



# sanitation

Kathryn Garcia Commissioner

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**Testimony of Kathryn Garcia, Commissioner  
New York City Department of Sanitation**

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

**Monday, June 15, 2020  
1:00 P.M.**

**Intro No. 1942 - A LOCAL LAW to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to organic waste drop off sites; and**

**Intro No. 1943 - A LOCAL LAW to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to community recycling centers**

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Good afternoon Chair Reynoso, and members of the City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. I am Kathryn Garcia, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Sanitation. I am joined today by Bridget Anderson, Deputy Commissioner for Recycling and Sustainability, and Gregory Anderson, Assistant Commissioner for Policy and External Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this afternoon.

Before addressing these bills specifically, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the challenging position that we find ourselves in as a city during this time. The COVID-19 pandemic has put immense stress on our city and our communities. The Administration has had to make some difficult cuts to the budget to continue core government operations and to devote resources to essential safety, health, shelter, and food security needs. This includes deep cuts to the very programs we are here today to discuss. As I mentioned at our Executive Budget hearing last month, no one is more frustrated than I am to see these programs be reduced, suspended or eliminated. But it is a necessary step for our city to take due to our current budget reality.

Now, more than ever, we are seeing the importance of supporting communities and giving New Yorkers the tools to continue to sustain and improve their neighborhoods. I believe that the spirit of these bills endeavors to do that – to provide local, equitable opportunities for New Yorkers to reduce waste, to fight climate change through daily choices and behaviors – and to bolster a culture of resource reuse and reinvestment locally. Now more than ever, we need to empower individuals and communities to keep our neighbors healthy and safe, to help our city grow and thrive.

We look forward to working with Council to identify and implement creative approaches to achieve the goals laid out in these bills. I am here today sober about the challenges we face, yet optimistic about our combined passion to overcome them. Despite these challenges, we can work together to achieve our zero waste goals, and we can do so by empowering individuals and communities to make change.

## **DSNY's Community-Based Zero Waste Programs**

For the last five decades, efforts in New York City to conserve resources, reduce waste and achieve zero waste have often started at the community level. They have been led by residents, teachers, gardeners, nonprofit organizations, block associations, and small businesses. These efforts continue today in neighborhoods across the city, ranging in scale from large to small.

At the beginning, recycling of newspaper, cans and bottles happened because of the hard work and dedication of volunteers collecting materials from their neighbors or working at community drop-off centers. It is only as a result of their work that the City enacted the landmark Local Law 19 of 1989, which created the city's mandatory curbside recycling program. Today, this program is a cornerstone among the city's sustainability programs, and we continue to achieve year-over-year growth in the amount of mixed paper and metal, glass, plastic and cartons collected.

At the Department of Sanitation, our approach is two-fold: to support, enrich and empower community-based efforts to recover resources for beneficial use while also ensuring that *all* New Yorkers have access to the tools to contribute to the citywide zero waste effort. At times, these two approaches can create healthy conflict, inspiring thoughtful conversations about the merits of a program's breadth of scale versus depth of engagement. We believe that both approaches are necessary to achieve our goals, and that we must take a "both/and" approach, not "either/or."

Organic waste is particularly suited for community-based recovery and beneficial use. When composted, food scraps and yard waste become a nutrient-rich soil amendment that can bring health and vibrancy to neighborhoods – from street trees to parks to community gardens. DSNY created the NYC Compost Project in 1993 to rebuild our city's soils by providing New Yorkers with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities they need to produce and use compost locally.

The seven NYC Compost Project partners located in all five boroughs operate food scrap drop-off sites, process collected material and distribute finished compost to public greening projects around the city. They also partner with community groups for stewardship projects and provide technical assistance to local gardeners and at-home composters. Since the NYC compost project was started in 1993, we have trained more than 800 Master Composters, worked with thousands of volunteers and supported more than 225 active community compost sites and gardens. It is thanks to these passionate community composters that we were able to build the momentum that helped us launch and expand the curbside composting program over the last several years.

Before COVID-19, DSNY supported the operation of 175 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs. DSNY's support included funding for staffing and site operation, technical assistance, collection services, and local and regional processing. Many of these sites were facilitated by our Compost Project partners or by GrowNYC, and they had a dedicated base of thousands of weekly users. While the funding cuts in FY21 will dramatically reduce the support that we are able to provide to these sites, we hope that independent community support will allow at least some of them to resume as our city begins to reopen. And we will continue to provide training and technical assistance using in-house outreach staff to support our community composters and gardeners across the city. We expect to resume financial and operational support for these partners and sites in FY22.

Another example of DSNY's community-based approach to zero waste is donateNYC, which helps New Yorkers give goods, find goods, and do good. By donating and reusing goods instead of discarding them, New Yorkers can greatly reduce waste, conserve energy and resources, save money, and help provide jobs and human services for New Yorkers in need. DonateNYC also provides vital support for New York City's reuse community, helping nonprofit organizations and local reuse businesses increase and promote their reuse efforts.

Thanks to our donateNYC partners and other providers, NYC has more than 700 clothing and textile drop-off locations, located in all 59 community districts across the five boroughs. While some of these locations may be temporarily closed due to the COVID-19, we anticipate that many will resume collection as the city and state continue reopening.

For some products and materials, especially those that are inherently hazardous or dangerous, extended producer responsibility policies offer the best approach toward safe and sustainable management. While flawed, the State electronics recycling law envisions a network of recycling options for New York residents funded by electronics manufacturers and retailers. We continue to have discussions with the State DEC regarding the convenience standard and other elements of that law to improve its effectiveness. Producer-funded takeback programs for paint and pharmaceuticals have also recently been enacted at the state level, and we look forward to their implementation in the coming months.

Lastly, in this time of financial uncertainty, I would like to highlight two successful programs that operate at no cost to the City. ReFashionNYC was conceived in direct response to the city's 2005 Waste Characterization Study, which identified textiles as a component of NYC's residential waste stream with a high potential for reuse. Through ReFashionNYC, apartment buildings, non-profits and commercial establishments host clothing donation bins that are serviced at no cost to the city by non-profit charitable organizations, who then re-sell these items to fund their social services. The program was possible because of years of partnership between DSNY and reuse organizations within the city. E-cycleNYC is a parallel program for apartment buildings to collect and recycle unwanted electronics. E-cycleNYC is supported by electronics producers through the State electronics recycling law, which requires that producers pay some or all costs for such programs.

### **Intro. 1942 and 1943**

I will now turn to the two bills that we are here today to discuss.

The first bill, Intro. 1942, would require the Department to create at least three food and yard waste drop-off sites in each of the 59 community districts by June 1, 2021. Each site would operate a minimum of 20 hours per week and would be located in a geographic area that is easily accessible and in close proximity to public transportation.

Intro. 1943, similarly, would require the Department to create at least three community recycling centers in each of the 59 community districts by June 1, 2021. Like the drop-off sites, each recycling center would operate a minimum of 20 hours per week and would be located in a geographic area that is easily accessible and in close proximity to public transportation. The bill envisions that the recycling centers would accept materials that can be recycled or reused but are not collected curbside. Such materials may include electronics, textiles, furniture and other durable goods, and certain hazardous waste, as practicable. The community recycling centers could be co-located with the food and yard waste drop-off sites in the previous bill.

I want to thank the primary sponsors of these bills, Council Member Powers and Chair Reynoso, for introducing them and for convening this important conversation today. I support the intent of both bills to provide local, community-based reuse, recycling and composting options, especially for materials that do not already have a curbside collection program. I look forward to hearing from the many advocates, activists and other New Yorkers who will testify today and share their passion and commitment for community-oriented solutions to zero waste, and I look forward to working with the City Council to have further discussions about how to achieve our mutual goals.

However, given the City's current dire financial situation, I cannot support these bills as introduced. At a time when many, including the Council Speaker, are calling for even deeper cuts to agency budgets including ours, it would be impossible for DSNY to comply with a new programmatic mandate of this scale.

For Intro. 1942, I agree that the City should offer a robust network of food scrap drop-off sites, in particular in neighborhoods that lack curbside composting service. Such a network existed before the COVID-19 crisis, with 175 food scrap drop-off sites operating across the city. When the funding for curbside composting and for the NYC Compost Project resumes in July 2021, I look forward to working with the City Council to resume both programs, build participation and achieve success.

Intro. 1943 would create an entirely new network of community recycling centers. While I am certainly concerned about the cost of such an initiative, I also have serious concerns about the feasibility of siting and the regulatory requirements that would apply. I look forward to hearing more from the sponsors and from others who have joined us today, to better understand the intent and scope of this legislation.

## **Conclusion**

As we look beyond the COVID-19 crisis, I want to reassure the members of this Committee and all New Yorkers who are watching at home that we remain committed to our zero waste goals. While the budget realities have caused great and unfortunate setbacks, they also offer us an opportunity to reflect, to plan and, as we recover, to implement programs even better and more innovative than those that were cut or suspended.

I look forward to ongoing conversations with the City Council and the passionate advocates and stakeholders who care deeply about these issues in the coming weeks and months. Thank you for your time, and I am now happy to answer any questions.

**STATEMENT OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL  
BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL,  
COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE  
RE: PROPOSED DE BLASIO BUDGET CUTS TO COMPOSTING AND  
POWERS/REYNOSO INTROS 1942 AND 1943**

June 15, 2020

Good afternoon, Chairman Reynoso 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 many of you know, NRDC is a national, not-for-profit legal and scientific organization that has been active on a wide range of public health, natural resource protection and quality of life issues across the nation, around the world and right here in New York City, where we were founded fifty years ago and where our main offices are located. NRDC has more than 25,000 New York City members.

For decades, a top priority for NRDC’s work in New York has been to transform solid waste policy here from a system that relied on landfills and incinerators to one where waste prevention, composting, recycling and equity are the cornerstones of Sanitation Department trash handling.

We thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the DeBlasio administration’s ill-advised proposals to scuttle citywide composting programs and the legislation introduced by Councilmembers Keith Powers and Antonio Reynoso, Intros 1942 and 1943, designed to rescue and expand community composting operations to more equitably serve all New Yorkers. We strongly support the proposed legislation.

An often-overlooked fact about environmental history in New York City is that – going back to the beginnings of the modern environmental movement – it has frequently been the City Council, not the Mayor’s office, that has instigated environmental protection progress. It began in the 1960s when the Council took the lead in addressing New York’s daunting air pollution problems by restricting the burning of coal. It continued in the 1970s, when the Council passed laws limiting toxic lead in the environment. In the 1980s, it was the City Council that spearheaded the city’s pathbreaking mandatory recycling statute. And last year, it was this City Council, under the leadership of Speaker Corey Johnson, that passed landmark climate change legislation.

Indeed, on the issue of composting and organics collection, the City Council has been steering city policy in the right direction for almost a decade. In 2013, the Council passed Local Law 77, creating what became the largest voluntary residential organic waste curbside collection program in the nation. That same year, the Council enacted Local Law 146, establishing a well-designed program for separating and collection food scraps from restaurants and other food service establishments and incentivizing the creation of composting and anaerobic digestion facilities within 100 miles of New York City. Even then, the Council understood that

composting organics was critical to reducing the city's global warming emissions, recycling trash into useful compost, and ultimately reducing the cost to taxpayers of waste export.

The DeBlasio Administration has said the right things and we believe the Mayor personally believes in the value of recycling and keeping organics out of landfills and incinerators. But somehow the Administration has lost its way on this issue. In recent weeks, it eliminated the curbside organics pilot project, zeroed out funds for that operation in FY 21 and, significantly, scrapped the community composting program as well. It has done so despite having included a commitment in the Mayor's 2015 One NYC Sustainability Plan to "expand the NYC organics program to serve all New Yorkers by the end of 2018." City Hall apparently views organics collections as a frill operation, like the after-school clarinet program, rather than the essential sanitation service that it is.

The Mayor's slash-and-burn proposal for its own organics collection and composting programs is short-sighted and ill-advised. It will boost the city's contributions to global warming emissions from landfills. It will pull the rug out from under GrowNYC and dedicated non-profits like the Lower East Side Ecology Center, Big Reuse, Earth Matter NY and local Botanical Gardens across the city, which have been operating successfully on a shoestring budget for many years. And it will leave tens of thousands of New Yorkers without a way to sustainably dispose of their organics in the nation's largest and supposed most sustainable city. As the one year "suspension" of glass and plastics recycling in 2001 demonstrated, you can't stop and start these public trash disposal programs without confusing residents and causing a long-lasting downturn in participation.

Fortunately, the Mayor's broad-brush proposal must make it past the City Council before being finalized. And the ongoing budget process provides an opportunity for Councilmembers to once again play a leadership role in preserving a food waste collection program – at least in some form.

The first and most important step is for the Council to restore \$7 million in funding to retain community composting, neighborhood drop-off sites and related recycling education and out-reach. This \$7 million figure is a drop-in-the-bucket compared to the proposed \$28 million cut to composting programs proposed by the Administration and to the \$108 million proposed cut to the DSNY budget as a whole. As the Council explores ways of making equitable cuts to the roughly \$6 billion budget of the NYPD, in part to enhance needed social programs, we recommend that a tiny portion of the reallocated funds be set aside to support this \$7 million request.

We strongly support the two very sensible pieces of legislation that are before this Committee today. We thank Councilmembers Keith Powers and Antonio Reynoso and their co-sponsors of Intros 1942 and 1943 – the CORE Act. These bills will rescue organic waste drop-off sites from elimination, more equitably locate them throughout the city, with at least three in each community district, and facilitate collection of recyclables that are no longer being picked up by DSNY or its contractors at these new drop-off sites.

We understand that some questions have been raised as to the scope of Intro 1943, specifically regarding whether the drop-off sites are appropriate for the collection of electronic and household hazardous waste. We also understand that the possibility of using these drop-off locations for discarded clothing and textiles is being considered. While we are concerned as to whether the city will be able to comply with state law if it does not provide for convenient collection of electronic waste, we hope that alternative solutions such as household hazardous waste collection days can be added to address this issue. Similarly, to the extent there are objections to Intro 1942 on the grounds that it would be too expensive to operate so many drop-off sites for 20 hours a week, we would support amending that bill to provide for less costly one full day-a-week organics collections at these locations.

In his excellent sustainability report, *Securing Our Future*, Speaker Corey Johnson recognized the critical link between composting the city's organic waste and curbing climate change. The restoration of \$7 million compost and recycling education and outreach funds, out of a proposed \$28 million cutback in these programs, is a sensible step that is consistent with the Speaker's stated policy goals and necessary to preserve at the skeleton of citywide composting, until more ambitious, sustainable and equitable waste reform policies can be implemented. In the months to come, we look forward to working with Councilmembers and staff on Intros 1942 and 1943, as well as on the much-needed long-term solution to the city's food waste problem – legislation that would phase in the mandatory separation and collection of organics, citywide, no later than 2025.

Finally, we are grateful to the Council staff – especially Nicole Abene, Asher Freeman, Abigail Bressler and Laura Popa – for focusing on this important topic when the issues of Corona virus, the budget and systemic racism have justifiably occupied so much attention on the Council's agenda. Thank you for your attention.



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**Comments of Justin Wood, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest  
Before the City Council Sanitation Committee  
On the CORE Act (Intros 1942 and 1943 of 2020)  
June 15, 2020**

Good afternoon, my name is Justin Wood and I am the director of Organizing and Research at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI). I want to thank Chair Reynoso and Council Members Powers for moving so swiftly to introduce these bills after we learned that funding both curbside and community drop-off collections of organic waste and textiles would be suspended due to budget cuts imposed by the mayor.

We also thank Speaker Corey Johnson for scheduling this important hearing amidst an ongoing crisis of policing, public health, and mass unemployment the City, and thank the members of the Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus for announcing a plan to reduce the NYPD budget by \$1 billion – an urgent step needed to reform our massive police department and to mitigate the devastating cuts to other vital services in the mayor’s proposed budget, including DSNY recycling and community education programs.

We strongly support the principles of the CORE Act and urge the Council to pass it immediately after making any amendments necessary based on the expert testimony we’ve heard today. In particular, the bills’ assurance that all communities will host at least three accessible and equitably sited recycling drop off sites will help to ensure that communities historically excluded from recycling programs can fully participate in and learn about the benefits of waste reduction convenient to home.

However, today our most urgent request is that the Council use the budget negotiating process to insist on restoring the modest \$7 million in funding needed for the community drop-off sites and community education programs run by DSNY and its nonprofit partners to resume operations.

While the CORE Act will ensure that the City gives all New Yorkers the option to recycle food scraps and textiles, it may take up to a year to implement even if passed quickly. By acting immediately, the Council can ensure that New Yorkers can continue to recycle food scraps and textiles, and that hard-won changes in recycling knowledge and behavior in millions of households isn't lost for years or decades. Restored funding will also bring back ninety green jobs that hard-working recyclers, composters, and their families desperately need and could create further opportunities for a new generation of recycling innovators if funding for Summer Youth Employment is also restored in the budget.

We would also suggest two amendments to Intro 1942 and Intro 1943: First, we would like to see implementation of recycling drop-off sites in each district moved up to January 1, 2021. Second, we would like see language in the bills specifying that processing and recycling of food scraps and textiles be done within the City or as close to the City as possible both to reduce truck miles and pollution associated with transporting these materials, and to encourage the development of community and local processing sites, infrastructure, and jobs.

We hope the CORE Act is passed this summer and will serve as a crucial step on the road to a more ambitious citywide zero waste program in which every New Yorker will have organics collection service curbside, which other major cities have leveraged to greatly reduce landfilling and waste export while creating good, local green jobs at an affordable cost.

