



sanitation

Jessica S. Tisch Commissioner

**Testimony of
Jessica Tisch, Commissioner
New York City Department of Sanitation**

**Hearing before the New York City Council
Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management**

**Wednesday, March 15, 2023
10:30 A.M.**

**New York City Department of Sanitation's FY2024 Preliminary Budget and
Preliminary FY2024 Mayor's Management Report**

Good morning Chair Nurse and members of the City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. I am Jessica Tisch, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY). I am joined today by First Deputy Commissioner Javier Lojan, Joseph Antonelli, Deputy Commissioner for Management and Budget, and Gregory Anderson, Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Strategic Initiatives. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on DSNY's Fiscal Year 2024 Preliminary Budget.

When Mayor Adams took office last year, New York City was filthy. The previous Administration gutted core cleanliness functions at DSNY during the pandemic, slashing funding for basic services like litter basket collection and street cleaning. Combined with staffing shortages related to the ongoing pandemic, these cuts had created service levels among the lowest in decades – missed collections increased, cleanliness complaints increased, basic enforcement decreased, and the City was viscerally and visibly dirtier.

In the first year of the Adams Administration, that narrative has begun to change. Mayor Adams has made unprecedented new investments in restoring cleaning programs – and much more.

Today, we have more than 8,000 uniformed Sanitation Workers and officers, the highest uniformed headcount in two decades.

Before I address the specifics of our FY2024 budget, I'll discuss a few highlights of our new programs and priorities as we work to Get Stuff Clean.

Setout Time Rules

First, DSNY is implementing one of the most important changes to waste management in decades next month – changing the rules around waste setout to eliminate the five o'clock shadow of black bags on the curb. Currently, trash and recycling may be placed on the curb after

4:00 p.m. the night before collection – the earliest of any major American city – meaning that in many neighborhoods these items can sit out for more than 14 hours, including during the evening pedestrian rush hour.

The new rules, which take effect on April 1, give two options for residential and commercial properties. Residential properties will be able to set out waste in bags at the curb starting at 8:00 p.m. or in containers 55 gallons or less with a lid starting at 6:00 p.m. Commercial properties and establishments will be able to set waste in bags at the curb starting at 8:00 p.m. or in containers with a lid starting one hour before closing.

In addition to these new proposed rules, DSNY is doing more of its collection on the midnight shift than pre-pandemic, further reducing the amount of time trash sits on the street.

This month, DSNY has rolled out an aggressive marketing and communications campaign to educate the public about the new rules, including mailers to every home and business, ads on social media, digital, and print platforms, and dozens of meetings with business groups, community organizations and other stakeholders.

Cleaning – Restore and More

We have taken aim at something that every New Yorker was aware of – the way in which the City became meaningfully dirtier over the course of the pandemic, following deep cuts to the budget for the Department’s cleanliness function that took effect in March 2020. To that end, Mayor Adams has restored several cleaning services as part of his plan to Get Stuff Clean. But he hasn’t *just* restored them – he’s gone beyond, giving us the highest level of service for these basic cleanliness functions in history.

Together, these initiatives represent a total investment of \$53.2 million in the current fiscal year, the largest investment in new cleanliness programs in decades, and they total nearly 250 additional uniformed personnel for the agency.

Last July, in partnership with the City Council, we added \$22 million in supplemental service for the more than 23,000 corner litter baskets across New York City. This represents a 74 percent increase in service above the baseline funding level and has led to a decrease in 311 complaints for overflowing litter baskets by more than 50 percent compared to last fiscal year. Baskets are emptied 50,000 times more often citywide each week, and we’ve seen the largest year-over-year decrease in complaints ever.

In November, we added \$4.8 million to provide supplemental service for litter baskets on DOT bridges and around parks, some of the most highly-trafficked tourist areas in the city. Together, these investments fund 889 weekly litter basket crews, up from a pre-pandemic high of 736 weekly crews and the highest level of litter basket service on record at DSNY. Regular cleaning for some of our most visible areas, which is so essential to our recovery.

Last July, DSNY fully restored street cleaning operations after more than two years of cuts to sweeping frequency. Mechanical brooms are the city’s most effective tools for street cleaning —

sweeping litter from along the curb on thousands of miles of New York City streets – and they'd been handcuffed, effectively assigned to desk duty. This restoration of a critical cleaning operation, alongside new management and analytical tools to track performance, has contributed to noticeably cleaner streets. However, our street sweepers are only as good as New Yorkers' compliance with parking regulations, and we need New Yorkers to move their cars for ASP so our street sweepers can do their jobs. They should know, if they don't, they WILL receive a ticket, and their street WILL look dirtier for it.

Last fall, we also restored supplemental sweeping of highway on-ramps and off-ramps, often one of the first places that visitors and commuters see when they come to New York and an area that contributed to New York's reputation as Trash City. With \$470,000 in new funds this year and \$1.1 million in baseline funding thereafter, we're cleaning more than 150 miles of ramps an average of once a month.

But what about our neighborhoods? For far too long, "No Man's Land" areas – the walkways, medians, step streets, overpasses, and other areas - around the City harbored dirty, litter-filled conditions. These areas fell between the bureaucratic jurisdictional cracks, and no agency had the resources or the mandate to keep them clean. In November, DSNY created a new Targeted Neighborhood Taskforce unit to regularly clean these areas for the first time ever. We're addressing over 1500 of them, in every community in the City.

This unit, funded for \$7.1 million in FY2023, will grow to 141 dedicated Sanitation Workers this year. Already, it's having an impact on overlooked spaces across the five boroughs, and nearly every location originally identified for cleaning has been cleaned at least twice, with additional new locations being added every week.

Strategic Enforcement

We are doing our part to clean up New York City. But every New Yorker has a role to play in maintaining the cleanliness of our neighborhoods – in a city this size, it can't just be the 10,000 members of the Sanitation Department doing this work.

We have a new focus on enforcing basic cleanliness rules – cleaning the sidewalk in front of a chain store, putting trash out when you're supposed to and in an orderly manner, the kinds of things that keep our streets clean. These are the most basic cleanliness rules, not enforcement for enforcement's sake.

For things like filthy sidewalks, loose trash, uncovered receptacles that attract rats – the sorts of basic cleanliness requirements that make for good neighbors and good neighborhoods – we are looking at an 80 percent increase in summons issuance year to date as compared to the same period in 2022. On one of the most crucial regulations, the requirement that property owners keep their sidewalks clean, we have written nearly 12,000 summonses this year, up 79 percent compared to last year.

But enforcement only goes so far when the penalty for inaction is too low. Right now, fines for basic sanitation rules are set by local law at just \$50, an amount that is far too low. This was

reduced from \$100 by City Council in 2021, sending the message that cleanliness is not a top priority in our city. I am calling on this Council to reverse course and create stiffer penalties. I am eager to work with you to make this happen.

I'd also like to provide an update on our illegal dumping enforcement – one of this Administration's most successful operations at the intersection of safety and cleanliness, where for too long the only strategy was just to clean it up and let it happen all over again.

Illegal dumping is a theft of public space where someone – usually a crooked contractor or an out of towners – comes to what they think is a neighborhood no one will care about; a place they can just leave their trash on our streets. This doesn't affect every neighborhood, but the ones it does affect feel it profoundly – and that should matter to every New Yorker.

Dumpers are wrong about two things. They're wrong to think no one cares about Hunts Point, or East New York, or Glendale, or any of the other neighborhoods where this has been a problem for too long. And they're wrong to think they will get away with it.

For the first time in New York City, they won't.

That's because of our new citywide illegal dumping enforcement camera network that will grow each week to more than 250 cameras this summer. And it's because of the work of our dedicated Sanitation Police Officers, who use that camera network in their investigations to catch dumpers and hold them accountable.

