

**Testimony of
Javier Lojan, Acting Commissioner
New York City Department of Sanitation**

**Hearing before the New York City Council
Committees on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management and Finance
Monday, May 12, 2025 10:00 A.M.**

Executive Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2025-26

Good morning Chair Abreu, Chair Brannan, and members of the Committees on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management and Finance. I am Javier Lojan, Acting Commissioner of the New York City Department of Sanitation, and I am joined today by Joseph Antonelli, Deputy Commissioner, Management and Budget, and by Joshua Goodman, Deputy Commissioner, Public Affairs & Customer Experience.

The Department of Sanitation serves every part of the City, and in my 26 years here, I've seen thousands of Sanitation Workers take pride in a clean street, but as you all know, historically, key cleanliness programs like litter basket service had been subject to a "budget dance" between the Mayor and this Council, in which funding levels were set year-to-year based on political considerations. This creates doubt both among the public and within the Department about the service we can provide.

Instead, as part of the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget, better known to New Yorkers as "the best budget ever," Mayor Adams has once again proven himself to be a staunch and unflinching advocate of clean streets, this time by committing to move beyond the decades of political posturing around street cleanliness and allocating resources to Get Stuff Clean not just this year, not just at the handshake, not just for a photo-op, but baselined – which means forever.

This budget includes funding to continue the current level of [litter basket pick-ups](#) citywide (\$29.7 million, growing to \$31 million in FY 2028, baselined). This is likely the highest baselined level of funding for litter basket service in history; basket service in particular had often been negotiated year-to-year at the last minute, and decreases led directly to more overflowing baskets and more rats.

The Mayor's budget also baselines \$1.4 million to support positions dedicated to cleaning park perimeters, something that had been part of the ["Get Stuff Clean" initiative](#) and will now continue permanently. These are areas used by New Yorkers every single day that often look like City streets but, previously, did not always receive regular cleaning due to bureaucratic quirks.

The DSNY Lot Cleaning Unit, responsible for maintenance of city-owned or maintained vacant lots, is now baselined at \$820,000 for FY26 growing to \$1.6 million in FY29, preventing these areas from becoming eyesores and attracting pests.

Further, the Targeted Neighborhood Task Force is baselined at \$3.6 million, growing to \$6.3 million annually in FY 2029. This funding will support almost 60 employees who provide regularly scheduled cleaning of often neglected pedestrian spaces where DSNY did not have jurisdiction, like underpasses, greenways and medians. Through this program, over 1,500 locations across the city are receiving regular, scheduled cleaning for the first time.

And, something that I know is of particular interest to many of you, this budget includes \$1.1 million in permanent funding for DSNY's [Precision Cleaning Initiative](#), which provides targeted cleaning to high-need areas and assists with the City's interagency homeless encampment taskforce.

These are permanent high levels of funding to protect the cleanliness and quality of life of our neighborhoods. And not a moment too soon.

I will now provide updates on a number of strategic initiatives underway at DSNY.

Containerization

In October 2022, the Adams administration kicked off the Trash Revolution by changing set-out times for both residential and commercial waste from 4:00 PM, one of the earliest set-out times in the country, to 8:00 PM effective April 2023, while also allowing earlier set-out if the material is in a container. This incentive of containerization was paired with major changes to DSNY operations, picking up more of the trash far earlier, including ending a practice by which up to one fifth of trash had been left out for a full day.

Just over one year ago, container rules went into effect for all businesses of every type in New York City, requiring them to get their trash off the streets and into a secure bin. We wrote 70,000 warnings to businesses as this rule went into effect, and have written tens of thousands of summonses since, gaining broad compliance and bringing bins to restaurants, delis, bodegas, drug stores, boutiques, and everything else on our commercial corridors.

The first containerization requirement for residential buildings in more than 50 years went into effect November 12, requiring all buildings with 1-9 residential units to use bins. This can be either their own, or the official NYC Bin, the cheapest high-quality bin available.

This program was designed thoughtfully so that these bins would be by far the cheapest of their quality on the market at around \$50, a reasonable responsibility for most New York City property owners. I understand that members of this Council still felt a strong desire to distribute free bins, as seen in the passage of Intro-1126. While I share your concern about cost burdens on homeowners, this bill requires DSNY to use data on the STAR and E-STAR tax exemption to determine eligibility. This is state data which, by law, DSNY cannot access. Unfortunately, the program as described in the law will be extremely expensive and difficult to operationalize, will not reach communities of the greatest need, and is ripe for abuse.

New Yorkers have purchased over 800,000 of these bins at www.bins.nyc or at NYC Home Depot locations, and they have fundamentally altered the look and feel of our streets, replacing

piles of black trash bags that attracted the rats, impeded pedestrians, and generally made New Yorkers feel that no one cared about their neighborhoods. These bins may look like simple pieces of plastic, but they have led to double digit percentage decreases in rat sightings citywide.

Starting June 2026, this will be the only bin permitted for trash, to facilitate safer, cleaner mechanized collection. As you all know, I was a Sanitation Worker. I still am one at heart. And it pains me that fully half of our line of duty injuries are sprains and strains from throwing bags. The two Sanitation Workers operating a truck with mechanical tippers will have one less thing to worry about.

That gets us to 70% of trash already covered by containerization requirements, but we have a plan for the remaining 30%. Installation of stationary on-street containers called Empire Bins is well underway in Manhattan Community District 9 for the first full-district containerization pilot, with these bins to be serviced by new automated side-loading trucks. This is one of those innovations where we talk about it so much that it may be hard to maintain sight of just how fundamentally it changes the way that trash is stored and collected in New York City, and thus our experience of the streets in general. Consider the fact that even a small-scale test of on-street containerization on 10 blocks in Hamilton Heights led to a 60% decrease in rat sightings. This will make a difference – forever.

The new West Harlem pilot will take those huge piles of trash bags that are generated by the largest buildings off the streets and, instead, store them in secure containers just like you'd see in Europe, South America, or Asia, years faster than anyone thought possible. West Harlem will see just over 1,000 Empire Bins, covering more than 80% of their apartment units. Unlike in other parts of the world, the bins are not shared by the entire block. Bins will be assigned to a single large building, using our density, which had long been thought of as the Achilles' Heel of containerization, to our advantage, by allowing for greater oversight. Property owners will have access cards and designate appropriate staff to be able to access the bins.

DSNY outreach staff is on the ground in the neighborhood now explaining this process, and upon completion of installation, use of these on-street containers will begin June 1, and we will begin analyzing results and outcomes right away. But I must caution the members of this Council, as I have done at previous hearings: if you would like to see this international best-practice expand beyond West Harlem – if you would like to defeat the piles of trash and the rats once and for all – there is pending legislation that must pass. Council Member Hudson is the lead sponsor on a bill many of you have already joined; the Removing Animals from Trash Act, or RAT Act, is absolutely essential to the expansion of this program. Without that bill becoming law, this will be just another pilot.

We can have clean sidewalks, clear corners, and passable curb cuts. We really can, if we just see this through to the end.

Composting

Just like with containerization initiatives, our citywide composting program is something that many of the cynics believed we couldn't have – and New Yorkers are proving them wrong every single day. While curbside composting programs have existed in New York City for the last decade, until last October, none had ever served more than approximately 40 percent of the city. When Mayor Adams took office, he committed to developing a universal program that *works* for New Yorkers, and the team at DSNY set to work developing a model built for long-term success.

The resulting program is now running in the entirety of our City, providing residents with simple, universal weekly collection of leaf and yard waste, food scraps, and food-soiled paper products on their recycling day.

That simplicity is the most important part of the program. There's no need for sign-ups, special dates to remember, or specific locations to visit within limited hours. Simply place your materials out on recycling day, your Sanitation Workers will collect it from your home, and we'll ensure it's put to good use. This is a composting program for all New Yorkers.

Make the separation of compostable material easy, and people will do it. I've seen these programs operating for a long time. I have never seen numbers like what New Yorkers diverted in April, when they set weekly tonnage records three weeks in a row.

New Yorkers want to help the environment. They want to fight rats. And with this program, they're doing both.

Composting has a benefit not just for our environment more broadly, but also for NYC gardeners. We give tens of millions of pounds of high-quality New York City compost away for free during the spring, summer, and fall, but for many years, you had to either catch a pop-up event or drive to a site on Staten Island to get it. Last year, we added a second site, in Greenpoint, that is accessible by cyclists, pedestrians, and public transit, and earlier this year, we added a third site, in Astoria. I'm proud to share that New Yorkers are composting so much that we will add a FOURTH site in Eastern Queens before the end of this season, and we are working to identify locations in the Bronx and Manhattan as well, bringing this service to every borough.

Some of you have asked me whether the success of the curbside composting program means the popular Smart Composting Bins are going away. These 400 bins, where residents can drop off their compostable material 24/7 through an easy-to-use smartphone app, are complementary to curbside service and will continue to operate.

We are making great strides in residential diversion by applying simple, easy to understand rules citywide, and we believe the same should be true for commercial organics. While the Commercial Waste Zone system will improve commercial diversion, in that DSNY is requiring carters to charge businesses less to collect recyclables and compost than to collect trash, we were thrilled to see that the Council is also considering a bill to allow DSNY to require source separation at all commercial establishments. We believe this will bring clarity to a confusing system, and help the environment while fighting rats.

Commercial Waste Zones

Now that we've mentioned Commercial Waste Zones, I'll provide a fuller update on that program and our implementation of Local Law 199 of 2019 for anyone who may have missed the recent oversight hearing on this topic.

This law was designed to reform the commercial waste hauling system by establishing new safety standards for workers in the commercial carting industry, improving service for businesses, increasing diversion rates, and reducing vehicle miles traveled as well as harmful emissions from waste hauling vehicles.

When fully implemented, we are looking at about 12 million fewer miles traveled by commercial carting vehicles. And, making good on a promise from when this program was created, businesses will pay less for the collection of recyclables and compostable material than they do for trash at a citywide average of 32% less for recycling and 18% for compostable material. That means businesses will have a meaningful financial incentive to separate their waste properly.

In January, after years of planning and months of outreach, the first of New York City's 20 non-exclusive Commercial Waste Zones came online in Corona, Elmhurst, and Jackson Heights. Because it was done thoughtfully, this has been a successful launch, and not a single one of the thousands of businesses in the Zone has made a complaint to DSNY of any issues with service or billing. We are routinely writing safety violations there and are seeing very strong compliance, likely due at least in part to the significant fine escalators built into the CWZ program, with a total of about 200 violations written since implementation of the Zone began in September.

Following a thorough data analysis of the first zone and of conditions across the City, we recently announced that the next two zones will cover the entirety of the Bronx beginning later this year, with full citywide implementation complete by the end of 2027. This is an important program, but it is a program that was destined to fail if it were rushed. We are doing it right.

Special Enforcement Programs

The expansion of DSNY quality of life enforcement under the current administration is not restricted to the Queens Central Commercial Waste Zone; since April 2023, Sanitation has been the lead agency on enforcement of the City's laws around street vending, also a topic of a recent oversight hearing by the Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection. Our Sanitation Police Officers enforce these laws with a focus on cleanliness and pedestrian access, and they conduct routine enforcement operations rooted in the belief that all New Yorkers, across every neighborhood, in every borough, deserve clean, safe sidewalks.

While we take a warnings-first approach, often posting dozens of warning signs throughout an area before taking any enforcement actions, we also engage in robust enforcement to protect cleanliness and quality of life, and DSNY issued around 4,000 vending-related summonses in 2024.

Street vendors are a part of vibrant neighborhoods. But the rules exist for a reason, so that those neighborhoods can be enjoyed by all, and New Yorkers appreciate our enforcement, as shown by the overwhelming support for Proposition 2. The expansion of DSNY vending enforcement under that ballot measure is in the early implementation stage.

On the same day that DSNY became the lead agency on street vending enforcement, we were also designated to manage the City's graffiti removal program. We brought our operational knowledge to the organization of this program, and in the FY25 PMMR, the number of graffiti service requests closed is up 80%.

Recently, DSNY began enforcing the rules around mobile carwashes, per a new law sponsored by Council Member Salamanca and passed by this Council. While this work is only just beginning, we are encouraged by early results about the impact this can have on cleanliness and quality of life.

We are also continuing our interagency work around ghost cars and abandoned vehicles, through which tens of thousands of abandoned vehicles have been removed from our streets, in addition to over 10,000 more ghost cars since the ghost car task force was launched in September of last year. These are unlicensed vehicles that not only steal public space and toll dollars, but are untraceable if used in crimes.

And like with containerization efforts, getting this done just helps fight the feeling that the City doesn't care about your neighborhood.

I assure you, we do. Because it's our neighborhood, too.

Snow

And with winter now behind us, I'm proud to say that you weren't forgotten during snow season, either. If you grew up here, you likely remember the old days of "primary, secondary, and tertiary" streets. That kind of division in service level is over. Thanks to higher headcount and new technology for internal monitoring, every street is on a route, and every route can be dispatched at the same time for snow operations as soon as conditions warrant it, a practice we call "Snow Equity."

And I want to preview something exciting for you – all-new brine flushers are on their way, reducing the City's dependence on rock salt and proving that even in a perfected science like snow removal, there is always room for innovation as part of the Trash Revolution. We'll have more to say about that at the next snow hearing.

In the winter of 2024-25, DSNY responded to 14 winter weather events and observed 12.5 inches of accumulating precipitation. Half of these events were in February alone, and Sanitation Workers were on 12-hour shifts for weeks to address these conditions.

Thanks to their efforts and the administration's investments, they were able to get the streets open, even servicing car lanes and bike lanes at the same time. I want to take this moment to thank our Sanitation Workers for their efforts, for being the heroes with the plow just as they have been for decades.

FY2026 Executive Budget

With their work in mind, I will now turn to the FY 2026 Executive Budget, the Best Budget Ever, which baselines critical cleaning services – forever.

The Executive Budget includes \$2.03 billion in expense funds in Fiscal Year 2025 and \$1.97 billion in Fiscal Year 2026, reflecting increases of \$81.4 million and \$41.2 million, respectively, from the budget adopted last June.

The Fiscal Year 2026 budget includes \$1.2 billion for personal services to support a total budgeted headcount of 9,618 full-time positions, including 7,957 uniformed positions and 1,661 civilian positions, and \$757.7 million for other than personal services, or OTPS.

DSNY's Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Capital Budget includes \$3.54 billion in capital funding in the 10-year plan, \$1.16 billion of which is for garages and facilities, \$2.25 billion for equipment, \$66.62 million for IT, and \$59.87 million for solid waste management infrastructure.

The Capital Budget includes funding for several major facilities projects, including:

- \$488 million in funding for the construction of a new garage for Bronx Districts 9, 10, and 11, with demolition;
- \$284 million in funding for the construction of a new garage for Queens District 1, which is slated to begin design next fiscal year;
- Upgrades to the facility that serves as the home for the Bronx District 12 Garage, which has an overall budget of \$55.0 million and will begin construction next year;
- And the \$17 million finishing touches of the \$212 million build out for the brand-new home for Staten Island District 1 and 3, which is slated to be completed this year.
 - That project, along with the new BK3, means we will be opening three new garages at two buildings this calendar year, a rare milestone for this Department and a sign of this administration's serious investment in the safety and well-being of Sanitation Workers and the neighborhoods they serve.

Thank you, and we look forward to taking your questions.



**Department for
the Aging**

TESTIMONY

Presented by

**Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez
Commissioner**

on

FY 2026 Executive Budget

before the

New York City Council

**Committee on Finance
Committee on Aging**

on

**Monday, May 12, 2025
At 12:00 p.m.**

Good morning, Chair Brannan, Chair Hudson, and members of the Finance and Aging Committees, I am Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, Commissioner of the New York City Department for the Aging (NYC Aging). I am joined this afternoon by Jose Mercado our Chief Financial Officer. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss NYC Aging's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 (FY 26). It is so fitting that we are here speaking with you today in May, which as you may know, is *Older Americans Month*. This month is a national time to acknowledge and promote the contributions of older adults. It is also an opportunity for us to affirm our commitment, as the largest Area Agency on Aging (AAA) in the United States, to providing aging services and making New York City a truly age-inclusive community. This year's theme for *Older Americans Month* is "Flip the Script on Aging," and I believe that truly embodies the work we are doing everyday at NYC Aging to meet the growing needs of New York City's quickly approaching 2 million residents over the age of 60 while also combatting the pernicious nature of ageism throughout the country.

We flip the script every day in our Older Adult Centers (OACs), through dance, art, exercise, as well as when serving meals, or when we connect someone to a workforce program which leads to income-sustaining employment after 60, and many other programs. We are proud that we have been joined by national leaders in flipping the switch and tackling ageism head on! We talk the talk everyday and encourage all to do the same, combatting ageism every day, and at every opportunity it needs to be heard. NYC Aging's work to eliminate ageism and ensure the dignity and quality of life of older New Yorkers is seen beyond the month of May and is showcased in how we provide high quality services and resources to older New Yorkers every day of the year despite difficult budget cycles and fundamental changes to the federal landscape.

To support this important work, our FY 26 Preliminary Budget projects \$554.4 million in funding, of which \$432 million is in City funds. This includes allocations to core programs you are all familiar with including \$263 million to support Older Adult Centers (OACs), \$73 million for home delivered meals (HDM), and \$53.2 million for case management (CMA). I refer to these as core programs because they are all intrinsically connected to providing meals and food to older adults and, while we don't typically view congregate or home delivered meals as "food as medicine," these are essential services for healthy living and preventing social isolation. The work done by OACs, HDM programs, and our CMA providers combat poverty and financial insecurity while also connecting older adults to in-home services which address their needs when struggling with activities of daily living. There are also allocations of \$37.7 million to support home care for homebound older adults who are not Medicaid-eligible which allows older New Yorkers to age-in-place, and \$17 million for NORC programs which provide similar services as OACs, other than meals, for recreation and combatting social isolation but includes nursing services. Finally, \$9.2 million for caregiver services supporting the 1.3 million caregivers and their care receivers in the City, and \$6.1 million for transportation services allowing older adults to be connected to community centers, houses of worship, shopping, and medical appointments. These numbers tell only a portion of the story beyond the services included at NYC Aging and show the human side of the work we do to make New York City fully age-inclusive.

Speaking of the human side, I am also proud of the work of agency employees and our providers who serve older adults daily. Even when NYC Aging staff are spending time in the field connecting with provider staff or older adults, they still prioritize their daily work and tasks which make this agency an incredible part of New York City government. I was disheartened to hear comments made recently in this room about NYC Aging staff ignoring their responsibilities to process contract payments because they spend too much time in the field with older adults or our provider network. Those two actions go hand in hand and is integrated into their work. More importantly, I believe our record of on time payment speaks for itself, as does the positive relationship we have to our contractors. This is not to say there are not any issues to be addressed, there are issues and we do address these and our approach is to resolve these as equal partners.

As we discussed in March during our Preliminary Budget Hearing, there are key challenges in the City financially, and NYC Aging is always prepared to prioritize the needs of older adults and our core aging

services while limiting the impacts of these challenges. We were pleased to see that under the FY 26 Executive Budget, in addition to there being no mandatory savings exercise, the Mayor and OMB have funded the backfill of expiring stimulus dollars and Programs to Eliminate the Gap (PEGs) for the core programs I mentioned earlier. Nonetheless, we are still keenly aware of the change in federal administration, and the need for an improved per-capita funding formula to increase State dollars and result in fair share funding for the City, which has led to confusion in funding sources, especially federal grants. These are ongoing issues that we monitor day-to-day and continue to assess their potential impacts to aging services where we have developed several possible scenarios. We also continue to advocate that our State and Federal partners share the financial responsibility of serving older New Yorkers living in the City.

Since I was last here in March to discuss the Preliminary Budget, we are proud of our work done along with the work of our non-profit partners in addressing some notable recent successes and upcoming items we are looking forward to:

- In FY 2024, NYC Aging hit a post-pandemic record of 10 million meals served to older New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs. This includes 6.1 million meals served at the 300-plus OACs in the network and 4.2 million meals delivered by our HDM providers. We are pleased to share that we are on track to match that number again in FY 2025 and are confident that as the aging population grows in New York City and the US, NYC Aging will be serving more than 10 million meals annually in the years to come. This is an incredible achievement when considering the dollar-for-dollar impact of meals provision as an anti-poverty measure in the lives of older adults. When the Older Americans Act (OAA) was passed 60 years ago this July in 1965, a key reason for creating that pivotal legislation was the address older adult poverty nationwide through nutrition and supportive services. While what it means to be an older adult may have changed since the 1960s, the basic human needs for dignified aging—meals, health, agency, and income—remain the same.
- As I often say, food is not the only core service which NYC Aging provides, but it is an important aspect of the work we do. The FY 2026 Executive Budget includes a more than \$10 million increase for HDM providers, further helping our contractors to weather rising food and transportation costs while we also account for future growth in the homebound older adult population. We strive for innovation and quality in our meals service and were excited to host the first ever Plant Based Cookoff on March 25th at City Harvest in Brooklyn where contracted providers competed against one another in a *Top-Chef* like experience for best plant-based dish which is already served at an OAC in the City. This was a great way to showcase the innovation done at centers around food and taking a required health mandate while having fun with the objective—improving the lives of older adults through healthy eating.
- I appreciate Council's shared goals and commitment to older adults and supporting the work of NYC Aging especially as we navigate uncertainty in the federal government. It feels that everyday is a new change, crisis, or fundamental shift in the way social services are provided to Americans. Even amidst those uncertainties, NYC Aging continues working to meet the needs of older adults as we plan for worst case and moderate case scenarios. We are mindful of our joint advocacy role and work to ensure that federal dollars are available for aging services in New York City. Regardless of what may come in the future, centers are still open, non-profits are working, meals programs function, case management continues, and the Cabinet for Older New Yorkers is still meeting to address aging needs and break down communication silos which hinder agency efforts to make New York even more age-inclusive.

We are thrilled about these recent successes and some key programs supported in this Executive Budget which shape our core services and improve the lives of older adults in New York City.

Home Delivered Meals

Our Home Delivered Meals (HDM) program is a vital component in NYC Aging's network of services. Not only does the HDM program provide meals to homebound older New Yorkers, the interaction with the delivery

person—which for many of our clients may be the only direct human interaction for the day—support our ongoing effort to combat social isolation, again a critical aspect of our Community Care approach. This program continues to follow the strict guidance set by the state and is open to those who meet those criteria.

As we saw announced in late February from Columbia University and Robin Hood Foundation, the share of New Yorkers living in poverty is now at 25%, double the national average. Because financial insecurity remains among the most critical needs of older adults it is highly correlated to food insecurity, NYC Aging is continually evaluating our efforts and exploring areas for improvement. While workforce programs continue to be a way for older adults to avoid long-term poverty, meals programs are a life-line to older adults struggling with financial, and ultimately, food insecurity. This includes enhancing meal options for recipients, embracing the diversity of our city by increasing the availability of culturally aligned meals, and promoting uniformly high-quality and nutritious meals. In FY 24, our network of 15 HDM providers delivered 4,209,261 meals to 24,604 clients, and we are working with 17 HDM providers in FY 25. Combined with the meals served at OACs, NYC Aging has served a record breaking 10,337,629 meals in FY25 – underscoring importance of these meals to older New Yorkers. We are happy to mention again this year that HDM reimbursement rates have increased \$11.78 in Fiscal Year 2023 to \$13.78 in Fiscal Year 2025. Over the past few years, these rates have gradually risen to help meet the needs of our providers serving these critical meals. These have been key improvements to service and our providers that we have met through partnership between this Administration and Council leadership.

Homecare & Caregiver Services

As the number of older adults in New York City continues to grow, it is imperative that we continue to grow the community care support systems which allow older New Yorkers to remain in the communities they built and truly age in place. We do this through Homecare and Caregiver services which greatly serve those who are homebound or in need of additional supports. Homecare services are provided through Medicaid reimbursement and for those who do not qualify for Medicaid programs, through the Expanded In-Home Services for Elderly Persons (EISEP) program where case management hours are reimbursed to providers. Currently, we are advocating that the New York State legislature make permanent the inclusion which passed last year of a \$0.55 per hour wage match for EISEP Homecare workers which would bring them into parity with Medicaid Homecare workers who have already received raises. As you know, this is a key component of community care and being able to age-in-place is the overwhelming preference for older New Yorkers which also improves health outcomes. We welcome your support and advocacy in this regard.

Without this, EISEP clients are at a disadvantage when Medicaid Homecare workers are incentivized to take on those clients because the pay is higher. There is no distinction between EISEP and Medicaid Homecare workers, they are primarily women of color, and this exacerbating inequity because of the salary. Currently, the Homecare program at NYC Aging is funded at \$37.7 million for FY 25,. This occurred in previous years and was resolved in part with help from advocates on the Council to ensure that aging services workers, who are frequently women or women of color, are not left out of the needed pay increases for critical aging services.

Many older adults are caretakers for their aging parent. Many are caregivers who also have full time jobs. The caregiver program offers options for respite care through home care or participation in social adult day care. There are an estimated 1.3 million New Yorkers who function as a caregiver. Without the support for care of daily living activities and respite care, many of these caretakers would not have the financial means or ability to leave the care receiver in someone else's care while they take a needed break from their caregiving responsibilities.