As our city faces an unprecedented pandemic, record job losses, and painful budget decisions, climate change continues to lurk as a long-term crisis which tragically strikes many of the same communities of color suffering disproportionately from COVID-19 and unemployment. Last winter was the warmest ever recorded, and the 2020 hurricane season is expected to be more active and dangerous than normal, and atmospheric CO2 levels are currently at an all-time high despite months of global economic slowdown due to public health lockdowns.

Solid waste management remains one of the vital environmental policy areas in which municipal and state governments retain full control, and NYLPI and our partners continue to believe that municipal investments in sustainable local recycling and waste reduction programs is a key way to curb climate emissions and create good, green jobs in the communities where they are needed most.

The continued growth in participation in food scrap and textile recycling by so many New Yorkers, and the tremendous response to the Save Our Compost coalition's organizing efforts show that people are eager to resume taking whatever actions they

can to keep recyclable waste out of landfills, even during a period of social distancing.

We therefore urge the committee and the council to pass these bills as quickly as possible, and to use the next two weeks to fight for immediate restoration of compost and recycling funds in the 2021 budget, and thank you and your colleagues once again for leadership on this and other critical issues facing local legislators every day.

We look forward to continued work with the Council to create a more just, equitable, and sustainable city, and welcome further contact:

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Good afternoon Chair Reynoso, Councilman Powers, and Committee Members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I'm Kathy Nizzari and serve on several boards, but as County Committeewoman and a concerned citizen, I urge you today to pass Intros 1942 & 1943.

We all know we're in a climate crisis and that black and Hispanics are at increased risk of the devastating health impacts and premature deaths due to toxic colonialism. While COVID-19 has put the city on pause, neither the climate crisis nor resultant deaths will wait for us to return to normal. So I commend you for getting us back on track with composting. The pandemic taught us the need to find equitable, cost-efficient, multi-dimensional solutions that require working together as a community. How can we do it expeditiously?

Step one: Restore the roughly 175 GrowNYC drop-offs.

Two: Have drop-off and processing at the same location. This would eliminate transport and process fees as well as carbon emissions. Nearly 2/3 of the city's 536 community gardens have the infrastructure to collect and compost on site. While not all have the same capacity, they can scale up with minimal funding from DSNY for equipment and staff. For this to work, the gardens must have legislative protection from real estate developers.

Three: Include the nearly half of the DOE's 1,800 schools citywide plus universities that compost and enlist local non-profits, block associations, BIDs, and community boards that want to help.

Four: Composting must be equitable. Let's scale up NYCHA's urban farm and garden composting *FOR* NYCHA residents. Residents should be hired to run it, funded by DSNY, after completing free training from Green City Force. Doing it onsite creates a closed loop system. It also addresses their leaf issue and rat population. There *IS* interest *IF* done equitably.

Five: Set up drop-offs in grocery store parking lots in the outer boroughs.

Six: Create a rebate program for private carters who already have the infrastructure to pick up from multi-family buildings.

I've shared some of these ideas with the Speaker and Council staff and am happy to work with you on it.

In order for this to work, there must be ample funding for education, including for buildings and folks, like myself, who want to do it at home. I would also ask that the sites be operational by October 31<sup>st</sup> and guarantee none of it would be incinerated or landfilled.

Lastly, please bring back the SAFE drop-off sites for e- and hazardous waste.

I thank you for your time. Please pass Intros 1942 & 1943. Thank you.

The New York City Council  
Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management  
15 June 2020  
Re: Intro 1942-2020 & 1943-2020

Dear City Council Members:

My name is Rebecca McNerney, and I am a resident of Clinton Hill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding Int 1942-2020 and Int 1943-2020, relating the expansion of our city's organics and inorganics recycling programs. I support the goals of this amendment and urge you to do the same.

As you well know, New York City has committed to Zero Waste by 2030. Despite this promise, 175 community composting sites have been shut down and curbside e-waste collection has been suspended, leaving myself and my fellow residents without a green mechanism to dispose of this waste. I understand the need to cut expenses in the face of a pandemic and looming recession, but just because one crisis is upon us, doesn't mean another no longer exists.

In order to protect our city, and planet, from climate change, our residents must have equitable access to composting and recycling. To that point, the amendments brought forth by Council Members Powers and Reynoso are a fine first step in addressing this need by including a minimal number of drop-off locations, hours of operation, as well as the specification that they be close to transportation and accessible for persons with disabilities.

I'd also like to point out that I was especially impressed with the clause in Int 1943-2020 — "Each community recycling center shall also accept hazardous material, as practicable and as defined by the department, that should not be disposed of curbside waste." As you may know, the process for recycling hazardous materials, such as batteries, electronics, or paint, isn't at all intuitive — from navigating the city's resources in order to schedule specific curbside pickups or making a trek to a hazardous waste drop-off site, during the few times a year they're made slightly more accessible to the public. As a result of such obfuscation, far too many people are disposing of toxic waste incorrectly, causing great harm to our communities and environment.

Several of you on this Committee have committed to cutting \$1B from the NYPD spending in the Fiscal 2021 budget. I urge you to reallocate a portion of that amount to fulfill the promises of Council Members Powers and Reynoso's amendments.

I want to thank the Committee again for convening this hearing today and to express my appreciation for the tremendous support demonstrated by leaders at every level of government and by organizations and individuals across the city.

Thank you,

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Dear Council Member Lander and Speaker Johnson,

I am submitting this testimonial to ask you to please allocate the budget fairly and help save composting and other social programs in NYC.

As a citizen pruner, a garden committee member for our block association and one of the Tree Stewards of our block, I can attest that we benefit tremendously from the use of city compost, both collection and use of the final product.

On our block we have 24 tree beds with healthy mature trees. The beds are beautifully planted and maintained by the residents of our block, working as a group on weekends. Every spring we pick up the BEST compost and mulch from our sponsors, the Gowanus Canal Conservancy. Last year we entered the BBG's Greenest Block in Brooklyn competition for the first time and were semi finalists, on our first year of planting and beautifying our block! None of this would have been possible without the city compost and mulch processed here in our neighborhood by the GCC.

Our neighborhood as a whole has been practicing curb side composting for so many years and has incorporated the practice as an integral part of the Sunday routine (almost as brushing your teeth!). I was so proud of actively participating on the collection program and having so little garbage! We spent years being trained to compost and recycle and it is unthinkable to go back to placing all organic matter in the garbage.

We are counting on your support to continue funding for community composting programs and curbside composting now!

Warm regards,

Helena Whitaker

Good Day,

My name is David Garbutt, and I am with Myrtle Village Green Community Garden in Bed-Stuy Brooklyn. I ask that the City not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for organics recycling and composting.

The Mayor's proposed budget would undercut much of the progress this City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills -- a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The Administration is slashing the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million of that coming from a total elimination of all funding of composting organic waste and recycling education and outreach. This is short-sighted and has potential to have long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals.

Today we urge the City Council to ensure that the City at least maintain the ability to continue some sort of organics recycling and composting, and not toss away the progress we have made in the past few years.

We are not asking that the Council restore all \$28 million of organics program cuts. Rather, we are asking that the cuts to the NYC Compost Project and partners, and to GrowNYC, be restored, with expansion for community outreach and education.

The cuts to the NYC Compost project and partners and to GrowNYC together represent approximately \$7 million, and with some additional funding, could go a long way to allowing New Yorkers to continue to source separate food waste and preventing this major waste stream from going to landfill and emitting greenhouse gases.

This comparatively small amount of funding in the big picture would ensure that:

- at least eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide organics collection and processing services, as well as community education, could continue their good work;
- at least 170 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs can continue to divert this potent source of greenhouse gases from landfills;
- at least six community composting facilities can continue their work of processing the food waste to turn into usable compost to grow food in community gardens and urban farms during a time of food insecurity; and
- the City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and recycle – such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop lifetime habits of sustainable living.

We cannot understate the urgency of this ask to our community, and hope the Council ensures that this important priority not be left behind in the budget process.

Thank you.

## **TESTIMONY BY WILIAM AND ANDREA SCARBOROUGH**

**115-05 179<sup>TH</sup> Street Addisleigh Park NY 11434**

Intro 1942 & 1943, the CORE Act:

Good afternoon Council Member Reynoso, Council Member Powers and the New York City Council's Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. This testimony is being submitted on behalf of William and Andrea Scarborough who reside in Southeast Queens, Community Board 12, and are members of the Addisleigh Park Civic Organization. In addition, Andrea is a member of Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board Organizing Committee.

We are testifying in support of Intro 1942 and 1943 which we feel will be of tremendous benefit to our community. Community Board 12 was never included in the curbside composting program which was suspended in May 2020. Our community has traditionally had to contend with waste transfer stations, garbage dumps, and other environmental hazards and can be deemed an environmental injustice community. Community composting presents an opportunity for our residents to participate in green initiatives and take more responsibility for our environment. Additionally, if New York City abandons community composting, it has already become clear that commercial carters are prepared to fill the vacuum. Indeed some of the very carters that are burdening our community now, are rumored to be seeking future contracts for organics recycling. This could create an additional hardship on our community.

It is for this reason that we ask that the cuts to the community composting budget be restored. We ask that the seven million dollars, which is a relatively small amount of funding, be restored to provide residents and communities with sites to drop off organic waste for the immediate future. In addition we support Intros 1942 and 1943, the CORE ACT. We consider this a reasonable next step in moving our city closer to zero waste in an equitable manner. This initiative will create three equitable organic waste sites in each community board and three textile recycling centers in each community board. Establishing this initiative in a fair and equitable manner will be of tremendous benefit to Community Board 12 and other communities of color. We urge this committee and the City Council to act on this legislation without delay. Thank you for your consideration.

William and Andrea Scarborough

## Testimony from North Brooklyn Compost Project regarding FY21 Budget

Dear Speaker Johnson,

My name is Katie Zwick and I'm the founder of the North Brooklyn Compost Project (NBKCP), a grassroots community organization formed in direct response to the suspension of the City's composting programs. While I am proud of the work we have been able to accomplish, it is clear that our capacity is far below that of Grow NYC, Big Reuse, and DSNY, and cannot be sustained long-term. I am writing today on behalf of the NBKCP to express concern regarding Mayor de Blasio's proposed FY21 budget.

I am obviously disheartened by the elimination of composting programs from the FY21 budget, but it's the loss of so many other critical social and community programs that is so staggering. The proposed budget eliminates the Summer Youth Employment Program, reduces the NYC Parks budget, and calls for a hiring freeze for school counselors. All the while, there is almost no change to the NYPD's nearly \$6B budget.

The proposed budget fails to prioritize the needs of New York City residents and I feel strongly that it will lead to continued over-policing and police brutality in Black communities throughout the five boroughs. I urge you not to approve the budget unless it includes a minimum \$1B reduction in the NYPD budget and reallocates those funds to community, health, education, and environmental programs.

While I recognize that the City is experiencing unprecedented hardship caused by COVID-19 and the recession, now is not the time to seek short-term solutions. We should recommit to the OneNYC goal of becoming "the most resilient, equitable, and sustainable city in the world," and that means we cannot continue to ignore or neglect communities of color. The elimination of curbside and community compost collection will not lead to a reduction in the total waste that the City produces. Waste will continue to accumulate and will be sent to transfer stations and / or landfills adjacent to underserved communities.

Please use your power to prioritize a budget that will support communities and fund critical resources, including youth programming, education, community-based composting, healthcare, green jobs, and parks.

Thank you,

Katie Zwick

North Brooklyn Compost Project

Follow us on Instagram: [@nbkcompost](https://www.instagram.com/nbkcompost)

Visit our website: <https://nbkcompost.org/>

#SaveOurCompost

#DontTrashMyScraps

If you haven't signed the petitions:

- [Mayor de Blasio: Composting Is Essential To NYC](#)
- [Save Community Composting in NYC](#)

### Testimony on Intros 1942 and 1943

My name is Ross Pinkerton, and I am a high school teacher and resident in Manhattan and the Secretary of the PSC-CUNY union Environmental Justice Working Group. I have proudly carried my compost to 96th St and Lexington Ave for Wednesday morning drop-off, and reluctantly agreed that it needed to briefly pause at the height of the COVID-19 growth this spring. However, it is counterproductive to cut composting, in the form of drop-off, pick-up, and processing for budget reasons. We will now have to spend more to truck our expanded solid waste out of the city, to get distant locales to accept it, and to mitigate the destructive and costly climate change impacts that letting that organic waste rot in landfills will bring.

I advise an environmental club at my school and students are eager to participate in solutions to both the broad climate emergency and to more local issues of excessive waste and resource extraction. Restoring and expanding community composting as in Intro 1942 and textile recycling as in Intro 1943, throughout every neighborhood of the city, can reduce harmful trucking that yield disparate health outcomes and reduce our city's carbon footprint and material footprint for goods that have to be shipped here. Please maintain the high standards the city has set for itself, for instance in the NYC Green New Deal package of bills admirably passed last year, so that we can continue to be a leader, for both the world's sake and the sake of our future shorelines. Thank you for your consideration.

Ross Kennedy-Shaffer Pinkerton

[rosskspinkerton@gmail.com](mailto:rosskspinkerton@gmail.com)

717-599-2900

Good afternoon to the Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management:

“Garbage Is, always. We will die, civilization will crumble, life as we know it will cease to exist, but trash will endure...” - “Picking Up”-Robin Nagle

My name is Ruth Esa. I am an ICU nurse and hopeful compost master. As a Queens resident living in 2020- I think it's a shame that I need to speak up about a 7 million dollar city budget cut to an initiative that addresses social & environmental justice and climate change impacts. On the other hand, I think it's important for me to speak up at this committee hearing to reiterate as those before me have- that the issue of organic waste removal is a priority need for NYC in the name of Public Health.

Throughout the pandemic- I continued to do my part of backyard composting, and curbside up until it was unfortunately suspended. Throughout this time I have worked at the hospital caring primarily for all Covid-19 confirmed cases but also on my days off taking the Compost master program online via Queens botanical Garden. In many ways, the compost master program has been therapeutic for me in processing this challenging time as a healthcare worker. This past year, I was also a fellow at Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments and a proud Master Composter from Queens Botanical Garden. In my work this past year, I see a discrepancy that not all neighborhoods in the five boroughs are treated equally to have available brown bins for curbside collection neither are there available drop off sites. This is a great time to analyze these gaps.

This past year, I participated in a voluntary fellowship with Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments ([ANHE](#)). In NY there is a daunting list of inequities-aside from covid 19- issues such as healthcare access, violence as a public health issue, urban heat island effects, air pollution in Southeast Queens and then to the issue of waste transfer stations primarily in neighborhoods of color. The main issue at the heart of all these disparities was what I realized is the issue irrespective of borough: social inequality and lack of resources. Outreach work via Zero waste initiatives is invaluable. Rather than back away from healthy preventive actions such as reducing waste to landfills- we need to enhance organic waste efforts- I believe this can be done by reimplementing curbside collection and establishing the CORE Act. Not only should the city strengthen its efforts on maintaining organic waste removal: it should make it mandatory and widespread throughout all the boroughs. It shouldn't stop there either- it should mandate that essential places of business- be held to a higher standard of waste separation.

I have worked as an ICU nurse at LIJ Medical Center for 9+ years, and in my whole career have never experienced such chaotic times than what is currently going on with the Covid-19 pandemic. As a frontline healthcare worker I understand the impact that climate change also

has towards long-term public health impacts. It would be counterproductive to retract such invaluable programming and one that truly makes a difference in reducing GreenHouse gases- such as methane. We need to be mindful as ever of our environment during these uncertain times.

**It is evident to me that behavior change is a reality: if people can abide by stay at home orders and socially isolate, organics waste collection should be made mandatory.** This past year, I have advocated voluntarily for composting in my hospital: to the extent of meeting with our associate executive director of operations about implementing composting, presenting to wellness champions, and tabling events. And I couldn't have done it without the assistance of the outreach workers from NYC compost program at QBG and Big Reuse. In the events I have tabled, I came across many people who have questions and have a desire to want to do more to improve their environment. At the high school -Institute for Health Professions at Cambria Heights I helped to coordinate a 101 composting educational session with a QBG outreach worker.

The high school students saw composting goes beyond "collection"-it is a method of reducing our carbon footprint and ties into local food growing initiatives. It provides a public health need and education. Your support would help me validate this past year's work I have done voluntarily because I see it as crucial to the future of the youth who will inherit our city.

The City must prioritize organics collection in order to meet our zero waste and our climate goals. Composting programs are part of less than 6% of the city's budget, yet they have the potential to reduce greenhouse gasses and improve NYC soil infrastructure. With NYC accounting for 5.7% of the U.S. population and with landfilled food waste accounting for 8% of greenhouse gasses globally, this city's trash has a major impact on the health of the planet and its inhabitants. As an ICU nurse, a holistic nurse and a fellow at ANHE: the organic curbside collection and zero waste initiatives serves as an essential intervention to improving global and planetary health. I ask that the City restore funding to Community Composting and Zero Waste Education programs and to implement the CORE Act.

Ruth Esa, RN, BSN, CCRN, HNB-BC. Nurse at LIJ-Northwell Health, Fellow at Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments, Potential Compost Master 2020 -Queens Botanical Garden

# **Testimony to the Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Committee in support of INTR 1942**

**Andrea Lieske**  
**92 St Nicholas Ave, 4E**  
**NY NY 10026**

Good afternoon Council Members,

6/15/2020

My Name is Andrea Lieske. I have worked for Earth Matter NY as part of the NYC Compost Project for 6 years. I have educated thousands of visitors at our Compost Learning Center on Governors Island during workshops, tours, workdays, technical assistance and during Center Open Hours, showing them the miraculous transformation of organic waste into nurturing compost to take care of our soil and plants; illustrating the importance and benefits of composting for the environment; showing them how to participate; and teaching them how to compost themselves.