Based on this new strategy, both vehicle impounds and the \$4,000 summons for illegal dumping are up **450% year to date** versus the same period 2022.

Our message to dumpers is clear: your days of dumping on our neighborhoods are long past over.

Universal Curbside Composting

Last month, I joined Mayor Adams to announce roadmap to implement the nation's largest composting program, which will provide universal composting service to every New Yorker for the first time ever over the next 19 months.

While curbside composting programs have existed in New York City for the last decade, none have ever served more than approximately 40 percent of the city. This will be the first-ever specific plan and commitment to reach 100 percent coverage citywide, providing residents with simple, universal weekly collection of leaf and yard waste, food scraps, and food-soiled paper products. It is also the first program designed as a service for "mass market" use by all New Yorkers.

This announcement came on the heels of the cost-effective first phase in Queens last fall, which collected nearly 13 million pounds of yard and food waste, more than three times the material per district than the legacy opt-in program.

The new program is built on a number of efficiencies that drive costs down, including the use of dual-bin trucks and a right-sizing of the workforce to reduce overtime. The leaf-and-yard-waste-first approach was designed based on an analysis of successful programs in other cities. Unlike past composting programs, there will be no sign-up required for this new program. Residents will simply set out anything from their kitchen or their garden in a separate bin on their recycling day and DSNY will pick up those materials to turn them into usable compost or clean, renewable energy.

DSNY is working with OMB to refine the costs associated with this program, which we expect to be funded in the Executive Budget.

This universal curbside program is part of a comprehensive approach to organic waste diversion. Earlier this year, we completed the installation of 250 Smart Compost Bins across all five boroughs. These bins are accessible 24 hours per day via a new app for iOS and Android called NYC Compost.

New Smart Compost Bin service covers a number of traditionally underserved communities, including Bushwick, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Castle Hill, Harlem, Highbridge, the North Shore of Staten Island, Parkchester, the area around Queensbridge Houses, and Washington Heights. Across these communities, the bins have been greeted by enthusiastic usage and have diverted pristine compostable material from landfill, and where feasible we are servicing these bins using existing school organics trucks. As Manhattan will receive curbside service last, DSNY is also adding an additional 150 Smart Compost Bins boroughwide beginning in June, for a total of 400 citywide.

We also announced a major milestone last week in efforts to expand composting at City public schools – completing the rollout of curbside composting service at every school in the Bronx. Over the next year, we will expand service to the remaining 533 schools, largely in Brooklyn and Queens, delivering on our commitment to provide composting to every public school by 2024.

Containerization

Cities in Europe, Asia and South America have introduced new innovations in waste collection over the past two decades; New York City, however, is stuck in the past. In October, we launched a study of containerization practices and feasibility in New York City. This study is largely complete, and we expect to release a public report in the coming weeks.

A few highlights: implementing shared containers in New York City involves significant complexity, including new trucks and containers that have never before been used in North America at scale. It also requires substantial curb space, taking away space used for parking, open restaurants, and other uses. And it requires significant increases to service frequency – some cities in Europe provide collection service as often as once or twice *per day*.

In parallel, DSNY has conducted a small pilot of containerization through our Clean Curbs program. Since the first installation was announced last April, we have installed more than 40

total Clean Curbs containers in all five boroughs. We have provided grants totaling \$375,000 to 19 business improvement districts and community organizations for Clean Curbs installations in all five boroughs.

In November, we launched the Clean Curbs residential pilot on 45th Street between Ninth and Tenth Avenues in Manhattan. This pilot has taught us a lot, most importantly that behavior change will be key to any adoption of containerization at scale. This block has been advocating for waste containerization for years, and despite consistent education and outreach efforts, there is regularly waste placed outside of the containers every day of the week. This is an incredibly resource-intensive pilot, and this approach is not scalable beyond its current scope.

FY2024 Preliminary Budget

The Preliminary Budget includes \$1.93 billion in expense funds in Fiscal Year 2023 and \$1.82 billion in Fiscal Year 2024, reflecting increases of \$55.9 million and \$4.5 million, respectively, from the budget adopted last June.

The Fiscal Year 2024 expense budget includes \$1.06 billion for personal services to support a total budgeted headcount of 9,551 full-time positions, including 7,649 uniformed positions and 1,902 civilian positions, and \$760 million for other than personal services.

DSNY's Fiscal Year 2024 Preliminary Budget includes \$4.17 billion in capital funding in the 10-year plan, including \$1.48 billion for garages and facilities, \$2.48 billion for equipment, \$72.6 million for IT, and \$135.3 million for solid waste management infrastructure.

The Capital Budget includes new funding of \$100 million to purchase 244 additional new trucks, allowing us to dramatically increase the pace of purchases of rear loader and dual-bin collection trucks. We are aggressively moving to bring in these new vehicles, which will bring down the average age of our fleet and improve out-of-service rates.

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

- \$170 million in additional funding for the construction of a new garage for Bronx Districts 9, 10, and 11, with construction of temporary space scheduled to begin in 2024; and
- \$140 million in additional funding for the construction of a new garage for Queens District 1, with construction of the new garage scheduled to begin in 2027.

Together, these investments will begin to address critical infrastructure needs at our Sanitation garages, many of which are in desperate need of repair.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and my staff and I look forward to answer your questions.



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

**City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
Hearing on the FY24 Preliminary Budget 3.15.23**

Good afternoon Chair Nurse and thank you for holding this hearing today. I am here today to speak about a few priorities to improve climate resiliency and quality of life in our city: Commercial Waste Zones (CWZ), organics, containerization, and the Brooklyn District 13/15 garage.

Commercial Waste Zones: A zoned system for commercial waste will improve public health, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect workers, and make our streets safer. I was very disappointed to learn that DSNY intends to postpone implementation of the first zone until the end of next year, with full rollout expected to take at least two years after that. This means full implementation will not happen until *at least seven years* after we passed this bill in 2019.

Last term, the City Council passed a budget that provided DSNY with funding for 38 staff specifically dedicated to CWZ, as well as funding for outreach and marketing. Yet at the hearing last month, Commissioner Tisch testified that the program is “fully funded based on need” with 20 civilian staff (three of whom had yet to be hired) and 10 uniformed staff, with outreach not slated to begin until Q3 of 2024. We’ve also heard from multiple sources that these staff have consistently been reassigned to other projects, such as the Queens compost rollout. As much as I support expanding compost collection, it should not come at the expense of this program.

I disagree with the Commissioner’s assessment that it would be “premature” to start outreach now. A small business owner recently contacted my office when a new carter took over their existing contract, concerned because they assumed that DSNY had chosen the new carter for them as part of CWZ. This speaks to the misinformation that is out there, which needs to be addressed in order to ensure a successful rollout. With full staffing dedicated solely to the program, we could begin outreach now, speed up the RFP review process, and begin implementation sooner.

Organics: I appreciate DSNY’s commitment to expanding organics collection citywide. Organic waste currently makes up about 1/3 of the City’s waste stream. Separating it keeps it out of landfills, where it produces greenhouse gases; brings down costs in DSNY’s largest budgeted area (\$478m in FY24 for waste export); and decreases the amount of waste that NYC dumps on environmental justice communities in other parts of the state and country. The smart bins and option for curbside collection will make it easier for New Yorkers to participate. However, I remain skeptical that the program will be successful in the long-term unless participation is

mandatory. This will require extensive outreach and education using multiple languages and platforms, as well as an investment in operations and staffing, and it is concerning that there is not dedicated funding allocated to this initiative in the FY24 budget. Especially given that a supermajority of the Council supports Intro 244 (which would create the mandatory program), the Council and administration must work together now to ensure there is sufficient funding for it to be implemented quickly once the bill is passed.