We know that the cost of maintaining an older adult in institutionalized care is far higher when compared to the cost of community care options such as supporting caregivers. It costs, on average, \$160,980 to house an older

adult in institutionalized care whereas the average cost of community care services is roughly \$32,000 per person per year. In FY 26, funding for the caregiver program is currently projected to be \$9.2 million. Caregiver supports positively impact the health and wellbeing of older adults while aligning with the cultural background of the individual. This is why Community Care is so incredibly important to the future of older New Yorkers. These integrated services for home assistance which is care for daily living needs such as bathing, cleaning, food prep, shopping, transportation, and meal provision can keep all older adults in their communities longer which is their desire and is a shared goal between this Administration and Council. I have personal experience with this, as do several members of these committees, as my own 95-year-old mother, who wants to remain in her home, needs additional care benefits greater when that care comes from her family or surrounding community.

Conclusion

I continue to be proud of the great work that NYC Aging and our providers accomplish with our resources. This past year has shown where NYC Aging is prepared to prioritize vital programs that truly meet the needs of older New Yorkers and continue to advocate for innovations in aging services which look to the future. Even in the face of challenges, we continue to be good stewards of public dollars. That said, given the need for further investment from our state and federal partners, we continue to be concerned about the current uncertainty and what changes may affect NYC Aging. It is imperative now more than ever, that New York City receive its fair share of aging services funding and that federal grants continue to be disbursed for these vital programs and services. We are grateful to the Chairs and Committee members for your ongoing advocacy and continued partnership to support older New Yorkers.

Finally, as I've said before, we are looking forward to some big anniversaries this year for programs and agencies which are vital to the lives of older adults. On July 14th, we will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Older Americans Act, signed in 1965 by President Lyndon B. Johnson, this legislation is fundamental to the services we provide at NYC Aging. If the OAA was a person, they would qualify for our services and that's something to acknowledge. Similarly, on August 14th, we will celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Social Security Act. Signed in 1935 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, this has been one of—if not the most—pivotal pieces of anti-poverty legislation and policy ever enacted by a modern democracy. Finally, on November 4th of this year, NYC Aging will celebrate its 50th anniversary and we are excited to showcase all the *golden* ways we have served older New Yorkers since 1975. Look out for upcoming announcements from us as we celebrate these milestones. Whether it's the 50th, 60th, or 90th, there's a lot talk about in the lives of older New Yorkers in 2025. I also want to take an opportunity to invite you all to join us on May 28th for National Older Adult Health & Fitness Day in Foley Square. We will gather with more than 1,000 older New Yorkers to take part in instructor-led flexibility exercises, movement based self-expression, dance at any age as a form of exercise, and laughter yoga designed to bring more oxygen to the brain, which all make us feel more energetic and healthy in our daily lives. We appreciate your dedication and advocacy to older adults and would love to see you there.

Thank you for your time today.

**New York City Council Committee on Finance, jointly with the Committee on Aging
Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 and the Executive Capital Plan for Fiscal Years
2025-2029
May 12, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chair Brannan, Chair Hudson, and members of the City Council Committees on Aging and Finance.

My name is Kevin Jones, and I am the AARP New York Associate State Director for Advocacy. I am here today on behalf of our 750,000 members in New York City and the more than 3.5 million older adults living in the five boroughs.

We are relieved that the Mayor's 2026 budget eliminates the dangerous \$102 million fiscal cliff, which would have threatened to abandon older New Yorkers at a time when they need more support, not less.

This outcome is thanks to the tireless advocacy of older adults, service providers, and the members of the Age Strong NYC coalition who raised their voices and refused to let the city balance its budget on the backs of older adults. We also thank you at the City Council for your continued support.

But our work is far from done. Centers still face years of deferred maintenance and basic repairs that threaten their ability to deliver safe, high-quality services. The reality is that the Mayor's budget doesn't invest nearly enough to meet the needs at the scale and scope required for older New Yorkers to age with dignity.

Keeping the doors open and the lights on is the bare minimum – these centers must be fully funded. That means ensuring they have the resources not just to operate, but to thrive. Older adult centers are lifelines for our aging population. They offer necessary meals, opportunities for recreation, wellness programs, technology training programming aimed at closing the digital divide, and access to critical support services. By not fully investing in older adult centers, we not only deprive older adults of much-needed resources but also exacerbate social isolation and loneliness.

Currently, DFTA receives less than 1 percent of the city budget, despite 20 percent of New York City residents being 65 or older. Additionally, New York City's older population is growing faster than any other age group. The 65-and-over population grew by 34 percent between 2012 and 2022, and the number of older New Yorkers living below the poverty line surged by 33.6 percent over the past decade.

More than half of older New Yorkers reported having no retirement income in 2022, and nearly 90 percent of those receiving meals through older adult centers say this support helps them remain in their own homes. Providing full funding for these centers will offer essential support to older New Yorkers amid rising financial insecurity, food insecurity, and social isolation, helping to prevent additional strain on city resources in the long run.

As the cost of living in New York continues to rise, the City must fully fund wraparound investments—including \$500 million for OAC Center State of Good Repair, \$44 million for expanded case management, and \$78 million for nutritional support—to meet the current and growing needs of New York’s aging population.

A budget is a statement of priorities. By fully funding services for older adults, the city would send a clear message: older New Yorkers are a priority. Investing in older adult services is not a burden; it is a necessity.

Older New Yorkers built this city and made it great, and they deserve to age with dignity in the communities they call home. Without real investments, we will leave our city's older adults behind. We urge Mayor Adams and the City Council to work together to fully fund older adult programs.

Thank you.



Asian American Federation

**Testimony for the New York City Council
Committee on Aging Jointly with the Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing
*May 12, 2025***

Written Testimony

Thank you, Chair Crystal Hudson and the Committee on Aging as well as Chair Justin Brannan and the Committee on Finance for holding this hearing and for giving us the opportunity to testify. I am Navdeep Bains, Associate Director of Advocacy & Policy at the Asian American Federation (AAF), where we proudly represent the collective voice of more than 70 member nonprofits serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers.

Today, I want to discuss the state of our aging population and how the city's budget can best serve their needs. As the Asian community faces a challenging landscape due to federal funding cuts and anti-immigration policies and rhetoric, our older adults are placed at the center of this issue, with the intersection of race and age rendering them particularly vulnerable. Throughout and despite this unstable political climate, our member organizations have persevered and continue to serve the growing needs of our community. However, it is essential for these organizations to receive continued support from the city to keep up this important work.

AAF's Senior Working Group

Asian older adults are the fastest-growing older adult community citywide, making up 14% of New York City's senior population. The number of Asian seniors in New York increased by 68% in a recent 10-year period (from 2012-2022). This population growth was coupled with a rise in poverty and currently, 42% of Asian seniors are low-income, making them among the City's poorest seniors. Moreover, twenty-five percent of Asian seniors experiencing poverty live alone, and 84% have Limited English proficiency (LEP).

To address these gaps, AAF created the Seniors Working Group (SWG) in collaboration with twelve member organizations. The SWG serves as the first and only Asian specific seniors advocacy coalition in New York City, helping over 125,000 low-income seniors annually, from 10 different Asian ethnicities. As a coalition, it identifies, addresses and advocates for the social service needs of our aging population. Building off this work, SWG published a policy agenda in 2022 which served as a public education tool to outline the most pressing needs of Asian older adults. The agenda makes several recommendations, including protecting seniors from anti-Asian violence, promoting access to direct services (senior centers, social services, and food programs), promoting mental health, and combating social isolation.

Among the issues of concern for the Asian elderly population are food insecurity, anti-Asian violence, functioning older adult centers, and mental health, all of which are interconnected. The SWG has helped bridge gaps by providing culturally competent meal programs, which are especially

essential during times of fear stimulated by the increase in anti-Asian hate crimes. Scared to leave their homes, Asian older adults rely on services such as these to sustain them. However, expanding culturally appropriate services and programs such as this one requires further understanding and funding. Systematic change is needed, rather than the “one size fits all” approach currently operated by the city’s Department for the Aging. Our community is diverse and has various needs which must be heard and understood. This means prioritizing cultural competency and language access in contracting processes, as well as focusing on funding smaller contracts for our local community-based organizations.

Ongoing Challenges

Older adult programs and services in the city have long been underfunded, rendering this population especially vulnerable. The elderly population makes up one in five New Yorkers, and in 2023, over [half](#) (50.7%) of the City’s 65 and older population were immigrants, higher than the 37.5% share of the total population. Asian elders are particularly at risk because of their race, especially with increased anti-Asian hate crime rates since the COVID-19 pandemic and current anti-Asian sentiment. With AAF’s research team, we found that Asian woman who are 65 and older have the highest suicide rate among all racial groups.

Hundreds of older adults are in danger of being pushed out of their homes, putting their livelihoods at risk. Along with the accumulation of underfunding towards older adult essential programs and services, providers have had trouble meeting the community’s growing need. Just this weekend, the community was advocating on behalf of a beloved senior center serving Sunset Park that is at risk of closing its doors after over 50 years of operating, due to a proposed rent hike of over 70%. Once older adult centers are closed, it becomes extremely difficult to reopen them. We are grateful that the mayor’s proposed budget backfills expiring stimulus dollars related to the PEG initiatives, which if left unaddressed, would have led to the closure of up to 60 older adult centers and slash vital services across the board. Yet, we remain concerned that when budget negotiations take place and a further lack of investment from the federal government is taken into account, funding for older adult services will be the first on the chopping block.

Our recommendations for City Council are as follows:

Recommendations

1. Support Our Older Adults Initiative: Support AAF’s advocacy, research, and programming work which highlights the unique needs of Asian seniors in New York City (\$100,000).
2. Increase funding to Asian-led, Asian-serving older-adult service providers, and expand this funding to include time and expenses spent on case management and digital literacy, devices and training. Our CBOs are juggling the expansion of in-person services while simultaneously catering to the needs of an isolated older adult population without funding to meet the demand for both streams.
3. Prioritize funding both congregate and remote services and programming. CBO staff are stretched thin because of the City’s focus on the former while the broader community continues to demand the latter.
4. Continue funding a network of linguistically and culturally competent food service programs that provide alternative food benefits to older adults.
5. Expand funding to include culturally competent, in-language, and older-adult-focused non-traditional mental health service models. This includes prioritizing CBOs that have a history

of providing free or subsidized nontraditional, culturally competent services for funding opportunities.

In addition to the funding requested to support our seniors, here are our other Citywide funding requests to support our work across the pan-Asian community:

Support AAFs work and priorities through:

- **Speaker's Initiative:** (\$800,000)
- **Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund:** Provide technical assistance and leadership development to help Asian-led, Asian-serving organizations thrive (\$150,000)
- **CUNY Citizenship NOW! Program:** Increase Asian American participation in the civic life of our city (\$250,000)
- **Hate Crimes Prevention:** Support programs that aim to prevent hate crimes through community-based safety solutions (\$200,000)
- **Immigrant Health Initiative:** Support programming to reduce mental health stigma in pan-Asian communities (\$100,000)
- **Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations:** Support the development of culturally relevant mental health and related services for pan-Asian communities (\$150,000)
- **Legal Services for Low-Income Immigrants:** Strengthen the infrastructure for a rapid response network that swiftly connects Asian immigrants with critical immigration legal support. Empower Asian-serving nonprofits with the knowledge and training needed to navigate and respond to fast-changing immigration policies, ensuring greater protection for New York's most vulnerable communities (\$500,000)
- **Worker Cooperative for Translators:** Support the development of a worker cooperative to help community members become trained and credentialed as interpreters and translators in the most commonly spoken Asian languages (\$700,000)
- **AAPI Community Support:** Support programming to address the urgent service needs of Asian immigrants, including anti-Asian violence prevention and response through our Hope Against Hate Campaign; community education to support parents, families, and seniors in navigating and accessing resources in response to fast-changing immigration policies; and trainings and resources to support small business owners and workers impacted by anti-Asian hate and changing immigration programs (\$400,000)
- **Neighborhood Development Grant Initiative:** This integrated approach ensures that immigrant small business owners gain access to essential resources while being empowered to thrive in an increasingly digital and regulated business environment (\$100,000)

On behalf of AAF, we thank you for listening to our community's needs and being willing to implement growth by prioritizing the voices of our older adults and their providers. We look forward to continuing this work with you in the future. If you have any questions or concerns, the Associate Director of Policy and Advocacy at AAF can be reached at navdeep.bains@aafederation.org or by phone at (212) 344-5878 ext. 225.

Testimony of Rachel Neches
Data Researcher, Center for an Urban Future
Before the New York City Council
Committee on Aging
May 12, 2024

Good morning. I'm Rachel Neches, the data researcher at the Center for an Urban Future, an independent think tank focused on creating a stronger and more inclusive economy in New York. Thank you to Chair Hudson and members of the committees for the opportunity to testify.

Our new report out today, *The Emerging Financial Security Crisis Facing NYC's Older Adults*, reveals a deeply troubling reality. Over the last decade, the number of older New Yorkers living in poverty has increased by 41%, rising to more than 250,000 older adults. Many more are on the brink: Nearly 60% of those over age 70 report having no retirement income. Nearly one in five lack Social Security benefits.

This crisis disproportionately affects communities of color: over the last decade, poverty rates among Asian older adults grew by 82%, and among Hispanic older adults by 42.1%. Immigrant New Yorkers, many of whom spent their working lives in low-wage jobs without access to retirement benefits and receive much less in Social Security, face a poverty rate of 21.7 percent, compared to 14.9% among U.S.-born older adults.

Although recent restorations helped avert significant service cuts, aging services still receive less than half of one percent of the city budget—even as older adults now make up a record 16.1 percent of all New Yorkers. To meet rising needs, the city will have to commit to long-term, increased funding that allows DFTA to expand access to essential programs, reverse the alarming rise in older adult poverty, and invest in innovative pilot programs and challenge grants.

We also recommend a \$50 million investment in capital improvements to shore up New York City's crumbling aging services infrastructure. By allocating additional capital funding to upgrade these facilities, the city can ensure they remain safe, accessible spaces, while taking steps to modernize buildings to meet the changing needs of today's older adults.

In addition to restoring funding for DFTA and investing in capital needs, the city should allocate \$20 million to expand social work staffing at community-based providers and older adult centers. These professionals are essential to helping older New Yorkers navigate and access the benefits and services that enable them to age with dignity—and these investments will likely prove even more essential in the face of anticipated federal cutbacks.

Finally, the Department for the Aging cannot meet this challenge alone. A truly age-inclusive city will require all agencies to embed older adult needs into their strategies, programs, and capital plans. That means making parks, libraries, and cultural institutions more accessible, investing in age-friendly transportation options through DOT, supporting older entrepreneurs through NYCEDC and SBS, and expanding efforts to prevent age discrimination in the workplace.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**Chinese-American Planning Council
Testimony Before the Committee on Finance and Committee on Aging
Chair, Council Member Justin Brannan
Chair, Council Member Crystal Hudson
May 12th, 2025**

Thank you Chairs Brannan, Hudson, and members of the City Council for the opportunity to testify today. The mission of the Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc. (CPC) is to promote social and economic empowerment of Chinese American, immigrant, and low-income communities. CPC was founded in 1965 as a grassroots, community-based organization in response to the end of the Chinese Exclusion years and the passing of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Our services have expanded since our founding to include three key program areas: education, family support, and community and economic empowerment.

CPC is the largest Asian American social service organization in the U.S., providing vital resources to more than 80,000 people per year through more than 50 programs at over 30 sites across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. CPC employs over 700 staff whose comprehensive services are linguistically accessible, culturally sensitive, and highly effective in reaching low-income and immigrant individuals and families. With the firm belief that social service can incite social change, CPC strives to empower our constituents as agents of social justice, with the overarching goal of advancing and transforming communities.

To that end, we are grateful to testify about the issues that greatly impact our communities. CPC serves over 11,000 older adults annually through our culturally-appropriate, linguistically accessible, community-based Senior Centers, where they participate in classes and social activities, access nutrition, health and mental health services, and get connected to resources and support. We house 300 seniors through our affordable housing units. And we serve over 3,000 older adults and people with disabilities through our Home Attendant Program.

Continuing to invest and expand meal delivery service for seniors

Home delivered meals for seniors were crucial during the pandemic and remain so as many seniors are limited mobility and/or can't afford rising costs of groceries. According to a report by the [Robin Hood Foundation](#), it was reported that 1 in 4 adults over the age of 65 experienced poverty in 2022. We are glad to see the administration's concerted effort in expanding these services and we want to ensure that \$500 million is included in the adopted budget for expanded nutrition services, including meals for homebound individuals, Older Adult Center meals, and SNAP outreach.

Investing in Senior Centers and Geriatric Mental Health Initiative:

Older Adult Services have huge capital needs due to deteriorating spaces, appliances, and vehicles that have gone without necessary upgrades for the past decade. Case management organizations are serving individuals with more intensive mental health issues with less funding



from the city. In addition, the Council's Geriatric Mental Health Initiative is critical to addressing the growing mental health crisis in the AAPI community, which experiences the highest rate of senior suicides. Through GMHI, we are able to break down the stigma and barriers to mental health access by normalizing mental health and providing appropriate services. We are urging the City to include \$800 million for community services, addressing infrastructure issues at Older Adult Centers, mental health services, and public spaces to fight social isolation.

Healthy Aging

The Chinese-American Planning Council Home Attendant Program, Inc. (CPCHAP) is one of the largest not-for-profit home care service agencies in New York City, licensed in 1998 by the NYS Department of Health as a Home Care Service Agency. Under contract with the New York City Human Resources Administration from the outset, CPCHAP also contracts with many managed care organizations for the provision of Personal Care Services and Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program to Medicaid-eligible individuals. CPCHAP serves about 3,000 home care recipients daily and employs over 4,000 employees.

CPCHAP is well-respected for its ability to provide culturally and linguistically competent home care services for individuals who live in one of the five boroughs of New York City and who are medically disabled, elderly and/or physically disabled who might otherwise require institutionalization. CPCHAP works with clients, their families, nurses, social workers and physicians in tailoring each plan of care and provides services for individuals who speak Chinese, Spanish, English, Russian, and Korean, as well as other languages. CPCHAP works with patients and their families to offer the care needed, ranging from a few hours each week to 24-hour care.

Asian Americans are the fastest growing population in New York State, and seniors are the fastest growing subset. Over 1 in 3 Asian American seniors lives under the poverty line, and over 2 in 3 are Limited English Proficient (LEP).

Broadly speaking, New York State has the fourth oldest population in the nation, with 3.7 million people aged 60 and over. By 2030, [5.2 million people](#) in the state will be 60 and older, with 1.81 million New Yorkers will be 75 or older. An estimated [seven out of 10](#) people over the age of 65 will need some kind of long term care. In addition, there are over a million New Yorkers with disabilities, chronic illnesses, or other functional complications that require direct care, creating a significant population in New York State that requires direct care support to live and age in dignity. Direct care in homes and communities is either provided by unpaid family caregivers, paid family caregivers, or home health workers through an agency. Care that takes place in homes and in communities is often higher quality, preferred by consumers, and less costly overall than institutionalized care. Many immigrant seniors and families prefer home health care because they can receive language accessible and culturally competent care that they would not find in institutionalized settings.

Because of the growing needs of people with disabilities and an increasingly aging population, the home care sector is the largest employer in the nation, yet continues to face shortages. In NYC alone, [there are 187,000 home health](#) workers, and in New York State, there are over 330,600 home health workers. Yet because of growing need, by this year, New York State will



see a 33 percent growth in need for home health aides and face a shortage of [23,000 workers](#). While automation and investments in technology serve to improve the function and efficacy of hospitalization and institutionalized care, this portion of the healthcare industry is highly reliant on human work, adding urgency to investments in this workforce.

We urge the Council to join us in advocating for New York State to build a robust home care sector that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

In addition, we are also strongly urging the Council to consider and ensure that the following are included in the FY26 adopted budget that is necessary to uplift our growing aging population:

- **\$1 billion for affordable housing**, including the Senior Affordable Rental Apartments (SARA), preserving HUD 202 buildings, growing Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE), and supporting group housing.
- **Maintain the existing council discretionary funding to keep our system whole.**
- **Identify and reform existing obstructions to providing capital funding across the board, but particularly with NYCHA and RAD converted properties.** Organizations have been able to secure capital funding through alternative city, state and federal sources for projects that were not approved for capital funding by the administration. Administrative hurdles should not be cited as the reason older adult centers are falling apart and the city has the ability to change its own rules to get the funding where it needs to be.
- **Reverse ALL cuts to the aging system.** We have identified acute needs across the system that any currently unspent funds could be used to remedy. Pulling money out of this system will only create a death spiral through physical deterioration of centers and resources, or fiscal insolvency for many smaller providers.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify on issues that greatly impact our communities. If there are any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to Ashley Chen, Policy Analyst at achen9@cpc-nyc.org.



COUNCIL OF PEOPLES ORGANIZATION

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Testimony of Mohammad Razvi, CEO

Council of Peoples Organization (COPO)

Before the New York City Council – Committee on Aging

Fiscal Year 2026 Preliminary Budget Hearing

Chair Crystal Hudson

Members: Chris Banks, Linda Lee, Darlene Mealy, Yusef Salaam, Lynn C. Schulman, and Susan Zhua

Opening Statement

Good morning, Chair Hudson and esteemed members of the Committee on Aging. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today and for your leadership in supporting New Yorkers across generations.

My name is Mohammad Razvi, and I am the CEO of the Council of Peoples Organization (COPO). Since our founding in 2002, we've worked to serve the immigrant, Muslim, and multiethnic communities of Brooklyn and beyond through food assistance, senior services, youth engagement, and immigration support. We are proud to be a trusted provider, deeply embedded in the communities we serve.

Today, I come before you with deep concern and urgency.

I. Alarming Mental Health Needs Across Age Groups

At COPO, we are witnessing an overwhelming increase in mental health needs. This crisis is not limited to any one age group. Both older adults and younger residents are facing intense mental and emotional distress in the wake of COVID-19, compounded by economic uncertainty, housing instability, and a rising tide of hate and discrimination.

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We were forced to hire a second mental health counselor in early 2024 even though we did not have the budget to support it because our first counselor was completely overwhelmed. Even now, with two counselors, we cannot meet the demand. Waitlists are growing. Walk-ins are being turned away. Trauma is going unaddressed. Our staff is stretched dangerously thin.

We are calling on the City Council to create a dedicated mental health funding stream for community-based organizations. This includes not only support for hiring and retaining licensed mental health staff, but also investments in trauma-informed, culturally competent care. This is a public health emergency and it must be funded like one.

II. Older Adults Need Sustained Support, Not Budget Cuts

Our Older Adult Center is a lifeline. In 2022, we served 396 clients and provided 17,637 meals. That grew to 528 clients and 22,215 meals in 2023. By 2024, we reached 692 clients and served 34,680 meals.

This dramatic increase reflects both the aging of our population and the rising need among older adults many of whom are uninsured, isolated, and ineligible for Medicare. Any budget cuts to NYC Aging would devastate these vital services.

Our center doesn't just serve meals it fights isolation, provides case management, connects clients to health services, and creates a space for dignity and healing. The mental health crisis among older adults is especially alarming, and we simply do not have the resources to provide the full care that is needed.

Cuts would also mean layoffs of staff who have built trusting relationships with clients over years. The ripple effects would be felt immediately and deeply.

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III. Halal Food Access Is a Matter of Equity

In 2024, COPO's halal food pantry served over 110,000 individuals. Since the pandemic, we've distributed over 20.5 million pounds of food to more than 1.5 million people. What makes our pantry unique is that it offers 100% Halal-certified food ensuring that families with religious dietary needs are not left out of food assistance systems.

According to a New York Health Foundation survey, 83% of Muslim in the United States follow a halal diet, and according to the 2022 report of the Arab American Family support center less than 40% of food pantries across New York City offer halal options—and many of those do not provide halal meat.

In conversations with rabbis and imams across our community, one truth remains clear: Kosher is not halal, and halal is not kosher. While both follow religious dietary laws, they are rooted in different traditions, and one cannot be used in place of the other.

COPO serves over 40,000 individuals annually, in partnership with more than 70 community-based organizations. Yet, even with this broad reach, halal food access remains severely limited throughout the city.

This lack of access creates barriers, stigma, and exclusion for Muslim families within the food security system. Without culturally appropriate options, many are forced to choose between their dietary needs and feeding their families.

We urge the Council to prioritize culturally appropriate food access in the FY2026 budget, and to support the creation of a separate Office for Halal Food Access, alongside sustained funding streams. This is a matter of inclusion, equity, and basic dignity.

IV. Rising Hate, Islamophobia, and Discrimination

The social context our clients live in cannot be ignored. Since October 2024, we've seen a 700% spike in Islamophobic hate crimes in NYC. Discrimination, fear, and isolation are rising, particularly among Arab, South Asian, and Black Muslim communities.

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In our April 2024 COPO Survey of Discrimination, 33% of respondents said that discrimination had a major impact on their health, livelihood, and well-being yet 90% of these incidents went unreported due to fear or lack of resources.