As part of the NYC Compost Project hosted by Earth Matter NY I have been instrumental in the successful implementation and operation of the only zero waste system in a City Park. Governors Island is the only public park effectively collecting post-consumer compostables. As part of a closed-loop system, these materials were processed right on the Island by Earth Matter NY with funding through the NYC Compost Project. In my position, I have managed the waste operation of many public zero waste events with thousands of visitors and volunteers, enabling them to learn and participate in composting, recycling, and environmental advocacy.

I have been let go on April 6<sup>th</sup> because of the city's budget cuts. But this is not about me. This is about NYC continuing to address the climate crisis. It is about making the CORE Act an equitable and effective bill. Without education, outreach, and technical support as part of the bill, it will not get there. It is through education and outreach that the word compost has become a household name and it is the wide outreach, education, and technical assistance that will allow New Yorkers to participate. For some the best way to participate might be to drop off food scraps at a location; for others, it might be through the technical assistance in their community garden; to others, it will be through the hands-on experience at a compost site. In-house DSNY staff will not be able to provide this at an adequate level. This work has to continue in tandem with offering New Yorkers the opportunities to drop off their food scraps.

Please reinstate the funding for Community Composting and Recycling Outreach now, make it part of CORE and pass the CORE Act.

Thank you for your time.

Andrea Lieske

15 June 2020

***Hearing on Intros 1942 and 1943, the CORE Act, to be held on June 15, 2020, 1pm***

Dear Chairman Reynoso and the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,

“The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the world’s cities. It is not just a global health crisis, but a social and economic crisis, the effects of which will be felt for years to come.”

C40 Cities, Global Mayors COVID-19 Recovery Task Force<sup>1</sup>

Mayor de Blasio formally endorsed the Statement of Principles of the C40 Cities Global Mayors COVID-19 Recovery Task Force in May 2020. The City Council can chart a path forward that uses these principles to “build a better, more sustainable, more resilient and fairer society out of the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.” One of the principles states, “Excellent public services, public investment and increased community resilience will form the most effective basis for the recovery;”.<sup>2</sup>

My name is Mary Jo Burke and I am a resident of the Lower East Side in Manhattan. I have been a devoted composter since 1998, when I discovered the Lower East Side Ecology Center’s (LESEC) compost drop-off program in the NYC Greenmarket in Union Square. I have also availed myself of the DSNY Brown Bin program through my neighboring coop in the past year or more to compost organic material not accepted by the LESEC. My board will not approve the program in our coop, even though we share management and maintenance personnel with the neighboring coop, until it is mandated by the City.

I am providing testimony today to ask the City to continue to provide public services and public investment to all citizens of New York City by doing the following 3 things:

1. Restore funding for community composting programs, with directed funding to GrowNYC and the NYC Compost Project. This funding would provide community drop-off and processing of organic material, as well as community education. This will help reduce the City’s export of our waste to communities outside our boundaries, including to other cities in New York State and to states as far away as South Carolina. It will help reduce waste truck traffic within our own communities. It will create green jobs. It will keep us on a path of achieving our zero waste goals, outlined in One NYC Plan.

2. Pass the Community Organics and Recycling Empowerment (CORE) Act. Intro. 1942 would require 3 compost drop-off locations in each community district. This would provide access to composting throughout the city. Intro. 1943 would allow for the collection of non-organic recycling materials, such as electronics and textiles. These collection programs need to be started immediately, as opposed to the proposed date of June 01, 2021. For composting, coordination with community composting programs may help facilitate this shorter timeline.
3. Introduce and pass legislation for citywide mandatory curbside organics collections to be implemented within the next 4 years. Much progress has been made by the City in the past few years in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills, which has furthered the City's progress in meeting its OneNYC 2030 Zero Waste to Landfill goals. After steady growth in collection rates, there was a sharp increase in organics collection numbers from 2017 to 2018.<sup>3</sup> A setback now could handicap the program, potentially for years to come, when it is reinstated in July 2021. Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and City Council Member Antonio Reynoso highlighted this in their opinion piece in the Gotham Gazette on May 13, 2020.<sup>4</sup> Mandatory composting would prevent this major waste stream, approximately 34% of all NYC's waste,<sup>5</sup> from going to landfill and emitting greenhouse gases. Methane, produced by organic material in landfills, is a short-lived climate pollutant and is approximately 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere.

I strongly urge the City Council to adopt the 3 plans of action stated above to help "build a better, more sustainable, more resilient and fairer society out of the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis."<sup>6</sup>

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

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Burke

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.c40.org/other/covid-task-force>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.c40.org/other/covid-task-force>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.grownyc.org/compost>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gothamgazette.com/opinion/9390-new-york-city-must-keep-expand-organics-collection-essential-service-composting-garbage?fbclid=IwAR15M6viTDBXqkxr-oc28-vl3iksqUZSRRLSmUjX-DgrSVfVik4jW7R5reE>

<sup>5</sup> <https://dsny.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2017-Waste-Characterization-Study.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.c40.org/other/covid-task-force>



## **TESTIMONY OF THE MANHATTAN SOLID WASTE ADVISORY BOARD**

### ***Hearing on Intros 1942 and 1943, the CORE Act, to be held on June 15, 2020, 1pm***

Good afternoon, Chairman Reynoso and members of the Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Committee. My name is Matthew Civello. I am Chair of the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board (the MSWAB) and I am testifying on its behalf regarding Intros 1942 and 1943, otherwise known as the CORE Act.

The MSWAB – a quasi-governmental organization – is a joint creation of the City Council and the Borough President, dedicated to increasing recycling, reducing solid waste, and advancing solid-waste policy in New York City. The Board is composed of concerned citizens and waste- and recycling-industry experts, nominated by sitting Board members or Council Members and appointed by the Manhattan Borough President's Office.

Mayor de Blasio's proposed fiscal year 2021 budget eliminates the residential organics collection and processing program in the City of New York. This program includes the voluntary brown bin curbside collection program, community drop-off locations and DSNY-funded compost projects, as well as outreach and education efforts associated with these programs.

As a result of these proposed cuts, 3.5 million NYC residents, many of whom live in Manhattan and who previously had access to voluntary curbside collection and drop-off, have found themselves with no alternative but to place their organic waste into the landfill or incinerator-bound garbage. From the volume and tenor of the emails received by the MSWAB over the past several weeks, this has been a difficult adjustment to make for many NYC residents who participated in this important program.

With each passing day that these programs sit dormant, they become more difficult to restart. Collection and processing infrastructure will deteriorate, assets will be deployed elsewhere or liquidated, sites will be permanently closed and vital personnel will find new opportunities. Likewise, we stand to lose much of the hard-earned dedication and behavior change in residents who participated in these programs.

If these programs are not restored, the City is throwing away a foundation that could eventually support a successful mandatory curbside organics diversion program. A mandatory organics program could potentially divert nearly 40 percent of the city's refuse that is currently sent to landfill and incineration to compost facilities and anaerobic digesters, an amount north of one million tons of organics a year.

Implementing an effective organics collection and processing program is the single most important step New York City can take to achieve its stated goal of sending zero waste to landfill and incineration. In addition, an organics diversion program in New York City can help mitigate methane and other powerful greenhouse gases in the atmosphere while also creating both compost and biogas, valuable resources that can be used to power our buildings and grow our food.

It bears repeating that burned or buried organic material creates methane gas, a powerful contribution to global warming that it is 28 times more powerful than carbon dioxide. The one million tons of organic waste that we bury and burn every year are significant contributors to global warming that we can no longer ignore.

Given the severity of the budget crisis that NYC faces, there is a sensible path forward to ensure that we can preserve and protect the progress we have made in collecting and diverting organics.

First, the budget cuts to the community composting program should be restored. This would require a de minimis \$7 million to restore the GrowNYC program and NYC Compost Project partners as well as a significant portion of the 170 drop-off and community education sites in operation before the cuts. By restoring these vitally important connections to communities, the City will ensure that the first step in protecting our investment in a future full citywide organics program is in place. To put this \$7 million into context, it represents just one half of one percent of the total \$1.75 billion annual budget for the NYC Department of Sanitation, and just one tenth of one percent of the City's entire budget.

This restoration of funding must include the vitally important education, outreach, and technical support for community gardens and composting efforts, including the compost hotline that the seven Compost Projects provide to their communities. In addition, this funding should include monies for on-site volunteer work days and demonstration sessions. The benefits of the community composting program to the entire City are much greater than the budget impact would imply: Restoration of funding would preserve approximately 100 jobs during a time where employment is at a premium, would provide adequate and equitable voluntary collection of food scraps and local processing of those food scraps for New York City communities, and would support the removal of over 1 million tons of organic material from incinerators and landfills.

For Manhattan, this funding restoration would reactivate the vital composting processing, education and outreach of two major composting facilities: the Lower Eastside Ecology Center and, on Governors Island, Earth Matter. Both of these crucial members of the NYC Compost Project have provided education and outreach to tens of thousands of New York City residents over the years.

Second, following the restoration of this funding, the next important step is to pass Intros. 1942 and 1943 (the CORE Act), the subject of this hearing. Implementing the Core Act would move this city closer to a goal of zero waste to landfill and incineration in a more equitable manner.

Intro. 1942 would extend food and yard waste dropoff locations to areas previously not served by the program by establishing three dropoff locations per community district. The Manhattan SWAB supports this equitable extension of the organics drop off program. We would request that Intro. 1942 be amended to specify that all material collected at the dropoff sites established by this bill be sent to the refunded Compost Projects in a manner commensurate with capacity utilization limits for those facilities. In addition, this bill should contain language that will ensure the continuation of the important education, outreach, and technical support for community gardens and composting efforts including the compost hotline that the seven Compost Projects provide to their surrounding communities. It also contains restoration of on-site volunteer work days and demonstration sessions as mentioned above.

Intro. 1943 provides for the equitable distribution of three textile recycling centers in each community district. The Manhattan SWAB supports this expansion. Discarded textiles represent 6 percent of the City's waste stream and addressing this is an important step in achieving zero waste.

Third, we look forward to seeing the Council introduce legislation committing the city to a mandatory residential curbside organics collection program. If such a program were to be successfully implemented, it could potentially divert nearly one million tons of organic material away from landfill and incineration and

would substantially reduce powerful greenhouse gas emission in the process. In addition, this would represent a significant step towards a zero-waste New York City.

We thank Chair Reynoso and the members of this Committee for consideration of our testimony.

**The Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board**

Members of the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board: Matthew M. Civello, chair; Rona Banai, vice chair; Kim Davis, secretary; Diane Orr, treasurer. Members: Margot Becker, Joyce Bialik, Diana Blackwell, Maggie Clarke, Debby Lee Cohen, Peter Cohen, Ellen Cooper, DeNeile Cooper, Lorial Crowder, Ann Marie Cunningham, Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli, Lisa Denby, Wendy Frank, Katie Hanner, Cullen Howe, Sophia Huda, Melissa Iachan, Christine Johnson, Sarah Lehigh, Kate Mikuliak, Kathy Nizzari, Alexis Obernauer, Jacquelyn Ottman, Ushma Pandya, Kristi Parson, Tinia Pina, John Reali, Martin Robertson, Rick Schulman, Brendan Sexton, Marc Shifflett, Amy Uong, Aditi Varshneya, Chana Widawski

**The Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Hearing  
Monday, June 15, 1:00 P.M.**

**Testimony supporting Int. 1942, the “Community Organics and Recycling Empowerment (CORE)” Act**

Dear Council Members,

My name is Kim Truong and I was very disappointed to learn the City’s plan to eliminate funding for community composting and zero waste outreach programs. I am optimistic that this will be reversed by the passage of CORE Act. I am submitting this testimony in support of this act and urge all Council Members to vote their support. I thank my Council Member Powers for introducing this bill.

My household of four relies on community composting programs to lesson our carbon footprint on the planet. In my prior apartment, my household and I also composted and former roommates were still composting until the programs ceased due to COVID-19. Countless other New York household rely on community composting programs to lead lives that are more sustainable and less carbon-emitting. It has been upsetting to have to stop composting due to the COVID-19 shutdown. I normally rely on the Lower East Side Ecology Center drop-off location at Union Square Green Market. The LES Ecology Center is a wonderful organization with stellar staff members, and I would hate for them to lose financial support of their vital community programs.

Community composting programs remain essential in NYC. Understanding the societal and fiscal challenges of COVID-19, we cannot afford to reverse progress on the larger, longer-term crisis: climate change. Composting is one of the most basic things that every person can do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and have a positive impact on the environment. Maintaining funding for community composting will provide continued access to essential composting service for New Yorkers at the lowest possible cost by uplifting community-based networks and tapping into local expertise. Community composting will also be beneficial to the NYC Department of Sanitation as households that compost will produce much less waste. Since my household has been forced to stop composting, I estimate that our household waste has **doubled**. This waste ends up in methane-producing landfills; methane can be 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide over 20 years.<sup>1</sup>

In this time of great uncertainty, we need programs that contribute to a more sustainable future, such as the CORE Act. The City’s Community Composting programs have given people hope that through collective action, our individual choices can make a difference. It is time to restore our ability to tackle climate change with collective, community-level action. I ask that the City Council pass the CORE Act. Now is the time to reinvest in policies and programs that tackle climate change.

Thank you,

Kim Truong  
Resident and Voter of District 4  
40 E 58<sup>th</sup> St, New York City

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.factcheck.org/2018/09/how-potent-is-methane/>

15 June 2020

Re: Written Testimony for The Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management 1pm Online Hearing

Dear NYC Council Members,

I am writing today in **full support of the proposed Community Organics and Recycling Empowerment (CORE) Act**.

I have recently heard that budget cuts include the elimination of the community composting subsidy.

This funds the seven nonprofits that make up the NYC Compost Project in every borough, including the one that serves my neighborhood in the Bronx.

The NYC Compost Project provides essential services to me and other:

- community gardeners and urban farmers
- local and citywide greening and volunteer groups
- schools and youth organizations
- agency and institutional partners
- seniors and other residential groups

I have benefited from the Compost Project's hands-on assistance, resources, and educational efforts.

They have been crucial in helping me to use composting to reduce waste and connect to my community.

Their work helps improve the health of our depleted soils and the environment at our homes and in our neighborhoods throughout NYC.

Now more than ever, we need the NYC Compost Project to continue to support our community as we work together to create a more healthy, equitable, and sustainable City.

We have already lost so much because of COVID-19. I hope I do not have to add such an important and beloved program to that list.

Sincerely,  
Virginia (Gini) Little  
205 W 123rd St, Apt 4  
NY NY 10027  
littlegin@gmail.com



Good morning,

My name is Julia Ferguson and I serve with the Roosevelt Island Garden Club as chair of Outreach. We are a 40-year-old volunteer run community of gardeners on Roosevelt Island who have actively supported, benefitted from, and worked alongside NYC Compost (for education, advice, food scrap drop off programs, and compost give backs) through both Big Reuse and Grow to Learn. Our gardens and our broader community have been revitalized through this work. We have learned so much in our community and connected with so many neighbors both on Roosevelt Island and city wide as a result of these programs.

**In this testimony, we ask that the City not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for organics recycling and composting. Composting has brought all ages of our gardening group and also broader community of 15,000 people on Roosevelt Island together. Because of NYC Compost programs our community has diverted over 100,000 pounds of food scraps from landfills.**

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

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

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

Partnerships and More Partnerships through Composting

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Julia Ferguson

Roosevelt Island Garden Club (Outreach and Publicity) [rigardencluboutreach@gmail.com](mailto:rigardencluboutreach@gmail.com)

[www.rigarden.org](http://www.rigarden.org) "RIGC - In Earth We Trust"

[rigardenclub@gmail.com](mailto:rigardenclub@gmail.com) RIGC Board



## NYC Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Hearing

June 15, 2020

Good afternoon. Thank you to Council Members Powers, our Council Member Reynoso, and Borough President Brewer for advancing this critical issue. My name is Ceci Pineda and I am the Executive Director of BK ROT. BK ROT is New York City's first bike-powered food waste hauling and composting service. Our project is staffed by young people of color in Bushwick, Brooklyn.

We are in a monumental moment. COVID-19 has highlighted unsustainable processes and decades of accumulated environmental injustices that place Black and Brown communities at greater risk of disasters. Simultaneously, Black communities once again rise to demand the restructuring of our society to invest in their safety and wellbeing.

At BK ROT, we understand how interlinked our environmental and climate crises are to the systemic violence against Black, Indigenous, and Brown communities. We started as a grassroots response to a lack of composting options, excess waste infrastructure detrimental to community health, and high unemployment rates for Black and Brown youth in Bushwick. We strive to create a just and regenerative model that invests in our soils and our community.

Mayor de Blasio's proposed budget eliminates several services essential to community health. Today I call attention to the concerning cuts to organics recycling, as well as additional DSNY services that increase our use of methane-producing landfills. Over a third of NYC's waste is compostable. In the short term, sending this material to landfills amplifies toxic air Black and Brown communities breathe. In the long term, it disproportionately impacts Black, Indigenous and Brown communities around the world who will acutely feel our decisions today.

As a part of the Save Our Compost coalition, we ask the City Council to take the following actions to advance composting options and equity in our communities:

We ask the City Council to restore at least \$7 million of funding toward community composting. These funds would support operating over 170 public food scraps drop off sites, community education around composting, and local processing sites. We urge an additional expansion of funds for community outreach, education and composting options to serve communities of color previously excluded from DSNY's composting services. The City Council can easily fund this by following calls from Black organizers to reallocate at minimum \$1 Billion from the NYPD's budget and instead into services that support the wellbeing and health of our communities.