Containerization: Every New Yorker agrees: the rat problem is bad and only getting worse. Containerizing waste is a proven solution to this issue. Since I expressed my dismay last year regarding cuts made to the pilot program, the pilot was in fact implemented; however, with the residential portion limited to only one block in Manhattan. Meanwhile, I have constituents from Downtown Brooklyn to Coney Island complaining about unsightly garbage piles and the rodents they attract, and DSNY has spent \$4 million to pay McKinsey to study something we already know works based on many examples from other cities and countries. DSNY promised us a “market-ready Request for Proposals — including recommended commercial terms, performance requirements, and specifications.” It has been 23 weeks since the 20-week study was reported, and I am very much looking forward to seeing this RFP released.

Brooklyn District 13/15 garage: I included this in my testimony and budget response last year, and want to reiterate that Brooklyn Districts 13 and 15 are in dire need of a new sanitation garage, yet this remains unfunded in the Capital Plan. These garages are still operating from among the worst physical plants in DSNY’s inventory, with BK 13 located in a dilapidated building and parking its trucks on an HPD-owned site slated for affordable housing development, and BK 15 using trailers in an area plagued by flooding. A new garage was proposed at Coney Island Creek decades ago, and City Council approved site selection in 2006, but implementation was delayed so long that National Grid put the site on the private market in 2020. I want to again ask the administration to negotiate with National Grid to acquire the site before it’s too late, and to move forward with this new garage as soon as possible.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to working with the Council throughout the budget process to ensure that DSNY has a robust budget to meet the city’s needs across all its programs.



**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
FY24 Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 15, 2023**

Good afternoon, 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 Nurse and members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management for the opportunity to comment.

One of [NYLCV's top policy priorities](#) for the past several years has been achieving zero waste. Organics take up a third of our residential waste and produce methane when they decompose in landfills. [Neighborhoods near polluting facilities](#) like waste transfer stations and incinerators, most often low income and communities of color, are the ones whose health could most benefit by recycling organic waste. The higher rates of pollution in these communities cause disproportionately higher cases of asthma, cancer, and other health issues and compound already existing environmental and racial inequities.

The City has been behind schedule on meeting our Zero Waste goal of reducing the amount of waste we send to landfills 90% by 2030, so it is imperative that the City take bold action to drastically reduce waste over the next 7 years. With Mayor Adams' recent announcement of a citywide curbside composting program rolling out in all five boroughs over the next twenty months, the City must ensure robust funding is allocated over the next several years, not only for operations and staffing, but also for education, outreach, and marketing in multiple languages. According to the [Sanitation Committee Report](#), "DSNY confirmed that the cost for the citywide organics program would be \$18.7 million in Fiscal 2024 and would grow to an annual cost of \$38.1 million by Fiscal 2027, much more than the amount currently budgeted in this Fiscal 2024 Preliminary Plan."

While Mayor Adams' recent announcement of a citywide curbside composting program is a great step, we must continue to work towards implementing a comprehensive and equitable waste reduction and management plan. This means the Council and Administration work together to pass, implement, and fully fund [Intro 244-2022](#), requiring a mandatory citywide curbside organics program for residential buildings.

It is also incumbent upon the Council and Administration to swiftly implement the Commercial Waste Zones law. We need this system in place to further reduce unnecessary truck traffic,

emissions, and redundancies that halt expansion of services. While we understand the importance of starting off on the right foot and learning from other cities' attempts at overhauling their waste systems, it is imperative that the City carries out this law in a timely manner. According to the [Sanitation Committee Report](#), "while DSNY is experiencing lower vacancy rates than most City agencies, the Department is still experiencing high vacancy rates in certain areas...In the commercial waste division there are 27 budgeted civilian positions for Fiscal 2023 and 32 for Fiscal 2024, but only 20 of these positions were filled as of March." We urge the City to dedicate the requisite amount of resources and funding for staffing, education, and outreach to fully implement the CWZ law.

The City must also implement and fully fund a permanent citywide waste containerization program on our streets to streamline waste and prevent buildup on sidewalks and trashrooms. While the DSNY's Clean Curbs Pilot Program is a step in the right direction, providing permanent, sealed containers throughout the City to hold trash bags prior to collection can mitigate the issues of the bags being opened by rodents and will create a cleaner city. 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.

Additionally, the City must implement and fund the "Skip the Stuff" law (Local Law 17 of 2023), reducing single-use plastic items in take-out and delivery orders. DSNY must work with the NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection to ensure that enforcement of this law is carried out and participating businesses comply, along with funding for outreach and education materials in multiple languages.

We also call on the City to provide continued funding for the electrification of light-, medium-, and heavy-duty DSNY trucks. Specifically, DSNY must continue working with DCAS, utility companies, and industry professionals to ensure that sufficient infrastructure is available to charge heavy-duty DSNY trucks.

Lastly, while DSNY is experiencing lower vacancy rates than most City agencies, NYLCV underscores the importance of the Council and Administration working together to ensure there is sufficient funding and staffing for programs such as the citywide curbside organics program and Commercial Waste Zone law implementation.

We look forward to working with the Council and this Committee to reach our zero waste goals. This will not only move New York City towards a sustainable and equitable future, but also improve our quality of life, reduce garbage collection costs, increase street hygiene and attractiveness, and benefit the health of our planet and community.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.



Founders

Vernice Miller-Travis
Peggy M. Shepard
Chuck Sutton

Board of Directors

Chair

Jeff Jones

Secretary

Nancy E. Anderson, Ph.D.

Treasurer

Ken P. Mak

Members

Lakeisha M. Aquino
Peter Bokor
Dennis Derryck, Ph.D.
David Evans, Ph.D.
Abiola Fasehun, Esq.
Eric A Goldstein, Esq.
Neetin Gulati
Christy Loper
Sarangi Iyengar
Marielle Villar Martiney
Crystal Romeo Upperman
Vernice Miller-Travis
Phillip Morrow
Dart Westphal

Executive Director

Peggy M. Shepard

Testimony of WE ACT for Environmental Justice

To the New York City Council Committee on Sanitation & Waste Management

Regarding The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2024

Dear Committee Chair Sandy Nurse and Committee on Sanitation & Waste Management:

WE ACT for Environmental Justice, an organization based in Harlem, has been fighting environmental racism at the city, state, and federal levels for more than 30 years. We have used collaborative problem solving techniques to address the problems of inappropriate garbage disposal and rampant rodent and roach infestation in Northern Manhattan in order to reduce negative health impacts from garbage and pests in this community. Currently, through our Climate Justice Working Group we have been advocating for the passage of the [Zero Waste Bill Package](#) and advancing community composting and organics processing.

It should not be lost on this committee the importance of achieving zero waste in New York City:

- **We need to lower carbon emissions.** Food and other garbage in landfills generate methane and carbon dioxide. Incinerated trash also generates greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Waste disproportionately hurts low-income communities and communities of color.** New York City sends its trash to upstate New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and even South Carolina and Ohio for processing. Landfills and waste processing sites including waste incinerators and burn facilities are [more frequently located in environmental justice communities](#) and produce high rates of harmful pollutants that lead to respiratory illnesses and cardiovascular diseases.
- **Waste is expensive.** New York City spends approximately \$478 million, or 26 percent of the Fiscal 2024 Preliminary Budget to export its trash to landfills as far as Ohio and South Carolina. Achieving zero waste can save the City money that can be reinvested in other vital climate and environmental justice needs across City agencies.
- **New York City is behind.** Other cities such as Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Austin are rolling out mandatory composting programs to achieve zero waste goals with excellent outcomes. As the largest city in the country, New York City needs to address its waste crisis and take clear steps to achieving its zero waste goals to improve



our air quality, health, and reduce the rat and other vermin populations that are currently running rampant in our city.