This is why the work we do is not only social it is protective. But our teams cannot respond to these crises without proper funding. Whether it's mental health, food access, senior services, or legal support we are being asked to do more and more with less.

V. Immigration Services Are in Crisis

In 2024, COPO processed more than 700 immigration applications with no funding at all for our immigration department. Asylum seekers arrive daily, desperate for legal guidance. Our appointments are booked through August. We do not take asylum cases due to the complexity and lack of funding and when we refer out, those organizations are also full.

We are beyond capacity. And federal cuts threaten to make this even worse.

Closing

COPO is doing everything possible to meet the growing needs of our community, but we are reaching our limits. We respectfully urge this Council to:

- Invest in dedicated mental health funding for both youth and older adults.
-
- Protect and expand support for Older Adult Centers, especially in immigrant and underserved communities.
-
- Fund and institutionalize halal food access as a culturally essential public service.
-
- Recognize and respond to the rising tide of Islamophobia and discrimination.
-
- Ensure immigration services are funded, accessible, and responsive to the real crisis on the ground.

These are not extras. These are essential services lifelines for the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your commitment to our city's communities. I welcome your questions.

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**New York City Council Committee on Aging Jointly with the Committee on Finance –
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget Hearing**

Testimony of EmblemHealth

May 12, 2025

On behalf of the thousands of New Yorkers we employ and serve, EmblemHealth would like to thank Chair Hudson, Chair Brannan, and members of the Committee on Aging and the Committee on Finance for providing the opportunity to share information on the programming at EmblemHealth Neighborhood Care and how we can better address the needs of our communities with funding support from the City Council.

EmblemHealth Neighborhood Care is a non-profit providing free, culturally competent health and wellbeing support at 15 sites across New York City's five boroughs. Our team provides one-on-one support and individuals come to us with any challenges they may be facing. We provide connection to community resources to address social determinants of health (SDOH) needs such as food, transportation, and housing, and connection to medical providers for health care services. We provide free health and wellness classes that help individuals learn healthy behaviors and make connections in the community, with topics including Zumba, art therapy, and cellphone literacy. We also have virtual programming available to ensure we can reach homebound individuals. We are located in many under resourced communities, and our staff represent and reflect the communities they serve. We provide services and support in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Haitian Creole, and 81% of our team members are bi or trilingual. In 2024, we supported community members in nearly 120,000 encounters at our sites, and we welcomed over 56,000 attendees at nearly 4,800 wellbeing classes and special events. We are seeking funding to be able to reach even more individuals and families and address their most pressing health and wellbeing needs.

We are seeking \$50,000 in city-wide initiative funding for Older Adult Clubs, Programs, and Enhancements. Nearly twenty percent of individuals we serve are over the age of 65, making us uniquely positioned to help address the challenges this community is facing. With funding support, we would be able to enhance our programming for older adults, host facilitated social hours on topics such as stress awareness and women's health, increase local access to fresh food by hosting food pantries and farmers markets, and host classes to address the wellness and fitness needs of older adults, including chair fitness and Tai Chi. We have found that creating a safe, social space for individuals to gather is integral to combatting the loneliness and social isolation challenges that many older adults face. Our social hours, one-on-one and group discussions, and group classes allow for community members to strengthen relationships, deepen their ties to their community, and develop trusted relationships with our team members. This program would enable us to hold more supportive discussions and to host popular wellness resource days with multiple classes in a row, with offerings such as brain exercise activities and nutrition education. Ultimately this program would build upon our daily programming and provide more tailored support to older adults, creating safe, supportive spaces for health and wellness education, assistance, and connection.

An area of need across the older adult population we serve is for targeted supports and programming to improve mental wellbeing. We are seeking \$50,000 in city-wide initiative funding for Older Adult Mental Health to expand programming in this area. With this funding we would be able to reach more individuals and to provide more support and programming on topics such as art and relaxation, journaling, and mindfulness. We would also hold one-on-one and group conversations and wellness resource days, offering a mix of services to give individuals access to comprehensive support that best meets their needs and keeps them connected to the local community. Given the high level of food insecurity and SDOH needs in the populations we serve and its impact on mental wellbeing, it is critical that we continue to increase access and connection to needed resources, including hosting food pantry and farmers market events to increase healthy food access locally. Our team continually seeks feedback from participants and updates our programming accordingly, and one key area we've identified is the need for more support for older adults dealing with grief and life transitions. This program would allow us to create more tailored programming and resources, and to create more touch points with community members who would benefit from our support, but don't currently know where to seek help. With city-wide initiative funding, we would be able to build upon our experience to address wellbeing challenges for more older adults, ensure greater connection to community, and increase access to meaningful programming and resources for healthy aging and mental wellbeing.

We are also seeking \$50,000 in city-wide initiative funding for Access to Healthy Food and Nutrition Education to enable us to provide more culturally appropriate nutritional support and education, and to increase the number of events we host to connect individuals directly to fresh food. In 2024 we reached over 3,400 recipients at 52 food pantry and farmers market events held at our sites. In addition to these events, we host classes on nutrition such as Heart Healthy Nutrition and Plant Based Eating 101, and we facilitate SNAP benefit enrollment. With funding support, we would work with existing community partners to create and host collaborative events including food pantries, fresh food markets, and food prep demonstrations. We would pair the food access events with healthy food and nutrition classes, building upon our popular nutrition education offerings. We would also host one-on-one conversations and workshops to ensure that individuals have access to comprehensive support that helps them to achieve their goals. We hope to build on our experience of improving access to healthy food and nutrition in our communities to reach even more individuals with these crucial services.

We have also requested Council district level funding for each of our Neighborhood Care sites. With \$10,000 in local funding for individual locations we would be able to address wellbeing needs through providing supportive social connection spaces, enhancing healthy food access, and offering mental wellbeing programming on topics such as art and relaxation. We are also seeking \$10,000 in Support Our Older Adults funding to tailor more programming to the large older adult population that we serve, on topics such as healthy aging and combatting loneliness and social isolation. Local discretionary and Support Our Older Adults funding would enable us to provide more culturally appropriate support and materials in the most needed languages and enable us to collaborate more closely with partners to bring new resources and classes to the community.

EmblemHealth Neighborhood Care is proud to provide free resources, education, and community connection for many underserved communities. With your support we hope to expand our reach and increase our impact even further. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to continuing to work together to ensure that everyone in our communities has access to equitable, holistic wellbeing support, education, and resources.



Testimony Supporting Funding for Community Composting

Joint Hearing of the Committee on Finance and the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

May 12, 2025

My name is Jane Selden, and I chair a committee on waste reduction at the climate activist organization, 350NYC. As a group committed to promoting just and equitable solutions to the climate crisis, we recognize the vital role NYC's Community Composting programs play in educating New Yorkers about the benefits of organics recycling, one of the most important ways individuals can be actively engaged in combating the climate crisis. **We commend the City Council for restoring funding for these organizations last year, and we urge them to continue supporting their valuable work by allocating \$11.4 million dollars for community composting in the FY 2026 budget.**

Composting organic waste is essential if NYC is to reach its greenhouse gas reduction goals. Forty percent of the City's waste stream is composed of recyclable food scraps and yard waste. When this organic waste ends up in landfill, it emits methane, a greenhouse gas 80X more potent than CO₂ over a twenty-year period. Landfills are the largest source of anthropogenic methane emissions in the United States. When organic waste is sent to incinerators, the process of burning material with so much moisture is very energy-intensive, resulting in high levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

Diverting organic material from landfill and incinerators will also have a positive impact on the health of communities living near these facilities and near waste transfer stations in the city. The majority of these waste transfer stations are located in low-income communities and communities of color, where toxic emissions from heavy truck traffic is linked to very high rates of asthma and other respiratory illnesses.

The city has committed to achieving zero (recyclable) waste to landfill by 2030 and has recently begun enforcing the mandatory curbside composting law as an important step towards achieving this goal. However, simply passing waste-reduction legislation is not enough. Ensuring widespread participation in the organics recycling program will require many New Yorkers to acquire new habits and behaviors regarding waste disposal. People will not only need to understand the nuts and bolts of source separation but feel motivated to do it. Participation in the curbside composting program

has so far been low. Based on conversations I've had while tabling at local events I think this may be because many people aren't aware of the many direct benefits of composting. This is where the Community Composting programs play an essential role. A flyer or sign posted above a brown bin tells you **how** to recycle food scraps, but it doesn't tell you **why** it's important. Signs and flyers are no substitute for a friendly, informative conversation with a community composter at a farmer's market food scrap drop-off site or the hands-on experience of applying composting to create healthy soil in community gardens and to neighborhood street trees. These composting programs also strengthen communities by bringing together New Yorkers of diverse backgrounds and ages with the common goal of creating nutrient-rich soil, growing healthy food, and diverting waste from landfill and incinerators. Many of the social benefits community composting engenders like cooperation, mutual respect and community resilience can't be quantified numerically, but their value on a human level is immense.

I'd also like to point out that 100% of the food scraps collected by local composting organizations are converted to compost, whereas 80% of the organic waste from City's curbside composting program isn't composted. It's sent to Newtown Creek's wastewater treatment plant where it's anaerobically digested to produce biogas (methane) and fertilizer. We believe that the city should prioritize converting organic waste into compost, not biogas, utilizing local processing operations to reduce transportation emissions and produce high quality compost. This can be used to nourish the depleted soil of local parks, community gardens, street trees, and urban farms. And, as the city faces rising sea levels and more frequent torrential downpours, compost can play a vital role in flood mitigation because it acts as a sponge, retaining up six times its weight in water. NYC has spent millions of dollars developing green infrastructure: over 12,000 rain gardens have been created, and the City's first mini-forest has just been planted on Roosevelt Island. The application of compost- enriched soil will enhance the effectiveness of these climate resiliency measures.

The city currently spends over \$190 million dollars a year exporting food scraps and yard waste to landfill and incinerators. It makes fiscal sense to allocate a modest \$11.4 million dollars towards substantially reducing all this organic material that ends up in waste sites, and, instead, converting it into the valuable resource appropriately referred to as "black gold."

Thank you.

Jane Selden
350NYC



Making New York a better place to age

**New York City Council
Committee on Finance and Aging
Chair Brannan and Chair Hudson
May 12, 2025
Aging Executive Budget Hearing**

My name is Kevin Kiprovski and I am the Director of Public Policy at LiveOn NY. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LiveOn NY's members include more than 110 community-based nonprofits that provide core services under the NYC Aging portfolio and many other home and community based services in our city.

Background

The aging services system is not prepared for the current needs in our city and we see no major plans to upgrade services to meet the clear upcoming increase in needs that was revealed through multiple reports published over the past 12 months. The Center for an Urban Future and AARP published a report showing that our city and state are aging, and aging into poverty at higher rates than before with over half of all older New Yorkers in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens having no retirement savings at all. Our own housing report shows that older adults are becoming homeless at a rate 3x higher than younger demographics due to skyrocketing rents. We have the systems we need to ensure all older new yorkers can thrive as they age but we are not taking the opportunity to invest in them. If we don't we're cutting almost 20% of New Yorkers off from their communities and even their homes because the systems we live in have decided they don't deserve security in their own city.

We must invest in a multi year campaign to fully fund our current aging services system and build in new programs to meet new needs. Below is only a short list of the \$2.3 billion in new investment we are recommending as part of the AgeStrong NYC Campaign.

Recommendations

- **\$500 Million for OAC State of Good Repair:** Older Adult Centers have not received significant capital investment from the city in over 2 decades, leaving some in dire or unusable condition. We estimate the solution to all these needs across the city is a one time \$500 million infusion to ensure that our unique and incredibly effective system does not collapse and is ready to meet the needs of our aging city. We are asking the council for a \$5 million revolving emergency repair fund from council discretionary funds to help keep centers open in the interim.
- **\$44 Million for Expanded Case Management:** There is a critical need for a \$44 million dollar baselined increase in Case Management contracts adding 2 case managers and 1 intake staff to

LiveOn NY

Making New York a better place to age

each contract. This investment would also add 1 full time case manager to half of the centers in the city which are overwhelmed with their current case assistance program, community services, addressing infrastructure issues at OACs, mental health services, and public spaces to fight social isolation.

- **\$78 Million for Nutritional Support:** There is an essential need for a \$57 million investment in congregate meals at OACs to meet food price increases due to inflation and support the providers who serve these meals. We also need to add \$21 million to provide fully funded weekend meals to home delivered meals recipients.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

For questions, please email Kevin Kiprovski, Director of Public Policy at LiveOn NY, kiprovski@liveon-nyc.org

LiveOn NY's members provide the core, community-based services that allow older adults to thrive in their communities. With a base of more than 100 community-based organizations serving at least 300,000 older New Yorkers annually. Our members provide services ranging from senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, case management, transportation, and NORCs. LiveOn NY advocates for increased funding for these vital services to improve both the solvency of the system and the overall capacity of community-based service providers.

LiveOn NY also administers a citywide outreach program and staffs a hotline that educates, screens and helps with benefit enrollment including SNAP, SCRIE and others, and also administers the Rights and Information for Senior Empowerment (RISE) program to bring critical information directly to seniors on important topics to help them age well in their communities.



FY 26 BUDGET KEY ISSUES

We need \$2.3 billion dollars in transformative investment in the Aging Services system now to ensure that older New Yorkers can stay in their homes and continue to be a part of the communities they built over the decades.

Mayoral Budget Needs

◆ **\$500 Million for OAC State of Good Repair**

Older Adult Centers have not received significant capital investment from the city in over 2 decades, leaving some in dire or unusable condition. We estimate the solution to all these needs across the city is a one time **\$500 million infusion to ensure that our unique and incredibly effective system does not collapse and is ready to meet the need of our aging city.**

◆ **\$44 Million for Expanded Case Management**

There is a critical need for a **\$44 million dollar baselined increase in Case Management contracts** adding 2 case managers and 1 intake staff to each contract. This investment would also add 1 full time case manager to half of the centers in the city which are overwhelmed with their current case assistance program, community services, addressing infrastructure issues at OACs, mental health services, and public spaces to fight social isolation.

◆ **\$78 Million for Nutritional Support**

There is an essential need for a **\$57 million investment in congregate meals at OACs** to meet food price increases due to inflation and support the providers who serve these meals. We also need to add **\$21 million to provide fully funded weekend meals to home delivered meals recipients.**

City Council Discretionary Needs

- We are grateful for the Council's existing discretionary support and we ask for all lines to be kept at least the same in FY 26 with 2 increases
- A \$1 million increase in the NORC budget to \$6.2 million to cover increased nursing rates from nursing service providers.
- A \$5 million dollar 5 year emergency repair discretionary fund for Older Adult Centers that need small scale repairs or equipment replacements that they cannot fund with the currently allocated city funds.

Plus, full funding for all initiatives that support older New Yorkers, including but not limited to: Older Adult Clubs for Immigrant Populations, LGBTQIA+ Older Adult Services in Every Borough, Social Adult Day Care, Elder Abuse Prevention, Borough Presidents' Discretionary Funding Restoration, Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivor Initiative, Support our Older Adults, Older Adult and Information and Referral Services



Joy. Power. Possibility.

The Lower Eastside Girls Club connects young women and gender-expansive youth of color throughout New York City to healthy and successful futures through free, innovative year-round programming and mentoring. Together, we are building a just and equitable future filled with "Joy. Power. Possibility."

101 AVENUE D • NEW YORK, NY 10009 • 212-982-1633 • WWW.GIRLSCLUB.ORG

**Testimony from the Lower Eastside Girls Club
City Council FY 26 Executive Budget Hearing
Committee on Aging Jointly with
Committee on Finance
May 12, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and members of the Committee on Aging, and Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee. My name is Jenny Dembrow, and I am the Executive Director of the Lower Eastside Girls Club (LESGC) and have been with the organization since our founding in 1996. It was within NYCHA housing on Avenue D that the dream of the Lower Eastside Girls Club was brought to life—by a group of mothers, aunts, friends, and neighbors who recognized that our girls needed space to create, connect, and be safe. LESGC families have resided in the NYCHA housing on Avenue D, bordering the LESGC facility. Many individuals who were able to maintain that housing are now older adults, still securing housing for their families in the neighborhood. As of 2022, adults aged 65+ comprised 20 percent of the Lower East Side and Chinatown population, with 25% identifying as ages 45 to 64.¹

For almost 30 years, LESGC has nurtured creative and supportive spaces where young people and their families can dream big, find their passions, and connect to peers and careers. We have always aspired to strengthen our work with entire families, from infants to older adults. In 2022, we launched the Center for Wellbeing & Happiness (CWBH), where we provide a third space that fosters healthy relationships between neighbors, combats chronic loneliness, and promotes intergenerational community care through accessible wellness programs. This is a hyperlocal community space focuses on being a dynamic wellness hub with programming that includes a Weekly Food Pantry; Nutrition, Fitness (Chair Yoga and Tai Chi), and Wellness Classes (Nutrition to Address Chronic Illness); Creative Expression Classes (such as Knitting and Creative Writing); and Support Groups for parents and caregivers. In addition, our Weekly Food Pantry serves over 1,700 people each month, including 755 older adults. We are also a community hub providing space, collaborating with other mission-aligned organizations, and hosting meetings, trainings, and community events.

Here, we prioritize the wellbeing of all generations—from babies to elders—and all genders are collectively supported. Many of our co-founders are now older adults who are aging in place, and we are able to give back to them as they invested in us during our founding. The CWBH membership is growing; currently 210 participants ages 50-61 and over 260 participants ages 62+ (this is our largest category by age group). CWBH members identify as 44% Latinx, 26% Black, 9% Asian, 10% White, and 11% Other or Unknown.

CWBH is a vital resource for multiple generations of community members who are navigating various life challenges. Our ability to provide community care—from immediate crisis support to long-term wellness

¹ NYC Health Department. (2022). *Community health profiles data: Chinatown and Lower East Side*. NYC Health Department. Retrieved March 9, 2025, from <https://a816-health.nyc.gov/hdi/profiles/>



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initiatives—has made us an essential anchor institution for older adults seeking connection and wellbeing. The LES has a rich history, yet our older adults and most vulnerable community members are being forgotten. Many of our groups now offer support group-level assistance for older adults who lost family during COVID and/or were severely isolated during the pandemic. Additionally, significant changes are happening with the aforementioned NYCHA housing, including a vote for the Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) program or remaining in Section 9. Many older adults have requested support in understanding these developments, and we have partnered with NYCHA Tenant Association Representatives and GOLES to offer community meetings.

CWBH has also supported grandparents and older parents who are helping their children and loved ones through substance use issues while trying to maintain support, manage their limited incomes, and ensure safety during major mental health and drug crises. Unfortunately, we have also witnessed an increase in assaults against our elders in the community on Avenue D, where we are located. During this crucial moment, we are becoming a rapid response space where individuals feel comfortable bringing these concerns forward and asking for support. We aim to enhance our programming and partner with organizations to provide Know Your Rights Trainings, Safety Trainings, and caregiver training for this population. During this troubling time, we must take care of older adults.

Currently, LESGC is navigating a challenging financial reality and stands at a critical inflection point. Between a \$3 million mortgage for purchasing our CWBH space in 2019, rising costs due to inflation, and declining donations, our revenue has fallen behind, resulting in a \$2 million deficit. Recently, the cuts to the NYCHA Health Corps-AmeriCorps program have directly impacted our CWBH staff and Food Pantry operations. We have also been impacted by cuts to our Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) funding, which has been reduced from \$14,096 to \$7,000. The EFSP program has been frozen due to recent federal policy decisions affecting FEMA. While this contract through United Way does not fully cover the costs of our Community Food Pantry, it has been a crucial piece to our overall funding model. Combined, these fiscal challenges pose a direct and imminent risk to our ability to provide the vital services and innovative programming so many older people in the LES rely on at a time when the need is greater than ever. We have already been forced to lay off 17 employees in April 2025 and are diligently working to stabilize the organization. Towards this end, we are requesting \$30,000 from the Committee on Aging to support our work, specifically focused on older adults in the LES, to provide wellness support and emergency food assistance. We are requesting a total of \$2.5 million from the City Council in FY26 to support the broader stabilization of the organization.



**Testimony on behalf of the
Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and Bronx Solid Waste Advisory Boards**

before the New York City Council
Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Budget Hearing

May 12, 2025

Testimony on All SWAB Budget Priorities

This Budget hearing comes at a propitious moment as we transition from the City's 2006 to the 2027 Solid Waste Management plan. After three decades of diversion efforts, the takeaway is clear: it's not just how much we spend, but how we spend it.

Today, 80%, 2.8 million tons, of residential waste is exported to landfill and incineration annually, at a projected cost of \$500 million in 2026.

Organics make up 40% of exported waste, but only 4% is captured, and it's not compost until it's composted. Local Law 85 mandates source-separation, but we must fund the NYC Community Composting Network and pass Intro 696 to realize compost's full environmental, social, and fiscal benefits. The City's newly released NYC Climate Budgeting Report references \$189 Million in capital investment in net zero emissions for FY 2025-2035 in projects that reduce emissions from organic material, solid waste, and wastewater treatment. We would like clarification on what is included in these projects.

Textiles are 5% of exported waste. Intro 256 would study a recycling mandate to expand local textile reuse and recycling infrastructure.

Enacted Intro 697 requires DSNY to continue Waste Characterization Studies; \$12.5M over five years should include reuse and prevention data.

Intro 692 for microplastic testing and monitoring of tap water should advance and be funded to hold producers accountable and improve waste systems.

Much of the success of NYC's solid waste management policies hinge on funding outreach and education, ensuring residents fully participate in recycling and composting so we can reduce our reliance on waste export, as called for in the City's 2006 plan.

Please see our submitted testimony for more on the SWABs' priorities.



Testimony in Support of Funding for Waste Characterization Studies and to Expand Focus to Reuse and Waste Prevention

The City Council approved the continuation of Waste Characterization Studies to tell us how much and where the recyclables and organics are generated in the City so that infrastructure like MRFs can be sited and sized properly, and we support this. However, to comply with the City's new zero waste laws, we must understand the reuse and prevention potential of curbside discards, which comprise an estimated 20% of the discard stream¹ according to EPA's product-based waste characterizations, which show more clearly the opportunities for reuse and prevention. But DSNY's studies, conducted since 1989, have never been designed to help the City develop a municipal waste prevention and reuse program with sufficiently frequent, gentle curbside collection and repair facilities for our repairable discards. Therefore, the City needs sufficient funding to not only continue regularly producing Waste Characterization Studies, but to also expand their focus to reuse and waste prevention characterization.²

EPA's solid waste hierarchy developed since 1988 has prevention and reuse as the highest priority above recycling and composting, and according to the World Resources Institute, reducing generation of goods and food is 70 times as beneficial for the environment, and the climate, compared to reducing export to landfills and incinerators with recycling.^{3 4}

We know that reuse potential left on the curb is large, and the value of repaired consumer goods per ton is considerably higher than tons of recycled commodities or organics. Compare, for example, a ton of repaired electronics to a ton of glass or organics. But the City has very little data about the distribution, the types, the condition, and from that, the repaired value of repairable items that we leave at the curb. The Manhattan SWAB has begun to pilot a reuse potential measurement program at curbside,⁵ but to create a successful, municipal reuse and prevention program and infrastructure,⁶ the City requires commensurate funding for reuse and prevention characterization studies as it has done since 1989 for recycling and organics.⁷

We urge the City to commit to develop and include additional funding for Waste Prevention and Reuse Capacity Characterization Studies to make clear the types, distribution, quantity, condition, and repaired value of reusable / repairable consumer goods like clothing, furniture, appliances, electronics, books, and toys, as well as types of unrecyclable packaging like fused paper, plastic, and/or metal packaging that would be candidates for a legislative ban. The information we would get from such studies is critical to calculating the potential reused value, hence the benefit / cost ratio. Calculating the reuse and

¹ [Zero Waste Solutions discards pie chart](#) by Maggie Clarke, based on USEPA data from Advancing Sustainable Materials Management 2018 Tables and Figures, Assessing Trends in Materials Generation and Management in the United States, December 2020.

² OMB's fiscal impact analysis for this law indicates that 2 studies over 5 years would cost \$12.5M.

³ [Consume](#)
[r Demand and Climate Change](#)

⁴ [Data Needs: Upstream and Downstream Pollution](#)

⁵ [MSWAB Reuse Characterization Pilot](#)

⁶ [Municipal Product Evaluation and Repair Facilities \(PERF\) and associated Infrastructure](#)

⁷ [Argument for / Design of Municipal Reuse Programs](#)



prevention potential value per ton would make clear how much we could save over the cost of exporting the same materials and losing that value in incinerators and landfills. Environmental costs are also avoided by prevention and reuse. We also need to determine costs for gentle collection, a sufficient number of product evaluation and repair facilities, and staff training.

Testimony in Support of Testing and Funding for Testing Microplastics in NYC's Potable Public Water Supply

This testimony focuses on the 2024 Council bill known as *Testing Drinking Water for the Presence of Microplastics*, Intro 692, and about including funds in the budget for implementing such testing.