BK ROT supports the CORE Act, which moves our city closer towards zero waste, climate resilience and environmental justice. In the creation of a new system to sustainably and equitably manage our organic waste, we propose the following recommendations.

- We urge the City to invest in local micro, small, and medium facilities to process organic waste. This reduces economic, environmental and health costs transporting material longer distances and also makes finished compost readily available for community use.
- Closed loop models offer communities local employment opportunities as well as the direct benefits of composting. This is a critical educational component that transforms our relationship to waste, while also increasing local food and climate resilience.
- In moving towards local, sustainable waste management, our collection should rely on zero- or low-emissions vehicles like bicycles and electric trucks. This creates local employment opportunities, reduces local air pollution and carbon emissions. Furthermore, collection sites should have consistent community drop off hours and ideally be staffed by local community members, who are best fit to communicate and educate their neighbors.
- We must prioritize serving communities, like NYCHA residents, historically left out of easily available composting options. We recommend hiring local community members to lead community engagement and education campaigns for successful participation.
- Lastly, the city should ensure community composting organizations and social enterprises are supported in continuing to build the systems and infrastructure to guarantee that all New Yorkers have access to organics recycling and composting. There is a wealth of knowledge and resources held among those of us who have been collecting organic waste and maximizing our efficiency and capacity to process organic waste into compost on small plots of land. We recommend the committee engage these stakeholders in the development of the CORE Act.

In the long-term BK ROT supports legislation for Citywide Mandatory Curbside Organics Collection to be implemented in the next four years. We are long overdue for every New Yorker to have free, convenient organics recycling collection from their home. In order to get there, we must continue the momentum in organics recycling in the last decade by restoring community composting immediately and passing the CORE Act.

In closing, we urge the Committee to take action to immediately restore composting options and invest in a new model to provide free, accessible and equitable composting options to all New Yorkers. We urge the Committee to invest in local emissions free collection and local processing capacity. This will create local employment opportunities, move our communities into a more responsible relationship with our waste, invest the nutrient-rich materials we create back into our soils, and invest in our (eco)community resilience.

Thank you,  
Ceci Pineda  
Executive Director  
BK ROT

# SAVE COMMUNITY COMPOSTING in NYC

Testimony of Emily Bachman

Member, NYC Community Composting Coalition

Before the NYC Council Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management

Hearing on Int 1942 & Int 1943 (CORE Act)

Monday, June 15, 2020

Thank you Chairman Reynoso and members of this Committee for allowing me to share an update about the groundswell of support to restore funding for community composting in NYC as it relates to the **CORE Act (Int. 1942)** sponsored by Councilmember Keith Powers.

I write this testimony as a representative of the NYC Community Composting Coalition on behalf of over **7,200 New Yorkers who have signed our petition to Save Community Composting in NYC**. The NYC Community Composting Coalition is an informal, rapid-response group of composting practitioners dedicated to protecting and providing community-based composting services to NYC residents throughout the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.

We appreciate that the CORE Act seeks to re-open, expand, and equitably distribute food scrap drop-off sites throughout NYC, and we agree with the underlying beliefs motivating this proposal: that **composting is an essential service that must continue to be funded in the New York City budget**, and that food scrap drop-off sites are the most cost-effective way to maintain access to this service for all New Yorkers in these difficult economic times.

In order to achieve the goals of the CORE Act, we must first **reverse \$6.4 million of current budget cuts** that eliminate all funding for GrowNYC Zero Waste Programs and NYC Compost Project: 8 non-profit organizations that have administered community composting and zero waste education programs on behalf of the NYC Department of Sanitation for over 20 years. These groups will be poised to implement the CORE Act following reversal of these cuts:

\$3.5 million – Suspension of Community Composting Subsidy in FY21

\$2.9 million - Reduction in Recycling Outreach Programs for FY21 and outyears.

Restoring funding for GrowNYC & NYC Compost Project means re-activating our City's network of **170 food scrap drop-off sites and 6 DEC-registered compost processing facilities**. It means supporting hundreds of community gardens and urban farms in their efforts to grow food and steward public open space. It means bringing back nearly 100 green jobs and thousands of meaningful volunteer opportunities. Most importantly, it means being decent ancestors and striving to improve the environment we've inherited and will pass on to our City's young people.

Now more than ever, community composting programs are essential in NYC. Recognizing the urgent need for budget cuts and cost-savings due to COVID-19, we cannot afford to reverse progress on the larger, longer-term crisis: climate change. Maintaining funding for community composting will provide continued access to essential composting services for New Yorkers at the lowest possible cost by uplifting community-based networks and tapping into local expertise. Passing the CORE Act will build on these efforts and codify our City's commitment to **environmental justice** by ensuring that waste reduction opportunities are available to all.

Composting is one of the most basic things that every person can do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and have a positive impact on the environment, and our petition demonstrates that New Yorkers are desperate for our City's composting programs to return. Thank you for listening and thinking creatively about how to continue this work.

# SAVE COMMUNITY COMPOSTING in NYC

## What's at stake:

The proposed FY21 budget cuts include suspension of the community composting subsidy (\$3.5M) in FY21 and reduction in funding for recycling outreach programs (\$2.9M) for FY21 and outyears. The result is a complete elimination of funding for **GrowNYC Zero Waste Programs** and **NYC Compost Project**: eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide public composting and recycling services and education to New Yorkers citywide, including:

- **170 Food Scrap Drop-off Sites** across all 5 boroughs
- **6 Community Composting Facilities**
- **Compost Distribution** for urban agriculture and stewardship
- **Zero Waste Education and Outreach**

## We urge City Council to support:

- 1** Maintaining **citywide access to composting** for NYC residents through a network of food scrap drop-off sites operated by GrowNYC and other partners.
- 2** Processing residential food scraps at existing **community composting facilities**, including the following DEC-registered sites:
  - Queensbridge (Big Reuse)
  - Governors Island (Earth Matter NY)
  - East River Park (Lower East Side Ecology Center)
  - Gowanus Salt Lot (Big Reuse)
  - Queens Botanical Garden (Queens Botanical Garden)
  - Red Hook Farm (Brooklyn Botanic Garden)
- 3** Providing **education, outreach, technical assistance, overflow processing capacity, and free finished compost** to residents and neighborhood groups.

## 2019 Impacts



Hosted **97,510** participants at Zero Waste workshops & events



Supported **409** Community Gardens & **287** Community Compost sites



Engaged **7,704** volunteers in over **30,000** hours of volunteer service



Trained **91** Master Composters & **174** Community Composters



Distributed **1.1 million** lbs of finished compost to over **12,000** recipients



Employed **45** full-time & **52** part-time staff



Operated **87** Food Scrap Drop-off sites  
Supported **106** volunteer-led sites



Diverted **4.6 million** lbs of food scraps from landfills



Composted **5.3 million** lbs of food scraps and garden waste locally

*The NYC Community Composting Coalition is an informal, rapid-response group of composting practitioners dedicated to protecting and providing community-based composting and education services to NYC residents throughout the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.*

# Here's what New Yorkers are saying about Community Composting in NYC (p.1)

"We have to retain our composting program! The climate crisis is real, and won't pause for COVID-19. We have made progress in NYC, let's not go back, we may not be able to return!"

- Paula Walzer, Inwood, Manhattan

"Climate change is the emergency that won't disappear with a vaccine and we cannot ignore the need to keep investing in programs like community composting. It's absolutely crucial."

- Laura Nesci, Rockaway Beach, Queens

"Folks have learned the value of composting and there's a huge interest in gardens right now. Please reinstate these valuable programs."

- Gert Coleman, Prince's Bay, Staten Island

"We need an option to compost. We can't let our kids and future generations down because we didn't do the right thing. Food in the landfill creates methane, which is a powerful greenhouse gas."

- Michele Fox, Kensington, Brooklyn

"I strongly urge you to retain the composting budget for NYC. Living in Queens most of my life, I have benefited from the drop-off site in my neighborhood and then was able to put out my bin for DSNY pickup. As a dedicated professional in health, it is critical that we retain this program for our city. It is a guarantee that future generations will benefit from it on an environmental level as well as in having a respect for our planet."

- Maria Lefkarites, Kew Gardens, Queens

"Please please bring back our composting! It is shocking to see how much more trash I have than usual! It's a tragic waste!"

- Alice Johnson, Greenpoint, Brooklyn

"Composting connects us to the most basic part of both the end and beginning life cycle of our food system. It turns food scraps into earthy fertilizer, ready to return the nutrients back to the growing soil. If it's not used for fertilizer, it can be used as biofuel. Isn't this a no-brainer? Do we really want to "pause" this momentum? A lot of hard work has gone into these composting sites and programs, and the public funding needs to continue."

- Cynthia Lamb, Sunset Park, Brooklyn

"Our budget requires sacrifice, yes, but climate change continues to be the big picture. Please do not completely cut composting."

- Shannon Threatt, Concourse Village, Bronx

"New York needs to keep momentum on promised climate change solutions! This is not a time to regress!"

- Virginia Little, Harlem, Manhattan

"We need composting for a just and sustainable future! We need more green jobs, less waste, limited greenhouse gas emissions, and more urban soil to grow food and support healthy lifestyles. Composting is an essential service if we want a healthy future!"

- Sara Perl Egenderf, Crown Heights, Brooklyn

"We must continue composting to protect the future of our city for all citizens now and for all future generations. I very much miss walking my composting down to the Greenmarket every Saturday. It gave me a sense of fulfillment that I was making a contribution, even in this small way. I watched as the number of bins grew over the years and as more and more of my neighbors did their share to keep our environment from further destruction. Do not cut this out of the budget."

- Susan Sherman, Upper East Side, Manhattan

# Here's what New Yorkers are saying about Community Composting in NYC (p.2)

"This can't be something we put off. Please keep these programs that are helping our environment, we can't go backwards."

- **Tabitha Allen, Washington Heights, Manhattan**

"If NYC is to focus on community health, we need healthy soils to help achieve that goal. With compost we can build localized food sources where there is little to no access to fresh healthy foods. We can also use compost to reduce strain on our aging sewer systems through green infrastructure. And finally, composting programs help reduce strain on environmental justice communities that have the disproportionate burden of transfer stations among other high truck activity businesses that impact the health of these communities by reducing waste tonnage and growing trees/plants to improve air quality. To have an equitable future, we have to do away with linear thinking, and come up with a holistic approach that ties in multiple issues. Compost is one way we can have that future."

- **Rosalia Lucero, Jackson Heights, Queens**

"PLEASE continue to fund composting!! Especially in these times, cleanliness is critical. Compost allows us to do something USEFUL with waste! Thank you."

- **Heidi Bota, Pelham Bay, Bronx**

"Everything about these programs is critical for the health of our city system. Keep it!!!!"

- **Jonathan Cousins, Downtown Brooklyn**

"Composting is an essential service. It helps combat climate change and is a critical piece of the City's goal to send zero waste to landfills by 2030. Communities that never had access to the curbside pilot depend on community-based drop off sites."

- **Lacey Tauber, New York City**

We need to keep and continue composting sites, as this is one of the ways to mitigate the rapid Climate Change. Reversing these programs is a short-sighted remedy with far-reaching losses to humanity."

- **Ena K. McPherson, Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn**

"I have noticed so many positive changes because of the city composting program. Least of which my daily garbage has been reduced dramatically. It is a good program that also connects the community. Please do not discontinue it."

- **Jayne Chu, Chinatown, Manhattan**

"Composting is not a luxury. Composting is one of the most effective ways of bringing down greenhouse gas emissions. Composting on a large scale and based in already existing community programs will only save the city money and benefit all city residents."

- **Natalia Sucre, Midwood, Brooklyn**

"As a homeowner, longtime Brooklyn resident, and public school teacher, I am SO disappointed that the Department of Sanitation is taking this moment to move us BACKWARDS in sustainability in New York City. This crisis is a shock to all systems and I do understand the need for cuts, but to cut such an important program for A YEAR AND A HALF is just mind boggling. It is disappointing that the City of NY has not been able to rise to the challenge of handling our waste in a way that is good for our planet. I strongly oppose this decision and I hope that DSNY will consider changing the conditions."

- **Deanna D'Onofrio, Bay Ridge, Brooklyn**

"I've been composting my scraps for over 20 years! It's vital to our community!"

- **Beth Sopko, East Village, Manhattan**

# Here's what New Yorkers are saying about Community Composting in NYC (p.3)

"Expand composting to other neighborhoods, don't curtail it."

- Naomi Allen, Flatlands, Brooklyn

"Composting is the future of our planet. If we keep adding waste to our planet, garbage will consume the Earth. We have to continue making a community effort to make a difference."

- Marilyn Omdahl, Chelsea, Staten Island

"Please save and expand city composting!! It is morally imperative that we take care of our environment. NYC always sets the example for the rest of the country."

- Tessa Mecham, Long Island City, Queens

"Composting is so integral in our fight against global warming! Please don't interrupt this initiative. You're sending the WRONG message to the children in NYC. Give them one less thing to worry about in the future!"

- Jane Cyphers, Gramercy Park, Manhattan

"Composting is the best thing that happened to our family's waste - we throw away only one small bag of trash a week!"

- Margaret Blachly, Inwood, Manhattan

"Save composting! I cannot fathom why this program was selected as dispensable, given that the city already pays to have its trash hauled out of state. Cutting composting services is terrible for the planet, terrible for the city, and terrible for the states that take our garbage and dump them in their own sites. Please let's work to keep composting accessible to the millions of New Yorkers without yards, but with a sense of urgency about the planet."

- Katie Gray, Downtown Brooklyn

"Composting has become an extremely important part of the NYC waste removal ecosystem! NYC's compost program, beyond making our city a more sustainable and desirable place to live, is a living model for how other major cities in the US and around the world can start and scale sustainable food waste removal in the long term. If the program is shuttered, it will take years (if ever) to get the systems back in place, both on a municipal level and an individual routine level. Please don't cut this program of critical, long term importance!"

- Luke Harrison, Upper West Side, Manhattan

"We need healthy soil in the city! Please consider all the benefits and beauty that healthy soil brings to the city!"

- Secundina Garcia, Fordham Heights, Bronx

"Please please keep the composting alive especially at times like this! Filth and smell will increase at dump sites because everyone is at home cooking and more residential food waste is being produced. Initiatives like these is what is helping counterbalance the effects of global warming. Every small amount of good matters!"

- Mansai Patel, Rego Park, Queens

"This can't be something we put off. Please keep these programs that are helping our environment, we can't go backwards."

- Tabitha Allen, Washington Heights, Manhattan

"This pandemic is not the time to reverse course on important steps to reduce climate change and pursue a zero-waste NYC. If anything we need to push harder. Composting is important to me as a way to keep excess food scraps out of landfills."

- Caryn Audenried, Astoria, Queens

# Here's what New Yorkers are saying about Community Composting in NYC (p.4)

"These shortsighted cuts that results in minor savings mean bigger costs for waste removal, soil and fertilizer purchasing and lets New Yorkers forget their connection to the earth--bring back composting!"

- Eve Baron, Kensington, Brooklyn

"I am a local resident physician and appreciate the burden of COVID-19 on the city and I believe it would be a shortsighted to stop composting. Please allow the community input on how we reduce spending. This crisis is going to last for years, we need to figure out sustainable pathways through that nourish our community. Composting is a part of that. Pausing to assemble adequate PPE and protections for those involved in the work makes sense. Figuring out what is the lowest cost and highest yield to maintain equitable access to compost (eg Greenmarket drop-offs) makes sense. But closing down for the foreseeable future sets back significant progress in sustainability."

- Julia Agee, Kipps Bay, Manhattan

"Our ecology in our community is crucial - compost is so crucial to all of this - no more waste!"

**Mariana Miller-D'Alessandro,  
Van Cortlandt Village, Bronx**

"A few stats: The USDA estimates Americans waste 30-40 percent of the food supply. Food occupies 22% of space in landfills, which in turn produces 20% of the methane (a more powerful greenhouse gas than CO2) the US sends into the atmosphere. Composting should not be an optional service; it's an investment in the future for all NYers. And many New Yorkers in particular don't have the option to make compost at home. Please preserve and protect these important programs."

- Jennifer Bogo, Park Slope, Brooklyn

"With major budget cuts threatening DSNY's curbside compost program, we need leadership to ensure that our community drop-off sites can be maintained and potentially even expanded. The loss of composting programs would be such a huge step back for the city, and also other cities who look to New York as a model for ethical governance and progressive environmental values. I understand the stresses, the near impossibility, of balancing the budget in the economic climate created by the COVID-19 pandemic, though maintaining Greenmarket compost drop-off seems so basic and doable."

- Sabine Rogers, Williamsburg, Brooklyn

"Please save composting. NYC Compost Project hosted by Snug Harbor taught me how to compost. I now have my own compost bin. I rely on them for help -- and for teaching others and encouraging others to compost."

- Debora Schwartz, Silver Lake, Staten Island

"Composting is not a luxury issue. Collecting compost prevents tons of food and yard waste from being trucked to waste processing facilities. Those facilities are located in some of the poorest sections of NYC, where people already suffer from respiratory conditions due to pollution. More composting means fewer trucks and less pollution for those neighborhoods. The long-term public health benefits for under-served communities and communities of color are clear."

- Margaret Samu, Manhattan

"Not only is it crucial to divert waste from landfills, but the NYC Community Compost Project allows us to rebuild the depleted soils of or city for future generations."

