.

6 Similar legislation that we helped draft is
7 literally moving through the Connecticut legislature
8 as we speak.

9 Fertility control alone will not stop the carnage
10 of New York City's raptors and other wildlife.

11 Anticoagulants work by preventing blood from
12 clotting, and the second gen class was created to be
13 more toxic and lasts longer than the first generation
14 class. Rodents frequently more than a single dose
15 and the birds of prey don't have a chance against the
16 super lethal buildup in the rodents tissues, so
17 they're dying from internal bleeding after consuming
18 poisoned rodents.

19 The good news is there's been no public health
20 emergencies in California or British Columbia since
21 2021, when they restricted and banned SGARs. That's
22 proof that we can protect wildlife without
23 compromising public health.

24 And more good news: You've heard about data that
25 shows bird road and birth control can be effective.

2 Raptors are the solution. Our allies in California
3 were able to reduce the rat population by 91% at a
4 Seattle business district using birth control. In
5 Bushnell Park right here in Hartford, Connecticut,
6 has stopped using toxic anticoagulants since it
7 launched a successful birth control pilot program in
8 2021. Toxic anticoagulants mismanage the problem,
9 they'll never solve it. Most importantly, they're
10 killing these birds--

11 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Nicole. Laura
12 Roth is next. Appreciate your time.

13 MS. ROTH: Hi, everyone, we're going back to
14 poop. Thank you for the time to speak today. I'm a
15 mother of two who has been a New York City resident
16 for almost 15 years. I'm choosing to raise my
17 children in this city, a city where the sidewalks,
18 parks, and playgrounds are an extension of our home.
19 It's where I consider to be our backyards, frankly.
20 I spend my days dodging dog leaves with my stroller,
21 which of course for those that haven't pitched a
22 stroller in a while, I roll back home into the
23 entryway of our home, where this one is crawling and
24 touching the tires. I spent my afternoon yesterday

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT148

2 looking for a clean piece of sidewalk for my toddler
3 to do some chalk.

4 It's just not acceptable. Being a dog owner is a
5 privilege and they have a responsibility to clean up
6 after their dogs. Because of that, I'm asking you to
7 hold these dog owners accountable via increased fines
8 after being caught leaving waste, and I'm going a
9 step further to implore you to consider creating a
10 program that would allow you to DNA test the dog
11 waste and issue these fines back to the owners. This
12 would not only create jobs in New York City, it would
13 create a new revenue stream. And all of this would
14 be done while cleaning up our city as they're
15 collecting the waste to be sampled. There are models
16 of this working throughout Europe.

17 As a New York City resident, I consider New York
18 City to be the best city in the world and we just
19 need to do better. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much, Laura.
21 Next Nathan Semmal, a constituent of mine actually.
22 Nathan, you're there?

23 MR. SEMMEL: Good afternoon. My name is Nathan
24 Semmel. I'm a Board Member of Voters for Animal
25 Rights. We're a grassroots organization that has

2 worked with the City Council to pass several pieces
3 of groundbreaking legislation to protect animals in
4 New York City. I appear today both on behalf of
5 VFAR, and as a resident of District 7, who could not
6 be prouder, really, of my Councilmember, Chair Abreu,
7 for his continued commitment to protecting animals
8 and representing the district with integrity.

9 For a good year we had an amazing neighbor who
10 lived in our neighborhood, Flaco. Flaco was not only
11 the toast of the town, but a symbol of freedom to New
12 Yorkers and tourists alike who relished the
13 opportunity to see him perched, you know, on trees
14 and buildings, hooting and living his best life. But
15 like countless birds and wildlife who helped make our
16 city and parks the wonder they are, Flaco ingested
17 rodenticide. He got sick and he died a slow painful
18 death.

19 I'm fortunate to have another wonderful neighbor
20 in the adjacent district, the Wild Bird Fund. And in
21 the midst of other crises that overwhelm our cities
22 rehabbers and rescuers, this organization works
23 around the clock treating and caring for countless
24 wildlife who suffer the devastating consequences of
25 rodenticide like you've heard.

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT150

2 But it's not limited to wildlife. Just ask any
3 trap, neuter return, caretaker, dog walker, or
4 overworked city vet about the burgeoning number of
5 cats and dogs sickened and killed by rodenticide, and
6 the crushing emotional and financial impact it has on
7 families.

8 From the containerization program in the
9 district, which I've seen firsthand, to this pilot
10 contraceptive plan, Intro 736 is consistent with the
11 Chair's think-outside-the-box approach to reducing
12 the rodent population. And let's be honest, all
13 other methods, as Commissioner Tisch said, had been
14 tried and woefully failed. VFAR is proud to support
15 Intro 736.

16 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Nathan. We will
17 now move over to Allie Taylor from VFAR.

18 MS. TAYLOR: Hi, my name is Allie Taylor,
19 President of Voters for Animal Rights in New York
20 City. Thank you, Councilmember Shaun Abreu, and the
21 Committee on Sanitation, Solid Waste Management, and
22 to Speaker Adrienne Adams for today's public hearing.
23 And also thank you to the 29 Councilmembers who have
24 already co-sponsored Intro 736. I also want to thank

25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT151

2 the Lights Out Coalition for doing this important
3 work to advance this legislation.

4 As a current homeowner in Bushwick and a former
5 resident of Bed Stuy I'm very much familiar with the
6 rat problem. If you take one step outside my stoop
7 onto Putnam Avenue, it's obvious why we have a rat
8 problem with a buffet of trash bags lining our
9 streets. As a trap neuter release cat rescuer and a
10 dog walker in Bushwick in Bed Stuy. I've seen
11 firsthand the devastating and fatal effects of
12 rodenticide on cats and dogs. It's not only
13 ineffective, but it has devastating effects on
14 wildlife too. When birds of prey eat rodents, they
15 ingest rodenticide and suffer slow and painful deaths
16 that cannot be reversed even with veterinary care.
17 We need to find a sustainable and effective long-term
18 solution containerizing trash, coupled with a pilot
19 program to test contraceptive pellets for rats and
20 mice is an important first step to getting there.
21 And I would love to see both trash containerization
22 and the rodent birth control pilot program come to
23 my neighborhood.