Microplastics are known endocrine disruptors and are linked to other negative health outcomes including cancer and diabetes. Microplastics have been found in our air, water, food, soil, blood, brain, and in both sides of the placenta (parent and baby). It seems that wherever we look for microplastics, we find them. We know there are microplastics in our drinking water, but currently we are not measuring the *amount*. Because of this, we are not able to answer basic questions: are microplastics in our water increasing over time? Does it vary by location or season?

The Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board conducted initial testing in Manhattan and Queens' tap water. We found that there were more microplastics in Queens' tap water than Manhattan's. This first step of measuring microplastics then allows us to pose questions - why is this the case? - and seek solutions. As the saying goes, if you can't measure it, you can't manage it. In the current state, we're not measuring or managing microplastics.

The publication *Gothamist* reported on an earlier version of the bill, Intro 797, and interviewed Sandy Nurse, the bill's prime sponsor. Nurse said, "We're seeing a proliferation of plastics and different types of plastics in everything. If we find that it's in our water, that to me would allow us to then hold producers accountable. It could help us create better waste systems. It could help prevent certain types of plastics that are known to break down faster than others not be sold or not be used in certain products." If the bill passes, the city would follow California's move to launch a statewide testing protocol for monitoring microplastics in drinking water.

The current bill, Intro 692, has 20 co-sponsors. Let's bring a microplastic testing bill over the threshold this year and include funds to implement testing and monitoring in the budget. The City already tests our tap water for other contaminants. Whenever and wherever the City conducts these tests, the City should also test for the presence and level of microplastics.



Testimony on the Urgent Need to Increase Budgetary Outlays for Outreach, Education, and Enforcement to Improve Composting and Recycling Compliance

The SWABs would like to highlight a critical issue facing New York City's sustainability efforts — the need for significant investment in outreach and education related to composting and recycling programs. Without a strategic and right-sized commitment to the means of instituting citywide behavior change, New York City will fail to reach its climate goals and will continue to make our refuse other peoples' problems.

Over thirty years ago, New York City implemented mandatory curbside recycling and set a goal to achieve a "25% diversion rate of recyclables." This was a pivotal moment in the City's waste management history. Since then, the City has made significant commitments, including the 2015 introduction of the "0x30" plan, which aims to eliminate the sending of divertible waste to landfills by 2030. Unfortunately, the efforts to fulfill the commitments haven't been followed up with a plan of action and funding, leading to a stalled recycling rate and the abandonment of the "0x30" plan. Most recently, the passage of Local Law 85 of 2023 mandated residential curbside collection of source-separated organics, but you need only walk down your block and scan for brown bins to understand that the take-up rates are quite low.

While the recycling and compost initiatives have been crucial steps in the right direction, we must confront a stark reality: New York City has a participation problem. The City has continued to export over 80% of its discards, including recyclables, organics, and reusable materials, to landfills and incinerators both within and outside the region. The remaining portion is diverted for recycling and composting — but that represents a fraction of the waste that could be kept out of landfills with better participation.

What is Missing from the Equation?

The gap in our current waste diversion strategy is clear: we lack a sustained and effective effort to reach, educate, and convince every New York City resident of the value of waste diversion and the significant impact their participation can have on achieving the City's long-term sustainability goals. While some New Yorkers are willing to engage, they often lack the necessary information, understanding, and motivation to properly participate in composting and recycling programs.

Take the City's organics processing capacity as an example. In 2024, curbside organics collection rolled out to all five boroughs. Of the 1.1 million tons of organics discarded by residents annually, only about 4 percent is estimated to have been diverted for separate collection and processing in 2024.⁸ This is a figure that will threaten the economic viability of collecting organics if it is not remedied soon, and reflects a significant missed opportunity for waste diversion.

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<https://www.biocycle.net/the-organics-capture-rate-and-what-it-tells-us/#:~:text=Calculating%20the%20capture%20rate%20in%20areas%20currently,residential%20organics%20composition%20at%20a%20citywide%20level.>



To put this in perspective, the City's recycling program provides valuable lessons. When New York City made recycling of metal, glass, plastic, and paper mandatory in 1989, it began an education and outreach effort that spanned decades. After 30 years of these programs — including some setbacks and abysmal spending on outreach and education — New York City has been stuck at a recycling capture rate of about 50%. This figure highlights that while mandatory collection alone may drive some progress, it is the sustained, targeted education, community engagement, and enforcement, directed particularly at those who are more resistant to participating, that ultimately deliver results.

The success of our composting and recycling programs hinges not just on the infrastructure we build but on the participation of every New Yorker. To achieve our waste diversion goals, we need to make a real investment in understanding the propensity of different residents to participate, as well as educating our residents. It is only through robust, behavioral science-informed outreach and education efforts that we can expect to see real, measurable progress toward the City's sustainability goals, and ensure that New York remains a model for environmental responsibility.

Therefore, I urge the Council to consider increasing budgetary outlays to conduct behavioral science informed outreach to increase recycling and compost compliance. The increase should also include funding to conduct behavior and attitude studies of the population of New Yorkers to determine the best ways to reach and motivate everyone to participate, as well as funding to measure the effectiveness of the outreach. Furthermore, any successful compliance program should include enforcement. For some, education and outreach is not enough. In New York, not much attention has been given to universal enforcement, and rolling this out smartly with adequate funding will contribute to increased participation.

Funding for outreach, education, and enforcement should be a no-brainer. A well-thought-out and planned outreach campaign should pay for itself over time as it has the potential to create revenue through the sales of recyclable goods and compost and reduce the costs of transporting and landfilling these discards. Increased recycling and composting will also create more local jobs and tax revenues, keeping money in our communities while creating a more sustainable, equitable, and environmentally-conscious future for all New Yorkers.

Testimony in Support of Passage and Funding for Intro 256

The SWABs support the passage and funding for Councilmember Hudson's Intro 256, requiring the Sanitation Commissioner to study the feasibility and potential environmental effects of a recycling mandate for household textiles. This study is a first step in broadening the collection of secondhand textiles so they no longer end up in landfill or incinerator-bound refuse but, instead, spur investment in resale and local textile-to-textile recycling infrastructure.

Current cheap and unethical fast fashion models encourage widespread overconsumption, environmental and human harms, discourages repair, and makes too many consumers feel they can dispose of unwanted clothing and textiles as trash.



BUT CLOTHES ARE NOT TRASH!

Textile and apparel waste is choking the planet; NYC residents contribute to that at the dizzying pace of 155,000 tons annually, according to DSNY's 2023 waste characterization study. This contributes to the climate change crisis through GHG emissions and groundwater contamination. As 5% of the MSW, this equals 92 pounds per household annually. This is down from 6.3% in 2017, but the recent impact of cutting the GrowNYC's programs will likely raise that back up to the 123 pounds of textile waste per household annually. And our 10-year tipping and incineration contracts also increase yearly! Textile waste export, tipping and incineration costs us \$25 million annually. So, even if we personally didn't enjoy the use of these items, we pay for their improper and avoidable disposal with no attempt to recover value through circular systems of textile waste management.

Waste stats across all product categories are staggering, but clothing, in particular, is considered the worst offender since, according to the EPA, textiles is the FASTEST GROWING waste category, projected to increase 63% by 2030. So, we have a choice— continue to bury and burn it OR establish a circular textile collection, recycling, and innovation system that will simultaneously serve the NY fashion industry. Upfront investment can be offset by savings from renegotiated waste contracts, and in turn help finance the infrastructure needed to establish a new circular textile industry, bring green jobs, investment, and tax revenue.

Intro 256 will start us down the path to textile circularity. As a part of DSNY's GrowNYC program, their reFashionNYC program has been somewhat successful, but does not account for the 155,000 tons still found in our waste stream. 64.4% of NYC apartment buildings are 5+ units, equal to approximately 35,420 multi unit buildings, but reFashion bins only exist in about 1,300 buildings and its contract with Housing Works leaves the charity with excess that cannot be sold. This eventually becomes textile waste export where a large percentage is unsaleable and is landfilled or dumped on beaches in other countries when it could be recycled into new textiles in the US fashion capital! Intro 256 is an opportunity to study curbside textile collection, environmental impact, and recycling feasibility in order to assess the potential that will attract needed investment from Wall Street and the textile industry at large. NY State is working to pass textile legislation that will facilitate the requirement and desire to create a market for recycled textiles and content.

Please endorse the funding for this bill and include the city's SWABs in helping make textiles our next curbside recycling category. Thank You

Additional Background:

In a May 2023 study of 151 American cities, only 8 offer curbside collection of textiles as part of a regular recycling program (Bethke):

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| ● Boston, MA | ● Little Rock, AR |
| ● Atlanta, GA | ● Lansing, MI |
| ● Honolulu, HI | ● Allentown, PA |
| ● Yonkers, NY | ● Warwick, RI |



It follows that NYC could learn a lot by meeting with officials from these cities to understand set up, costs, benefits, and pitfalls in order to design a study and execute a plan that fits into NYC's Zero Waste goals.

Testimony in Support of Robust and Well-Funded New Solid Waste Management Plan for NYC

Most fundamentally, NYC's new Solid Waste Management Plan should be structured with enough actions, commitments, and budget in each year of the plan to fulfill existing city and state laws, including the City's Zero Waste, Waste Equity, and Commercial Waste Zone laws, as well as the New York State Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

Zero Waste, Greenhouse Gas Reduction, Waste Equity, and Environmental Justice can only be achieved through a Solid Waste Management Plan that includes how these laws will be fulfilled.

Also needed is crucial input from the City Council's and Borough Presidents Offices' internal experts and the SWABs. A handful of people working in isolation will not yield the most effective results.

In addition, the new Solid Waste Management Plan needs to have a Sustainable Materials Management orientation. The requirements of successful Sustainable Materials Management Plans include:

1. Establish goals, such as, 90% diversion within 10 years via prevention, reuse, recycling, and local composting.
2. Lay out sufficient planned actions and commitments in each year of the plan, covering all discards, to reach the goals on time.
3. Conduct product-based characterization studies and tie the results to annual planned actions and commitments.
4. Design education and outreach to reach and motivate all segments of the population, maximizing the participation rate.
5. Establish and enforce sufficient incentives and disincentives to increase motivation to participate.
6. Commit sufficient budget and staff to accomplish the annual planned actions and commitments.

Thanks to the City Council and NYS Legislature, some laws to sustainably avoid and manage discards are in place. The new Solid Waste Management Plan needs to be the City's blueprint for achieving them.

The new Solid Waste Management Plan must include annual commitments and report back on the City's Waste Equity Law and Commercial Waste Zone (CWZ) Law that go beyond the current annual reports⁹. The Solid Waste Management Plan needs to include annual commitments and report back on full implementation and enforcement of these existing laws, including, for example, reductions in truck traffic other than those associated with reduced tonnage, e.g., through barging. Construction and

⁹<https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/downloads/resources/reports/waste-equity-law/2024/waste-equity-report-2024.pdf>



demolition debris should be brought under the umbrella of the CWZ Law and be included in the Solid Waste Management Plan.

New York State's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act requires no less than 85% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050, compared to 1990. The Act's Scoping Plan states that, "The most obvious and well-documented contribution to GHG emissions from the management of waste is from the uncaptured emissions of methane from landfills." US EPA data indicate that over 50% of carbon emitted to the atmosphere can be mitigated by using Zero Waste solutions, such as redesign, prevention, reuse, recycling, and composting. [NYC's Zero Waste law](#) requires that the City institute measures to achieve zero waste, including a timeline to send zero waste to landfills and incinerators. In addition to other plans and requirements, the City's Solid Waste Management Plan needs to include annual work plans with actions and timetables showing how the City will fulfill these laws. Thank you.

Testimony in Support Funding Full Implementation of Local Law 199

The 20 Commercial Waste Zones mandated by Local Law 199 were supposed to be fully implemented a year and a half ago. Currently only one zone was implemented in the initial phase rollout that began in January 2025, with only two more CWZs – Bronx East and West – scheduled to be implemented by the end of this year. There is no scheduled timetable for the rollout of the other 17 CWZs.

Reporting on the implementation of the initial phase rollout at the recent City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste CWZ Oversight Hearing was sparse. Now is the time to publish the data from the required reporting and move to full implementation.

To their credit, at the recent CWZ hearing, DSNY mentioned not having enough personnel resources to fulfill implementation. Funding for personnel should be included in the budget so that communities and workers get the health, safety, and welfare benefits that have been pending for almost a decade now.

Also, Intro 0352-2024, which will establish a commercial waste zone (CWZ) working group – that includes representatives from communities, including those covered by the Waste Equity Law, and unions – should be reintroduced and passed and any required funding provided for its implementation to ensure that promised community and worker relief is achieved.



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New York City Council Committee on Aging Executive Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2026

Chair Hudson, and fellow members of the New York City Council Committee on Aging,

Thank you for holding this hearing on the New York City FY26 Executive Budget. We are writing testimony on behalf of the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty (Met Council) in support of the \$128 million increase in funding for the Department for the Aging from the Preliminary Budget. The Department for the Aging (DFTA) provides essential support to Met Council's Geriatrics programs, which promote healthy aging among New York City's aging population. This increase is an exciting step in the right direction, however, New York City's growing older adult population still needs more support.

We request that the committee consider expanding and improving rental support programs to fight housing insecurity among New York City's senior population. Many older adults live on fixed incomes, and rising housing costs often leave them vulnerable to eviction, homelessness, or unsafe living conditions. Currently, the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) program provides valuable support to housing insecure seniors, but more needs to be done.

For over 50 years Met Council has been one of America's largest Jewish charities dedicated to fighting poverty. We operate ten departments ranging from 100% affordable housing to our award-winning family violence program to comprehensive Holocaust Survivor assistance, geriatrics programs, crisis intervention, and the country's largest kosher emergency food network. Met Council provides a wide array of support to over 320,000 New Yorkers annually.

Met Council's Geriatrics Team serves over 3,000 older adults through its Elder Abuse Prevention Program, Caregiver Support Program, Holocaust Survivor Program, and Senior Repair program. We work closely with DFTA-funded Older Adult Centers, Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC), Home-Delivered Meals, and Case Management programs to connect our older clients to vital services. Our Elder Abuse Prevention Program utilizes Older Adult Centers as part of safety planning for isolated older clients who are actively experiencing abuse and may need a place to feel safe and connect to a larger support network. For older clients who experience increased frailty, limited support, and limited means to afford help, we regularly connect them to home care services through Case Management Programs, which offer Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly Program ("EISEP"). Having access to support with everyday activities, meal preparation, and socialization is critical for extending one's ability to age in place and avoid higher levels of care.

New York, a diverse and dynamic city, is a refuge for millions of people. Whether it is immigrants looking for a better life for themselves and their families, or Americans seeking opportunities in a home that supports their fundamental rights and allows them to truly be themselves, New York City provides a home. With this incredible diversity also comes the significant poverty that unduly affects

millions of our residents. This poverty persists and directly affects housing security, particularly among some of New York City's older residents.

According to a study done by the Columbia University Center on Poverty and Social Policy, nearly 2 million New York City residents live in poverty, a number that has been rapidly increasing in recent years. Within this population, older New Yorkers are disproportionately represented. According to the New York State Comptroller, **21.5 percent of New York City seniors live in poverty**. This disproportionate level of poverty within the senior population results in a higher than the national average rate of housing insecurity among seniors in New York City. According to the New York State Comptroller, **43 percent of households with a resident over the age of 75 experience housing insecurity**.

In recent years, our Geriatrics Team has seen increases in housing insecurity with their clients, impacting their ability to age in place and causing greater strain on those who care for them. Additionally, housing insecurity is known to have adverse impacts on other aspects of an individual's life. These impacts can include increased stress levels, poorer overall health status, reduced access to health care, and negative effects on mental well-being, including higher rates of depression and anxiety. SCRIE provides valuable support to seniors in New York City, but with the continuously rising cost of living, some seniors who do not qualify for the program are also facing housing insecurity. The SCRIE income eligibility limit of \$50,000 annually has been stagnant and is not reflective of the cost of living in New York City. It is essential that SCRIE income eligibility caps increase to reflect annual Social Security Cost of Living Increases. Currently, modest annual Social Security increases can result in disqualification for needy older adults, putting their housing in jeopardy. Expanding housing support programs and modernizing income requirements would lift thousands of seniors out of housing insecurity, support aging in place, and improve health outcomes.

In addition to rising housing costs, homes are not equipped to meet changing physical needs, and access to affordable homecare is limited. Investments for in-home and community-based services such as the DFTA-funded case management, home-delivered meals, homecare, and caregiver support services can help to empower older adults to live as independently as possible; thereby, reducing hospitalizations and long-term care admissions. Our experience and expertise working with older adults in New York City is what prompts us to request maintained funding for DFTA, as well as the expansion of housing support programs such as SCRIE. The importance of SCRIE and DFTA for Older New Yorkers cannot be overstated.

We thank you for taking the time to review our testimony, and we hope to continue to work with this committee and the New York City Council to meet the needs of older New Yorkers.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'LW' or 'Lillian Wu'.

Lillian Wu, LMSW

Director of Geriatrics Programs

Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty



**STATEMENT OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL
BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT
RE: EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARINGS**

May 12, 2025

Good morning, Chair Abreu and members of the Committee. My name is Eric A. Goldstein, and I am New York City Environment Director at the Natural Resources Defense Council ("NRDC"). As you know, NRDC is a non-profit legal and scientific organization active on a wide range of environmental health, natural resource protection and quality-of-life issues around the world, across the country, and here in New York City, where we have had our main office since 1970. For years, one of NRDC's priority New York issues has been solid waste reform. Our main objective has been to transform waste policy from primary reliance on landfilling and incineration to making waste prevention, recycling, composting and equity the cornerstones of a more sustainable and sensible waste policy for all New Yorkers.

We are pleased to be here today to comment on the Administration's Executive Budget on solid waste and contrast it with the proposals being advanced by the City Council.

In short, the Administration's proposed sanitation budget is disappointing in critical areas and without revision will set back efforts to enhance public health, safeguard our environment, and improve the quality of life for city residents. The Council's response to the mayor's preliminary budget, on the other hand, is far more sensitive to these important waste issues.

We thank Speaker Adrienne Adams, Finance Chair Brennan, Sanitation Chair Abreu and the Council's Finance Division staff for their leadership. And we strongly support the Council's recommendations on waste issues and urge that they be included in the final FY'26 budget.

We urge the Council to continue to fight for increased monies for six high-priority waste programs, as set forth in the Council's Response to the Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Budget:

Community Composting for All – Community composting is a critical strategy that is necessary to ensure the success of the city's curbside organics collection, achieve the Council's Zero Waste goals, and advance neighborhood revitalization across all five boroughs. The 17 non-profit groups that are part of the New York City Community Composting Network are made up of a diverse cross-section of New Yorkers who are educating their neighbors as to how and why it makes sense to separate their food scraps and yard waste for recycling. This strategy will save taxpayer dollars by reducing the costs of sending organics to distant landfills and incinerators. While we know that the Network's request for \$11.4 million would be well spent, NRDC urges the Council to ensure that nothing less than 7 million dollars is included in the final FY '26 budget for this exceptional program.

Litter Basket Service Restoration – Frequent emptying of the city's litter baskets on public avenues and streets in all five boroughs is an essential sanitation service. When litter fills and overflows these baskets, it presents health risks, lowers property values, and gives New Yorkers a sense that the city is out of control.

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NRDC strongly supports the Council's proposal to restore \$25 million and to baseline this expenditure into the city's budget.

Illegal Dumping Cameras and Lot Clean-Up Restoration – Illegal dumping across the city and the slow pace of vacant lot clean-ups are challenges that are a significant burden to many city neighborhoods, especially those in low- and moderate-income communities. The installation of cameras in known dumping areas is one important step to address the problem. But the Department of Sanitation also needs sufficient funds to ensure that it has the resources to clean up some of the worst vacant lots. NRDC supports the Council's proposal to allocate \$10 million for the installation of 330 additional cameras and \$800,000 to baseline DSNY lot-cleaning operations.

Trash Bins for Business Improvement Districts and Low- and Moderate-Income Buildings – To its credit, the Adams Administration has advanced programs aimed at ending the placement of litter in plastic bags on New York City streets. The overall approach is already reducing the city's rat problem and is enhancing the appearance of the city's streetscape. But this approach has presented a problem for Business Improvement Districts and Low- and Moderate-Income Buildings, whose managers do not have funding to purchase the necessary bins. NRDC supports the Council's proposal to provide \$10.7 million for low- and moderate-income buildings and \$5 million for Business Improvement Districts to comply with the city's new containerization requirements.

Renewable Rikers Master Plan – Rikers Island, which has long had a small, successful composting operation for food scraps generated on the island, has the potential to help the city cost-effectively dispose of a significant portion of its organic waste -- if its composting operation were to be expanded. That is one of the promises of the Renewable Rikers legislation passed by the Council in 2021. To advance this goal, the necessary next step is the development by the city of a master plan for post-incarceration uses that advance the Council's objectives of converting the island into a model for sustainability and resiliency. NRDC strongly supports the Council's proposed addition of \$3 million in the FY'26 budget to fund the start-up of a transformative master plan for this 413-acre island, to maximize the benefits of this once-in-a-generation opportunity.

NRDC stands ready to work with you on all these issues. And we thank you for your attention.



**Testimony of Alia Soomro, Deputy Director for New York City Policy
New York League of Conservation Voters
City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
FY26 Executive Budget Hearing
May 12, 2025**

My name is Alia Soomro and I am the Deputy Director for New York City Policy at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV is a statewide environmental advocacy organization representing over 30,000 members in New York City. Thank you, Chair Abreu, as well as members of the Committee on Sanitation for the opportunity to comment.

One of [NYLCV's top policy priorities](#) is getting us closer to our zero waste by 2030 goals. Food waste is the third largest source of New York City's overall emissions according to the City's [integrated NYC Greenhouse Gas Inventory](#), after buildings and transportation. Twenty percent of New York City's greenhouse gas emissions come from household food consumption. When food waste is sent to landfills, which are disproportionately located in low income and communities of color, organic waste decomposes to create methane gas, a powerful greenhouse gas more than twenty times more potent than carbon dioxide. Neighborhoods near polluting facilities like waste transfer stations and incinerators have higher rates of pollution, which cause disproportionately higher cases of asthma, cancer, and other health issues and compound already existing environmental and racial inequities. Due to these environmental injustices—which are only being compounded with the impacts of climate change—the City needs to be doing everything in its power to continue moving towards organic waste recycling, including allocating robust funding for these programs.

NYLCV appreciated the Council's FY26 Preliminary Budget Response, particularly when it came to community composting. However, our City has a long way to go when it comes to implementation, funding, education, and outreach to achieve our zero waste goals and improve our quality of life.

Residential and Commercial Organic Waste

First, the City must continue implementing the Zero Waste Act of 2023. This includes funding for education, outreach, and robust enforcement of the citywide residential curbside organics program, and funding for community recycling centers and organic waste drop off sites, as required by Local Laws 85, 88, and 89 of 2023.

When it comes to organics collection, NYLCV is extremely disappointed by [the Adams Administration decision to stop issuing fines to most buildings that break composting rules](#) for the rest of the year. This is short-sighted and goes against Local Law 85 of 2023. This bill was

on our 2023 NYC Council Scorecard and it is now a law that we are very supportive of. If we are to achieve our zero waste goals and improve quality of life, DSNY needs to robustly enforce this law *and* conduct strong outreach and education in multiple languages. [Recent data suggests](#) that residential organic capture rates remain low. We urge the Council and Administration to commit more funding for outreach and education in multiple languages throughout the city in order for all residents and superintendents to utilize this program. We also hope that enforcement will begin again.

Moreover, NYLCV believes that the City can do better when it comes to incentivizing and enforcing commercial organics. We urge the city to expand commercial organic separation requirements to all food businesses in concert with the implementation of Commercial Waste Zones. In accordance with Local Law 146 of 2013, DSNY is required to evaluate whether sufficient regional processing capacity exists to accommodate the expansion in the proposed LL146 rules.

NYLCV has long advocated for the equitable siting of regional capacity for processing residential and commercial organic waste, including continuing to invest in more City-owned composting facilities and community composting programs, to the extent feasible, marine transfer stations to ultimately avoid the use of landfills and incinerators. It is imperative that the emissions reductions achieved from diverting this waste are not diluted by transporting it long distances, and does not compound poor air quality in environmental justice communities by siting additional capacity that will increase truck traffic in these already overburdened districts.

The City should ensure that small businesses and large businesses alike have access to recycling and food donation programs that are accessible, easy to use, transparent, and which would result in cost savings compared to landfilling and incineration. We echo [DSNY's February 27, 2024 testimony](#) calling for the Council to consider updating Local Law 146 of 2013 that would allow DSNY to have source separation at all commercial establishments, in line with the residential curbside program.