A crucial step to achieving zero waste in New York City is the diversion of [food waste](#). 24 percent of municipal solid waste landfills (more than 35 million tons nationally) is food waste and is a major contributor of methane emissions as it decomposes. New York City throws out [4,000 tons](#) of food waste per day. Throwing out excessive amounts of food waste like this poses a number of [health challenges](#). Food waste attracts pests like rats, cockroaches, and pigeons, which plague neighborhoods that lack secure disposal options and carry diseases like Leptospirosis, which is easily transmittable to household pets and people and [exacerbate existing respiratory illnesses](#) like asthma. Rotting food waste lowers the quality of life in dense urban settings like New York City by contributing foul odors, and gasses that [cause](#) skin rashes and asthma. Although the City has made efforts to approach waste through the lens of equity, there are still gaps in this work. WE ACT applauds the Mayor's [commitment to citywide composting](#); however, we know that the only way for the City to make a true impact on diverting waste is to have mandatory curbside composting. This is why WE ACT is a strong supporter of [Int 0244-2022](#), which *mandates* residential curbside organics collection.

In order to achieve zero waste goals and hold the Mayor accountable for wanting to improve the cleanliness of the city, City Council must:

- **Ensure adequate funding is allocated for the recently announced citywide curbside composting program.** DSNY confirmed that the cost for the program would be \$18.7 million in Fiscal 2024 and would grow to an annual cost of \$38.1 million by Fiscal 2027, much more than the amount currently budgeted in this Fiscal 2024 Preliminary Plan.
- **Invest in community composting infrastructure** like [HotBox Composting™](#) co-created by Nando Rodriguez, Environmental Program Coordinator at [The Brotherhood Sister Sol \(BroSis\)](#). This compost processing method that can be constructed in community gardens – investing in local and circular economies and reducing export costs.
- **Ensure adequate funding for [community composting drop off sites](#) and collection and maintenance of the [Smart Composting Bins](#).**
- **Fund any aspect of expediting the implementation of the City's [Commercial Waste Zones](#) law (Local Law 199 of 2019),** which will reduce emissions from garbage collection and decrease vehicle miles traveled by waste haulers.
- **Provide funding to increase litter baskets and litter basket service pick-up** to neighborhoods, like East Harlem, that have a



disproportionately lower number of litter baskets compared to Whiter, more affluent neighborhoods.

- **Implement and fund a permanent citywide waste containerization program** on our streets to streamline waste and prevent buildup on sidewalks and waste rooms. Currently, only [10% of the City's trash is in containers](#). While the DSNY's [Clean Curbs Pilot Program](#) is a step in the right direction, providing permanent, sealed containers throughout the City to hold trash bags prior to collection can mitigate the issue of the bags being opened by rodents and will help create a cleaner city.
- **Fund the expansion of paper, metal, glass, plastic, and organic waste recycling to all NYCHA developments by 2026 and fully fund [NYCHA's Waste Management Plan](#).**
- **Restore funding for and expand Curbside E-Waste Collection.**

All New Yorkers deserve indoor and outdoor environments that are free of contamination and pollution. Achieving zero waste will greatly improve our environment and our public health, and it will be a positive step toward addressing environmental and racial justice.

Lonnie J. Portis

Environmental Policy and Advocacy Coordinator

WE ACT for Environmental Justice

1854 Amsterdam Avenue, 2nd Floor New York, NY 10031

646-866-8720 | lonnie@weact.org



New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
151 West 30th Street, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10001-4017

**Testimony of Sonya Chung,
Environmental Justice Staff Attorney of New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
Preliminary Budget Hearing, March 15, 2023**

Thank you, Chair Nurse and members of the Sanitation Committee for the opportunity to present testimony on the City's 2024 Preliminary Budget. My name is Sonya Chung, and I am an environmental justice staff attorney at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. At NYLPI, we appreciate this Committee's leadership in improving New York City's sanitation and waste management – overhauling what is not working and pushing forward reforms that will make New York City's waste processing more equitable and effective, especially in light of the escalating climate crisis.

With the Council's forecast of FY2023 and FY2024 revenue totaling \$5.2 billion more than the Office of Management and Budget predictions, and the Independent Budget Office's announcement of a \$4.9 billion surplus this year, now is not the time to retreat from our city's sustainability and equity goals.

We have four overarching recommendations for the Department of Sanitation's (DSNY or the Department) 2024 budget.

First, the budget must reflect a commitment to staffing and resources for robust implementation of Local Law 199 of 2019, the Commercial Waste Zones (CWZ) law, on a timeline that prioritizes environmental justice. We are glad to see an increase in the budget for full-time staff positions for the Commercial Waste Division and hope this signals increased capacity to move the implementation forward. The CWZ is a landmark reform which will bring efficiency and accountability to the private waste industry while upholding climate justice for New Yorkers. Once implemented, the CWZ system will be financially self-sustaining, as designated haulers will pay fees to cover the costs of administering the program. Additionally, each day that CWZ implementation is delayed, is a day we pay for in foregone benefits to environmental justice communities, climate, worker and public safety, and accessible recycling services to New York businesses.

We appreciated the Oversight Hearing this Committee convened for Local Law 199 and were encouraged to hear the Department state that Commercial Waste Zones was a priority. We urge the Council and DSNY to continue to prioritize this important reform and look forward to the Department's bold and timely implementation of the law.

Secondly, we recommend increases to the budget for DSNY's marine and rail transfer stations, specifically to accept commercial waste during peak commercial collection times.

In the Mayor's proposed budget, full time staff and budget for marine transfer stations is substantially reduced, by 17 full time positions, and \$750,000. The marine and rail transfer stations are the gold standard in minimizing pollution exposure and climate impact in processing waste. We understand that there is unused capacity at the marine transfer stations, and believe it is common sense to process more waste at these gold standard facilities. Environmental justice requires that the environmental benefits of the marine transfer stations be enjoyed by the communities that unwillingly bear the environmental burdens of the City's commercial waste. Therefore, we press DSNY to adopt measures to allow for marine and rail transfer stations to accept commercial waste as called for in the current Solid Waste Management Plan, and to budget the resources required to facilitate it. This would allow for further efficiencies in commercial waste routes, cutting additional truck miles from overburdened communities, and would help level the playing field for smaller designated waste haulers that do not own their own transfer stations.

Third, in excited anticipation for the Council to make organics a mandatory recyclable material, we urge the Council ensure that DSNY is fully funded and staffed to implement a citywide organics service. Current diversion rates hovering at about 17-18% in New York City are dismal and are far from on track to meet the City and State's climate goals. New Yorkers need yearlong, dependable organics service, which we were excited to see Mayor Adams announce this February. Considering this forthcoming service, we are very concerned to see a \$516,046 cut in the Composting and Organics Processing OTPS budget. We cannot have budget constraints hinder implementation of a citywide universal, mandatory composting program. We are similarly alarmed to see \$18,689,117 cut, specifically from Recycling & Sustainability OTPS, in the budget for Waste Prevention, Reuse, and Recycling OTPS. The budget does not appear anywhere near prepared for a fully funded and staffed citywide organics service. We urge the Council and DSNY to allocate a budget that funds this necessary program that has already been promised to New Yorkers.