- Carolyn England, Astoria, Queens

# Here's what New Yorkers are saying about Community Composting in NYC (p.5)

"Funding support for all composting efforts should be consistent and sustained as an essential service."

- Patrice Kleinberg, Little Neck, Queens

"Keep composting! As we take care of ourselves during this crisis we need to continue to support the Earth. It should not be a matter of choosing between what's best for people versus the Earth - we are all one, we are connected. Save composting!"

- Ciana Barnaba, Upper East Side, Manhattan

"Please please please save our compost programs!!! It truly is the easiest way for the individual to add value to collective positive impact! Mindset matters to change our habits to be more eco conscious."

- Marcela Acosta, Washington Heights, Manhattan

"Please, what we need to do for Mother Earth is sustainability. Don't stop community composting programs, which help us to move forward for a better planet and communities."

Thalita Mercado, Kingsbridge Heights, Bronx

"In NYC we need some form of a composting program even if it does not operate weekly. An absolute abandonment of the program shows us how incompetent this city/state is. I am sure California has not abandoned their program nor their plastic bag ban."

- Marie Romano, Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn

"GrowNYC Zero Waste Programs and NYC Compost Project host sites should definitely be continued, its not so expensive and creates a lot of jobs, even if brown bin pick up has to be suspended for cost reasons."

- Clare Mifflin, New York City

"Composting has reduced my family's landfill additions to an amazing extent. It has also helped to mitigate the rat issue on the block and made a more livable neighborhood."

- Rachel Cohn, Fort Greene, Brooklyn

"When I throw food scraps in the garbage, I have to take my trash out once a week. When I am able to drop off my food scraps, I only have to take out the trash every 3 weeks...please reinstate community drop-off sites for food scraps!"

- Sam Sittenfield, Crown Heights, Brooklyn

"Composting is important! Yesterday. Today. Everyday."

- Cyndi Chu, Chinatown, Manhattan

"Invest in green jobs and a sustainable city that will fight climate change and create a better future for NYC. This is an opportunity to rise to the occasion rather than getting side-tracked from our Zero Waste Goal and the health of our citizens."

- Lydia Hallett, Lincoln Square, Manhattan

"Composting is essential and much-needed in our fight to mitigate the worst effects of climate change. Please allow composting and the NYC Compost Project to flourish."

- Tenzin Tsomo, Elmhurst, Queens

"NYC Community Composting provides a cycle of debris management that is vital for parks, gardens, and natural areas around NYC. As a worker in a NYC Park and as a New Yorker, I cherish the value of these services, and the need for our green spaces in adding to our quality of life."

- Cyndi Chu, Chinatown, Manhattan

# Here's what New Yorkers are saying about Community Composting in NYC (p.6)

"We are at a loss without our beloved Union Square composting drop-off. What a natural, easy, and economical way to help our environment. Please restore funding; this is so important to our city and planet."

- Paula Grande, East Village, Manhattan

"Please reconsider these funding cuts. I am a Queens resident and a business owner in Greenpoint. The food waste composting program in NYC is a huge step forward for our growth and the health of the city. It is a service I use daily and see the benefits of in every way, fewer waste problems in my neighborhood, less vermin and food waste on streets, lower volumes of trash, and an ability to turn the food I recycle into compost for my garden. I consider these programs absolutely essential to our city and our progress towards a healthier living environment."

- Carol Johnson, Woodhaven, Queens

"Please do not end the composting programs. Our environmental health is at stake."

- George Trivizas, Great Kills, Staten Island

"This pandemic is bringing to light how unprepared we are for disasters, how we don't take care of our planet and the people living on it. By canceling the city's compost we are taking steps BACKWARDS when we need to be moving forward together."

- Lehuanani DeFranco, Williamsburg, Brooklyn

"Composting is an essential part of reducing landfill waste and allowing New Yorkers to be stewards of our land. It has to stay!"

- Sam Sundias, Sunnyside, Queens

"My family and I were dropping off food scraps at GrowNYC's Parkside Avenue location for over a year. We made a space in our freezer for our food waste (which is NOT garbage) and I loved teaching my daughter about how we were reducing the amount of trash going to landfills and helping make new dirt to help grow the plants on our balcony. Especially now, when we need to reflect on our place within the environment, impact minimization is paramount. Composting represents something that every citizen can do to help reduce their carbon footprint and should be expanded to every borough immediately to reduce landfill usage, help people connect their actions to their waste streams and educate the children! PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE expand compost collection!"

- Eric Sherman, Flatbush, Brooklyn

"It takes time to change behavior. It's working! Residents in my NYC building are slowly adopting composting as a normal part of their trash routine, just as they took to recycling years ago. My trash has been cut dramatically since I started composting! Please don't take it away! Redouble education efforts instead."

- Sabrina Peck, Upper West Side, Manhattan

"The community composting programs are important and useful, as they affect the stability and well-being of our community. The program allow the Department of Sanitation to know about the problems and needs of people."

Elena Lyashenko, Riverdale, Bronx

"Please do not let short term crises hurt our long-term goals, we can do this!"

- May Yeung, Lower East Side, Manhattan

# Here's what New Yorkers are saying about Community Composting in NYC (p.7)

"I have composted my food scraps for at least the last 20 years. First, traveling to Union Square Greenmarket when they were the only place collecting food scraps, then to other Greenmarkets closer to my home. A few years ago I signed my residential building up for composting and it has been a big success. Please realize how vital composting is for the earth, and for New Yorkers."

- Pamela Koch, West Harlem, Manhattan

"We can't let this pandemic set us back in our strides to improve our environment!"

- Jenna Aurelia, St. George, Staten Island

"Let's not go backward for the environment during this pandemic. Let's go forward. Composting was something everyone could do in NYC to pitch in for the environment. People were just starting to change their habits. Taking it away makes people feel defeated. SAVE COMPOSTING IN NYC."

Emily Dolson, Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn

"Let's not destroy good human behavior because of a very bad virus"

- Michael Singer, Upper East Side, Manhattan

"I used to walk almost a mile every Sunday - and gladly - to drop off my compost at the Cortelyou Greenmarket. Please keep this access open."

- Corinna Snyder, Flatbush, Brooklyn

"This is not the time for NYC to be more wasteful than it already is."

- Windy White, Glendale, Queens

"Throwing my food scraps in the garbage is so sad. Now that we're all home, and doing more with less, composting seems even more important."

- Lydia Gerthoffer, Gowanus, Brooklyn

"We cannot abandon our environmentalism in the face of crises, doing so will exacerbate the frequency and severity of crises to come."

- Ellen Obrochta, Bushwick, Brooklyn

"Please please please save our compost programs!!! It truly is the easiest way for the individual to add value to collective positive impact! Mindset matters to change our habits to be more eco-conscious."

- Marcela Acosta, Washington Heights, Manhattan

"Community composting brings people together around sustainability and helps to build up a future where zero waste practices become habit for all NYers. Composting has a way of connecting people to their neighborhoods, parks and green spaces and further supporting community stewardship and does so in a holistic way to keep NYC on a path towards zero waste and maintaining our climate change prevention goals."

- Renee Crowley, Clinton Hill, Brooklyn

"One of my favorite parts about this program was how easy it was. Two access points in my neighborhood. The folks who took my compost were always the kindest people, and out there no matter the weather. I still haven't deactivated my calendar reminder. Save this program!"

Matty Greene, Crown Heights, Brooklyn

"Composting is essential, too, as part of a fully-realized sanitation & waste management program to insure the health & welfare of all New Yorkers."

- Karen Winer, Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan

"This is the perfect time to change behavior and launch our city into a clear, more sustainable, and more equitable future!"

- Arthur Sprogis, Upper West Side, Manhattan

Hello Council Members,

As a concerned citizen and a black female, I believe the NYPD should be defunded. Too many times I've seen police officers forced to take on other job titles due to lack of resources. Though some officers are proud to serve in any way they can, they are ILL EQUIPPED to do so. No amount of training can replace the people who's sole purpose and education has been dedicated to helping others in need. Whether it be a physician, mental health worker, psychologist, social worker teacher, sanitation or any other services this city has DEFUNDED the rest so they have to do more with less. So do not try to tell New Yorkers that defunding is not possible. What's amazing to me is that this administration thinks that it's okay to make someone hold all these hats and not even pay them adequately. I say all of this to say, the administration needs to reallocate the budget to fund services that will benefit the people. These services not only cost less to fund but will have long lasting effects on society. Please relieve the burden of these overworked officers so they can do their intended job which is to fight crime. Also this administration needs to take the time to hold the officers that fail to protect and serve the public accountable. When these 'bad cops' harm the people and cast a dark shadow on the department they need to be terminated, arrested AND jailed (with the lost of their pension) for the crimes they commit against humanity. The city needs to instead INVEST in hospitals, sanitation, schools, social services, homeless services, infrastructure and community projects alike. This will decrease the need to commit crimes and make everyone's lives and jobs easier. Force ESPECIALLY deadly force is not the answer to anything. As you can see it creates more problems than it solves. Finally, you need to recognize that the people who are most effected by the militarized police force and will benefit from this change in NYC are black and brown people. That's who I speak for, because until BLACK LIVES MATTER all lives will NEVER matter. Miracles are a change in perspective, and black people are fighting for a miracle right now, make it happen we're no longer asking.

Signed,

Karis Bamba

An educated fed up black female in America

# Testimony of the Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board



## Regarding the Community Organics and Recycling Empowerment (CORE) Act

June 15, 2020

My name is Oliver Wright and this comment is presented on behalf of the Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board (BkSWAB). BkSWAB is a volunteer citizens' organization with a mission of helping New York City achieve its zero waste goals. Our members are appointed by the Brooklyn Borough President and tasked with advising the Borough President, City Council Members, City Administration, NY State Legislators, and others on matters related to materials management, and specifically waste prevention, recycling and other beneficial reuse. BkSWAB is also a member of the #SaveOurCompost Coalition.

We believe that the immediate focus should be on re-funding and reopening drop-off sites and the seven NYC Compost Project programs (two of which are in Brooklyn) that were closed due to the Mayor's budget cuts as a result of Covid-19. This should not wait until next June and should be restored as soon as possible. Without restoration of funding, there will be no remaining infrastructure upon which to build future programming. Every city-funded residential organics program will be gone, and any future action will have to start from scratch.

The CORE Act as a whole is an important next step in moving the City towards a more equitable waste system. Intro 1942 specifically focuses on the establishment of organics drop-off sites in locations that maximize equity of access, and this is something BkSWAB strongly supports.

From the perspective of social benefit and equity, we recommend equipping as many of the organics drop-off sites as possible with processing capacity, and making any finished compost freely available as a community resource. This will build goodwill in the community and reduce truck miles by eliminating the need to transport collected organic waste. We also recommend ensuring that all NYCHA complexes are sited within walking distance of a drop-off site.

Providing local organics processing capacity and allowing for transfer between sites has the potential to:

- Reduce the reliance on transfer stations which are disproportionately located within underprivileged communities, thereby bringing further environmental and social benefits;
- Reduce the reliance on imported woodchip as a carbon input to the composting process by permitting the exchange of excess yard or food waste between local processing sites; and

- Allow the contents of the curbside brown bin program, once reinstated, to be processed locally, further reducing truck miles.

As a next step we would like to see a roll-out plan for Intro 1942, to include a capacity analysis of potential partner organizations, an infrastructure and staffing plan, and, where possible, milestones for a staged opening of new sites, rather than all new sites opening close to the deadline". A plan for the final destination of all collected organic waste will also be needed, along with a guarantee that none of the collected material will be sent to landfill.

Intro 1943 requires the establishment of Recycling Centers, and BkSWAB understands that the focus of these Recycling Centers will be on the collection of textiles. The increase of access (and equity of access) to a recycling route for textiles is a welcome development, provided it is done in a manner that complements, rather than competes with, existing options.

While we understand that Intro 1943 will be amended to exclude electronic and hazardous waste, at present the public is in a difficult situation with no curbside collections or drop-off points for either of these awkward streams. This needs to be resolved, as residents cannot be expected to store waste indefinitely and will resort to clandestine disposal of electronic and hazardous waste in the general waste stream, or risk fines by illegally dumping such items at the curbside.

As far as possible, the Recycling Centers should be sited in the same place as the organics drop-off sites, thereby reducing journeys for residents and potentially providing economies of scale around staffing and logistics. As with organics, assurances over the final destination of all material collected will also need to be made.

BkSWAB also strongly believes that the ultimate goal is for NYC to have free, convenient and universal organics recycling curbside collection in the not-too-distant future. In order to get there, we cannot reverse the progress we have made; we must restore the budget cuts to community based composting and pass the CORE Act to bridge us to a greener future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.  
The Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board

Chair: Shari Rueckl; Vice Chair: Celeste McMickle; Secretary: Elizabeth Royzman; Sergeant at Arms: Oliver Wright;

Members: Akhmoose Ari-Hotep, Anne Bassen, Sarah Bloomquist, Kendall Christiansen, Suzan Frazier, Louisa Freeman, Pablo Garcia, Kevin Jaksik, Rhonda Keyser, Rose Lenoff, Dylan Oakley, Vandra Thorburn, Greg Todd, Phil Vos

**JUNE 16, 2020**

**Hello, Good Morning.**

**Please restore free, public composting in NYC. Back where I grew up, in Florida, composting was much more accessible because most people had yards and private outdoor space.**

**But here, in the city, most people don't have that. Not offering free collection nearly guarantees that New Yorkers will end up throwing their food waste out with the rest of the trash.**

**I live in Melrose, in the South Bronx (District 17). This area is already disproportionately affected by pollution (it's surrounded by I-87, I-95 & I-278).**

**Fresh Direct was recently allowed to set up shop for its gas guzzling delivery trucks on the Bronx waterfront & now Amazon is adding a warehouse not too far away.**

**Given that the city continues to green light companies that want use the South Bronx as a fossil fuel dumping ground-- compost collection is not a big thing to ask for. Climate justice and social justice go hand in hand, and I think offering compost collection is a critical step in the right direction.**

**Allison Worrell  
Melrose, Bronx Resident**



*Creatively working with youth to achieve equitable zero-waste, climate smart school communities and a plastic free biosphere, —teaching citizen science, civic action, arts & media*

## **Cafeteria Culture Testimony - June 15, 2020**

### **New York City Council Hearing; Regarding Intros 1942 and 1943, the CORE Act**

Good afternoon, Chairman Reynoso and members of the Sanitation and Solid Waste Committee.

**On behalf of Cafeteria Culture (CafCu), I strongly urging the City Council to pass Intros 1942 and 1943, the CORE Act, to ensure that our City's residents can continue to engage in some form of organics recycling and composting by immediately restoring the \$7 million dollars of funding to our community-based compost drop-offs and education programs run by DSNY. CafCu is especially supportive of the bill's proposed plan for at least three accessible and equitably sited recycling drop off sites to be located in each community, including those who have been previously left out City recycling opportunities, ensuring the long overdue opportunity for public housing and lower income communities to participate in such programs close to home.**

***Cafeteria Culture (CafCu), founded as Styrofoam Out of Schools, is an environmental education organization that works with creatively youth to achieve equitable zero waste, climate smart school communities and a plastic free biosphere. Students in our programs, overwhelmingly from lower income communities of color and living in public housing, are providing an urgently needed voice to our City's zero waste and climate movement. Our award winning "Cafeteria Ranger" service learning programs and "Garbology 101", taught by our team to over 12,000 students in 20+ NYC schools and shared for free with all NYC schools, helped to launch and support the City's first school composting pilot programs. Students take on leadership roles during the lunch period and conduct waste audits and use their data to inform policy, bridging the connection between our consumption and garbage to environmental justice and climate change.***

### **Organics Collection, Environmental Justice and Education**

The Administration's decision to slash the DSNY budget, including cutting the \$28 million for composting organic waste and recycling education and outreach, is one giant step backwards in our efforts to mitigate the climate crisis. What we "save" now, will surely cost us dearly in the near future. The elimination of all forms of City supported organics collection translates into more garbage being transported to waste transfer stations in the South Bronx, North Brooklyn and Southeast Queens, as well as to the Covanta incinerator in Newark, NJ, all environmental justice communities, or "sacrifice zones," that are already disproportionately impacted by our City's garbage.

**Local or community composting sites are ideal places to teach about the awe-inspiring beauty of the composting process, replacing the uninformed "yuk" reaction with revelatory awe.** The Cafcu team has witnessed this stunning educational "aha" moment many times simply by taking students on walking field trips to community gardens. Kids and adults alike put their hands into finished compost, smell its lush earthiness (often for the first time), and behold the bounty of the garden. Every community deserves a composting site.

Our 10 years of experience on teaching about waste equity, researching local urban composting in Tokyo, and partnering with youth and schools on the piloting of innovative zero waste solutions has informed one of our core principles: the future of NYC solid waste management must include *local solutions for all*. **Ensuring that some of the local drop-off sites specified within the CORE Act also serve as sites that can locally process organics will bring us one step closer to this vision.**

Debby Lee Cohen, Executive Director/Founder, [CafeteriaCulture.org](http://CafeteriaCulture.org) [DL@cafeteriaculture.org](mailto:DL@cafeteriaculture.org) 917-282-0253  
% The Lower Eastside Girls Club NY, 402 East 8th Street, NY, NY 10009



*Creatively working with youth to achieve equitable zero-waste, climate smart school communities and a plastic free biosphere, —teaching citizen science, civic action, arts & media*

## Long Term Consequences and Future Benefits

Budget cuts for citywide composting are short sighted and dangerous. **The long-term implications of such budget cuts will no doubt set the City way back on our hard earned progress towards zero waste, as well as sustainable behavioral changes for many of our City's residents.** We are still recovering from similar setbacks caused by the recycling cuts after 9/11. The climate crisis may soon overshadow the pandemic and we cannot risk another 20 year recovery period to rebuild the groundwork for a composting culture for ALL City residents.