As stated in the [Sanitation Committee Preliminary Budget Report](#), the City's curbside and containerized recycling diversion rates remain low, as has been the case in the previous fiscal years. In the first four months of FY25 the diversion rate of curbside and containerized recycling was 15.5 percent, this is 0.4 percent less than in the first four months of FY24. The average diversion rate for the previous three fiscal years was approximately 17 percent, which is still far below the 23 percent target DSNY has set. We urge the City to invest in recycling and waste diversion programs, especially when it comes to education and outreach, with an emphasis on reduction and reuse to bring New York City closer to its Zero Waste by 2030 goal laid out in Local Law 86 of 2023. We also urge the City to ramp up enforcement in order to improve recycling rates.

We also urge the City to continue taking action to upgrade the City's wastewater treatment plants' digesters to process organic commercial and residential waste into renewable energy to reduce local pollution and help address food waste, including exploring the feasibility of

public-private partnerships. DEP should make clear and public what its intentions and plans are for anaerobic digestion capacity at its WWTPs and what quality of materials they will take.

Community Composting

NYLCV supports community composting initiatives across New York City. We are grateful to the City Council for restoring funding for community composting in FY25. NYLCV supports the Council's FY26 Preliminary Budget Response proposing an allocation of \$7 million in additional funding to support the continuation and expansion of the Community Composting Program for All, ensuring citywide access to reliable, decentralized composting options, as well as staffing support, equipment and site operations for local composting.

As emphasized above, in order for the citywide residential organics program to be successful, awareness and participation must improve. Community composting is one tool to help New Yorkers change their behavior to compost food scraps. Community composters are educators and facilitators that can help DSNY increase composting efforts across the city. We believe that the community composting program can and should [complement](#) the City's residential organics program, especially when it comes to workforce development, and outreach and education to spark behavior changes.

Containerization

NYLCV supports DSNY's Pilot Containerization Program for Manhattan CD9 and we hope the Administration and Council can work towards developing and funding permanent citywide waste containerization program, including allocating the requisite funding for the rollout of this program such as funding for Automated Side-Loading Trucks. Providing permanent, sealed containers to hold trash bags prior to collection will improve quality of life and mitigate the issues of the bags being opened by rodents. Getting trash off the sidewalk also creates more opportunities for beneficial use of public space like bioswales, bike corrals, sidewalk seating, bus shelters, and pedestrian plazas.

Commercial Waste Zones and Truck Electrification

Ensure the timely implementation of the Commercial Waste Zones (CWZ) law to improve the safety of workers, pedestrians, and cyclists, and bring the city closer to its zero waste goals. We are pleased that the first waste zone ("Queens Central") [officially began this January](#), and that DSNY proposed rules to implement the second and third CWZs, "Bronx East" and "Bronx West." While we understand the importance of starting off on the right foot and learning from Queens Central, it is imperative that the City carries out this law in a timely and transparent manner. We urge the City to release a list of more CWZs that will be implemented and a firm timeline for when all CWZs will be operational.

We also call on the City to provide continued funding for the electrification of light-, medium-, and heavy-duty DSNY and commercial sanitation trucks. Additionally, the City must continue working with DCAS, utility companies, and industry professionals to ensure adequate charging infrastructure is installed and available for sanitation trucks and give extra consideration for CWZ carters with the most aggressive plans to do so. Requiring cleaner fleets as part of the

City's move to CWZs is also the best way to bring measurable air quality improvements to neighborhoods that house a disproportionately high number of haulers and waste processing facilities. It is not good enough to require citywide emissions reductions. We should also strive for more localized benefits.

Lithium-Ion Battery Recycling

Lastly, as e-mobility devices continue to increase, we call on the city to enact legislation to establish a safe recycling program for rechargeable lithium ion batteries, particularly e-bike and e-scooter batteries. As the [Sanitation Committee Preliminary Budget Report](#) outlined, we are encouraged that the Mayor's Preliminary Plan includes an additional \$872,688 in FY25 and \$353,056 in FY26 and the outyears for the Mobile Battery Drop-Off Program. This program is funded by a federal grant through the Department of Energy to support collection events for the proper disposal of lithium-ion batteries. In conjunction with DSNY, the Department of Energy, aims to hold at least 200 mobile collection events annually across all five boroughs, implementing a marketing campaign to reach over a million residents, and collect at least 35,000 pounds of batteries by the project's conclusion. According to DSNY, this program will include no additional headcount as an outside vendor will run it. We hope the City can continue to allocate funding for this program in the long-term.

Conclusion

While the City Council and Administration made strides over the past year prioritizing zero waste bills and policies, they are only as effective as the funding and political support they receive. NYLCV underscores the importance of robust funding for the citywide residential organics program, community composting, and other sanitation initiatives.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.



**Testimony for the
CITY COUNCIL EXECUTIVE BUDGET MEETING
Topic: Aging
May 12, 2025
Committee on Aging, Chair Crystal Hudson**

Submitted by Brianna McKinney, Chief Advancement Officer, Project Guardianship

Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Brianna McKinney, and I serve as the Chief Advancement Officer at Project Guardianship. We are a nonprofit organization that provides person-centered guardianship services to New Yorkers who have no one else—no family, no friends, and no financial means to manage their affairs. We also advocate for reforms that strengthen and modernize New York’s guardianship system and promote less restrictive alternatives whenever possible.

Guardianship plays a vital role in protecting individuals who can no longer safely make decisions for themselves—people with advanced dementia, serious mental illness, intellectual or developmental disabilities, or other conditions that impair decision-making capacity. For these individuals, a guardian can step in to ensure medical treatment is received, finances are managed, benefits are secured, and basic needs like housing and food are met.

But the system that is supposed to deliver this protection is already stretched to its limits.

Despite the legal requirement under Article 81 of the Mental Hygiene Law that every person in need of guardian is entitled to one, courts across New York routinely struggle to fulfill this mandate. Judges report that in one-third of cases statewide—and up to half of cases in New York City—they are unable to appoint a guardian at all, primarily because no one is available, willing, or qualified to serve. Many of those in need are poor, alone, or marginalized, and without a public system in place to support them, they fall through the cracks.

This is the guardianship crisis we are confronting today—and it stands to grow even more severe.

If proposed federal cuts to public benefits and social infrastructure are realized—including Medicaid, Medicare, SNAP, and Social Security—the consequences will be catastrophic. Not just for the individuals who rely on these programs, but for the entire guardianship system. Guardians are not magicians. They cannot conjure affordable housing where none exists. They cannot create access to health care when Medicaid is gutted. They cannot put food on the table when SNAP is slashed. Guardians can make decisions and assemble resources—but they cannot compensate for the dismantling of the very public programs their clients rely on to survive.



And even as we fight these federal threats, New York must take responsibility for addressing its own guardianship crisis. Despite increasing need, the state allocates only \$1 million annually to support guardianship services—an amount that is grossly insufficient and disconnected from the scale of the problem. The burden has been left to nonprofit providers like Project Guardianship, who have stepped in for decades to provide high-quality, trauma-informed, and culturally competent care—often with limited funding and overwhelming caseloads.

This under-resourced system creates cascading impacts across courts, hospitals, and social services. Patients cannot be discharged because no guardian is available. Judges delay proceedings or appoint unqualified guardians out of desperation. Social workers and public administrators are left to navigate complex legal and care decisions without adequate support. Meanwhile, thousands of New Yorkers remain without protection or representation.

And yet, we know that guardianship, when done right, doesn't just improve lives—it saves public money. Project Guardianship's model has been shown to reduce avoidable hospitalizations and long-term nursing home placements, saving approximately \$67,000 per person each year, largely through reduced Medicaid spending. Meeting full demand for nonprofit guardianship services statewide could generate over \$85 million in annual savings.

We were heartened to see the recent passage of New York City Council Resolution 0561, calling for the establishment of a statewide public guardianship system in partnership with experienced nonprofit providers. Unfortunately, New York State did not heed the Council's advice in their FY26 budget. And yet, the need in New York City, where more than 60 percent of all guardianship cases originate, continues to grow.

We urge city leaders to take decisive action now—by allocating funding to expand nonprofit guardianship services, closing the gap for those most at risk, and building a more stable, accountable infrastructure of care. Doing so will not only meet urgent needs but reinforce the state's commitment to justice, dignity, and safety for our most vulnerable neighbors.

Project Guardianship commends Chair Crystal Hudson and the Aging Committee for their dedication to addressing the needs of New York's older and disabled populations. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to protecting our most vulnerable residents.

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May 5, 2025

Good afternoon, esteemed members of this Committee on Finance hearing,

We are honored to be here today representing our President and CEO – Dr. Anderson Torres of **Regional Aid for Interim Needs, Inc., also known as R.A.I.N.**, an organization that has proudly served the older adult community along with those in Home Care since **1964**. It is our privilege to continue this essential work. Our dedicated staff reflects the diverse communities we serve, and we are humbled to carry forward the legacy of our late founder, **Beatrice Castiglia-Catullo**, affectionately remembered as “Bea.”

Our **13+ Older Adult Centers** are more than facilities—they are lifelines. Many of our members describe them as their “home away from home,” where they find friendship, connection, and purpose. In these centers, older adults reduce feelings of **isolation, depression, and anxiety** by engaging in meaningful activities and building supportive social networks.

We live in a society that too often overlooks the needs of older adults. Today, we **appeal to you** to stand with us in promoting **equity and age inclusivity and FUND our Older Adult Centers**. We need a city that works **for all ages**, integrating care in a way that honors every stage of life.

You may ask: **What does that look like?**

We answer: It looks like **a model that engages, invites, and empowers older adults**. A model that bridges generations and amplifies the message that **seasoned New Yorkers are vital contributors to our communities**.

Our Older Adult Centers are not passive spaces—they are interactive hubs of **cognitive stimulation, creativity, and empowerment**. They also provide spaces where risk factors are assessed on a regular basis. Through diverse programming, we challenge the mind, encourage lifelong learning, and promote mental agility. We are a **community of collected voices**, with lived experiences that enable us to mentor others and **thrive through inclusion**.

Our thoughts matter. Our contributions matter. In times of need, you will find many of our older adults continuing to serve as **pillars of their families and communities**. It is essential that we are **seen, heard, and considered** in policy decisions.

We thank the champions in your professional networks who have already advocated for programs that support our work. But today, we ask you to reflect:

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- **What is essential for an older adult to truly thrive in New York City?**
- **Who is the older adult we serve?**

At R.A.I.N., we create **spaces that honor the individual's story and listen to their needs**. Without these centers, the health and well-being of older adults would decline—and that would ultimately impact the city's health care system and financial stability. Socialization is not a luxury—it is a critical component of health. Without it, the city will see rising levels of **illness, hospitalizations, and costs**.

Every day, our centers teach older adults the importance of staying active, eating well, and nurturing **mind, body, and spirit**. Today, we ask you: **What would you want for your own parent or grandparent or yourselves at this stage in life?**

We are grateful to those who continue to advocate for policies that support funding of older adult programs and uplift those who have paved the way for us all.

And finally, we must challenge outdated stereotypes of Older Adult Centers as places where people simply sit all day. The older adults we serve are **engaged, active citizens**—they **vote, advocate, embrace technology, improve their health, and contribute meaningfully to society**. They want to thrive. But they can only do so if we continue to invest in an integrated community model of care that promotes both cognitive and physical well-being.

That's why your support—and more importantly, your **FUNDING—is critical now more than ever**. Without sustained and increased funding for Older Adult Centers, we risk unraveling the very safety net that keeps thousands of older New Yorkers healthy, engaged, and independent. The same ones you have FUNDED in the past.

We urge you to champion this cause, to secure the funding resources that will allow us to continue this vital work, and to ensure that older adults in our city are not left behind.

Your investment today is an investment in the health, dignity, and future of New York City.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anderson Torres', with a stylized, flowing script.

Anderson Torres, PhD, LCSW-R
President and CEO

Testimony

New York City Council Committee on Aging

Executive Budget Hearing

May 12th 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and members of the New York City Council Committee on Aging. My name is Bryan Ellicott-Cook (They/He), and I serve as the Director of Government Relations at SAGE—the nation’s oldest and largest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ older adults.

Since our founding in 1978, SAGE has been a tireless advocate for LGBTQ+ elders, fighting for policies and programs that enable them to age with dignity, security, and support. Through national advocacy and local direct services, SAGE has remained at the forefront of efforts to combat social isolation, housing insecurity, and healthcare disparities affecting our communities.

For several months, SAGE joined our partners in the aging sector led by LiveOn NY to advocate for a city budget that truly meets the needs of older adults. While we are relieved that the Mayor’s Executive Budget addresses the \$102 million fiscal cliff, it still falls significantly short of the investment required to ensure that all older New Yorkers—including LGBTQ+ elders—can age with the dignity, respect, and resources they deserve.

Aging presents challenges for many, including social isolation and declining income. For LGBTQ+ older adults—who have endured a lifetime of stigma and discrimination based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity—these challenges are even more profound. They are more likely to face financial hardship and health disparities, rooted in systemic discrimination. This has led to unequal access to care, disparate health outcomes, and housing instability.

That is why SAGE stands in strong support of *Age Strong New York’s* call for a \$2.3 billion transformative investment in the city’s aging services system. This bold investment is essential to ensuring that older New Yorkers—including LGBTQ+ elders—can age safely in their homes and communities.

In the midst of a rising tide of anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and policies from Washington, many LGBTQ+ older adults live in fear and uncertainty about their rights, healthcare, and overall well-being. For thousands of our City’s queer elders, SAGE is a vital source of support—providing essential services, advocacy, and a welcoming

community to ensure they are not left to navigate these challenges alone. To meet this growing need, we are seeking increased support to serve this important and often invisible population.

LGBTQ+ elders are frequently isolated, disconnected from services, and without the support of traditional biological family structures. They are far more likely to live alone and less likely to rely on family members for caregiving. In fact, 25% of SAGE's constituents report having no one to call in an emergency. Because of these limited support networks, LGBTQ+ older adults rely heavily on trusted community-based services—but often remain wary of mainstream providers due to historical and ongoing mistreatment. SAGE bridges this gap through culturally competent care, building trust and community for LGBTQ+ elders in New York City.

Our SAGE Centers serve as a crucial safety net, especially for LGBTQ+ elders and older adults aging with HIV. Through these centers, we provide life-enhancing programs that reduce isolation and increase access to services, including benefits counseling, legal and financial assistance, health and wellness programs, support groups, educational workshops, and nutritious meals.

SAGE also respectfully submits the following FY26 funding requests to continue and expand our essential services:

- **\$1,255,000** under the Council Initiative *LGBTQIA+ Older Adult Services in Every Borough*, to support our five SAGE Centers. These funds sustain more than 300 programs per week—both virtual and in-person—for over 5,000 LGBTQ+ and HIV-affected older New Yorkers. We seek an enhancement this year to launch *Know Your Rights* initiatives and expand training programs for staff and participants.
- **\$250,000** from the LGBTQIA+ Caucus, to provide LGBTQIA+-affirming and HIV-competent care management for individuals 60+ (or 50+ if transgender, a veteran, or living with HIV), including benefits enrollment, legal referrals, counseling, caregiving support, and crisis intervention.
- **\$100,000** through the Geriatric Mental Health Initiative, to provide mental health care for frail, homebound LGBTQ+ elders and older adults with HIV—including home visits, screenings, support groups, and referrals.
- **\$100,000** through the *Citywide Initiative of Legal Services for Veterans*, to support **SAGEVets**—New York City's only program dedicated to older LGBTQ+ veterans—helping them access VA benefits, wellness services, and discharge upgrades.
- **\$36,868** through the *Senior Centers Program and Enhancement Initiative*, to support care management at SAGE Centers, including legal aid, counseling, crisis intervention, and friendly visiting for isolated elders.

To continue this critical work, we urge the City to prioritize the following in the Executive Budget:

- **\$500 Million for Older Adult Centers (OACs) – State of Good Repair:** Many OACs are in serious disrepair after decades of underinvestment. LGBTQ+ elders depend on these spaces for safety and community. This funding is essential to keep them accessible, welcoming, and open.

- **\$44 Million for Expanded Case Management:** An increase in case management funding is needed to hire more staff, reduce caseloads, and ensure that isolated and vulnerable older adults receive the care and coordination they deserve.
- **\$78 Million for Nutritional Support:**
We support a \$57 million increase to address rising food costs and staff shortages for congregate meals, along with an additional \$21 million to fully fund weekend meals for homebound older adults—many of whom are LGBTQ+ individuals facing food insecurity.

In closing, LGBTQ+ elders have contributed greatly to our city and our movement. We urge the Council to continue to make the investments necessary to ensure that every older New Yorker has access to the care and community they need.

Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to New York's aging population.



2025 Save Our Compost City Council Budget Brief

THANK YOU CITY COUNCIL FOR SUPPORTING COMMUNITY COMPOSTING! **LET'S MAKE IT HAPPEN AGAIN!**

Community composting is a critical component of a just and sustainable waste management system, reducing landfill waste and greenhouse gas emissions, creating green jobs, supporting curbside collection, amending soils, and strengthening local food systems. The Save Our Compost Coalition advocates for restoring and expanding funding for community composting programs in New York City, ensuring that composting remains accessible, equitable, and integrated into broader climate resilience efforts.

WE ARE ADVOCATING FOR THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL TO ALLOCATE \$11.4 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY COMPOSTING PROGRAMS.

Last year, the Council stepped up to reinstate essential funding to community composting organizations, recognizing the vital role they play in waste reduction, climate resilience, and green job creation. We urge the Council to once again protect and sustain these programs, ensuring that New Yorkers continue to have access to community-driven composting solutions that benefit both people and the environment.

Learn more about

[The New York City Community Compost Network](https://nyccommunitycompostnetwork.org)

nyccommunitycompostnetwork.org

Learn more about

[NYC Save Our Compost Coalition](https://saveourcompost.org)

saveourcompost.org

Read the

[Letter of Support from 60+ organizations](#)

Read the

[Letter of Support from four borough-based Solid Waste Advisory Boards \(SWABs\)](#)

Learn more about the organizations' objectives, accomplishments, and detailed funding request:

[NYC Community Composting Network Fiscal Year 26 Funding Proposal](#)



The New York City Community Composting Network

Organization	Amount requesting (Fiscal Year 2026)	Contact
Astoria Pug	\$15,000	Caren Tedesco Cardoso caren@astoriapug.org
Big Initiatives Incorporated d/b/a Big Reuse	\$1,400,000	Justin Green justin@bigreuse.org
BK ROT	\$500,000	Nora Tjossem nora@bkrot.org
Bronx River Alliance	\$75,000	Siddhartha Sanchez development@bronxriver.org
Cafeteria Culture	\$1,000,000	Atsuko Quirk atsuko@cafeteriaculture.org
Center for Zero Waste Design a project of the Fund for the City of New York	\$50,000	Clare Mifflin clare@centerforzerowastedesign.org
Earth Matter NY Inc	\$1,500,000.00	Marisa DeDominicis marisa@earthmatter.org
East New York Farms! / Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation	\$150,000	Sra Feigelman sraf@cypresshills.org
Green City Force-Compost Power	\$1,400,000	Domingo Morales dmorales@compostpowernyc.org
GreenFeen Organix	\$275,000	Dior St. Hillaire dior@greenfeenorganix.com
Lower East Side Ecology Center	\$3,529,274	Christine Datz-Romero christine@lesecologycenter.org
		Renee Crowley renee@lesecologycenter.org
Queens Botanical Garden	\$550,000	Lou Reyes lreyes@queensbotanical.org
Red Hook Farms / Red Hook Initiative	\$150,000	Saara Nafici saara@rhicenter.org
Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden	\$450,000	Susannah Abbate sabbate@snug-harbor.org
The Brotherhood Sister Sol	\$200,000	Juanita Secor js@brotherhood-sistersol.org
The New York Botanical Garden	\$100,000	Angel Hernandez ahernandez@nybg.org
		Pam Alvarez palvarez@nybg.org
Uptown & Boogie Healthy Project Inc	\$10,000	Judith Desire ubhp@ubhealthyproject.org
TOTAL:	\$11,354,274.00	



**NYC Council Joint Hearing
Committee on Finance
Committee on Aging**

**Testimony from Selfhelp Community Services
May 12, 2025**

Thank you to the members of the Committee of Finance jointly with the Committee on Aging for the opportunity to submit testimony related to the Executive Budget.

About Selfhelp Community Services

Selfhelp is a home and community-based nonprofit that provides critical support to over 25,000 older adults. Our services include home care, community-based programs, and affordable housing, allowing older New Yorkers to age in place with dignity and independence. For almost nine decades, we have proudly served as a safety net for Holocaust survivors, immigrants, and low-income older adults, who rely on home and community-based programs funded in part by federal funds funneled through state and city budgets.

AgeStrong

We support the AgeStrong multiyear campaign to fully fund our aging services system and support new programs to meet new needs, including the recommendations below.

Recommendations

- **\$500 Million for OAC State of Good Repair:** Older Adult Centers need significant capital investment, including our own Latimer Gardens OAC which is in Latimer Gardens NYCHA. We support a onetime \$500 million investment in the OAC network as well as a \$5 million emergency repair fund from council discretionary funds.
- **\$44 Million for Expanded Case Management:** There is a critical need for a \$44 million dollar baselined increase in Case Management contracts, which would add 2 case managers and 1 intake staff to each contract.
- **\$78 Million for Nutritional Support:** There is an essential need for an investment in nutrition programs including \$57 million for OAC congregate meals and \$21 million to provide fully funded weekend meals to home delivered meals recipients.

Impact of Federal Funding on City Contracts

As was discussed, during the May 12th hearing, a reduction in federal aid to New York State could ripple through human services programs in New York City. According to a [January report from the NYS Comptroller](#), there are 1.43 million people 65 and older living in NYC with 21.5% of this population living in poverty. If federal funding is scaled back or delayed, these reductions will compound existing challenges and jeopardize the services that allow our city's older adults to age with dignity.



Federal funding plays an indispensable role in sustaining essential services for NYC's older adults. Programs under the Older Americans Act, administered through the Administration for Community Living (ACL) within the Department of Health and Human Services, provide the resources needed to fund Older Adult Centers, home-delivered meals, transportation services, and caregiver support. However, with the recent dismantling of ACL and the rapidly shifting federal landscape, we face uncertainties regarding the continued availability of these funds and continuity of services.

Medicaid is also a critical lifeline for the community we serve at Selfhelp. Many older adults depend on it for essential healthcare and long-term care, especially home care services that enable them to age with independence in their own home. Beyond direct care, Medicaid supports critical programs like transportation and prescription assistance, which are vital for maintaining their health, independence, and overall quality of life. For countless older New Yorkers, Medicaid is not just a program but a pillar of security and well-being.

Recommendations

To address these challenges, we join the chorus of voices from the human services sector to respectfully urge The City to take the following actions:

1. **Expedite Payments for City Contracts** to address delays to human services providers. Expediting payments will provide a safeguard to ensure providers can continue delivering essential services without interruptions.
2. **Strategic Federal Funding Drawdown**
The City should develop a plan for a strategic and expedited drawdown of federal funding that it receives, prioritizing close coordination and communication with human services nonprofit partners. This will allow providers to better prepare for funding shifts and maintain continuity of care.
3. **City-State Coordination of Federal Aid Strategies**
The City and State must work together in a comprehensive, preemptive manner to develop counter-strategies for federal cuts to human services funding. Proactive collaboration is critical to mitigating the impact of these anticipated changes, ensuring that older adults and other vulnerable populations are not left behind.

Conclusion

While we advocate for increased funding, we are appreciative of current investments in programs to serve older adults. These programs not only allow older New Yorkers to age with dignity but serve as a foundational component of our city's human services network.

Selfhelp Community Services remains a committed partner in working with The City to preserve the programs and services that hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers rely on every day.

Submitted by Katie Foley, Managing Director, Selfhelp Community Services
kfoley@selfhelp.net



**Testimony to the New York City Council City Council
Committee on Finance and Sanitation**

May 12, 2025

Good afternoon. My name is Carina Kaufman-Gutierrez and I am the Deputy Director at the Street Vendor Project. I would like to thank Chair Brannan and Abreu for the opportunity to testify today, specifically on street vendor enforcement.

Just last week, this council held a public hearing on legislation that will overhaul the dysfunctional status quo of street vending, allowing our city's smallest businesses to grow within a regulated, predictable, and enforceable system that bolsters the city's business and hospitality sector overall. During that hearing, DSNY testified about DSNY's role as the lead agency for coordinating enforcement of street vending rules. Additionally, when asked how passing Intro 431 would impact their work, DSNY testified that their interactions with licensed vendors are far more productive than our interactions with unlicensed vendors, in terms of actually addressing. I highlight these remarks to bring this to the council's attention, because I encourage the council that if they actually want to address compliance, to move forward with urgency on Intro 431.

In terms of the current situation – Perhaps no industry in New York City faces enforcement from as many agencies and departments as street vending, at least seven total. DSNY is the lead agency, however there are at least 7 city agencies that play a role in enforcement -NYPD, DSNY police, Parks enforcement patrol, DOHMH, DCWP, Parks, FDNY, DEP.