24 VFAR is proud to support Intro 736 and we urge
25 the city council to swiftly pass the bill so that we

2 can take the first steps to better protecting urban
3 wildlife while controlling the mice and rat
4 population. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Allie. Arina
6 Hinzon.

7 MS. HINZON: Good afternoon esteemed members of
8 the committee. My name is Arina Hinzon, and I'm the
9 co-founder and executive director of the Urban
10 Wildlife Alliance. Thank you so much for giving me
11 the opportunity to testify today.

12 Since 2014, our organization has been dedicated
13 to promote the welfare of wildlife in New York City
14 through hands-on wildlife rehabilitation and
15 advocacy, all while focusing on compassionate
16 conservation practices.

17 Today, I address you to express our strong
18 support for Intro 736. Over the past decade, while
19 taking care of wildlife patients, our team has
20 witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of
21 rodenticides on urban wildlife, even on non-avian
22 species like squirrels and opossums. The recent
23 tragic death of Flaco, the beloved owl, brought this
24 issue into the public eye. And though this event
25 shocked us deeply, it sadly didn't come as a

2 surprise. Animals affected by rodenticides due to
3 direct or secondary rodenticide poisoning are
4 suffering excruciating and painful death every day.
5 And yes, rats suffer horribly, too.

6 As someone who has had to witness this suffering
7 over and over again, I can tell you that it's a death
8 no sentient being deserves. Intro 736 offers a
9 hopeful shift towards more humane and innovative
10 methods of pest control. By adopting this bill we
11 can significantly reduce the collateral damage
12 inflicted on non-target wildlife species.

13 Such methods not only protect our city's
14 wildlife, but also reflect a progressive and humane
15 approach to rat population management. Implementing
16 this pilot program will place New York City at the
17 forefront of sustainable and ethical urban ecology
18 practices. We urge the committee to approve this
19 bill and allow our city to lead by example, in
20 adopting--

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you Arina. Anna Sacks
22 is next.

23 MS. SACKS: Oh, sorry about that. Hi, thank you
24 for having me. Thank you for this hearing. I wanted
25 to bring up three points. One is that the

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT154

2 requirement for one-to-nine built unit buildings have
3 to purchase bins. Large buildings do not have to pay
4 for their bins that are going to be provided by the
5 city. And so this seems inequitable to me. So I
6 would ask the Council to consider that either all
7 buildings pay, or no buildings pay but not that
8 residents of one-to-nine unit buildings have to pay
9 to purchase the bins.

10 The second is that I have tried working with DSNY
11 to get illegal dumping in park. Specifically,
12 there's a park in upper Manhattan where sometimes
13 mattresses are dumped there. And they view it as a
14 Parks Department issue and not a sanitation
15 department issue. And so I would urge more cross-
16 agency collaboration with illegal dumping.

17 The third is that composting and rat mitigation,
18 making that connection, and community composting is
19 essential to rat mitigation. I did the master
20 composter program, which is now defunded, and one of
21 the pillars of that is rat mitigation strategies. We
22 learn all about it. And community composting is
23 really essential for spreading the word that by
24 separating our food scraps into these rigid bins,
25 we'll be depriving rafts of their food source.

2 So I urge the council to continue to push for
3 restoring funding for community composting. Thank
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Anna. Alexandria
6 LaFatah.

7 Hi, my name is Alexandria LaFata. I'm the
8 founder of Hamptons Muse, hospitality expert and
9 lobbyist, and I lobby alongside Voters For Animal
10 Rights.

11 With my extensive experience managing hospitality
12 venues in New York City, I can attest to the
13 potential benefits of rat contraception in our
14 industry.

15 Well, I can't speak for the entire industry, I
16 represent my colleagues and myself who have been
17 earnestly seeking humane solutions to manage rodent
18 issues while adhering to all of the health and safety
19 standards set forward and required by New York City.

20 If you're in the hospitality managers and venue
21 owner space and you decided shut down having a
22 reputations tarnished due the rat problems, that has
23 pushed too many towards inhuman methods of control.
24 The most commonly-used methods are torturous, with
25

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT156

2 poisons that cause internal bleeding, snapping good
3 chops, and carbon monoxide suffocation and overdose.

4 Alarmingly, I've also witnessed residents using
5 their dogs to train and hunt rats during [inaudible].

6 Societally, we tend to protect animals we find
7 appealing, while those who consider less attractive
8 like rats, are subjected to brutal treatment. By
9 controlling the rat population through birth control,
10 we can [inaudible] countless [inaudible] deaths not
11 only of rats, but of also [inaudible] animals like
12 owls. The ripple effects of current rat control
13 methods harm numerous other species. For example,
14 consider the case of Flaco, who escaped human
15 captivity, only to be fatally impacted by our cruel
16 decisions regarding other animals.

17 Implementing birth controls is a method of humane
18 control. It represents a compassionate step forward,
19 aligning our actions and our ethics while reducing
20 unnecessary suffering [inaudible] system. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Ms. LaFata. I'd
22 like to recognize people who were present, be
23 formally present to testify but are no longer here.
24 Peggy Siphers, Elizabeth Coachlin, Pedro Suarez,
25 Laurie Stark, Irene Marshall, Raul Rivera. Thank

1 COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT157

2 you, everybody for today. This hearing is hereby

3 adjourned.

4 [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date _____ May 29, 2024 _____