Food scraps and organics account for roughly a third of our waste stream. Our rapidly rising price tag of almost 1/2 a billion tax dollars annually to export our garbage to (mostly) out-of-state incinerators and landfills is not disappearing. Over time, budget cuts to the organics collection can only drive this cost higher and more rapidly, while simultaneously increasing our City's greenhouse gas emissions.

**Additionally, restoring and maintaining City Council funding for zero waste education and outreach at this time is critical. We must ensure that *all* New Yorkers, especially our children from lower income communities and communities of color are provided with educational opportunities that bridge the connection between food as garbage and the climate crisis. We have no time to waste.**

**We hope that the CORE Act is passed as soon as possible, setting the stage for the long term, climate smart solution of mandatory citywide composting for all City schools and residents, keeping food waste out of landfills and incinerators.** Investing in recycling and organics collection with robust education and outreach to support these efforts is critical for curbing our City's carbon and methane emissions .

**With the Coronavirus starkly highlighting our city's sacrifice zones, topped by the Trump administration's EPA rollbacks on air and climate pollution, we must do everything possible - right now - to end environmental and racial injustices in New York City, including how we manage our solid waste. Let's ensure the right to clean air and a healthy future for our most vulnerable children and communities.**

A special thank you to Council Members Powers and Reynoso for listening to the community's outcry against the recent organics collection budget cuts and for your excellent leadership on this issue.

Thank you,  
Debby Lee Cohen

Cafeteria Culture, Executive Director/ Founder, [CafeteriaCulture.org](http://CafeteriaCulture.org)  
Co-Director/Producer, [MicroplasticMadness.org](http://MicroplasticMadness.org) - a movie and impact campaign for a plastic free future  
c: 917-282-0253, [dl@cafeteriaculture.org](mailto:dl@cafeteriaculture.org)  
[Youtube: CafCu Media](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCafCu) [twitter @cafeteriacu](https://twitter.com/cafeteriacu) [Instagram: @CafCu](https://www.instagram.com/CafCu) [FaceBook](https://www.facebook.com/CafCu)



Photo: Fifth grade students from Cafeteria Culture's Zero Waste Schools Program at PS/MS 34 Franklin D Roosevelt trenching their school food scraps at the 12th Street Children's Garden.

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Chairman Reynoso and members of this Committee,

My name is Miryam Shemwell, I've been living in NYC for the past 5 years. I've started dropping off my food scraps at a GrowNYC food scrap drop-off site within the first month of my arrival and have been fully involved with community composting for the past 2 years and a half. I was part of this community as a Master Composter volunteer at various community gardens and as a former employee of GrowNYC's Compost Program. I'm writing to you today as a NYC resident who wants to live in a resilient and sustainable city that allows communities to thrive equally.

I would like to see NYC lead by example and be at the forefront of progressive initiatives that focus on environmental justice and equity, and circular economy with long-term planning. By sending our food waste to landfills, we are burdening out-of-state communities and contributing to climate change. NYC's recycling history has taught us that any suspension of a recycling program can erase years of outreach and education on changing waste disposal habits. We can't let this happen once again. Community composting is a low-cost solution to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, that largely contribute to climate change.

We have the existing infrastructure and knowledge right here to process residential organic waste. Community composting creates a sense of belonging for all who participate (even by just dropping off) as well as green jobs. By composting locally, the city also creates a valuable resource from its own waste, which is a perfect example of the circularity we need for sustainable solid waste management. The city has a goal of sending zero waste to landfills, which we can only achieve if we reactivate local food scraps collection and processing. This is why **I'm asking you first and foremost to restore the original budget of \$7 million for community composting.** This relatively small amount enabled the city to divert close to 5 million lbs. of food scraps from landfills in 2019, and the numbers keep growing as the movement to fight against climate keeps gaining momentum.

Once this budget has been restored, the **CORE Act (Intros 1942 + 1943)** will also allow our city to move closer towards our zero waste goal by establishing equitable distribution and accessibility of organic waste and textiles collection sites in each community district. I'm strongly in favor of hyperlocal solid waste management and support the CORE Act. I would however **push for an implementation much earlier than June 1, 2021 and that organic waste must be processed locally.** The next step would be to introduce and pass legislation for mandatory curbside composting to be implemented before 2025.

Thank you for your time,

*Miryam Shemwell*



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My name is Mary Parisen-Lavelle and I am Chair of Civics United for Railroad Environmental Solutions. CURES is a coalition of civic associations that formed in November 2009 to advocate for the use of modern freight rail technology East of Hudson -- including rail cars, containers, and locomotives used to export waste-by-rail from NYC and Long Island. Our goals are to eliminate needless air and water pollution and GHG, and enhance public and environmental health and quality of life in neighborhoods of in NYC and greater Long Island through the use of this modern freight rail technology.

In this testimony, we respectfully ask that the City Council to restore cuts to our community-based composting programs, pass Intros 1942 and 1943, known as the CORE Act, and introduce and pass legislation mandating citywide mandatory curbside organics collection to be implemented in the next four years for the following reasons:

- Waste export from NYC is a huge, long-term public expense, so source reduction offers savings.
- Composting putrescible waste instead of exporting it reduces waste burdens on communities – from NYC neighborhoods where waste is picked up, processed, and shipped out of town, to more distant neighborhoods near landfills where NYC’s waste is dumped. For example, every single ton of NYC MSW and other types of waste exported by rail through Fresh Pond Yard in Queens is stored, classified, and hauled through the communities we work with. These communities are burdened with odors, vectors, pollution from waste blowoff and leachate, excessive noise, and diesel exhaust from ancient locomotives during the export of waste-by-rail, as well as congestion and pollution from trucks used to haul solid waste-for-export to transfer and transload facilities. Each old locomotive emits excess NOx pollution equivalent to the exhaust of 30,000 cars, compared to modern Tier 4 Switch Duty Cycle locomotive technology. To its credit, Waste Management partnered with NYC EDC and DSNY to obtain a \$1M USEPA DERA grant. With the grant and its own matching funds, WM purchased a Near Zero Emissions Tier 4 locomotive to haul NYC MSW from its Varick Ave. and Review Ave. facilities to Fresh Pond Yard, mitigating that portion of community burdens. However, most of the locomotive fleet hauling waste for export east of Hudson is still 1970’s locomotive technology, including high-polluting, unregulated locomotives operating in Environmental Justice Communities in Southeast Queens. Since 2013, \$21M has been appropriated by the NYS legislature for LIRR to repower these old Switch Duty Cycle locomotives to Tier 4 standards, but LIRR hasn’t done it, and, in fact, sold four of the old locomotives it was supposed to repower to its freight rail concessionaire for a total price of \$45,400 (sales in 2014 and 2017). The freight rail concessionaire subsequently “refurbished” but did not repower these ancient LIRR MP-15 locomotives for its ongoing use in Brooklyn, Queens, and greater LI, where they continue to harm the health of residents. This is not a small problem. Waste-by-rail accounted for one-third of the total annual rail carloads east of Hudson before the current recession and COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Mayor’s proposed budget would undercut much of the progress this City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills -- a major source of greenhouse gas

emissions and odor and noise problems for communities. The Administration is slashing the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million of that coming from a total elimination of all funding of recycling education and outreach and composting organic waste. This is short-sighted and has potential to have long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals.

Action we are asking City Council to take, to happen in three major steps:

1. Immediate Impact: Restore the cuts to community composting in the budget:
  - The Mayor's budget cut approximately \$7 million of funding directed to GrowNYC and the NYC Compost Project and partners, which has sustained more than 170 drop off and community education sites as well as many processing sites. We ask that this comparatively small amount of funding be restored to at least provide residents and communities with sites to drop off organic waste in the short term and immediate future.
  
2. Pass the CORE Act:
  - The reason we are here today is to discuss Intros 1942 and 1943, known as the CORE Act.
  - This is sensible legislation that we see as the second step, after restoring the \$7 million budget cuts, to continue to move our city closer towards zero waste in an equitable manner.
  - *Intro 1942: why you support establishing equitable organic waste collection sites in each community district*
  - *Intro 1943: why you support establishing equitable recycling centers for textiles in each community district*
  - Why equity and accessibility matters, especially in educating communities about diversion, composting, urban farming/food security, etc.
  - Here is where you might state any constructive amendments you suggest to the bills themselves, such as pushing for a shorter deadline for implementation (currently June 1, 2021), or language mandating that organic waste collected shall be processed locally.
  
3. Introduce and Pass Legislation Mandating for Citywide Mandatory Curbside Organics Collection to be Implemented in the Next Four Years:
  - Finally, the ultimate goal is for every resident of NYC to have free, convenient organics recycling collection from their home in the not-too-distant future.
  - In order to get there, though, we cannot squander the progress we have made so far, and must restore the budget cuts to community based composting and pass the CORE Act to bridge us to the brighter greener future of citywide mandatory curbside collection.

We cannot understate the urgency of this ask, and hope the Council ensures that this important priority not be left behind in the budget process.

Thank you.

Mary Parisen-Lavelle, Chair CURES – 718-772-6563



**Carl A. Zimring**  
Professor of Sustainability Studies  
Department of Social Science and Cultural Studies  
School of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
108 DeKalb Hall  
Pratt Institute  
200 Willoughby Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11205  
Telephone: 718-687-5958  
Email: [czimring@pratt.edu](mailto:czimring@pratt.edu)

June 9, 2020

Dear Council Speaker Johnson, Sanitation and Solid Waste Committee Chair Reynoso, and members of the City Council:

We are history professors who teach, research and write about New York City environmental history at universities and institutions throughout the United States. We are writing to urge you to restore full funding to community composting programs in New York City, and to support Intro 1942 of 2020, better known as the "Community Organics and Recycling Empowerment (CORE)" Act.

Our forthcoming book, *Coastal Metropolis: Environmental Histories of Modern New York City* will be published this December by the University of Pittsburgh Press. The book covers the history and traditions of environmental principles and values in the cultural, economic, and political development of New York City from the 1800's through present day. **Among the subjects of the book is the long, rich history of community composting in New York City and its crucial connections to community gardening, urban agriculture, urban renewal, and the struggle for environmental justice.**

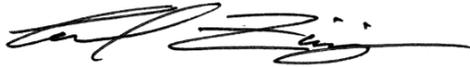
While formal municipal funding of community composting began in the early 1990's, the practice in fact can be traced back to grassroots action by local community groups during the fiscal crisis of the 1970's, which among other harms led to cuts to basic city services (including sanitation). During this period, community composting was core to struggles by those who remained in some of the most underserved areas of the City to forge their own network of self-preservation in areas of safety, health, recreation, food, and sanitation.

As NYC faces a potentially drastic budgetary crisis in the wake of the pandemic, it is essential to remember that NYC community composting emerged in the 1970's in a similar period of fiscal devastation. As the community composting movement has grown, it has provided vast and varied benefits to the City in terms of environmental education, job training, greenspace development, and the establishment of a base for decentralized sustainability practice that serves us well in this epoch of climate change and its impacts on people in cities. Without a thirty-year history of community composting to build on, it is probable that the city's aspirations to curbside organics collection, not to mention carbon neutrality through sustainable organics management, would still be ideas on the drawing board. Without the continuation of community composting, New York's future resiliency is imperiled. Community compost literally builds the ground that New Yorkers use to grow food and

restore industrial land. We strongly urge you to restore funding to the organizations that have made composting a reality in this coastal metropolis.

Sincerely,

Joy Cytryn, CUNY Graduate Center  
Adam Charboneau, Stonybrook University  
Steven Corey, Columbia College Chicago  
Martin Melosi, University of Houston  
Tina Peabody, SUNY Albany  
Kara M Schlichting, Queens College CUNY  
Joel Tarr, Carnegie Mellon University  
John Waldman, Queens College CUNY  
Carl Zimring, Pratt Institute

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carl Zimring". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dear Committee,

Please allocate adequate funding for curbside and community composting and all city composting projects. The fate of our environment is crucial and composting is a practical solution and doable in our city. Our lives depend on it.

Thank-you,

sandy renz

PS I'll volunteer.

Good afternoon, name is Allison Hirschhorn and I am a concerned citizen and composter in New York City. In this testimony, we ask that the City does not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for organics recycling and composting. I am a native New Yorker, I grew up in Flatbush Brooklyn. I have always been concerned for the fate of the environment, but it's only been recently that I began composting after attending a talk that moved me to change my behavior. Once I started, I realized how easy it is and how good it made me feel. Throwing food in the trash these past few weeks has been truly heartbreaking.

The Mayor's proposed budget would undercut much of the progress this City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills -- a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The Administration is slashing the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million of that coming from a total elimination of all funding of recycling and composting organic waste. This is short-sighted and has potential to have long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals.

Today we urge the City Council to ensure that the City at least maintain the ability to continue some sort of organics recycling and composting, and not toss away the progress we have made in the past few years.

We are not asking that the Council restore all \$28 million of organics program cuts. Rather, we are asking that the cuts to the NYC Compost Project and partners, and to GrowNYC, be restored, with expansion for community outreach and education.

The cuts to the NYC Compost project and partners and to GrowNYC together represent approximately \$7 million, and with some additional funding, could go a long way to allowing New Yorkers to continue to source separate food waste and preventing this major waste stream from going to landfill and emitting greenhouse gases.

This comparatively small amount of funding in the big picture would ensure that:

- at least eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide organics collection and processing services, as well as community education, could continue their good work;

- at least 170 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs can continue to divert this potent source of greenhouse gases from landfills;
- at least six community composting facilities can continue their work of processing the food waste to turn into usable compost to grow food in community gardens and urban farms during a time of food insecurity; and
- the City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and recycle – such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop life-time habits of sustainable living.

We cannot understate the urgency of this ask to the people of New York City (and the world) and hope the Council ensures that this important priority not be left behind in the budget process.

Thank you,

Allison Hirschhorn

6/12/2020

Hello, my name is Sarah Hahn and I have called Brooklyn home for most of the last 15 years, with the last five in Prospect Lefferts Gardens. In this testimony, I request that the City not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for composting. I have not thrown out organic waste from my home in nearly eight years until now. I have also volunteered on several occasions at compost processing sites in Queens and Brooklyn, so I appreciate the effort that goes into city composting, but also its many rewards. The environmental impact goes without saying, but meeting young NYCHA residents who are apprenticing as urban farmers has underscored the value of composting in our City in other ways, too.

The Mayor's proposed budget would undercut much of the progress our City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills -- a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The Administration is slashing the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million of that coming from a total elimination of all funding of recycling education and outreach and composting organic waste. ***This is short-sighted and has potential to have long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals.***

I urge the City Council to ensure that our City at least maintain the ability to continue some sort of composting, and not literally toss away the progress we have made in the past few years.

I am not asking that the Council restore all \$28 million of organics program cuts. Rather, I ask that the cuts to the NYC Compost Project and partners, and to GrowNYC, be restored, with expansion for community outreach and education.

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6/12/2020

- The City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and recycle – such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop life-time habits of sustainable living.

I cannot understate the urgency of this ask. The value New York City had placed on composting has been a source of pride for me and something that sets us apart from many large cities. And now that so many people have been cooking more from home, there is an even greater need for this service. ***I hope the Council ensures that this important environmental, educational, and social priority not be left behind in the budget process.***

Thank you,

Sarah Hahn  
Brooklyn, NY  
617-955-2955

Hello Speaker Johnson (or staff member),

My name is Allie Wist and I am a resident of Brooklyn, and a photo editor at Bon Appetit Magazine. I am concerned about the suspension of the organics recycling program, both the drop-off sites, community composting, and the DSNY curbside program. My partner and I are both committed to reducing our carbon footprint through these very important channels. Additionally, through my work, we use composting to reduce the waste created by photoshoots, and I'm concerned about the additional waste to landfills created by the suspension of the programs.

The City must prioritize organics collection in order to meet our zero waste and our climate goals. Before these budget cuts, New York City was making major advances in our waste management, moving beyond our toxic waste legacy and the lack of awareness most city dwellers have of their huge carbon footprint. Not to mention the movement forward this did for climate justice. I am writing to encourage you to support forthcoming legislation in the City council to expand, and not contract, our organics collection because taking action is overdue.

I would appreciate it if you could continue to champion organics collection, and thank you for your support thus far.

Allie Wist & Tim Lessick  
267 Clarkson Ave  
Apt 2  
Brooklyn, NY 11226

Good afternoon,

My name is Kelsey Nadolski and I am a resident of Astoria, Queens. In this testimony, I ask that the City does not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for organics recycling and composting. New Yorkers want a resilient, healthy, zero-waste city -- organics composting is essential. We must plan for the future, reduce our solid waste, and protect our vulnerable communities who bare the burden of our garbage.

The Mayor's proposed budget would undercut much of the progress this City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills -- a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The Administration is slashing the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million of that coming from a total elimination of all funding of composting organic waste and recycling education and outreach. This is short-sighted and has potential to have long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals.

Today we urge the City Council to ensure that the City at least maintain the ability to continue some sort of organics recycling and composting, and not toss away the progress we have made in the past few years.

We are not asking that the Council restore all \$28 million of organics program cuts. Rather, we are asking that the cuts to the NYC Compost Project and partners, and to GrowNYC, be restored, with expansion for community outreach and education.