In 2024 DSNY conducted more confiscations than tickets: 4,323 versus 4,144, respectively. This ticketing is “costly and ineffective,” – researchers with Cornell University found DSNY operates at a nearly \$21 loss per \$1 recouped.¹

The amount of summons issued, both civil and criminal - just keeps climbing. Despite DSNY as the lead agency, NYPD was the agency that issued the highest number of summonses in 2024,

¹ Wolf, Andrew B., and Dylan M. Hatch. 2025, *Cornell University, ILR Worker Institute*, <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/a6ba4425-d925-4750-9561-d7303b7bddc1/content>. *Data compiled from the New York City Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH) for civil summons and NYPD Criminal Court data for criminal summons to examine the patterns of tickets issued for street vending.*

9,376 total, and this was five times higher than in 2019 when the agency was **actually** the agency in charge of vendor enforcement.² This was also twice as many as in 2023, when the police issued about 4,213 tickets to vendors. The NYPD issued 2,037 criminal summonses to street vendors in 2024 — far surpassing the 1,244 it gave out in all of 2023, a nearly 64% increase.³

The city council has proposed \$7.7 million to the vendor enforcement, more than double the resources the office has now, and yet NOTHING for vendor education or support.

And as long as the current outdated vending system is in place, this council is putting street vendors at risk of interactions with local law enforcement. Sanitation Police uniforms look exactly like those of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE.

Constant enforcement of the inequitable laws means nothing but keeping these communities in a vicious circle of poverty. They can't survive, and they're not allowed to follow the law. Everybody is losing, we're losing on creating opportunities, creating thousands of jobs, generating hundreds of millions of dollars in the local economy, and millions more in taxes.

Street vending has been an economic pathway for small businesses since New York City was founded. For far too long the City has placed insurmountable barriers in allowing these businesses to thrive, instead prioritizing strict enforcement and criminalization.

Sincerely,

Carina Kaufman-Gutierrez
Deputy Director
Street Vendor Project
Urban Justice Center

² Parra, D. (2025). "NYC Issued Over 10,000 Street Vendor Tickets, Confiscated Tons of Food in 2024," City Limits, March 18. Accessed March 21, 2025, at <https://citylimits.org/nyc-issued-over-10000-street-vendor-tickets-confiscated-tons-of-food-in-2024/>

³ Chu, Haidee. "NYPD Dragging Many More Vendors to Criminal Court, Data Shows." *THE CITY - NYC News*, 27 Jan. 2025, www.thecity.nyc/2024/02/05/nypd-vendors-criminal-summonses-court-spike/.

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The Samuel J. Tilden Democratic Club resolves to support the Department of Aging's budget of \$550 million. We urge the City Council and Mayor to restore the \$124 million in cuts that is proposed to the Department so as to fully fund services to adult senior centers in New York City.

We further call on Council Member Keith Powers (District 4) and Council Member Carlina Rivera, (District 2), to support a full allocation of \$550 million from the Budget for the Dept. of Aging and not approve any cuts.

Submitted: May 12, 2025

Signature: Michelle D. Winfield 



**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses
Before the New York City Council**

**FY 2025 Executive Budget Hearing: Committee on Aging
Council Member Crystal Hudson, Chair**

**Submitted by Anita Kwok, Policy Analyst
May 12, 2025**

Thank you for convening today's Executive Budget hearing on Aging. United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is a policy and social change organization representing neighborhood settlement houses that reach over 800,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life. A progressive leader for more than 100 years, UNH is stewarding a new era for New York's settlement house movement. We mobilize our members and their communities to advocate for good public policies and promote strong organizations and practices that keep neighborhoods resilient and thriving for all New Yorkers. UNH leads advocacy and partners with our members on a broad range of issues including civic and community engagement, neighborhood affordability, healthy aging, early childhood education, adult literacy, and youth development. We also provide customized professional development and peer learning to build the skills and leadership capabilities of settlement house staff at all levels.

UNH members provide a wide variety of services to over 800,000 older New Yorkers each year by operating programs such as older adult centers (OACs), Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), home delivered meal (HDM) programs, Geriatric Mental Health, case management programs, and others, often funded and contracted by NYC Aging and the City Council. UNH and its settlement house members employ the philosophy that older adults are valued members of our neighborhoods, whose wisdom and experience are important to the fabric of our communities.

This testimony is a follow up and supplement to our [Preliminary Budget testimony](#). We are grateful for the Council's support for aging services by including many of our priorities in their Preliminary Budget response. In the Mayor's Executive Budget released on May 1, we were relieved to see the NYC Aging fiscal cliff cuts restored with an \$81.5 million investment in FY26 and \$75 million in restorations baselined, as well as a restoration of \$23 million in OAC PEG cuts in FY26 and \$37.7 million in the outyears. However, there continues to be growing community needs, an aging population, and ongoing inflation demands – and this budget fails to include any new funds in NYC Aging's budget to address these issues. We urge the Council to fight to restore funding in the FY 2026 Budget, reverse these cuts, and make new investments in the aging services network.

Overview

In FY 2026, UNH urges the City to take the following budget actions to support older New Yorkers:

- Increase food budgets at older adults centers with a \$57 million investment to meet inflation demands for congregate meal services
- Invest \$20.6 million to operationalize Council Member Linda Lee's Intro 770, which requires the city to pay for meals 7 days a week.
- Invest \$44 million for the case management program to help with caseloads and staffing
- Create a recurring capital fund of at least \$5 million for program repairs and renovations
- Restore Council initiatives, including growing the NORC City Council Initiative to \$6.2 million to support nursing services, standalone NORC programs, and additional programmatic support

Congregate Meals

Older adult centers (OACs) are crucial supports for older New Yorkers, offering both in-person and virtual activities, congregate meals, and other essential supports. Settlement houses in UNH's network operate 42 standalone OACs and two network OACs, serving tens of thousands of older adults in these centers.

Rising inflation rates have affected senior meals programs, especially food costs for congregate meals. There has not been an increase to the congregate meals budget in years, since at least the last RFP in 2021 which predated a period of abnormally high inflation. Food costs have reached record highs, placing an immense strain on an already chronically underfunded meal program. And this year, despite eggs being a cost-effective source of protein, the food staple has been experiencing shortages and record high costs that are not expected to go down any time soon. Rising food costs have made it increasingly difficult for providers to provide culturally-competent and nutritious meals. Food insecurity remains high among older adults, and anything the City can do to address these needs should be embraced.

The City must ensure inflation costs are included annually in future budgets for congregate meals at OACs. We reiterate our call from the Preliminary Budget testimony for the City to **increase food budgets at older adult centers with a \$57 million investment in FY26 to meet inflation demands for congregate meal services**, which includes restoring the \$7 million PEG cut to older adult center congregate meals from the FY24 Adopted Budget and including at least \$50 million to cover inflation costs. This \$57 million figure is consistent with an analysis of the on-the-ground needs from UNH and our advocacy partners. In addition, we continue to support Intro 237 by Council Member Hudson to allow all OACs to provide grab and go meals if they want to, which would help alleviate food insecurity while providing flexible options for older adults who do not feel comfortable eating in public due to public health concerns.

This week, UNH is releasing a report on the impact of congregate meal programs on older adult centers and more details about cost increases, highlighting the urgent need to invest \$57 million in this year's budget. We look forward to sharing this report with the Council.

Home Delivered Meals

Nonprofit home delivered meals (HDM) providers deliver a daily nutritious meal to homebound older adults who are unable to prepare their own food, while also providing case management and regular in-person wellness checks for those at risk of social isolation. Eight UNH members currently provide home delivered meals in their communities, either as lead contractors or subcontractors. The HDM program recently underwent a new procurement that began last fall. Several private vendors were selected to carry out this work for the first time instead of nonprofits, and we are monitoring the impact of this change and whether meal reimbursement rates are appropriate. We deeply appreciate the Council's support over the last few years in securing funding for a higher reimbursement rate for the HDM program. Since 2021, the per-meal reimbursement rate has increased from \$9.58 to \$13.78 per meal. This is a significant and essential improvement.

Older adult hunger is at a crisis level. For many homebound older adults, the HDM program is the only food they are receiving for all of their nutritional needs, and they will stretch the meal to last all day. We need to look toward expanding this system and providing more meals to those who need them. We continue to call for a **\$20.6 million investment to operationalize Council Member Lee's Intro 770, which requires the City to pay for meals 7 days a week.** Currently, weekend and holiday home-delivered meals are provided through a public-private partnership with Citymeals on Wheels. Intro 770 shifts the responsibility from Citymeals on Wheels to regular NYC Aging home-delivered meal contracts, allowing Citymeals to provide additional meals per day. Expanding home delivered meals is critical to addressing food insecurity among older adults and ensuring homebound seniors receive nutritious meals.

Case Management

Case Management Agencies refer older adults to benefits and services, including to the home delivered meals program. The Case Management program is overburdened and in need of additional case managers and intake staff to serve the community well. According to the Preliminary Mayor's Management Report from January 2025, in the first four months of Fiscal Year 2025, case managers had a four percent decrease in clients and a three percent increase in hours from the same period in Fiscal Year 2024. Providers report that older adults experiencing dementia and other mental illnesses are sharply on the rise, and case managers must spend additional hours on these higher needs clients. Further, new Case Management contracts have made significant changes to the landscape, including reducing intake staff and placing this responsibility on case managers.

We thank the Council for negotiating for additional funds for this program in the last several budgets, and this led to a restoration of \$2 million for this program in the Executive Budget. However, this year we encourage a deeper investment. In FY26, **we urge the City to invest \$44 million to expand the case management program to allow for more comprehensive service to New Yorkers.** Case Management Agencies on average need two case managers per case management contract, one intake staff member, and one case manager in half of all older adult centers to create a program that can keep talent and serve the community well. This will allow high-need cases to be handled effectively.

Invest in Capital Needs

NYC Aging-funded programs often face major difficulties with aging buildings and equipment upkeep. Systemwide needs include HVAC repairs, accessibility upgrades, technology systems, kitchen equipment, and more. Providers frequently express problems with leaks and flooding after storms, and note that these are becoming more frequent as climate change accelerates the rate and intensity of weather-related disasters.

Thank you to the Council for including \$50 million in its Preliminary Budget response for capital needs in aging services programs, echoing our request for a recurring capital fund in this amount each year for NYC Aging. These funds play an important role in high-quality service provision by keeping buildings and equipment in a state of good repair, and programs have a number of long-standing capital needs that continue to grow. These issues vary by provider and include building repairs, renovations, kitchen equipment, HVAC units, vehicle repairs and replacements, and more. There is especially a need for additional HDM vans for contractors and subcontractors. We appreciate the Council's support in pushing for these investments.

Restore Council Aging Initiatives

UNH greatly appreciates the Council's long-standing support for aging through funding invested in Citywide Initiatives, which provide enormous support for older adults and the programs that support them. Aging in particular benefits from a large share of Council funding that the network relies on to carry out essential services, with initiatives such as Support Our Older Adults, NORCs, Older Adult Clubs for Immigrant Populations, and Older Adult Clubs, Programs & Enhancements. Some Council funds support entire programs that do not have other state or city contracts, and others pay for entire staff lines, or give programs the flexibility to hire consultants and fill programmatic gaps.

In FY 2026, the Council must restore funding for all of its Citywide Initiatives for aging to at least FY 2025 levels, representing a total of \$35.7 million. Two years ago, several of the programs that were fully supported by the Council for many years received baselined contracts through the NYC Aging OAC/NORC procurement. As a result, some of the awards shifted around, but we continue to advocate that the total investment remain in place given the enormous value of these funds to the aging network.

Specifically this year, we support restorations as follows:

- Access to Critical Services for Older Adults - \$1,180,000
- Borough Presidents' Discretionary Funding Restoration - \$1,129,774
- Case Management - \$2,000,000
- Elder Abuse Prevention Programs - \$335,000
- Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivors - \$4,250,000
- Information and Referral Services - \$407,811
- LGBTQIA+ Older Adult Services in Every Borough - \$1,755,000
- Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) - increase to \$6,200,000
- Older Adult Clubs for Immigrant Populations - \$1,500,000
- Older Adult Clubs, Programs, and Enhancements - \$4,376,670
- Social Adult Day Care - \$1,505,556
- Support Our Older Adults - \$7,650,000
- DOHMH Geriatric Mental Health Initiative - \$3,405,540

The City Council NORC initiative provides essential supplemental funding for programs, and also independently funds several NORCs that do not have separate City contracts. For the last several years, this funding has included support for nursing services in NYC Aging-contracted NORCs. This funding fills a gap left by the reduction of pro-bono nursing services that are required by NORC contracts. The nursing funding is essential and providers rely on this support. This year, the Council needs to account for the rise in the standard hourly rate to hire nurses to \$100 per hour (this rate was \$85 per hour when the Council began providing these funds in 2019). Council funding also goes to some State-contracted Neighborhood NORCs, and serves as a required matching fund grant for these contracts that providers rely on. Because of the Council's enthusiasm for the NORC program, we have been able to bring resources and attention to the needs of a large and rapidly growing older adult population. We reiterate our ask for the City Council to **grow the NORC City Council Initiative to \$6.2 million to support nursing services, standalone NORC programs, and additional programmatic support in FY26**. In addition, we urge NYC Aging to absorb the part of the Council's NORC initiative that goes toward nursing, to ensure programs can stably provide nursing services and Council funds can continue to enhance the NORC program.

Looking ahead, UNH remains concerned about the remaining \$6.5 million outyear cut from the fiscal cliff. It is possible this could result in cuts through a future RFP, which NYC Aging has communicated is expected early next year. We thank the Council for all of its support for aging and urge them to fight for these essential enhancements in FY26.

Thank you for your time. To follow up, please contact me at akwok@unhny.org.

Testimony of VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget Hearings –
Department for the Aging
Monday, May 12, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Mark Bones, and I am here on behalf of VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. VISIONS is a 99-year-old nonprofit organization dedicated to serving New Yorkers who are blind or visually impaired, free of charge. Last year alone, we supported over 7,000 individuals, nearly half of whom are 60 years of age or older. Two-thirds of those we serve are low-income. Our vision is simple yet profound: to help everyone see what is possible.

An estimated 80,000 seniors over the age of 65 are living with blindness in New York City. Through strong collaboration with a citywide network of partners and community stakeholders, we're able to identify and support these individuals with services that make a lasting difference. Our long-standing partnership with the Department for the Aging (DFTA) has been instrumental in expanding vital programs such as our Older Adult Center (OAC), which now serves over 800 members, and our Caregiver Support Program, which has enrolled more than 750 participants. We are deeply grateful for DFTA's continued partnership and dedication to supporting some of our city's most vulnerable residents. VISIONS continues to make a profound impact in the lives of older adults and caregivers across NYC by offering essential social services—including accessible health and wellness programs, vision rehabilitation, support groups, nutritious meals, and both community-based and in-home support. These efforts help ensure that older adults remain safe, independent, and socially connected. Last year, 83% of a random sample of OAC participants reported improved overall life satisfaction as a result of their involvement with the center.

However, significant gaps remain, and we urge the city budget to reflect and focus attention on the following priorities:

1. **Accessibility:** Many city materials—including forms, flyers, and websites—remain inaccessible to our blind and visually impaired clients. We recommend that all public communications and training be available in

accessible formats such as braille, large print, and screen-reader-friendly digital versions.

2. **Technology & Social Connection:** Isolation remains a serious issue among older adults. VISIONS provides high-demand adaptive technology training that allows seniors to participate in virtual classes and stay connected with family and volunteers. We urge investment in tablets and training, including intergenerational programs where students assist seniors with technology use. Keeping older adults engaged shows a reduction in medical expenses (i.e. reduction in falls).
3. **Caregiver Support:** Caregivers bear an immense burden. Increased funding for respite services would provide vital relief to those caring for visually impaired older adults.
4. **Health & Nutrition:** Vision loss and diabetes are closely linked. We request expanded nutrition counseling programs tailored to the needs of those managing diabetes and pre-diabetes.
5. **Affordable Home Care:** Seniors just above the Medicaid threshold often cannot afford quality home health aides. The EISEP program must be expanded to address long waitlists and ensure trusted, culturally competent care.
6. **Legal Assistance:** Access to legal services is critical for blind seniors navigating pooled trusts and Medicaid eligibility. The City should invest in expanding free or low-cost legal resources beyond current providers.
7. **Mental Health & Social Work:** There is growing need for grief and bereavement counseling and social work services addressing anxiety, isolation, and trauma.
8. **Volunteerism & Employment:** Older adults thrive when given purpose. Supporting volunteer roles and employment opportunities enhances well-being and strengthens community centers.

VISIONS is proud to be a trusted partner of DFTA. But as our city demographically ages and we are clearly seeing increasing poverty and vulnerability among our senior and disabled communities, we must act. We echo the AgeStrong NYC Campaign's call for a multi-year, \$2.3 billion investment in aging services—including \$500 million for Older Adult Center repairs, \$44 million for case management, and \$78 million for nutritional support. These are not luxuries—they are lifelines. **We thank you for your commitment and look forward to continuing this vital partnership!**

Visiting Neighbors' Testimony
New York City Council's Committee on Aging
Hearing May 12th, 2025

My name is Dr. Cynthia Maurer, and I am the Executive Director of **Visiting Neighbors**. Thank you for the opportunity to submit Testimony. We are grateful to the *NYC Council* and *The Aging Committee* for your support of our vital programs in our current fiscal year and we need you to continue that support in 2026, as we have not stopped working and have continued to support our older and frailer neighbors. We are now helping second and third generation clients and continue to be in the vanguard.

Our mission:

This Spring marks Visiting Neighbors' 53rd year of providing life-enhancing and essential support services enabling individuals age 60+ to remain independent and safe in their own homes and a vital part of the New York City Community. Through programs of "neighbors helping older neighbors," volunteers, supported by Visiting Neighbors' professional staff, help older adults alleviate loneliness and isolation, provide mental stimulation and emotional security, share information about wellness and health related concerns, have important conversations on many important and difficult topics, and encourage physical independence and quality of life at home. Visiting Neighbors champions the power of the volunteer and encourages interdependence so that mutual learning and understanding brings generations together to share life experiences and gain respect for each individual's uniqueness.

The organization promotes a positive acceptance of life after sixty and the value of the elderly in society. Visiting Neighbors' main programs; are *Health Management/ Health Advocacy/Health, and Wellness (Physical, Mental and Emotional) Programs, Friendly Visiting, Shop & Escort, Therapeutic Walking, Telephone Reassurance, Intergenerational Friendship and Learning, Case Assistance, Caregiver Support, Remembering Special Occasions, and Information & Referral.*

There are no income eligibility requirements, nor a fee for services.

Our clients:

- Visiting Neighbors' clients are 60 – Centenarian plus (Currently our oldest client is 107)
- 75% of our clients are over 80 and 33% are over 90.
- Thirty-three clients are over 100.
- Our clients tend to be frail, with one or more ailments
- 77% are female and 22% are male and 1% define themselves as non-binary or other,
- 96% live alone,
- We now have second and third generation legacy clients.
- We serve a diverse group of individuals who want to age-in-place, most of whom live on fixed incomes and can't afford to pay for help (98% of our clients can neither pay for private services, nor are eligible for Medicaid).

Because of our NYC Council's support Visiting Neighbors has had the following Outcomes:

1. Many older adults, when they first engage with us, express they feel overlooked, forgotten and/or have low self-esteem. They learn with Visiting Neighbors' Friendly Visitors they do not have to be alone and will have someone they can turn to and will be a lot less lonely. Seniors have someone safe, supportive, and empathetic to talk with/vent their frustrations to. We also give older adults an opportunity to tell their life stories and a chance to be heard, seen and feel understood. Our volunteers (ages 14-92) are gaining understanding and empathy

towards their new older friend(s) and the older adults' self-esteem is enhanced from having an active interested listener.

2. Older adults became better informed on a variety of wellness issues, and we got them asking more questions. Older adults had better communication with their health professionals. We also encourage them not to be intimidated and speak up.
3. Older adults have been getting to and from their health care appointments, procedures, vaccinations, and treatments with the assistance of a trained volunteer escort by their side who will serve as an advocate when necessary, so they are not ignored.
4. We also use an in-home wellness visit as an opportunity to update seniors' current emergency contact and primary care physician and keep lists of key info (i.e., medication list, amounts, dosage, and time) readily handy.
5. We provide safety-in-home checks of senior's dwellings to help older adults avoid senseless accidents.
6. Older adults have been getting their shopping and errands done. When an older adult comes home from a hospital stay, we check in on them to make sure they have what they need. Volunteers escort older adults who want to vote in person. Volunteers will go shopping or do an errand either with or for a senior depending on the seniors' needs, desires, circumstances or based on weather.
7. We share vital information about good nutrition, super foods, the importance of adhering to their prescribed diet(s) i.e., diabetes, monitoring salt intake, staying hydrated and access to healthy food and essential supplies. We also share information on community activities that would benefit them, i.e. health fairs, shredding events, free screenings, and giveaways etc.
8. Older adults have been taking more (and longer) healthy walks safely outside accompanied by a trained volunteer or two. Quite a few seniors have become power walkers because of the more frequent walking. We get seniors moving more (and volunteers too are taking more steps).
9. Older adults are remembered on special occasions like birthdays & holidays, so they feel included and connected to others.
10. Hundreds of older adults have received direct services and have described feeling emotionally, mentally, and physically supported by Visiting Neighbors and reported feeling empowered, so that they have been able to retain or re-establish their sense of self-worth.
11. Our Intergenerational activities/projects foster respectful, enjoyable, informative and meaningful conversations and friendly relations are established between two generations. Our young students gain respect for the life experiences of the seniors – everything from having common sense to basic knowledge of life and seniors learn that they are still relevant.
12. We advocate older adult issues to help the public and our respective communities have a greater understanding of seniors' needs in the community, so seniors can age-in-place. *We will continue to help older adults cope with the myriads of changes associated with aging in general, as well as address their specific issues and with the aim of preventing problems from becoming worse or from having disastrous consequences.*

13. Our older adults have been describing feeling better about their life in general. They are learning that knowledge is powerful support (i.e. what one's options are, putting things into perspective and good communication is vital to getting the appropriate and accurate information) and friendships are essential to enhance life's satisfaction and help to better deal with life's stressors. We have older adults expressing that they have experienced more joy and feelings of being loved, appreciated, and valued - volunteers too!
14. Visiting Neighbors' staff assist older adults with questions regarding health care proxy, living will, end-of-life issues and have important and often very difficult conversations.
15. *Once becoming a client, the older adult is usually with us for the remainder of their lives, and we do what we can to enhance the quality of those lives.*
16. We provide information, help older adults stay calm, have every conceivable kind of conversation with them, including having difficult end-of-life discussions, making them feel emotionally supported. We have offered guidance to 1675+ individuals including caregivers and community members who care about their older neighbors.

Just as our older adults need us more than ever, we need your support more than ever!

*We would not be able to do what we do, nor at the level and pace we have been working, without the support of our NY City Council and the Aging Committee Members!! **You in fact - are our heroes!***
We need you to continue to be our champions, so we can continue to succeed as we have for the past 53 years and be here for our seniors moving forward.

Sincerely,
Cynthia Maurer, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Visiting Neighbors, Inc.
3 Washington Square Village, Suite 1F
New York, NY 10012
info@visitingneighbors.org
cmaurervn@aol.com
212-260-6200

New York City Council
Committee on the Aging Joint Hearing with the Committee on Finance
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget Hearings
May 12, 2025

Chair Hudson, Chair Brannan, and Members of the New York City Council Committees on Aging and Finance, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on protecting, preserving, and supporting Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) and Neighborhood NORCs (NNORCs) in New York City. We deeply appreciate your ongoing support, which has enabled VNS Health to provide nursing services to 38 NORCs across the city.

We want to thank the City Council for recommending increased funding to NYC Aging and the Mayor's Office for increasing funding in the recently released Executive Budget. Reductions in funding for programs that support aging, including NORCs, would significantly impact the sustainability, reach, and impact of our services, impeding residents' ability to age in place in New York City.

For 130 years, VNS Health has helped people live, age, and heal where they feel most comfortable — in their homes and communities. As the largest nonprofit home and community-based healthcare provider in New York, VNS Health provides high-quality care to more than 70,000 New York residents each day through a wide range of services, including skilled home care, hospice, long-term care, and behavioral health care.

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities

NORCs were founded with the goal of transforming residential complexes and neighborhoods to meet the needs of older residents, enabling them to remain living independently in their homes, thrive in their communities, and delay hospitalization or nursing home placement. To achieve these goals, NORC programs address both the social service and health needs of NORC residents.

NORC nurses work as part of the NORC interdisciplinary team and provide a comprehensive range of services to support older adults aging in place, including health assessments to determine residents' health status and coordinate required follow-up care, health education on disease prevention and chronic health conditions, and health care advocacy to help residents navigate the healthcare system and access necessary services. In addition to healthcare, NORC nurses provide culturally competent support to address social isolation and mental health issues of residents.

Thanks to continued City Council funding, VNS Health currently provides nursing services to 38 NORCs across New York City, reaching approximately 20,000 older adult residents and addressing more than 40 wide-ranging acute and chronic health care conditions. Our nurses speak English, Spanish, Russian, Mandarin, Cantonese, and French Creole in the first three quarters of Fiscal Year 2025, VNS Health provided 15,635 hours of nursing to older residents.