Lastly, we urge the council and the agency to ensure that the budget reflects the will and the resources to properly enforce DSNY rules, especially commercial recycling and organics source separation rules, illegal dumping in environmental justice communities, and enforcement of transfer station rules. Simply put, New York City cannot afford to cut enforcement of the current recycling rules and protections of environmental justice communities. Anecdotally and in previous hearings with DSNY, we have learned that enforcement has been minimal. Troublingly, the mayor's proposed budget includes substantial cuts to enforcement personnel, with 78 positions being eliminated in total. Similarly, the Business Integrity Commission – which regulates the private sanitation industry and enforces recycling rules for private waste haulers – is also facing about a 10% proposed reduction in workforce. As we wait for full implementation of Local Law 199, businesses and haulers must at minimum comply with existing recycling rules, and a cut to enforcement personnel would be a tremendous obstacle for that goal.

We are grateful for this Committee's and DSNY's continued efforts to improve New York City's sanitation and waste management. With these budget recommendations, we hope to see

significant reform for commercial waste processing and composting in the City in the coming year, as well as effective enforcement of our existing recycling laws. Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify.

**Sonya Chung, Environmental Justice Program
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
151 West 30th Street, 11th floor
New York, NY 10001
sochung@nylpi.org**

Founded 45 years ago, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) pursues equality and justice for all New Yorkers. Our work activates the power of New York communities as they lead the fight to make equal justice a reality. We strive to create equal access to healthcare, achieve equality of opportunity and self-determination for people with disabilities, ensure immigrant opportunity, strengthen local non-profits, and secure environmental justice for low-income communities of color.

NYLPI's Environmental Justice Program fights environmental racism, works to eliminate the unfair burden of environmental hazards borne by low-income communities and communities of color, and seeks to create a more equitable and sustainable city. We support local leadership and strengthen communities' ability to assert their right to a healthy and sustainable environment.

Delia Kulukundis

2728 Thomson Avenue, Unit 445
Long Island City, NY 11101
dkulukundis@gmail.com



March 17, 2023

Councilmember Sandy Nurse

Chairperson, Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
New York City Council

cc: New York City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams
cc: Commissioner, New York City Department of Transportation
cc: Commissioner, The City of New York Department of Sanitation

Re: Pass Int 0244-2022 and make curbside organics collection universal and mandatory

Thank you for your leadership in cosponsoring and hearing Int 0244-2022 for universal residential curbside organics collection. For the sake of our future climate and present health and quality of life in New York City, I urge you to pass this transformative bill and fully fund its implementation in the budget this year. In order for the program to be as cost-effective as possible, residential curbside compost collection must be a citywide program that is mandatory for all residences.

I am an organizer with the grassroots climate organization 350Brooklyn, which is an independent local chapter affiliated with the nationwide climate organization 350.org. Our organization has over 4000 members, and since 2015 we have worked to make our city a leader in fighting climate change and protecting those most vulnerable to its impacts. We have a record of supporting the passage of New York City's most transformative climate laws like Local Law 97 and Gas Free NYC and defending those laws in their implementation. 350Brooklyn urges swift passage and implementation of Int 0244 now.

Although we welcome Mayor Adams' announcement of a citywide residential composting program, we know that his proposal of a voluntary program is insufficient. We must not settle for a voluntary program when a mandatory program would be more effective and efficient. Organic waste creates methane when it decomposes anaerobically in landfills, but those emissions can be avoided by diverting organic waste into compost processing facilities where it can decompose aerobically. Methane emissions are a very significant contributor to dangerous global heating, since methane

is a potent greenhouse gas. The good news is that methane is short-lived in the atmosphere, so by reducing methane emissions now, we can meaningfully reduce global heating in the short term - buying time for our atmosphere to recover while we reduce carbon dioxide emissions from more difficult-to-abate sectors like heavy industry. In other words, reducing methane now will reduce global temperatures in the short term. It is therefore essential that New York City implement a mandatory residential curbside composting program in order to capture as much compostable material as possible.

The program must be mandatory to be as cost-effective as possible. A voluntary program would collect a smaller amount of compostable material for the same number of truck trips. The City would not save money by making the program voluntary, but it would simply have a less effective program.

We understand the necessity of the environmental review being conducted by the DOT and DSNY, and we urge those agencies to complete the data analysis and issue their rulings without further delay, so that City Council may pass Int 0244 before finalizing the budget. The Council must fully fund the program in the budget, including robust, language-accessible educational and outreach materials, to ensure the program's success.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your leadership on climate and zero-waste legislation in New York City.

Sincerely,
Delia Kulukundis



BK ROT, Inc.
86 Wyckoff ave
PO BOX 370538
Brooklyn, NY 11237

Hello and thank you for giving me space to share this testimony.

My name is Ash Drury, I am a lifelong Brooklynite, as well as a compost micro hauler and processor in Bed Stuy with BK Rot. Even before working in compost for the last few years, I grew up with a compost bin in my Flatbush backyard in which I collect food scraps from my neighbors to create compost that gets used directly in my backyard vegetable garden. That is all to say that I am very aware of the need for compost collection in NYC, as many of my neighbors compost bags are full of organic matter which attracts rats and emits harmful methane in landfills when it could instead be fertilizing plants creating food for our communities!

I am so grateful for the work of CM Sandy Nurse and the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management which has worked hard for the first ever plan for universal residential organics collection, and I want to raise some particular areas of concern within this plan. Firstly; in the absence of city responsibility over organics, community organizations like BK Rot have spent years creating local institutions which are already being threatened by universal collection. Our models of local, decentralized compost collection and processing have very important benefits; they have less of a carbon footprint then trucking to out of city facilities, they increase public knowledge and feeling of responsibility for compost, and organic matter enters into a local cycle of carbon usage as compost processed at community gardens or local sites gets used by gardeners in the same neighborhood as the food waste was produced in! I understand that right now these institutions do not have the capacity to handle universal compost collection, but I am curious about how we can collaborate to make the city's program supportive of community gardens, micro haulers, and local compost sites.

Perhaps bike micro haulers do door to door curbside collection bringing organics to a centralized site where it can be brought by trucks or freight train to the larger compost sites out of the city, decreasing auto traffic and harmful air emissions caused by trucking while also creating more jobs and buy in from our neighborhoods. Another possibility would be having a

community-first model where compost gets picked up first by preexisting community institutions, and the spillover is handled by DSNY. By incorporating the already existing community led compost structures into this exciting moment of organic collection expansion, we can ensure that our public institutions stay accountable to the communities and movements which they are serving and who have created them, and create room for more local, flexible, and decentralized problem solving.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing about the next steps of this process!



BK ROT, Inc.
PO BOX 370538
Brooklyn, NY 11237

March 15, 2023

New York City Council and Sanitation Chair Nurse:

My name is Nora Tjossem, and I am the current Co-Director of BK ROT, a youth-driven, bike-powered composting service in Bushwick dedicated not only to diverting food waste from landfills, but to hiring young people of color in a rapidly gentrifying area. As you know, we have been operating in Brooklyn for almost ten years. Over the last three years of the pandemic alone, we have diverted hundreds of tons of organics to create high quality compost that goes directly back to our neighbors in north and central Brooklyn. All of this was done in community gardens and on bikes, fossil fuel free, by young folks who have fearlessly advocated for environmental justice solutions in the communities where they have grown up. They are not just the future, but the here and now of environmental justice and waste equity.

My question today is how the city's forecasted plan will include and uplift, rather than eradicate, these fierce community composters who have held down composting in New York City. How will you value and uplift the workers who are out there, on bikes and in gardens all year round, putting into practice the power of circularity, and demonstrating the many applications of compost in our city: from growing fresh food, to flood mitigation, to street tree care and soil remediation in public green spaces?

Initiatives like mandatory organics recycling will encourage new composters, rather than simply shifting those who already compost with community orgs to a municipal system. As the CWZ rolls out and more bike lanes appear with the popularization of bike deliveries, so too do opportunities for collaboration with bike-based microhaulers, who can mitigate traffic congestion and diesel emissions while creating local, green jobs.