The cuts to the NYC Compost project and partners and to GrowNYC together represent approximately \$7 million, and with some additional funding, could go a long way to allowing New Yorkers to continue to source separate food waste and preventing this major waste stream from going to landfill and emitting greenhouse gases.

This comparatively small amount of funding in the big picture would ensure that:

- at least eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide organics collection and processing services, as well as community education, could continue their good work;
- at least 170 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs can continue to divert this potent source of greenhouse gases from landfills;
- at least six community composting facilities can continue their work of processing the food waste to turn into usable compost to grow food in community gardens and urban farms during a time of food insecurity; and
- the City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and recycle – such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop lifetime habits of sustainable living.

We cannot understate the urgency of this ask to us and our neighborhood, and hope the Council ensures that this important priority not be left behind in the budget process.

Thank you.

Kelsey Nadolski

-

## Testimony to the New York City Council Budget Hearings- May 21, 2020

### Save our Compost Program

**Nancy Romer, Peoples Climate Movement-NY,**

The Covid-19 crisis has upended our lives, killed 16,000 New Yorkers and put hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers out of work. My comments today will be on the looming climate crisis, its similarity to the Covid crisis and what the City of New York can do now.

Scientists warned us about minimizing Covid-19 back in January—had we heeded their warnings we could have saved thousands of lives and jobs. The scientists are warning us about much more devastating consequences to run-away climate change: if we don't act NOW the lives we love, the people we love and the planet we love will be devastated. The scientists tell us we have ten short years to respond and shift away from a fossil fuel-based economy to one based on renewable energy. This can be done while we are recovering from the health and economic devastation of the pandemic and prevent the greatest threat—climate change—from advancing. Our city must take the lead if we can ever expect the rest of the nation and the world to follow.

We are asking the City of New York to advance a Green Recovery. It will require massive investments right now in green infrastructure, real and thorough retrofitting of ALL buildings in NYC to maximize energy efficiency, and dramatically expand solar, wind and composting capacity. This is not the time to pit one important crisis against another. It is the time to create a future that takes the health of individuals, communities and our planet as central to our solutions.

The Peoples Climate Movement-New York stands behind **saving the composting programs** that exist right now and asks that the City of New York expand that program to make it more self-supporting and, ultimately, less costly or incur no costs to the city over time. Closing down the present composting program will be costly and starting it up will be even more costly. **Composting costs can be covered by expanding the program and making it more self-sustaining.** The public outcry for this program can translate into broader education of New Yorkers and effective participation in the composting program now and in the future. Composting sequesters carbon in our atmosphere; putting food scraps into landfill creates methane, a GHG 82 times more potent and dangerous than carbon and creating respiratory illnesses in nearby communities. Because most waste transfer stations and landfill are in low income communities they will be most affected--again.

The people of New York and the people of the planet are crying out for a healthy, safe and decent life. We need to center the recovery in expanding, not contracting, all the green infrastructure projects available and to honor the wishes of New Yorkers to expand the composting program, sequester carbon, improve the quality of the air in NYC and save lives in the future.

If we think the Covid crisis is bad, which it certainly is, unmitigated climate change will be far worse with fewer “solutions”. The solutions are before us now: keep and expand composting, expand green infrastructure, expand renewable energy. The future of our city and our planet depends on progressive governments taking the lead now. Thank you for leading that fight.



**Written Statement of GrowNYC to the NYC Council Committee on  
Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Hearing on Intros. 1942 and  
1943, the CORE Act**

**June 15, 2020**

Good afternoon, Chairman Reynoso and members of the Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of the CORE Act. My name is David Hurd and I have been the Director of Zero Waste Programs at GrowNYC since those programs were established in 2006. As many of you know, GrowNYC has played a pivotal role in helping improve the environmental quality of life in NYC for the past 50 years.

I have been working in recycling and composting in New York City since 1980. I have spent the better part of my life to make recycling and composting second nature, and a way of life for the average New Yorker. I am proud to say I designed and implemented the first large-scale recycling program for high rise apartment buildings in NYC from 1984-1988 with funding from the NYC Department of Sanitation. It was the first such program in North America.

The proposed executive budget eliminates organics recycling in NYC, as well as additional DSNY services designed to reduce the amount of waste that NYC exports to landfills. These eliminations would undercut much of the progress the City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills, where they become a major source of greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change. The proposed DSNY budget cuts include elimination of all funding for recycling outreach and education and composting programs for NYC residents. This is short-sighted and will have long-term negative implications, setting the City back further from its zero waste to landfills, greenhouse gas reduction, and environmental justice goals.

We have seen what happens when recycling programs are suspended – restarting takes enormous time, resources and effort. You don't go back to square one – you move behind it. In fact, the City's residential recycling program has yet to achieve the levels of landfill diversion it had prior to 2001, before portions of the program were suspended by Mayor Bloomberg following 9/11. It was only the introduction of Curbside Organics that began to put NYC back on track. This is a perfect example of why we cannot allow today's immediate COVID-19 crisis to distract us from our longer-term goals. Zero waste goals for NYC have been in place for almost 8 years and suspending these programs will further delay meeting those goals.

We support the ambitious and equitable goals of the CORE Act. However, in order to have the infrastructure and mechanism to support and implement community-based composting and recycling as embodied in the Act, we believe that the top priority and urgent short-term need is for the City Council to **restore the \$6.3 million in funding to GrowNYC and the NYC Compost Project that is proposed to be cut in the FY21 budget**. The restoration of those funds could bring back the 170 food scrap drop-off sites that we collectively managed when activities were suspended on March 22, 2020. This would bring the City Council very close to the CORE Act's goal of opening 177 food scrap drop-off sites, while passage of the CORE Act

would ensure equitable geographic distribution and access to these composting services. Without funding, these bills will be unable to achieve their objectives. The eight organizations affected by these cuts represent the backbone of community-based recycling and composting in NYC. They can achieve the CORE Act objectives, as GrowNYC and the NYC Compost Project:

- Are the original programs for supporting grassroots, community-led action and education for environmental sustainability in New York
- Have already developed a vast network of staffed and independent, community-based food scrap drop-offs that is ***waiting to be reactivated with a restoration of funding and has the potential to grow even larger in the future***
- Cultivated an army of concerned citizens who are solving the city's waste problems one block at a time
- Support hundreds of volunteer gardens, urban farms, and schools that are growing food for their communities and beautifying their neighborhoods
- Continue to connect New Yorkers from underserved communities to career paths in the environment, urban farming and horticulture
- Support hundreds of community projects that will provide unemployed and underemployed New Yorkers with purpose and inspiration as the city suffers through a major crisis

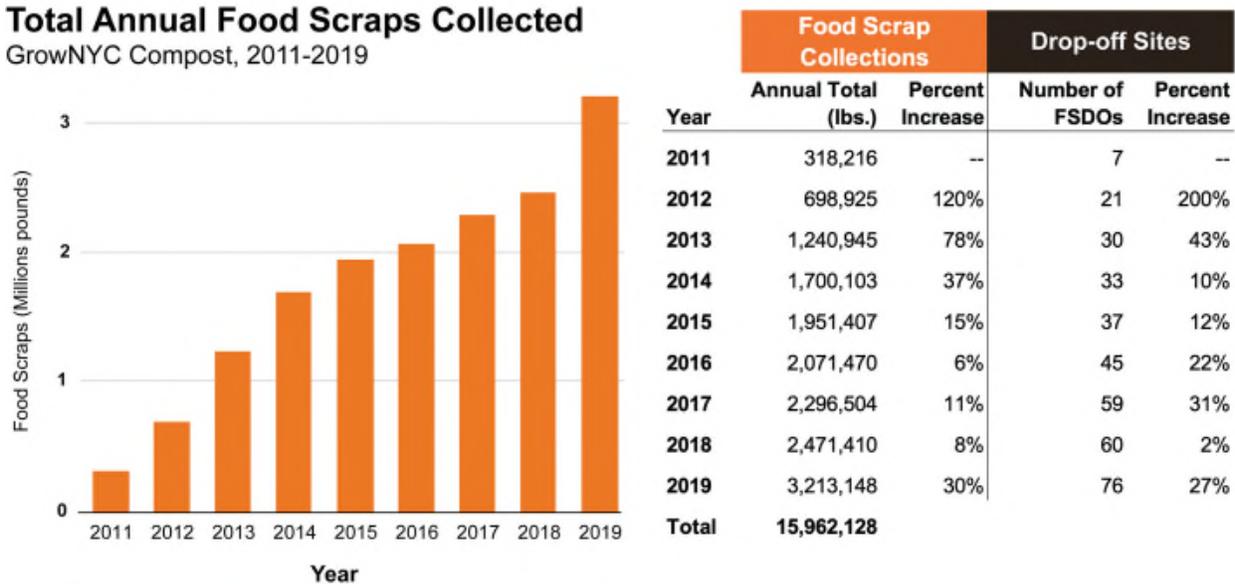
As of March 2020, GrowNYC Zero Waste Programs were operating 76 food scrap drop-off sites and 34 textiles collection sites. Since we began our textile recycling program in 2007 and our food scrap drop-off program in 2011, GrowNYC has diverted 7 million pounds of textiles and 17 million pounds of food scraps from disposal (Figure 1). That represents over 700,000 individual textile donations and over 2.4 million individual food scrap donations. The proposed cuts would also eliminate GrowNYC's important work in improving recycling at NYCHA developments, where we have been working actively for the past 5 years, in addition other important zero waste programming.



**Figure 1. GrowNYC Compost Program History**

**Total Annual Food Scraps Collected**

GrowNYC Compost, 2011-2019



*Note: Program began March, 2011. 2011 data reflects 10 months of operation.*

Our colleagues at the Compost Project are the pioneers of composting in NYC and have been a mainstay in that arena for 27 years. They operate six active DEC-registered composting facilities within the five boroughs and accept the bulk of the organics collected by GrowNYC - these programs truly don't exist without each other. The Compost Project's combined efforts turn over 5.3 million pounds of food scraps and garden waste into compost each year. Together, we distributed over 1.1 million pounds of compost to over 12,000 recipients in 2019.

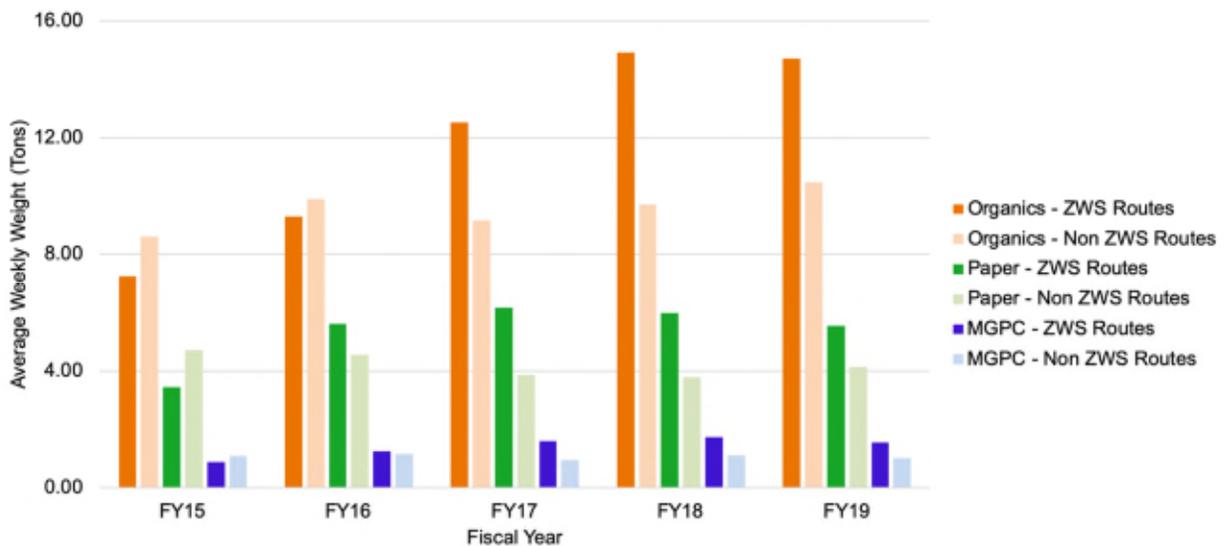
The funding for GrowNYC's Zero Waste Schools (ZWS) program under a contract with DOE through funding from DSNY has also been eliminated, and represents an additional \$972 thousand not reflected in the proposed \$2.8 million cut for "Recycling Education." We request that this funding be restored as well. This restoration will be critical as it is anticipated that NYC public schools will re-open in September.

This work directly supports schools to achieve maximum diversion with minimal contamination and reaches over 70 thousand students and 8 thousand teachers each year with lessons on how and why to compost organic waste as well as recycle. Since 2010, GrowNYC's ZWS program has worked directly with over 600 schools, reaching more than 330 thousand students, 24.6 thousand teachers and 1.8 thousand custodial staff. Our programming has been instrumental in increasing recycling and organics collection rates in the largest school system in the United States, and training the next generation of New Yorkers on the importance and the practices of waste reduction and recycling.

The ZWS program has measurable impacts on landfill diversion (Figure 2). **Organics tonnages improved by 103 percent on ZWS Routes, whereas organics tonnages on Non-ZWS routes only improved by 22 percent from FY15 to FY19.**



**Figure 2. NYC Zero Waste Schools Program Impact on Landfill Waste Diversion**



On a human scale, the proposed budget cuts to GrowNYC Zero Waste Programs and the NYC Compost Project represent a loss 56 full-time, and 52 part-time staff.

The reason we are all here today is to discuss Intros 1942 and 1943, known as the CORE Act. This is sensible legislation that we support, but that we see as the second step **after restoring funding to GrowNYC and the NYC Compost Project**. Together, these actions will continue to move our city closer towards zero waste in an equitable manner. We pledge to work closely with the City Council to implement these bills. We have some concerns about the proposed frequency and duration of operations, as well as staffing needs, but these details can be negotiated at a later date.

In the long-term, GrowNYC supports the introduction and passage of legislation for Citywide Mandatory Curbside Organics collection to be implemented in the next four years. The ultimate goal is for every NYC resident to have free, convenient organics recycling collection from their home in the not-too-distant future.

However, in order to get there, we cannot squander the progress we have made toward waste diversion over the past 3 decades. We must reverse the budget cuts to community-based composting and recycling education and pass the CORE Act to bridge us to the brighter, greener future of citywide mandatory Curbside Organics collection.



I would like to thank Chairman Reynoso and the Committee for the opportunity to provide this testimony, and for proposing this important legislation. We look forward to working with you in its implementation.

With gratitude,

David Hurd  
Director, Zero Waste Programs  
GrowNYC

*For 50 years, GrowNYC has been transforming communities throughout the five boroughs by giving New Yorkers the tools and resources they need to make our city cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable. Whether it's operating the world-famous Union Square Greenmarket, building a new community garden, teaching young people about the environment, or increasing recycling rates through education, GrowNYC is hard at work in your neighborhood. GrowNYC is a privately-funded 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.*



## CORE ACT TESTIMONY – June 15 2020

My name is Jeff Twine. For over forty years I've been President of Upper West Side Recycling. We're the only surviving one of the few dozen voluntary community recycling centers founded in the 1970s, long before DSNY started picking up recyclable materials. I was also secretary of a committee that coordinated the activities of these voluntary centers. During the 1980s I participated in meetings with DSNY when they were planning their recycling program. Then, in the 1990s, I served as co-chair of the Manhattan SWAB residential committee for several years. Upper West Side Recycling has collected various recyclables since the 1970s, and we currently publish a free environmental newsletter (<https://www.uwsr.org/>; [info@uwrs.org](mailto:info@uwrs.org)).

As you can see, I'm very familiar with how recycling has changed over the years in our city. *All the materials collected by DSNY were first recycled by community groups and non-profits.* These groups built up a base of participants, educated the public, and sparked the interest that would later enable DSNY to take over the collection of recyclables on a much larger scale. This has been the case for food-scrap composting. Totally eliminating any private-sector options now,

would make it much more difficult for DSNY when they try to re-start the program in June 2021.

Thus, I support the Core Act. In particular, *it's really important to maintain funding now for GrowNYC, Lower East Side Ecology, Big Re-Use and other members of the Compost Project.* Organics recycling is in its infancy, the same way that recycling of metal and glass was in the 1970s. According to what we hear, *people who've been recycling their food scraps through DSNY are committed and enthusiastic.*

They'd feel *betrayed* if they had no alternative, if they were forced to throw their food scraps in the garbage for the entire next year. If they feel betrayed, they'll be less likely to participate in future food scrap collection, less likely to interest their neighbors to do the same in the future. Thus, we'd lose much of the momentum that's been built up in the food-scrap collection movement. On the other hand, people are looking for ways to help out in this time of crisis. The Compost Project gives them a means to do so, and at the same time to help alleviate global warming. It also helps establish a connection with natural cycles that most city dwellers long for.

**Continuing to fund the Compost Project would enable its members to maintain the infrastructure that's been built up at GrowNYC, Lower East Side Ecology, Big Re-Use and the others—the trucks, containers, drop-off locations, organizational staffing, community outreach, markets, and planning necessary to carry out food-scrap collection. *Cutting this this relatively tiny amount of funding for the Compost Project would be a giant step backward for our city.***

**Longer-Term, we need to revisit how DSNY Food Scrap Collection is structured when it's resumed in June 2021. In order for the program to function efficiently, the public must participate fully. The primary way to achieve a high rate of participation in food scrap collection is to make it mandatory for residential buildings.**

**Higher participation would, in turn, help in at least two other ways:**

- 1. Since organic materials make about one-third of our waste stream, much less garbage would be generated as food scrap composting is increased. Thus, the frequency of garbage collection could be reduced.**
- 2. The rat population would drop significantly, helping to alleviate an important health problem.**

**Thanks to Councilmember Reynoso and all the other for giving me time to express my opinion. Once again, I'm Jeff Twine, Head of Upper West Side Recycling.**



## Committee on Sanitation and Waste Management

June 15, 2020

### **Fund Community Composting. Support Climate, Social, and Racial Justice**

Good afternoon, my name is Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli and I am the Director of Common Ground Compost LLC. We are a zero waste services company, helping businesses and residents divert food scraps and recyclables from landfills. We run Reclaimed Organics, a bicycle-powered micro hauling operation that services businesses and residents in Manhattan.