In addition to these 38 sites, VNS Health also sponsors the Chinatown Neighborhood NORC in Lower Manhattan's Chinatown to help people who are 60 years or older and live in a 24-block area of Chinatown. This program connects hundreds of Chinatown residents to culturally and linguistically competent services and collaborates with more than 40 other community organizations. The Chinatown NNORC team has touched the lives of more than 1,445 community members and continues to connect residents with vital care, community, and resources.

The Future of NORCs

Tens of thousands of older adults face the challenges of aging in place in New York City's NORCs, and these residents often grapple with multiple chronic illnesses that require consistent access to health care and social support. The services are not reimbursable by insurance and our program relies on the funding it receives; budget cuts to programs that support aging could jeopardize long-term sustainability, which further impacts the continuum of home and community-based healthcare services for all older residents.

At the same time, NORC nursing services have also become more expensive. Reflecting higher wages and related costs for our nurses, effective January 1, 2025, VNS Health has increased its nursing rate to allow us to retain and recruit nursing professionals during the current nursing shortage. Our limited increase of \$5 per hour reflects our commitment to our NORC partners and our recognition of the immense importance of NORC nursing. This has resulted in a \$100,000 cost increase to cover our nursing services for current NORCs. It is essential to maintain the current level of nursing at NORC sites to provide consistent health care support and timely connection to providers and resources, in order to avoid unnecessary hospitalizations and ED visits. To sustain the current level of service, we have provided the Council with financial information in our application reflecting this increase for the 2026 fiscal year budget.

We also know that despite reaching 38 sites, there are gaps in service for older adults in New York City. The 65 and older population in New York City was the only age group to see an increase from mid-2020 to mid-2023, and this population's needs will only continue to

grow. Given this increasing number of older adults, VNS Health is receiving more requests to provide nursing services at additional NORCs. To meet the growing demand, we are seeking funding to expand our care to three new sites in 2026.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this crucial issue. VNS Health's mission is to improve the health and well-being of people through high-quality, cost-effective health care in the home and community. Protecting, preserving, and supporting NORCs in New York City is critical to fulfilling our mission, and we urge the City Council to continue this important investment as the NORC program keeps up with the growing population of older adults. To the City Council and NYC Aging, we are here as partners in providing care to older adults and can support on policy, impact analyses, and expanding care to this crucial population. VNS Health looks forward to working with the City to ensure aging communities have the appropriate nursing services and access to the care they deserve.



May 12, 2025

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**Testimony of WE ACT for Environmental Justice
to the New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste
Management and Committee on Finance on May 12, 2025 regarding
Fiscal Year 26 Executive Budget.**

Dear Chair Shuan Abreu and Chair Justin Brannan and Committee on
Sanitation and Solid Waste Management:

WE ACT for Environmental Justice is a community-based organization in Harlem, New York City. We recognize and advocate for community-driven solutions that can remedy the institutionalized harms associated with unjust urban planning policies that have plagued communities of color for generations. WE ACT is also a member of the Save Our Compost NYC coalition – a coalition of New York City organizations working to support and expand community composting to uplift environmental and climate justice.

WE ACT is urging the City Council to reinstate \$11.4 million to community composting programs and composting infrastructure throughout the city by funding organizations a part of the [The New York City Community Composting Network](#) (see chart below).

Last year, the Council stepped up to reinstate this essential funding, recognizing the vital role community composting plays in waste reduction, climate resilience, and green job creation. We urge the Council to once again protect and sustain these programs, ensuring that New Yorkers continue to have access to community-driven composting solutions that benefit both people and the environment.

We know the City Council is dedicated to a greener, cleaner, healthier city for all New Yorkers. And want to invest in the youth – the future of our city. As a city we need to continue to take action on sustainability, combating the climate crisis and reducing the city's emissions. Community composting programs do all of those things and more. There is no other program within The City's budget that positively impacts multiple dimensions of the quality of life of New Yorkers.

Community composting is small by design and efficient and effective in what is designed to do. It provides local green jobs, hands-on education, technical support for hundreds of community gardens, high-quality finished



compost that absorbs storm water, and tangibly connects New Yorkers to community, regenerative agriculture, soil health, circularity, and local resiliency.

Furthermore, it is essential at this particular moment to maintain community composting to create widespread buy-in – as defined by long term sustained participation – for the curbside organics collection program, especially during building compliance period. Community Composting is a fiscally smart and essential path forward.

We want to thank the City Council for their previous support for community composting and we ask that you continue that support!

Sincerely,

Lonnie J. Portis

Acting Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs

lonnie@weact.org

646-866-8720

<u>The New York City Community Composting Network</u>		
Organization	Amount requesting (Fiscal Year 2026)	Contact
Astoria Pug	\$15,000	Caren Tedesco Cardoso caren@astoriapug.org
Big Initiatives Incorporated d/b/a Big Reuse	\$1,400,000	Justin Green justin@bigreuse.org
BK ROT	\$500,000	Nora Tjossem nora@bkrot.org
Bronx River Alliance	\$75,000	Siddhartha Sanchez development@bronxriver.org
Cafeteria Culture	\$1,000,000	Atsuko Quirk atsuko@cafeteriaculture.org
Center for Zero Waste Design a project of the Fund for the City of New York	\$50,000	Clare Mifflin clare@centerforzerowastedesign.org
Earth Matter NY Inc	\$1,500,000.00	Marisa DeDominicis marisa@earthmatter.org
East New York Farms! / Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation	\$150,000	Sra Feigelman sraf@cypresshills.org
Green City Force-Compost Power	\$1,400,000	Domingo Morales dmorales@compostpowernyc.org



[The New York City Community Composting Network](#)

Organization	Amount requesting (Fiscal Year 2026)	Contact
GreenFeen Organix	\$275,000	Dior St. Hillaire dior@greenfeenorganix.com
Lower East Side Ecology Center	\$3,529,274	Christine Datz-Romero christine@leseecologycenter.org
		Renee Crowley renee@leseecologycenter.org
Queens Botanical Garden	\$550,000	Lou Reyes lreyes@queensbotanical.org
Red Hook Farms / Red Hook Initiative	\$150,000	Saara Nafici saara@rhicenter.org
Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden	\$450,000	Susannah Abbate sabbate@snug-harbor.org
The Brotherhood Sister Sol	\$200,000	Juanita Secor js@brotherhood-sistersol.org
The New York Botanical Garden	\$100,000	Angel Hernandez ahernandez@nybg.org
		Pam Alvarez palvarez@nybg.org
Uptown & Boogie Healthy Project Inc	\$10,000	Judith Desire ubhp@ubhealthyproject.org
TOTAL:	\$11,354,274.00	



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New York City Council Committee on Finance and Aging
Chair Brannan and Chair Hudson
Aging Executive Budget Hearing
May 12, 2025

Good afternoon. Thanks Chair Brannon, Chair Hudson and the committee for the opportunity to testify. I'm Eustacia Smith, and I'm Director of Advocacy for West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing. We've provided housing and services for older adults in NYC for nearly 50 years. We also run three centers serving over 1,300 older New Yorkers, providing them with nutritional support, socialization, education and connection to services. Our participants are able to remain stably housed in the community *because* we're able to provide them with a range of services that keep them from falling into emergencies that would displace them.

Our services are essential – sometimes life and death essential – but we can't keep them going without increased funding. Our budget has stayed flat while the cost of food and other operating expenses has gone up dramatically. We have no wiggle room – each increase in cost means we have to cut something essential. Is it the meals that keep our elders from wasting? Is it the case manager who makes sure people can access their benefits? Truthfully, cutting any of it is dangerous.

Here's a real-world example from our Center at the Red Oak on 106th Street, where we serve 150 meals per day. Right now, our refrigerators are broken. It's the third time this year. We don't have the budget to fix them, nor to get new fridges we really need. It is nearly impossible to prepare meals without working refrigerators. Our staff have spent many, many hours figuring out how to work around the broken refrigerators, to still get meals out. That's time when they should be providing services, but can't.

Why do those meals matter? For some participants, the meal at our center may be their only meal of the day, because they don't have money to cover their food and expenses. Malnutrition makes our folks vulnerable to illness, memory loss, and spiraling problems.

Why do those case managers matter? Case management plays a critical role in keeping older adults housed in the community, even as their needs change over time. It prevents people from losing housing. It reduces hospitalizations and limits the need for nursing home care. It's humane, it keeps communities whole, and it keeps public costs down.

Older adults are the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness. They're also simply a fast-growing NYC population, set to grow by 25% by 2040. Yet city funding for older adults is disproportionately low. They're about 13% of the population, yet Aging Services only gets .5% of NYC's budget. We call on our city to scale up investment in older adult services including implementing new funding of:

- \$78 Million for Nutritional Support, with \$57 Million to meet the rising cost of food and \$21 Million to provide additional meal services.
- \$44 Million for Expanded Case Management.
- A \$5 Million 5 year emergency repair discretionary fund for Older Adult Centers that need small scale repairs or equipment replacements.
- \$500 Million for Older Adult Center State of Good Repair

And all of the recommendations that are part of the AgeStrong NYC Campaign.

Thank you.

Eustacia Smith

Director of Advocacy

West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing



Reimagining school cafeterias as climate action hubs where students drive equitable zero-waste solutions: reducing food waste, supporting local composting, and eliminating plastics through science, civic engagement, media, and the arts!

Testimony of Rhonda Keyser, Cafeteria Culture
New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
Budget and Oversight Hearings on the Executive Budget for 2026
May 12, 2025

Good day, Council Members Abreu, Brannan, and Hudson — thank you for the opportunity to speak.

I'm Rhonda Keyser, Cafeteria Culture's Program & Policy Director, and I'm here today to speak in strong support of continued and expanded funding in the FY 2026 Sanitation budget for local composting and compost education.

First, we sincerely thank the Council for supporting the New York City Community Compost Network. This investment has allowed our students to scale up their climate action efforts both inside their cafeterias, and out into their communities.



Thanks to City Council funding, we were able to continue piloting our Mindful Choice Meals program where students reduce school food waste by 35-80% and increase consumption by 15-46%. bring students directly into the composting process. This year, our students began composting their school food scraps at nearby community-run sites operated by Compost Power.

At these sites, students are not just learning about composting — they're doing it. They chop scraps, mix browns, turn tumblers, and see firsthand how what they thought was waste becomes soil. These active local compost sites make composting tangible and real, turning



abstract climate lessons into hands-on climate solutions.

We've also partnered with Red Hook Farms, another City Council-funded organization, to deepen this work. These partnerships prove that with the right infrastructure and support, schools and communities can collaborate to scale up both food waste diversion and environmental education.

Now is the moment to build on this momentum.

To continue to scale up, we want to expand access to local composting infrastructure near more schools — and continue to center students in this work. Our goal is to replicate this model across the city, supporting youth agency to lead food waste reduction efforts and participate in the full cycle of recovering waste as a resource — and reducing it at the source.



Local composting sites don't just process scraps — they build climate literacy, foster community ownership, and spark habits that last a lifetime. With strategic investment, we can bring these benefits to more schools and communities across NYC.

We urge the Council to ensure that the FY 2026 budget includes robust funding to **scale up** both local composting infrastructure and the student-centered education programs that make this work effective, equitable, and lasting.

Thank you for your continued support and for helping us grow a climate-smart future — from the cafeteria to the compost site and beyond.

Sanitation Budget Hearing - May 12, 2025
Testimony from Allison Allen

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on budget needs for DSNY for promoting the mandatory compost program, reuse, waste reduction and diversion overall.

The Mayor's recent decision to pause fines for curbside "composting" appears to be a result of inadequate outreach and education on this much anticipated program that has been in the works for years - without ever having an adequate budget for outreach and education. Surprisingly, the DSNY Commissioner didn't even ask for a budget at today's hearing and apparently has in house resources that can be reallocated to accomplish their goals. That is subject to debate. A detailed marketing budget should be submitted to promote these important programs that, in the end, will allow us to shift waste export costs towards building local infrastructure in support of a more circular and sustainable city.

In order to assess the extent of outreach needed, it would be helpful to get more detailed information on how many complaints were received, that caused the pause, and from who, what are the specifics of the complaints and how is the administration planning to address all of them. Now that DSNY has uniformed staff going door to door, it would also be useful to compile and report, to the council and the public, the feedback they are getting in the field. What lessons are they learning that can be quickly shared with the public to help all the other buildings that need help in order to maximize participation.

The city missed the opportunity to promote the composting containers first as the dedicated bin for food waste before rolling out the overall waste containerization program. Many electeds are quoted in the media talking about how containerization has reduced rat sightings, but they rarely, if ever, mention how rat sightings are also reduced when rat proof compost bins are used.

Organics is the largest part of the waste stream not currently captured (until now). Combined with textile waste, these 2 waste streams alone represent approximately 50% of the total waste we pay to export every year - at a cost of approximately \$250M - half of the \$495M total we paid to export waste in FY25.

It's clear we can potentially reduce waste by 50% by focusing on these 2 waste streams. We need leadership to prioritize and fund this and then look for additional opportunities to reduce waste further by identifying and salvaging the endless supply of valuable reusable items that are thrown away daily, when there are countless individuals in New York City that would be happy to rehome and keep them in circulation - and away from landfills and incinerators. Reuse should be prioritized now as tariffs are projected to increase the cost of consumer products, creating additional hardships for countless New Yorkers. There are tremendous opportunities for reuse in NYC that should be explored and funded now.

This would be a first step toward NYC re-committing to a new zero waste plan. We need to stop kicking the can down the road as every new administration comes out with a plan which is later dismissed or ignored without explanation or a plan to replace it.

This is also especially timely and critical as NYC's Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) will be updated this year. As a member of the MSWAB and as chair of its organics committee, I hope the Council and administration will collaborate with our board and take advantage of the breadth of knowledge we hold as we could provide invaluable assistance in achieving NYC's zero waste goals. We have no more time to waste.

Thank you for your consideration.

Allison Allen

Hello. My name is Andrew and I am a volunteer at the Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn, NY.

I would like to personally thank all the council people, and especially Councilwoman Rita Joseph, who stood by and fought on the side of community composting when the Administration cut most funding.

I am writing to you today because I believe that community composting should be included in the federal budget and request that \$11.5 million be reinstated to support this important network of organizations and countless individuals who believe in community solutions and organic food waste management.

Please vote to restore all funding to community composting. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Andrew Tsao

Hello! My name is Asher Cohen and I am a volunteer at the Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn, NY.

I would like to personally thank all the council people, and especially Councilwoman Rita Joseph, who stood by and fought on the side of community composting when the Administration cut most funding.

I am writing to you today because I believe that community composting should be included in the federal budget and request that \$11.5 million be reinstated to support this important network of organizations and countless individuals who believe in community solutions and organic food waste management.

Working with compost at Maple Street has made me more aware of the world and my place in it. I have met incredible, kind and caring people through compost as well as had fantastic experiences connecting with my neighborhood community. Composting does not just help our environment, it helps our neighborhoods and communities.

Please vote to restore all funding to community composting. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Asher Cohen

Hearing Testimony

Committee on Finance (joint with sanitation) @ May 12, 2025 @ 10am

Submitted: May 15, 2025 12:30pm

Dear City Council and Budget Committee Members,

Community composting is a bedrock of urban sustainability because it touches on multiple critical social-ecological infrastructures at once and in ways no other programming can: waste, soils, education, knowledge production, public enthusiasm and participation, local green jobs, healthy public green spaces, rat management, urban cooling, biodiversity, and social interconnection (naming just a few). We must invest in these infrastructures now if we want them to work for us in the future - which, we know, requires robust and equitable access to a resilient urban landscape as we face increasingly extreme and unpredictable temperatures, precipitation, storms, and flooding.

Diverting organic waste through the industrial DSNY system alone - particularly given DSNY's dismal education and outreach budget capacity - will not only fail to reach widespread participation rates necessary for the city's Zero Waste goals, but cannot achieve the level of complex urban infrastructure strengthening that community composting demonstrates.

As a public health professional trained in NYC, a long-time community member and organizer, and now a doctoral researcher focused on NYC's social-ecological systems, I urge the City Council to increase funding for Community Composting in FY26 to \$11.4 million.

I've witnessed directly, both through my research and as a participant in community composting programming, the high quality and value of the work that community composters do in our city. They bring people together to not only educate and build skillsets for participating in composting, but they develop joy and excitement around organic waste management. Their enthusiasm is a critical piece of the infrastructure that draws New Yorkers to the labor of love for Earth and city that is separating organic waste.

The \$11.4 million will increase the capacity for our composters and compost educators to expand their operations and deepen their reach through partnerships and innovations that tailor programming to the neighborhoods and communities throughout the city, and develop hyper-local-context-intelligent methods for encouraging and supporting participation in organic separation and recycling at the person, household, and building level. Only through deep and lasting relationship building can New Yorkers educate each other and work together to make organic collection successful.

Thank you,

Audrey Jenkins, MPH

jenka639@newschool.edu



Hello. My name is Beila Ungar and I am a volunteer at the Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn, NY.

I would like to personally thank all the council people, and especially Councilwoman Rita Joseph, who stood by and fought on the side of community composting when the Administration cut most funding.

I am writing to you today because I believe that community composting should be included in the federal budget and request that \$11.5 million be reinstated to support this important network of organizations and countless individuals who believe in community solutions and organic food waste management.

Please vote to restore all funding to community composting. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Beila Ungar

Good morning, Chair Abreu and Chair Brannan and distinguished members of the Committee on Finance and the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I'm Chanelle Sánchez-Schwartz Batrville, a senior at The Brearley School, organizer and founder of Highbridge Builders, deeply invested in the intersection of urban policy, economics, and law—with a focus on equity, systemic clarity, and public service.

I was born and raised in the Bronx, Highbridge to be exact, which is proudly served by Council Member Althea Stevens. My building stands directly in front of Highbridge Park, in a friendly family neighborhood that loves its dogs.

I've witnessed firsthand how infrastructure inequality shapes perception. When classmates' parents from the Upper East Side were hesitant to visit my home, it wasn't about the people—it was a reaction to broken infrastructure, decades of disinvestment, and a "Bronx is Burning" narrative that persists despite our vibrant community. I founded Highbridge Builders to challenge this narrative, turning "those neighborhoods" into "our community" through meaningful action—from frequent cleanups to creating public access to dog waste stations. Until now, our work has been entirely grassroots, self-funded, and born of love for our neighborhood.

I'm here today to address a specific sanitation inequality that connects directly to the work of this committee. Highbridge Park connects Manhattan and the Bronx through a pedestrian bridge. The Manhattan side features numerous free dog waste bag dispensers, while the Bronx side has none. With high dog ownership in our area and Manhattan residents frequently crossing into our neighborhood to walk their dogs, this disparity is particularly problematic. Given that our median household income is less than half of adjacent Manhattan neighborhoods, many residents simply cannot afford to purchase dog waste bags regularly.

This creates a cycle that reinforces negative stereotypes: without access to proper disposal resources, our sidewalks accumulate waste, further cementing the harmful perception that the Bronx is inherently less clean. This isn't a complex issue—it's a clear inequity with a simple fix.

I respectfully request that this committee consider:

- Supporting legislation like Intro 0281-2024 by Council Member Menin, which proposes installing dog waste bag dispensers throughout the city, with priority for underserved areas like Highbridge
- Allocating modest funding for at least two additional trash cans in our neighborhood
- Partnering with Highbridge Builders on community education about the "Pooper Scooper Law" that the Department of Sanitation enforces

This is a low-cost, high-impact investment: cleaner streets, increased community pride, and a powerful message that this administration values equitable service delivery across all boroughs.

I'm encouraged by efforts like Council Member Powers' "Scoop the Poop" PSA campaign, which demonstrates how public education can reinforce civic responsibility, and by Council Member Brewer's advocacy around responsible pet ownership. And as the Zero Waste Act championed by Council Members Nurse and Hanif shows, waste equity must be addressed not just with penalties, but with infrastructure, education, and access.

Highbridge Builders volunteers stand ready to partner with the Department on implementation and maintenance.

Thank you for your leadership on these issues. I welcome any questions about our proposal or our work in the community.

TESTIMONY OF CITYMEALS ON WHEELS
Before the New York City Council Committee on Aging
Honorable Crystal Hudson, Chair

FY26 Executive Budget Hearing
May 12, 2025

Submitted by:
Jeanette Estima
Director, Policy and Advocacy
Citymeals on Wheels

Citymeals on Wheels works in partnership with the City and the network of meal providers to ensure that homebound older adults have access to at least one nutritious meal a day, including during local or citywide emergencies. In FY24, Citymeals provided over 2 million meals to over 21,000 older adults across all five boroughs.

As the City's population ages and the cost of living—especially food and housing costs—have ballooned, we have seen food insecurity among older New Yorkers emerge as a crisis. Existing nutrition assistance programs that many older adults access, such as SNAP and food pantries, are largely inaccessible to those unable to shop for groceries regularly or prepare their own meals. Furthermore, as federal funding for these programs remains under threat of dramatic cuts, any assistance these programs did provide will be even more limited. And our 2024 research found that the City's congregate and home-delivered meals programs simply do not go far enough in supporting the nutritional needs of program participants, providing only 1 meal a day, 5 days a week. While Citymeals steps in to privately fund weekend meals for home-delivered meals recipients, 60% still experience food insecurity.¹

The City must adapt its programs to be more accessible to homebound older adults and create new, expanded programs to ensure that the City's most vulnerable older residents have the food they need to live safely in their homes. Citymeals is grateful that the Mayor's Executive

¹ [*Older Adult Hunger, Food Services, and SNAP Participation in New York City. Citymeals and CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute, 2024*](#)

Budget reversed over \$100 million in cuts to aging services. However, it is clear that maintaining the status quo leaves too many older New Yorkers hungry. We need a budget that reflects the reality that thousands of older adults simply cannot afford rent, food, medication, and other basic necessities in this moment.

Therefore, we respectfully request that the Council:

1. **Renew \$500,000 through the Older Adult Clubs, Programs, and Enhancements Initiative for Citymeals' emergency meals program** to ensure that homebound older adults have food during times of crisis such as storms and localized emergencies.
2. **Pass Intro 770**, to make the City's home-delivered meals program provide one meal 365 days a year.
3. **Invest \$200,000 in Citymeals' innovative pilot programs**, providing a second meal or groceries to home-delivered meals recipients with the greatest need.
4. **Invest \$57 million in congregate meal programs** at Older Adult Centers.
5. **Increase baseline funding for the Community Food Connection (CFC) to \$100 million.**

Background

The two main food programs targeting older New Yorkers generally provide one prepared meal on weekdays only; one program operates in a congregate setting at Older Adult Centers, and the other provides home-delivery of these meals to those who cannot regularly get to a center. Last year, 153,220 older New Yorkers attended an older adult center and 24,472 received home-delivered meals (HDM).² These food programs were established in 1965 through the Older Americans Act, which still only requires that they serve one meal a day, five days a week. We have long known that this falls short in meeting the needs of the most food insecure older adults who cannot regularly access additional food. In a national survey from 2018, 66 percent of home-delivered and 54 percent of congregate meal recipients reported that these meals provide half or more of their daily food intake.³

² Preliminary Mayor's Management Report. January 2024. Accessed at: <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/dfta.pdf>

³ Administration on Community Living. FY18 Older Americans Act Report to Congress. Accessed at: https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/about-acl/2021-06/ACL_FY2018%20OAA%20Report%20to%20Congress.pdf

Our research, done in partnership with CUNY's Urban Food Policy Institute last year, confirmed that the status quo leaves too many older adults hungry. We surveyed 500 older New Yorkers participating in the City's congregate and home-delivered meals programs to learn more about how they were meeting their food needs beyond the one meal a day they received through these programs. Some key findings from our research include:

- **48% of all respondents “sometimes” or “often” experienced food insecurity.** This number went up to 60% for HDM recipients.
- Affordability was a clear barrier with **65% of respondents living on \$15,000/yr or less.**
- Physical limitations were experienced by many, including those receiving congregate meals **41% said they are only sometimes or never able to shop for groceries,** and 38% have a limited ability to prepare their own food.
- Additionally, **45% reported having little to no support** from family, friends, or a personal care attendant.
- Other food programs are underutilized given the depth of need indicated: **only 56% received SNAP and only 18% had used a food pantry.**
 - 34% of those receiving SNAP said the benefit was not enough to meet their needs, and food pantries are not always accessible.

And things are about to get even worse for these older New Yorkers as billions in funding for SNAP, Medicaid,⁴ Section 8 housing assistance,⁵ the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP),⁶ and countless other federal benefits that older adults rely on are at risk. For low-income, homebound older adults, any cuts to these benefits would drastically impact their ability to pay for food and other basic needs.

We have already heard directly from meal recipients that they are afraid their regular home-delivered meals will not continue. We know that without that one meal a day, hunger will increase dramatically, worsening an already severe crisis of food insecurity among older New Yorkers. As the Council and the Administration work to negotiate their priorities in response to this challenge to our City's safety net infrastructure, we cannot lose sight of the needs of homebound older New Yorkers, who experience hunger out of sight and behind closed doors.