We need to know that with this rollout, we are not simply replacing the inequitable harms from landfilling waste, with anaerobic digestion, pollution from adding diesel trucks for collection, and waste export to other frontline communities. There are so many opportunities to learn from and work with microhaulers, food scrap drop off managers, and other community composters who have made compost their bread and butter (not to mention veggies, coffee, and fruits!). I hope you will do so as you plan for this new future of waste in New York City.

Thank you for your time,
Nora Tjossem
Co-Director, BK ROT



Contact: Clare Miflin
clare@centerforzerowastedesign.org
718.306.9525

Testimony of the Center for Zero Waste Design, March 15th, 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing: Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

Thank you, I'm Clare Miflin, ED of the [Center for Zero Waste Design](https://centerforzerowastedesign.org). I am very happy that this administration is working to clean up sidewalks, containerize waste and expand organics collection citywide – these were things we advocated for with our [Put Waste to Work: For Vibrant Streetscapes, Green Jobs and Healthy Neighborhoods](#) vision plan. This plan focuses on how to get trash bags, litter and rats off our sidewalks, how to integrate reuse infrastructure and the circular economy into the city and how to separate all food waste to regenerate soils citywide.

I'd like to focus on the last strategy – regenerating soils citywide. We'd like to see all private and public greenspaces in the city - parks, housing developments, street tree pits and private gardens - are regenerated with compost made within the city. Compost does much more for soils than fertilizer, bringing multiple benefits:

- Healthy compost-rich soil filters pollutants and holds stormwater, reducing flooding and ensuring plants stay green without watering. Compost can hold 5 times its weight in water.
- Compost helps restore health of the soil, which globally stores more carbon than all the plants, atmosphere and ocean combined. Healthy soil is alive, and teeming with microbes. Compost helps ensure the good microbes predominate, the ones that protect the plants from diseases and help them thrive.
- Healthy plants and trees filter the city air, and the more water they transpire, the cooler they can make the air in the summer.
- Community composting brings people together, and offers a tangible way for people to see how their sustainable actions can make a difference to their neighborhood. As Emily Bachman, formerly GrowNYC has often said, community composting brings HOPE, something we all need these days.
- It educates and incentivizes people to separate their food and yard waste
- Community composting produces the best quality compost which can satisfy landscapers specifications and is the kind of thing people are happy to put on their gardens – compost that isn't filled with little bits of plastic or PFAS like compost made from curbside collected organic waste.

I also know that there is a lot of funding for cloudburst projects in the city – project which better manage stormwater often through green infrastructure. Yet NYC green infrastructure guidelines do not mention the use of compost, unlike those of some other cities, like [Seattle](#), where compost is often required. I'd like to see DSNY work with Parks, DEP, NYCHA and the Mayor's Office to ensure that local compost is used in stormwater projects, is included in green infrastructure guidelines, and that public projects and agencies are required to procure and use local compost. I hope that this could provide additional funding and support and help ramp up small scale composting citywide, and I would like the city to work to change zoning rules, Parks department policies and more to provide the necessary space for small-scale composting, making it an integral part of greenspace maintenance.

This not only improves soils, but reduces rats, litter and can greatly reduce the amount of trucks, of the heaviest part of our waste.

The Center for Zero Waste Design is happy to help in any way we can. We have case studies online on parks [Battery Park City](#) and [Domino Park](#), both of which maintain the soils through compost made on site, from yard and food waste. We have extrapolated from these, to the whole of the city – if we assume 20% of the 47 thousand acres of landscaped areas are regenerated with $\frac{3}{4}$ " compost every year it would require 500,000 tons of food scraps, about half of all residential food scraps. And we could then eliminate trucking of those food scraps and use micro-haulers

to take them to local compost facilities which would be run by those maintaining local green spaces, increasing jobs, and greening our city.

Resources:

PutWastetoWork.org

CenterforZeroWasteDesign.org

Good morning! My name is Ryan Castalia; I'm the Executive Director of Sure We Can, New York's only nonprofit dedicated to serving canners, or the folks who collect and redeem bottles and cans others discard in order to earn income.

Thank you so much to Chair Nurse and the Council for continuing to make the space to discuss the critical issue of expanding New York State's Bottle Bill. It's heartening that the Council is moving to support the effort at the state level to expand the Bill. It makes a lot of sense, too, since the Bottle Bill is essential—it's critical for our city and state to fulfill their commitments to waste reduction; it's critical for the livelihoods of thousands of essential workers who are cleaning up after New Yorkers with little to no recognition or support; and it's critical for our NYC communities, many of which are designated environmental justice areas, regularly overburdened by street litter and pollution.

The resolution being voted on tomorrow is a major step. However, as we gather today to discuss the budget of the Sanitation Department, I call on the city to follow through on this important acknowledgement with tangible policy change and a new approach to supporting the redemption system, which since its inception and to this day has been New York's most effective tool for recycling.

Though the Bottle Bill is a state law and the city cannot act to change the value of the deposit or what containers are included, it can act to make the conditions of those who work within the system better. Rising rents and cost of operation mean redemption centers are going out of business across the five boroughs, meaning many individuals and businesses don't have an easy way to get their deposits back. This is especially an issue in Manhattan, where there are no active redemption centers at all. Reverse vending machines that are prone to malfunction or that have severe limits on volume are not sufficient to address this problem. The city should make direct investments in redemption infrastructure, like redemption centers, that can work in concert with DSNY to ensure the maximum amount of material is meaningfully recycled across the city. We are more than happy to work with the Department to ensure the containers being diverted are being captured in data and recognized as part of the city's overall recycling rate.

The canners, who, like New York's Strongest, work every day in arduous and potentially dangerous conditions to clean up our streets, should also be recognized and supported. Canners face intense stigma on the basis of race, class, background, spoken language, age, housing situation, or disability. They don't need additional stigma from the institutions of the city they are cleaning. Though it has been some time since canners were called "scavengers" or worse by city institutions, the wounds of those attitudes remain. The city should work to heal them by recognizing their work and personal dignity through a Canners' Bill of Rights, or at the least public statements supporting canners and encouraging New Yorkers to participate in the system.

By introducing real systemic support for the redemption system, by providing resources and recognition to the marginalized workers that produce the system's incomparable results, NYC

can do what it's always done best—blaze a trail for others to follow; this time, into a more sustainable future for all. Thank you.



**Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
FY24 Preliminary Budget Hearing
Wednesday, March 15, 2023 at 10:30 am
in the NYC Committee Room at City Hall.**

Good Morning:

And Congratulations to all of us – composters, our elected officials and administrative authorities for bringing New York City closer toward universal compost collection.

My name is Vandra Thorburn. I am the founder and president of Vokashi – New York’s original compost collection service founded in 2009nd. Since 2011 and my first testimonies before Sanitation Committees, **I have hoped for the reallocation of “waste export dollars” toward community-based composting and recycling initiatives.** Unfortunately, that budget line has only increased despite the many composting initiatives that have grown in the past 10 years demonstrating the potential for an amazing assortment of community-based projects just waiting to be expanded, developed, duplicated, studied and invested in – instead the current budget plan is for more dollars for waste-export and \$45 million in trucks!¹

With the political support found in the current elected representatives and passage of the Zero Waste package of bills (Intrs #274, 275, 280 and 281) and potential passage of Intro 244 requiring mandatory separation of organics from trash, I want to respectfully underscore the following issues:

Establish a Two tiered collection strategy for residential buildings in New York City:

Tier 1. Large buildings (more than 50 units) **MANDATORY** source separation on site. Dept of Sanitation should focus on Landlords and RE Developers and Managers to invest in the education of their tenants and janitorial staff to manage and maintain source separated waste streams within their buildings. Building managers should be educated on all reduction, reuse and recycling initiatives. Buildings could install dewatering machines and onsite composting equipment – reducing their loads of trash to DSNY by 1/3. There is the potential for dramatic change to DSNY organics practices. Huge savings for the DSNY in costs of equipment and personnel. Dramatic cost savings transferred to landlords and developers for installing composting equipment on site.

Tier 2. For residents in buildings with fewer than 50 units and low density-neighborhoods, A NEW GREEN SERVICE:

¹ Consider that GrowNYC has had grant from DSNY for past 10 years to support organic collections and processing of +/- \$4.5 million / year = total investment of \$45 million!

- ✓ Establish and Contract with variety of neighborhood landscaper/composters/micro haulers to collect and manage organics collections. Most households are only generating 5 to 10 lbs of organic waste a week. Low density neighborhoods can provide stable and sustainable base of support for dedicated landscapers/composters.
- ✓ Invest in a variety of community-based composting initiatives from large scale indoor dewatering machines to innovative composting methods.
- ✓ Allow for and encourage homes with garden space to compost onsite.
- ✓ Invest in local organics processing centers – owned and managed by community non-profit centers or green spaces or community gardens.
- ✓ There are hundreds of community gardens – some needing lots of attention.
- ✓ Imagine one-third of the waste export budget investing in the network of community gardens with innovative composting machines and methods and centers for educational and neighborhood green recycling industry.

Top of the food waste hierarchy is Prevention and Reduction.

- ✓ The Dept of Sanitation Practices on both the residential and commercial sides are designed to encourage MORE not less food waste.
- ✓ Particularly if the practice is to feed anaerobic digestors. The carting and for profit mindset would be to take more and more organics.
- ✓ Need to survey how many people are cooking at home – with or without food preparations – and how many people are eating out. (Our history shows that the average household generates between 20 to 35 lbs of food scraps a month. Collection services should be designed for the actual waste.)

Establish an independent organics collection industry – based on gardeners, landscapers and micro haulers.

- a. Regard and separate organics as a resource rather than ‘trash’;
- b. As an independent waste stream, mandates could include campaigns to reduce and redirect excess food production – i.e., sourcing to food banks and other food services for underserved areas and populations.
- c. As an independent waste stream greater attention to limit contamination;
- d. Priority given to compost organic matter using contemporary range of methods and machines on the market.
- e. Priority on creating and monitoring good, clean compost.²
- f. Limit use of anaerobic digestors at water treatment plants which is tied to use of unsustainable fossil fuels.

Respectfully submitted,
Vandra Thorburn

² ‘The Use of Sewage Sludge as a Fertilizer or Soil Amendment Endangers Human Health and the Future of Our Farms.’

Dear Council,

I want to begin by thanking Commissioner Tisch and Mayor Adams for their support of rolling out composting citywide. As a resident of Manhattan, I have been composting since I was a little kid, and have been dutifully dropping off my food scraps at a GrowNYC spot ever since they launched. New Yorkers are always challenged for space, and sometimes my bag of food waste can take up a large portion of my already precious freezer space, but what concerns me much more is how much organic material is going to our overflowing landfills. There is simply no need for organic waste to end up in landfill, especially when almost a third of the average New York City trash bag could have been composted instead. We can save money by reducing the total amount of waste sent to landfills and work to build a healthier, cleaner city with fewer rats. Expanding access and education to composting is one of the best ways to do this.

Firstly, I believe that composting should be mandatory for businesses, and that we should create a financial incentive for individuals to do it. As commissioner Tisch has said, New Yorkers need some time to get used to it, and a system similar to the "Pay as you throw" systems that DSNY has tried in the past could help increase participation. At the same time, composting should absolutely be mandatory for businesses that produce organic waste. The revenue produced from this could also be used to further fund compost education, information and equipment.

Investing in composting education has so many benefits. It can often seem like a daunting task to begin, but composting can be as simple as keeping your kitchen scraps in your freezer to turn in once a week. Many people already do this at a Grow NYC collection location on certain days, but this could be expanded to local composting sites, where the composting is done right then and there. This would in turn save on transportation costs, and allow community gardens, other local partners or even the local street trees to benefit from the nutrient rich soil immediately.

And finally, the city needs to lead by example and ensure that NYC agencies do a better job of composting where possible. For example, NYC Parks has hardly been the most friendly to composting organizations in recent years and could do more to compost their own organic waste. Where possible, Mayor Adams and the city council should pursue legislation to encourage or mandate composting across all city organizations and employees. Yes, even the NYPD - let's see if we can turn New York's Finest into New York's Finest Composters.

I am lucky to be able to serve as a consultant to Earth Matter, a grassroots organization providing composting education and action right here on Governors Island. We must continue to grow and develop the NYC composting community, and need your help to truly make this city waste free by 2030. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Joey Kemeny

From: Kimberly Marten <kimberly.marten@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 14, 2023 7:58 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Supporting the Zero Waste bill package

Distinguished Council Members,

Please note that I am writing in my personal capacity only, not as a representative of Barnard College or Columbia University, and that Barnard College and Columbia University may not endorse my viewpoint.

I am a professor of political science at Barnard College here in New York City. I teach a class on the "Global Politics of Climate Change." As a proud resident of New York City for over 20 years, I want to be able to hold my head up high and tell the 100 Barnard and Columbia undergraduate students who take my class each year that New York City is a global leader on climate change mitigation. In many ways New York City is a global leader already, including through its leadership in the C-40 program and its Net Zero energy planning, among other things.

At the moment, though, New York City isn't meeting all of its climate promises as well as it could. A major problem is the methane released by food waste that New Yorkers generate. The problem is particularly acute in New York City because so many buildings lack garbage disposals; at least when food waste is sent down a disposal system, it can generate useful recycled sludge for soil amendment and other purposes. But most of the food waste thrown into garbage cans ends up in landfills, generating the methane gas that is a major contributor to global warming and climate change.

To fix this we need easy composting programs to be available to all New Yorkers, in whichever borough they live, and in whatever kind of housing they have. This will empower all New Yorkers to make a difference in climate change mitigation.

I therefore strongly support the bill package before you on Wednesday. Thank you for your attention to this.

Sincerely yours,
Kimberly Marten

Testimony regarding NYC Sanitation Department budget FY24

Maggie Clarke, Ph.D. Maggie@maggieclarke.com

maggieclarkeenvironmental.com

I'm Maggie Clarke, Ph.D., former adjunct professor, member of the National Recycling Coalition Board and Manhattan SWAB among others, speaking on my own today.

I'm very pleased that there is significant movement towards curbside organics collection for all New Yorkers. I really want this to work, but I'm mindful that the Mayor needs these programs to be cost-effective, and that depends on having a high participation rate filling the trucks. I'm afraid we don't know as much as we should, how to move decisively towards 100% participation and I'm not sure we have made a commitment as a City to do that. Clearly to reach zero waste, participation must be near 100%. Going forward we must understand the critical role of participation in achieving zero waste.

Most residents are not eager beavers ready to participate no matter what the inconvenience or cost. The City's educational materials are designed for eager beavers, to tell them what and how to recycle and when. But this does not address the most who refuse for whatever reasons. We need to understand the reasons, how prevalent each one is, and where the reluctant ones are geographically and demographically. We need to know how many need to have peers and role models participate. We need to know how many need motivational messages or monetary incentives to participate or fines if they don't. Participation studies, as I've conducted in the past, are needed. DSNY's waste characterization and other studies cost between \$4-8 million. I call on the City to invest similarly to understand New Yorkers' attitudes and inclinations, in order to design more effective educational materials and outreach approaches. My doctoral dissertation was on this.