⁴ [What is Medicaid and why is it a Republican target for cuts? | CNN Politics](#)

⁵ [White House Eyes Overhaul of Federal Housing Aid to the Poor - The New York Times](#)

⁶ [Trump administration eyes elimination of program that helps low-income people heat and cool their homes](#)

Citymeals' Food Programs

To help fill in the meal gap for the City's many older adults, **we have launched a few pilot programs in FY25**. We have a long-term goal to end elder hunger by 2040 by working with our public and private partners to provide older adults with more food in more ways, while increasing choices and the diversity of food where possible. Each pilot will be evaluated to determine its impact and guide us in scaling up what works. Using data provided by case managers, we identify meal recipients who are actively experiencing food insecurity and place them into one of the following programs:

Our **Breakfast Box** provides the equivalent of 30 breakfast meals including shelf-stable food (eg. oatmeal, yogurt, granola, cereal), four frozen meals (eg. breakfast burrito, omelet with potatoes), and seven pounds of fresh produce (mostly fruit), procured, packaged and delivered by Citymeals directly to homebound older adults on a monthly basis. We are currently serving 2,000 recipients across the City.

Our **Mobile Grocery Program** provides the equivalent of 9 meals including shelf-stable items, dairy, and fresh produce (eg. rice, tuna, beans, fruit, and vegetables), delivered directly to an older adult at home. Within this program we are **piloting a phone ordering system** allowing an older adult to order 18-meal equivalents with 4 options (plant or animal-based proteins and milks, and all fresh produce or a mix of fresh and shelf-stable foods). This pilot is a collaboration with the West Side Campaign Against Hunger with a goal to reach 200 people in the first year.

Another way that Citymeals fills a critical food gap for homebound older adults is as a longstanding, citywide emergency food responder. Our Bronx warehouse can store up to 10,000 packed and ready meals, and enough food to quickly package up to 60,000 more meals. With this level of inventory, we can pre-supply HDM recipients with nutritious, shelf-stable meals and respond to any older adult in temporary need during extreme weather, a power or gas outage, or other emergencies. We can turn on a dime to reach large numbers of older adults in senior housing facilities, NYCHA housing, or Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), as well as individuals living across the five boroughs. **In FY24, Citymeals**

responded to emergencies with 42,514 meals, and pre-supplied program participants with over 230,406 meals in our seasonal emergency food packages.

We are grateful to the Council for their longstanding support of our emergency food program.

For FY26, we respectfully request a renewal of the \$500,000 we received in FY25 through the Older Adults Clubs, Programs and Enhancements Initiative so that we can continue to stand ready to serve older New Yorkers during the next emergency. Additionally, we ask the Council to partner with us in expanding our pilot programs, which respond directly to our research findings and the expressed needs of meal recipients. We request an additional \$200,000 to support these programs so we can continue to evaluate, adapt, and scale new solutions to elder hunger. Funding for the Citymeals pilot programs would be put towards procurement, packaging, and delivery of additional food to current home delivered meal recipients deemed by their case managers to be food insecure.

Sector-Wide Needs

New York City has not prioritized the services and programs that help older adults age in place, demonstrated by long-standing underinvestment in these services. Moreover, food programs serving all New Yorkers are struggling to keep up with dramatically increasing demand. If we fail to make the needed investments, millions of New Yorkers will continue to suffer from food insecurity, and many will be pushed out of their homes and our communities.

We call upon the City Council to prioritize older adults in the FY26 budget by:

1. **Passing Intro 770**, which would require the City's home-delivered meals program to provide a meal 365 days a year. As a core public service, this program must be made whole by providing at least one meal every day, rather than just on weekdays.
2. **Investing \$57 million in congregate meal programs** at Older Adult Centers, to account for steep increases in inflation over the last several years.
3. **Increasing baseline funding for the Community Food Connection (CFC) to \$100 million** to meet the growing demand for food assistance across NYC—including enhanced access to fresh food. With an 83% rise in emergency food visits from 2019 to 2024, NYC's emergency food system is under unprecedented strain.

Conclusion

The City must support more programs that get food directly to older adults, especially at a time when assistance from the federal government is uncertain. Older adults must no longer be an afterthought in anti-hunger strategies. *Our infrastructure is already failing homebound older adults. We must do more to address food insecurity among this population, such as funding a 365-day HDM program, providing grocery deliveries, and increasing accessibility of food programs like SNAP and food pantries.* To maintain an effective safety net and eliminate service gaps, we must upgrade our infrastructure and ensure that the City's food programs are accessible to older adults and present a comprehensive approach to hunger.

May 13, 2025

To: NYC – Committee of Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

From: Ellen M. Cooper, Master Composter 2023, Trash Academy graduate, member of SWAB Organics committee, former member of Manhattan SWAB

Re: Testimony to Allocate \$11.4M for Community Composting

I am writing in support of SaveOurCompost Coalition's request to allocate \$11.4M in funding for Community Composting in NYC.

As a Master Composter NYC, I have seen first-hand the dedication, energy, extraordinary expertise and power of the composting community around the city. It is inter-racial, inter-generational, knowledgeable, effective and passionate. As a dense city, green space is such a premium. Even a small pocket park provides cleaner air, an emotional respite, and a place for kids to learn about nature, grow vegetables, and for people to gather. And Community Composting is an intrinsic part of these green spaces.

Curbside Composting in NYC is still in its infancy, but Community Composting is the beating heart of the program. They work hand in hand. The citizen outreach & education provided by the community composters is irreplaceable. There is also a volunteer army who support the small staffs and help build the curbside program. This additional help and expertise, to educate and inspire citizens, provide food scrap drop-offs and compost giveaways, comes at minimal cost to the city. The more people who learn about composting through community composting, the MORE likely they are to support the curbside program and spread the word about it.

Community composting took decades to build and is part of the fabric of our clean, just and healthy environment. It is such a tiny part of the budget, but the impact is huge. The benefit includes thousands of dedicated volunteers who make the compost program run, and create millions of pounds of quality compost that makes our parks, gardens, street trees, air and neighborhoods healthier. Diversion of more food waste out of the black bags and into real, quality compost, helps our soils, and mitigates rat proliferation – which is a major goal of this administration. Please support community composting with funding this year!

It may not be the whole solution to our climate crisis, but community composting is a vibrant, cost-effective piece of the puzzle.

Respectfully,

Ellen M. Cooper, District 2, Manhattan

[REDACTED]

Hello. My name is Emily Drum, and I am a volunteer at the Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn, NY.

I would like to personally thank all the council people, and especially Councilwoman Rita Joseph, who stood by and fought on the side of community composting when the Administration cut most funding.

I am writing to you today because I believe that community composting should be included in the federal budget and request that \$11.5 million be reinstated to support this important network of organizations and countless individuals who believe in community solutions and organic food waste management.

Please vote to restore all funding to community composting. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Emily Drum

Hello,

My name is Ginger Albertson and I am a volunteer at the Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn, NY.

I would like to personally thank all the council people, and especially Councilwoman Rita Joseph, who stood by and fought on the side of community composting when the Administration cut most funding.

I am writing to you today because I believe that community composting should be included in the federal budget and request that \$11.5 million be reinstated to support this important network of organizations and countless individuals who believe in community solutions and organic food waste management.

Please vote to restore all funding to community composting.
Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Ginger Albertson



Brooklyn, NY 11226

05/12/2025

To whom it may concern,

My name is Gregory Wisniewski & I am a volunteer at the Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn, NY.

I would like to personally thank all the council people, & especially Councilwoman Rita Joseph, who stood up & fought on the side of community composting when the Administration cut most funding.

I am writing to you today because I believe that community composting should be included in the federal budget & request that \$11.5 million be reinstated to support this important network of organizations & countless individuals who believe in community solutions & organic food waste management.

Please vote to restore all funding to community composting. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Gregory Wisniewski

Hello. My name is Zhenia Nagorny and I am a volunteer at the Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn, NY.

I would like to personally thank all the council people, and especially Councilwoman Rita Joseph, who stood by and fought on the side of community composting when the Administration cut most funding.

I am writing to you today because I believe that community composting should be included in the federal budget and request that \$11.5 million be reinstated to support this important network of organizations and countless individuals who believe in community solutions and organic food waste management.

Please vote to restore all funding to community composting.
Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Zhenia Nagorny

12 May 2025

Dear Council Members,

Thank you for restoring funding for NYC's community composting programs after they were suddenly defunded in 2023. I strongly urge City Council to continue funding the community organizations who do this important work in FY26, and consider expanding funding to more community composters. The programs you're funding help my community garden, El Garden in Bushwick, keep organic waste from the landfill and return compost to our community.

While DSNY has rolled out curbside composting citywide, and I think this is a great step towards reducing food waste in landfills or incinerators, residents still need more options. Smart bins, brown curbside bins, community composting supported by Big Reuse, Earth Matter, community gardens or the botanical gardens in each borough are all necessary. People live busy lives and we need to give them options that work for their schedules and also that work for what they believe should be happening with their food scraps.

Community composting should be considered an essential part of the city's environmental goals and zero waste plan. It's important for me to see my council member supporting community-based, environmental programs that make it easy for us to learn more about composting (through the Master Composter and other programs), access local food scrap drop off sites, attend volunteer events that connect us to compost as a beneficial resource for our communities, and receive free compost for our neighborhood gardens and street trees.

Climate change is already here, as we've seen increasingly extreme weather patterns in NYC and across the globe. Especially with EPA cuts and climate change denial on the federal level, we must take action to combat the climate crisis however we can on the citywide and statewide level, including community composting.

Thank you for making these critical resources possible.

Thank you,
Jenny Poole

Hello my name is Jesse Vogel and I am a volunteer at the Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn, NY.

I would like to personally thank all the council people, and especially Councilwoman Rita Joseph, who stood by and fought on the side of community composting when the Administration cut most funding.

I am writing to you today because I believe that community composting should be included in the federal budget and request that \$11.5 million be reinstated to support this important network of organizations and countless individuals who believe in community solutions and organic food waste management.

Please vote to restore all funding to community composting. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Jesse Vogel

May 14, 2025

Testimony regarding: **5/12 Committee Hearing on Finance Jointly with the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management**

Hello!

My name is Jessica Chang, and I am writing to you today as a volunteer at the Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn, NY, and a strong advocate for community-based environmental solutions.

I want to first acknowledge and thank local leaders, especially Councilwoman Rita Joseph, who bravely supported community composting when vital funding was cut by the previous Administration. Their commitment highlights the critical importance of these programs at the local level.

However, community composting requires sustainable support, and that's why I am writing to you regarding the federal budget. Community composting initiatives are essential infrastructure, diverting organic waste from landfills, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving soil health, and fostering vibrant, resilient communities. They are vital networks of organizations and countless individuals dedicated to organic food waste management and community empowerment.

I urge you to recognize the value of this work and request that **\$11.5 million** be reinstated in the federal budget specifically to support community composting programs across the nation. This funding is critical to maintaining operations, supporting growth, and ensuring the continued success of these vital environmental and community assets.

Please vote to restore and fully fund community composting. Thank you for your time and serious consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,
Jessica Chang
Brooklyn, NY

Testing for microplastics in NYC's potable public water supply: Joyce Bialik

I am Joyce Bialik, representing the 4 borough Solid Waste Advisory Boards. I will talk about reintroducing the 2024 Council bill known as *Testing Drinking Water for the Presence of Microplastics*, Intro 797, and concurrently, about including funds in our budget for implementing such testing. The City already tests our tap water for other contaminants. Whenever and wherever the City conducts these tests, the City should also test for the presence and level of microplastics.

Microplastics are known endocrine disruptors and are linked to other negative health outcomes including cancer and diabetes. Microplastics have been found in our air, water, food, soil, blood, brain, and in both sides of the placenta (parent and baby). It seems that wherever we look for microplastics, we find them. We know there are microplastics in our drinking water, but currently we are not measuring the *amount*. Because of this, we are not able to answer basic questions: are microplastics in our water increasing over time? Does it vary by location or season? The Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board conducted initial testing in Manhattan and Queens' tap water. We found that there were more microplastics in Queens' tap water than Manhattan's. This first step of measuring microplastics then allows us to pose questions - why is this the case? - and seek solutions.

In an interview with Gothamist CM Sandy Nurse, the bill's prime sponsor said, "We're seeing a proliferation of plastics and different types of plastics in everything. If we find that it's in our water, that to me would allow us to then hold producers accountable. It could help us create better waste systems.

Intro 797 had 20 co-sponsors. Let's bring a microplastic testing bill over the threshold this year and include funds to implement testing and monitoring in our budget.



Julia K. Duch

May 14, 2025

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Julia Duch and I have been a volunteer at the Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn, NY for the past 3 years.

I would like to personally thank all the council people, especially Councilwoman Rita Joseph, who fought to keep community composting when the Administration cut most funding.

I am writing to you today because I believe that community composting should be included in the federal budget. Community composting helps to fill in the gap in municipal composting, teaches the community about composting and sustainability, and fosters a sense of ownership of neighborhood space and sanitation with community members. I request that \$11.5 million be reinstated to support this important network of organizations and countless individuals who believe in community solutions and organic food waste management.

Please vote to restore all funding to community composting. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Julia K. Duch



Hello!

My name is Kendall Jenkins, and I am a volunteer at the Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn, NY.

I would like to personally thank all the council people, and especially Councilwoman Rita Joseph, who stood by and fought on the side of community composting when the Administration cut most funding.

I am writing to you today because I believe that community composting should be included in the federal budget and request that \$11.5 million be reinstated to support this important network of organizations and countless individuals who believe in community solutions and organic food waste management.

Please vote to restore all funding to community composting. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Kendall Jenkins

Good morning, My name is Marisa DeDominicis , I am a co-founder and ED of Earth Matter NY Inc. a Compost Learning Center and processing facility, located on Governors Island for the past 16 yrs, and a member of the Community Composting Network.

Thank you City Council for your support for FY 26 community composting. This funding has provided a stop-gap measure for continuing the crucial work that Earth Matter and partners have been doing to educate, build support and to comply with the municipal compost program which we support 100%.

I am writing today to request the City Council pass a FY 25 budget that includes **\$10.5 m** to continue to support the work.

Through the Council's support in FY 25, Earth Matter and our partners' contributions to compost education and outreach efforts have provided critical assistance to the City's goals of successful residential food scrap collection.

This continuance of the City's investment in our work is a critical tool needed to help change the current mindset of "a throwaway society" into a society where people take action and participate in being a part of the solution of limiting climate change, thus ensuring our childrens' and grandchildrens' futures of a more livable city, and planet earth.

Financial support in the FY 25 budget will assist the city's composting efforts exponentially.

This year Earth Matter processed 600 tons of residential food scraps and public park "browns" materials into compost. This year we distributed over 200 c yards of compost primarily to Green Thumb community gardens and other public open spaces throughout the 5 boroughs

Unfortunately, we are currently, and for the foreseeable future, the only mid-scale processing site "online" to process almost all of the residential food scraps collected by LESEC and BigReuse.

This year we have successfully negotiated with The Trust for Gov Island to continue our work of "processing, and, education and enrichment" on the island in a new location 500 feet away from our current location, and future site of the NY Climate Exchange.

Earth Matter will use FY26 funds to build out our new site, to continue our community composting work that the Council has invested in us and the other members of our network.

City Council members, thanks for all of your support in retaining our community compost infrastructure and the related increase in green jobs, that help make our soils healthier, our grass greener, and lead to the reduction in the amount of our food scraps exported, to be incinerated or landfilled, which we all know despoils our collective soil, air and water.

Thank you for your support in providing funds in this FY and for this opportunity to request continued support.

Marisa DeDominicis

Marisa DeDominicis

From: [Monica Barach](#)
To: [Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Community composting
Date: Monday, May 12, 2025 4:33:39 PM

Dear council members,

You represent the people and you care about our health. Waste disposed in landfills and waste that is incinerated creates toxic fumes which is **detrimental** to public health. The science shows this.

Community composting must be encouraged for the public good: it is good for public health and saves taxpayers money.

Please support your constituents by funding community composting!!!

Thank you for the attention, you will be this important matter

Sincerely,

Monica Barach

Hello. My name is Nathaniel Kublin and I am a volunteer at the Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn, NY.

I would like to personally thank all the council people, and especially Councilwoman Rita Joseph, who stood by and fought on the side of community composting when the Administration cut most funding.

I am writing to you today because I believe that community composting should be included in the federal budget and request that \$11.5 million be reinstated to support this important network of organizations and countless individuals who believe in community solutions and organic food waste management.

Please vote to restore all funding to community composting. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Nathaniel Kublin

May 12, 2025

Hello. My name is Olivia Bowen and I am a volunteer at the Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn, New York.

I would like to thank all of the council people, especially Councilwoman Rita Joseph, who stood by and fought on the side of community composting when the Administration cut funding.

I am writing to you today because I believe that community composting should be included in the federal budget and request that \$11.5 million be reinstated to support this crucial network of organizations and individuals who believe in community solutions and organic food waste management.

Please vote to restore all funding to community composting. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Olivia Bowen

Dear Council Members,

I am writing this testimony in support of city funded composting programs such as the one in my neighborhood which lost funding recently. Community compost programs make up a small fraction of DSNY's overall annual budget, and has a large impact on the communities they serve through education, employment, and engaging New Yorkers in their communities and local greenspaces. New Yorkers can learn about where their waste goes, meet members of the community, and feel a sense of positive camaraderie and community that is sorely needed in our neighborhoods.

These programs have helped compost over 8 million lbs. of organic waste at seven different processing sites, while educating thousands of New Yorkers as Master Composters. In the absence of other municipal composting programs, the community composting enables at source organic waste separation, benefitting both climate pollution prevention and sanitation needs. At the same time, finished compost provides healthy soil to community gardens, parks, street trees, and New Yorkers across all boroughs.

For a small impact on the budget, these programs go a long way to impacting the city and its people.

Dear Council,

My name is Sandye Renz and I have lived in Gowanus , Brooklyn for almost 40 years and I have composted that entire time.

We all have one crucial issue and that is saving the planet.

Composting is an economical, practical and completely do-able habit forming activity that can be a part of the NYC arsenal to combat the climate disaster.

In most of the city community composting is the only true composting that happens. True composting is the best route for organic waste. I have worked at the Big Reuse community composting site and have personally seen how supportive and responsive residents are , even if the composting site was not easy to get to.

From what I heard in the hearing, the NYC community is participating enthusiastically in organic collection. There isn't enough finished compost to return to the community so the facilities need to be expanded. Also, organic collection has saved the city money because of there being less waste transportation costs.

These are some of the reasons to keep funding and supporting community compost.

Sincerely,

Sandy Renz

Hello. My name is Sebastien Ammann and I am a volunteer at the Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn, NY.

I would like to personally thank all the council people, and especially Councilwoman Rita Joseph, who stood by and fought on the side of community composting when the Administration cut most funding.

I am writing to you today because I believe that community composting should be included in the federal budget and request that \$11.5 million be reinstated to support this important network of organizations and countless individuals who believe in community solutions and organic food waste management.

Please vote to restore all funding to community composting. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Sebastien Ammann

Hello,

My name is Sorah Park and I am a volunteer at the Maple Street Community Garden in Brooklyn, NY.

I would like to personally thank all the council people, and especially Councilwoman Rita Joseph, who stood by and fought on the side of community composting when the Administration cut most funding.

I am writing to you today because I believe that community composting should be included in the federal budget and request that \$11.5 million be reinstated to support this important network of organizations and countless individuals who believe in community solutions and organic food waste management.

Please vote to restore all funding to community composting. Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,
Sorah Park

May 13, 2025

To Whom it May Concern,

When I first moved to Brooklyn in the summer of 2020, one of the first things I did was walk over to my nearest Greenthumb Community Garden. I emailed the garden to ask how I could be involved, and I found out about the compost program there. Community composting is how I found a way to be outside, connect with nature, bond with my neighbors, and find community even during a pandemic. I met my first and now closest friend in New York at that garden – Maple Street Community Garden. Even when I moved apartments, I stayed close to Maple Street Community Garden because of the meaning that it brought to my life.

I'm writing to ask you to restore full funding to Community Composting. It is an essential part of my life and the lives of so many New Yorkers. Community composting teaches people how to reduce our waste, take care of the planet, give back to the earth, grow food, grow beauty, create community, and take initiative. It gives people hope and joy during hard times. It makes people laugh. It brings people outside where they can be active and healthy—rain or shine! It's one of the few instances where I can engage in an intergenerational group activity and meet people who live within a few blocks from me—people I would've never otherwise had a chance to talk to.

Just because the city has rolled out the brown bin program doesn't mean everyone knows how to use them! We need community composting to continue the essential education about why and how to compost. People don't just start to look at their waste differently overnight. It takes time, it takes conversations, friendships, and support. If we want the compost program to be successful in NYC, we NEED the community aspect. If you restore full funding to community composting, so many New Yorkers will be able to continue the environmental work that brings life to their communities and a sense of responsibility and action to their lives. And so many people will be able to continue to learn and join the network of composters around the city.

Community composting has meant so much to my life here in New York—it's made it unique from anywhere else I've lived. Thank you for your time, and I hope you can understand that this funding is invaluable. It's an investment by the city into its people, and the benefits are too numerous to number.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Yu

I am writing to urge the City Council to restore \$11.4 million in funding for community composting.

Community composting is important for so many reasons. From an environmental perspective, it has multiple benefits. In addition to reducing the methane emissions of organic waste, this type of composting also restores nutrients to create healthy soil. In addition to growing better plants and crops, strong and healthy soil helps to create landscapes that are more resilient to runoff and flooding. While the SmartBin anaerobic co-digestion still decreases emissions (to a point), the soil positive benefit is unique to more traditional methods of composting.

Community composting has also been very meaningful in my personal journey of climate education and action. After I began learning about the benefits composting, it seemed like a no-brainer solution. The folks running the LES Ecology Center dropoff point at the Union Square Greenmarket and the GrowNYC dropoff point at the 79th Street Greenmarket were so helpful in learning about how to make composting easy, and how to fit it into my busy NYC life. Now that the city has rolled out mandatory composting, these educational ambassadors are crucial to the adoption and success of the program.

I ask the Council to restore this funding and ensure that New Yorkers can continue composting within our communities for a greener, more sustainable city.

Thank you for your time.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joseph Antonelli, Deputy Commissioner

Address: Management & Budget

I represent: DSNY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joshua Goodman, Deputy Commissioner

Address: Public Affairs

I represent: DSNY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Javier Lojan, Acting Commissioner

Address: _____

I represent: DSNY

Address: _____

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

Sanitation

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5-12-25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jim Martin

Address: _____

I represent: ACE

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/12/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christopher Leon Johnson

Address: _____

I represent: SCIV

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/12

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kevin Kiprowski

Address: _____

I represent: LiveOn NY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 9/12/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dominique Morales
Address: 105 RIVER ST BROOKLYN, NY 11249

I represent: COMPOST POWER

Address: NYC

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Justin Green

Address: [REDACTED] Brooklyn, NY

I represent: B. Reuse

Address: 1 12th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chanelle Schwartz-Sanchez Batraville

Address: [REDACTED] Bronx, NY 10452

I represent: Highbridge Builders - Self made organization

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

budget - Dept. of the City ☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 12, 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Constance Lesold

Address: [REDACTED] BKlyn, NY 11225

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/12/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Niki Cross

Address: [REDACTED] BK, 11226

I represent: New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/12

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Niki Cross

Address: _____

I represent: NY Lawyers for the Public Interest

Address: - Sanitation Committee

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/12

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Catherine Thurston

Address: _____

I represent: Service Program for Older People

Address: Committee on Aging

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/12

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brianna McKinney

Address: _____

I represent: Project Guardianship

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/12

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bryan Ellicott-Cook

Address: _____

I represent: SAGE

Address: _____

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

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 05/12/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rachel Neches

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: Center for an Urban Future

Address: 80 8th Ave

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☒ in opposition

Date: 5/12/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rhonda Keyser

Address: [REDACTED] Brooklyn 11231

I represent: Cafeteria Culture

Address: E 8th St / Ave D Manhattan

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Constance Lesold

Address: [REDACTED] Brooklyn 11225

I represent: With Christine Johnson

Address: Albany Berlin Center - 294

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/12/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Zhikang Ling

Address: [REDACTED] Staten Island NY 10305

I represent: Homecrest Community Services

Address: 1413 Ave T Brooklyn NY 11229

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/12/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elizabeth Gvellierv

Address: 220 E 42nd Street, 6th Fl

I represent: VNS Health

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Navdeep Bains zhikang ling

Address: 120 Wall St, 9th floor

I represent: Asian American Federation

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jeanette Estima

Address: 355 Lexington Ave

I represent: Citymeals on wheels

Address: same

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: 5/12/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jose Merrado

Address: 2 Lafayette

I represent: NYC Aging

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: 5/12/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez

Address: 2 Lafayette

I represent: NYC Aging

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eustacia Smith

Address: _____

I represent: West Side Federation for Senior &

Address: Supportive Housing 2345 Broadway

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anita Kwok

Address: United Neighborhood Houses

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/12/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sandra Martinez

Address: _____

I represent: RAIN Inc.

Address: 81 Morris Park Ave

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mohammed Razvi

Address: 1081 Coney Island

I represent: COPD

Address: 1281 Coney Island Ave

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