Once we have a better handle on why so many don't participate we can then design targeted education and outreach. But we have been chronically underfunding the education and outreach so it's no wonder we are not making progress towards better capture rates. For decades model cities like Seattle and San Francisco spent over \$3/capita/year and Austin has spent \$5/capita/year achieving 90% participation. We spend more like 85 cents / person/year. I call on the City to budget \$3/person/year and work decisively towards getting everyone to participate.

From: Mary Ellen Sullivan <maryellen.sullivan@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 16, 2023 8:44 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony for March 15th Hearing of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

Hello New York City Council:

I would like to submit my testimony for the March 15th hearing of the Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management.

Here is the testimony itself. Thank you. Mary Ellen Sullivan

Written Testimony

Mary Ellen Sullivan, Brooklyn Resident.

Committee Name: **Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management**

Hearing Name: **Preliminary Budget Hearing - Sanitation and Solid Waste Management**

Date: **March 15, 2023 @ 10:30am**

Support/Opposition for: **Zero Waste Package**

- [Int 0274-2022](#): Establishing a goal of zero waste for NYC by 2030
- [Int 0275-2022](#): Goal of zero waste to landfill and reporting on progress to goal

In 2013, former Mayor Bloomberg called for NYC to introduce a mandatory composting program - "the final frontier of recycling." Not to be outdone, in 2015 former Mayor de Blasio announced a commitment for NYC to achieve zero waste by 2030. Despite these announcements, composting or organics collection has yet to be fully or consistently implemented. While I am thrilled that Mayor Adams has announced a planned to fully roll-out organics collection, I am concerned that unless the NYCC passes Int 0274-2022 and Int 0275-2022, organics collection will be at risk of being cut or denounced as unpopular or uneconomical. As a concerned citizen and active member of We Act for Environmental Justice, New Kings Democrats, and Swing Left, I support the two bills introduced by CMs Nurse and Hanif (2023 versions of Int 0274-2022 and Int 0275-2022). Cementing New York City's Zero Waste Goal into law, making the program mandatory, and then requiring successive administrations to report on progress on Zero Waste to Landfill will give New York City the momentum and transparency we need to make real and needed reductions in our waste.

One-third of New York City's ~3.2 million tons of trash are organic. Without a fully supported organics collection (or composting) program, organic waste is mixed with regular waste and it is all being exported to incinerators or landfills. There are multiple problems with this approach.

- First, it is expensive. Transporting or exporting our waste costs roughly \$450 million annually.

- Second, it contributes to environmental racism. Landfills and incinerators are mostly located in black and brown neighborhoods exposing residents to harmful fumes and particulate matter that directly result in health problems. This is environmental racism and our inability to change our waste practices makes us complicit in its continuation.
- Third, it warms the planet. Landfills and incinerators emit carbon dioxide and methane which are powerful greenhouse gasses that directly contribute to the warming of our planet. And trucking our waste to landfill locations as far as Ohio or South Carolina results in even more carbon dioxide emissions being released into our atmosphere.

If we roll-out universal and mandatory composting, NYC will be on the path to eliminating 34% of our curbside or residential waste.

We could increase the amount of waste we are diverting by also requiring the NYC Parks Department to compost leaves, tree branches and other organic park waste.

The DSNY does not have to go it alone on composting. By engaging and partnering with community compost organizations such as Green City Force, BK Rot, Lower East Side Ecology, Earth Matter, and Big Reuse - to name a few - the city could make progress towards Zero Waste **AND** create green jobs and educational training programs. While it is laudable that Newtown Creek creates biogas that is used by National Grid to power NYC homes (is the project complete, or does methane flaring continue?), creating nutrient rich soil that can be used throughout New York would be a more beneficial outcome. Creating soil, not biogas + carbon dioxide is the solution our planet needs in the long run. We need our community compost organizations for this to happen.

If we want NYC's organics collection program to be a success, we must make it mandatory. Without this requirement, apartment buildings will continue to ignore renters' and owners' requests to allocate space and time for organics collection. And the DSNY will not be able to achieve enough volume to realize the program's ability to reduce net transportation costs (Independent Budget Office study). Without the program being made mandatory, city leaders will again be complaining that organics collection is not wanted by residents (not true) and that it is not cost effective. Let's not repeat the mistakes of the past, let's set ourselves up for success and make the program mandatory.

If we require our city residents to participate in organics collection to help achieve zero waste, it is then the city's responsibility to transparently report progress on the goal of Zero Waste to Landfill. The residents will be putting in the effort, they deserve to see how their efforts are contributing to the city's improved environmental performance.

Various city leaders have been talking about the need and the benefits of composting and organics collection since 2013. Major US cities such as Seattle, Austin, San Francisco, and Los Angeles have all rolled out mandatory organics/composting programs. It is past time for NYC to get serious in our battle to achieve Zero Waste. It is time for action. It is time to pass **Int 0274-2022** and **Int 0275-2022**.

--

Mary Ellen Sullivan

From: Page Fortna <vpf4@columbia.edu>
Sent: Saturday, March 11, 2023 3:50 PM
To: Finance Testimony <financetestimony@council.nyc.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony in support of Int 0274-2022 and Int 0244-2022

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Page Fortna. I have lived in Northern Manhattan for 24 years, and am a proud member of WEACT For Environmental Justice. I am not able to attend the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management meeting on Wednesday, so am writing to provide written testimony.

I urge you to support the Zero Waste Bill Package, including Int 0274-2022 establishing a goal of zero waste for NYC by 2030, and Int 0244-2022 mandating residential curbside organics collection.

I support these bills for several reasons:

- Diverting food waste from garbage bags to rat-proof compost containers will put a significant dent in the city's rat problem.
- Cutting the city's waste, especially cutting food and yard waste from the stream that goes to landfill, will help NYC achieve its climate goals by reducing the methane produced in landfills.
- This will reduce air pollution that disproportionately hurts people of color and marginalized communities.
- I spend time in Portland Oregon (where my husband is from) where mandatory curbside composting has been effect for years. It works extremely well -- it did not take long for residents to get used to separating their food waste from other trash, and to put it out for curbside pickup. My understanding is that ttthe same is true for other cities that have established mandatory curbside composting programs. New York should be a leader on this issue, but has been a laggard. It's time to catch up!

We need this bill to become law today, and I urge you to pass it immediately.

Thank you for your time.
Page Fortna

~~~~~  
~~~~~

Page Fortna (she/her)

W. 115th Street

New York NY 10025

~~~~~  
~~~~~

**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: 03-15-2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ALANA WEISS NYDORF

Address: 53 PARK PL NYC NY 10007

I represent: DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

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: 3/15/2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joseph Antonelli

Address: 125 WORTH ST, Rm 702

I represent: Department of Sanitation

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: Jessica Tisch

Address: _____

I represent: DSNY Commissioner

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: Gregory Anderson

Address: _____

I represent: DSNY Deputy Commissioner

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: 3/15/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JAVIER LOJAN

Address: 125 WORTH ST

I represent: DSNY

Address: 125 WORTH ST

**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: MARCH 15, 2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ERIC A. GOLDSTEIN

Address: _____

I represent: NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE

Address: 40 WEST 20 ST NY NY COUNCIL

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: Lacey Tauber

Address: _____

I represent: Brooklyn Borough President Reynoso

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: 3/15/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sonya Chung

Address: 151 W 30th St 11th FL

I represent: New York Lawyers for 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: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christine Pate-Romero

Address: 8th St

I represent: Lower East Side Ecology Center

Address: PO Box 20488 NY NY 10009

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