Since the Mayor de-funded residential organics programs, we have played an educational and coordination role among new and emerging micro haulers and processors. Enterprising individuals from across the boroughs have reached out to us for advice and guidance to build and launch organics diversion programs and services in their communities in response to the sudden void of food scrap drop off sites and curbside collection. Residents, eager to divert food scraps from landfills, are scrambling for solutions. New Yorkers understand that climate change is humanity's greatest and most pressing looming threat, one that will impact the most vulnerable communities first, as has the COVID-19 pandemic.

Organics are the heaviest and wettest, and therefore the most costly and emissions-producing portion of the waste stream to transport. Organics are also special: unlike plastic, glass, metal, or paper that are most effectively processed at massive volumes to achieve economies of scale, organics can remain even within an individual's apartment and be effectively recycled. Food scraps can be walked to community gardens, or collected on foot or by bike, and consolidated for processing in community-scale compost facilities. Organics can be organized at micro-scale transfer facilities to be collected and processed at a commercial scale near the city. Rather than just talking about it, we should build a system that keeps 100% of the City's organic waste within 150 miles of the City.

This goal would require investment in education, job training, and infrastructure. This approach would also create many more employment opportunities than are currently involved in our City's waste management supply chain: one that disproportionately burdens low income communities. This supply chain depends on contracts with so-called waste to energy facilities and far-flung landfills that are a permanent end-of-the-line for materials that could be valuable to our City if we invested in education and access to diversion opportunities.

We must take every opportunity to make the best of the economic disaster we are currently living through. We urge the City to, at an absolute minimum, restore \$7 Million to allow GrowNYC and the formerly-known-as-NYC Compost Project sites to immediately reopen. With equal urgency, we ask the City to expand the drop off locations to include communities that were not previously served: climate change will affect all of us, and the services we provide to mitigate the impacts of climate change must be accessible to all.

With this essential funding restored right away, in 2021 the CORE Act can step in and execute the equitable and citywide system we need to see. At least one of the CORE Act sites in each district should be a permanent organics processing site. These sites' operations can range from traditional composting processes, to hosting mechanical organics processing technology, to operating solely as micro-scale organics transfer facilities where material can be efficiently consolidated for collection by haulers.

These sites should not be limited to residential organics, but should have the opportunity to generate revenue to support the employment opportunities therein. A suggested fee structure, standard operating procedures, safety guidelines, training toolkits, troubleshooting, and of course data collection tools can all be developed and provided by the City. Individuals can be empowered to educate their neighbors about why composting and waste diversion matter, and a variety of other reuse, repair, and waste diversion programs can be centered on these sites.

Composting can no longer be a luxury afforded only to those privileged with time, money, and energy to devote to the cause. Fortunately, a robust organics diversion network is within our reach, and now is our opportunity to come together with bold ideas. New York must lead the way and set the highest bar for the rest of the country to follow, rather than lagging behind.

Thank you

Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli

Director

Common Ground Compost LLC



TESTIMONY TO RESTORE FUNDING FOR NYC COMPOST PROJECT/GROW NYC AND IN SUPPORT OF THE CORE ACT (INTRO. 1943, INTRO. 1944), June 15th, 2020

My name is Jane Selden, and I'm here representing 350NYC, an environmental activist organization focusing on local NYC climate issues. We are a grassroots climate group that depends on volunteers to advocate for political and social solutions to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

350NYC has joined the #SaveOurCompost Coalition because we recognize the vital role recycling of organic and non-organic waste plays in confronting the climate crisis. 1/3 of the City's waste stream is composed of organic material. If composted, it has the environmental benefit of sequestering carbon. However, if it enters landfill, it produces methane, a greenhouse gas 30 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Landfills are, in fact, the third largest emitters of methane. Therefore, we urge the Mayor to restore funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC. With the suspension of curbside recycling, the 170 drop-off sites and six compost-processing facilities operated by these organizations are now the only way New York City residents will be able to divert organic waste from landfill.

The shut-down of neighborhood-based composting facilities means even more waste will be trucked to waste transfer stations located primarily in low-income communities and communities of color, where residents are already subjected to unhealthy levels of noise and air pollution. Exposure to particulate matter produced by diesel exhaust from heavy garbage truck traffic has resulted in high asthma rates and is now being linked to higher rates of Covid 19.

It is these same communities that have often not had access to recycling programs. The CORE Act, sponsored by City Council Members Keith Powers and Antonio Reynoso would address this inequity by mandating at least three organic waste drop-off sites in every community district (Intro. 1943) and would also include sites for recycling textiles, which comprise 6% of the City's waste stream, amounting to 200,000 tons of waste a year (Intro.1943).

We are acutely aware that our city is facing an unprecedented financial crisis and is forced to make some drastic and painful budget cuts. However, decisions about where these cuts should be made must reflect the priorities of New Yorkers. We can see from the huge public outcry when the curbside pick-up and local composting program suspensions were announced, that New Yorkers recognize the need for organics recycling and the importance of the educational

and job opportunities the neighborhood-based facilities provide, especially in underserved communities. In May, over a thousand people participated in a virtual town hall to find out how to save these programs. New Yorkers clearly regard organic waste recycling as an essential service, and the City must as well.

We fully support both continuing to fund GrowNYC and the NYC Compost Project and passage of the CORE Act as important measures that will keep these recycling programs going during the current budget crisis. However, ultimately, we need to restore curbside pick-up and make organics recycling mandatory, as has been done with great success in cities like Seattle and San Francisco.

Twenty years ago, after 9/11, plastics and glass recycling was suspended in the wake of another financial crisis, and the City's recycling rate has never fully recovered. Today we no longer have the luxury of time in ensuring a sustainable future. We can't afford to make the same mistake twice.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jane Selden  
350NYC

June 11 ,2020

Dear Council

I am Adam Baruchowitz, the CEO of Wearable Collections. A leading clothing and textile recycling company based out of Brooklyn. We have been the backbone of the NYC greenmarket collections since 2008. We have grown the collections from 1 market a week to 34 markets per week over that time span. What started out as a proof of concept has grown to be part of the fabric of waste management in NYC.

Our company started by placing bins inside of residential buildings to make clothing recycling as easy as plastic, glass and paper. We have seen that business grow to over 250 buildings citywide. We have also partnered with the DOE office of sustainability to host clothing drives with over one hundred schools. Wherever we believe we can create a convenient collection hub we seek to operate. There has no better partner for us than GrowNYC who has led the way on niche waste management. The greenmarkets have proven to be a perfect hub for waste collection. The collections have grown to @ 1 million lbs annually from greenmarkets alone.

One might question how important textile collections are to the city. Textiles and clothing make up 6% of the residential wastestream. Its not a gigantic percentage but significant 200,000 tons a year. But there is more to this story of which my 15 years of experience has taught me. Clothing is the best gateway material to opening eyes for the value of our wastestream. People understand the value of clothing. They also have a good sense of another life the clothing have when they are done with it through years of donating clothing. People love to tell stories of the life they have lived in the clothing. As a waste manager, specifically of clothing but well versed in how other materials are handled, I can see how waste management is very formulaic. It necessitates efficient collections and dot connecting to find value of the materials making them worth collecting. Considering there is a cost for dumping our garbage, every pound that recyclers keep out of landfills and in motion saves the city money. Once people learn about how clothing's value is kept through efficient distribution, their minds can better translate how materials like plastics, and glass and organics have better lives ahead of them as well when they are finished and make them consider their consumptive habits in general.

We all seek a greener NYC and textile recycling plays a key role in raising awareness and education of the value of our wastestream. I hope the council can see that and reinstitutes zero waste programming. I fully support the CORE act.

Sincerely,

Adam Baruchowitz

CEO and Founder of Wearable Collections

May 21, 2020

Good afternoon, my name is Nancy Wu and I am a resident of Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

In this testimony, I am joining with fellow New Yorkers to ask that the City does not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for organics recycling and composting. I urge the City to take a long view of organics recycling and not to reintroduce millions of pounds of waste to our landfills. Composting is an easy way to save our planet and it helps to recycle our food scraps into natural fertilizers for our park and gardens.

The Mayor's proposed budget would undercut much of the progress this City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills -- a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The Administration is slashing the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million of that coming from a total elimination of all funding of recycling and composting organic waste. This is short-sighted and has potential to have long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals.

Today I urge the City Council not to abandon organics collections during this crisis but to recommit to organics diversion programs that have made significant impacts in our communities. Please do not toss away the progress we have made in the past few years.

History shows us that temporary suspensions do not have temporary effects. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the City suspended plastic and glass recycling in July 2002 to close a budget gap. Plastic recycling was suspended for 12 months and glass for 21 months. Once recycling resumed, rates plummeted and they have still not fully recovered, even now in 2020. Recycling compliance works best when practice and behavior are consistent.

I am asking that the Council restore organics program cuts including curbside collection. Though the brown bin program has yet to reach all of New York City, suspending the program will likely have grave consequences over time.

In the interest of access and equity, I am specifically asking that the cuts to the NYC Compost Project and partners, and to GrowNYC, be restored, with expansion for community outreach and education. These programs ensure that all New Yorkers can participate in organics collection and help to raise awareness about the importance impacts of diversion and waste reduction.

The cuts to the NYC Compost project and partners and to GrowNYC together represent approximately \$7 million, and with some additional funding, could go a long way to allowing New Yorkers to continue to source separate food waste and preventing this major waste stream from going to landfill and emitting greenhouse gases.

This comparatively small amount of funding in the big picture would ensure that:

- at least eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide organics collection and processing services, as well as community education, could continue their good work;
- at least 170 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs can continue to divert this potent source of greenhouse gases from landfills;
- at least six community composting facilities can continue their work of processing the food waste to turn into usable compost to grow food in community gardens and urban farms during a time of food insecurity; and
- the City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and recycle – such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop life-time habits of sustainable living.

I cannot understate the urgency of this ask to our Williamsburg / Greenpoint, Brooklyn neighborhoods, and hope the Council ensures that this important priority not be left behind in the budget process.

Thank you.

Nancy Wu

Dear NYC Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,

I would like to thank you for all your hard work and inspired leadership during this Covid-19 crisis, and for all you do in service of NYC. I am writing on behalf of the West 80s Neighborhood Association - a local and all-volunteer non-profit. We support the CORE Act (the compost and community recycling centers legislation drafted by Council Members Powers and Reynosa).

When the Mayor suspended the brown bin food waste recycling program and eliminated its funding from the current budget through 2021 (due to the pandemic and economic crisis), my neighborhood association received numerous complaints. Residents who compost are very committed to reducing waste to landfills, and have been engaging in this important environmental activity for years. We urge the NYC Council to continue to fund the popular compost program in this year's budget and to pass the CORE Act cosponsored by City Council Members Rosenthal, Landers, Kallos, Levine, Van Bramer, and many others, as well as Manhattan Borough President Brewer.

I have been sorting my food scraps, plant and garden clippings, soiled paper for years and bringing that organic waste product to community compost bins in the neighborhood (temples and churches that participate), as well as the GrowNYC farmers markets. Many of my friends and neighbors are in buildings that participate in the residential brown bin program. With the suspension of the brown bin programs and the Grow NYC and Union Square drop off centers, the CORE Act will fill that void. Additionally, in that the CORE Act community drop off centers would include hard to recycle items and electronics as well, it would remove even more waste from being sent to landfills or incinerators.

When one sorts and separates food/plant waste, paper, plastics, glass and metals from the regular garbage that goes to landfill or incineration, there is barely any non-recyclable garbage. This reduction of garbage to landfills and incineration is a very important environmental initiative as burying and burning our waste contribute to the climate crisis by increasing methane gas and particulate matter into the atmosphere. Scientists and the United Nations have warned that we have 10 years to reduce greenhouse gases in the atmosphere to prevent a climate catastrophe. NYC must continue to be a climate leader even in the midst of a pandemic.

As a social justice and community health benefit, the more garbage trucks we can divert from our waste transfer stations (which historically have been located in neighborhoods of color and lower incomes), health and quality of life in those neighborhoods will be improved, and the air will be cleaner resulting in reduction of asthma rates. Given that Covid-19 disproportionately has been negatively affecting people of color and those with underlying health conditions such as asthma, it would be a major step backwards in those communities to increase garbage truck traffic there as a result of increased garbage loads because there is no longer food waste diversion.

Additionally, the food waste that is turned into compost serves as an important example of the circular economy when that compost goes to community groups working on improving

neighborhood parks, community gardens, and street trees. This city green infrastructure helps to reduce the heat island effect, and thus reduces our energy consumption in the warmer months. New Yorkers benefit from healthy street trees and green spaces, which require compost added into soil. Green jobs and educational programs are also a result of this circular system. Additionally, sending food scraps and soiled paper products to compost centers reduces the rodent population (rats being an issue that this neighborhood association has unfortunately necessarily confronted numerous times), as food waste isn't left on sidewalks in thin, plastic bags that the rats and mice can easily bite through and feed on overnight.

We should not allow years of learned behavior, helpful habits, and entrenched environmental infrastructure to be jeopardized by even a temporary suspension. It is too risky that the environmental momentum of composting will be lost and that we will go backwards if composting is not reinstated.

NYC should be setting the example that cities need to be forward-thinking and creating more environmentally-friendly policies, not going backwards even though facing new fiscal challenges as a result of the pandemic. If there can be Mayoral discussion about funding a ticker-tape parade and [July 4th](#) fireworks (neither of which have long-term environmental benefits nor could likely be done with social distancing guidelines being enforced), there needs to be a discussion about funding priorities that focus on our future, our health, our environment, and not short-term celebrations (of course, we salute our frontline and essential workers, and owe them our deepest gratitude and respect for all they are doing during this pandemic). Additionally, if certain funds will be now diverted from the NYPD's budget, as a result of the advocacy of the Black Lives Matter movement, there hopefully will be more room in the budget for environmental, educational, health and social justice programs, and we believe community composting programs and recycling centers serve those needs.

I thank you for your consideration.

Best,

Melissa Elstein, Secretary & Co-founder  
West [80s Neighborhood Association](#)  
[P.O. Box 732](#)  
[NY, NY 10024](#)  
[www.west80s.org](http://www.west80s.org)  
[www.loveyourstreetreeday.com](http://www.loveyourstreetreeday.com)

Dear NYC Council members,

I am an adjunct professor at CUNY, and affiliated with the Professional Staff Congress (PSC). The PSC's Environmental Justice Working Group (EJWG) is affiliated with the SaveOurCompost campaign.

Over the last 20 years, I have been moved out from Brooklyn's more affluent neighborhoods by rising rents, from Park Slope, to Sunset Park and now to the Flatbush & Nostrand Avenue junction. Each time I have moved beyond the areas where city composting has been available. At last, I began to compost at Brooklyn College community garden up until the COVID 19 shut down.

Not only does funding need to be restored to the 170 sites across the city, it needs to be expanded. We need a drop off site for compostables and clothing at the Flatbush-Nostrand junction, not just at Courtelyou Road in Ditmas Park! Waste and landfill in poorer neighborhoods needs to be addressed. Jobs and education need to be supported. The concept behind 'Defund the Police' is to 'Refund the City'; to the need for our city budget to be re-balanced through stronger concepts of environmental justice as well as responsible use of tax payer contributions to our present and put future. Composting food, clothing, and electronics play a role in doing so.

For these reasons and more: please support and pass the CORE ACT: Intro 1942 and Intro 1943.

Thank you,  
Rachel Youens

My name is Domingo Morales and I'm a resident of NYC. For the past five years, I have worked with the NYC Compost Project and Grow NYC. I was raised in NYC housing authority and I was in and out of the foster care system until I was old enough to age out.

In 2015, I served on an Americorps team with Green City Force. Green City Force, serves NYCHA residents by teaching sustainability and growing free food for residents on NYCHA land. All GCF corps members are residents of NYCHA ages 18-24. During my term with GCF, I was introduced to Composting!! Being a person of color, it was a difficult transition. The Compost sector had very few people of color when I entered this realm.

In November of 2015, I was offered a position at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, with the NYC Compost project. I was stationed at the Red Hook Community farm, Collecting and processing residential waste while educating the public and volunteer groups about sustainability. The most exciting thing about getting this job was the opportunity to train Green City Force corps members. This was my chance to increase diversity in the Compost world. I was trained by the great David Buckel, David gave his life to protest fossil fuels in 2018. This was a hard hit for me because the Compost site he started was so important to so many people and he was a genius when it came to organizing volunteers and composting the right way. He was also my mentor and good friend.

How could I fill those shoes? David trained me with the intention of leaving the site in my hands when he was gone. The largest Compost site in the Country that uses 100 percent renewable resources to process its organics, was in the hands of a person of color. This was a full circle for me. I always wanted to manage a Compost site but the people who operated compost sites didn't look like me. I have been managing the Red Hook Compost site ever since. Through training and hard work I've been able to guide more people like me and anyone willing to learn, towards sustainable careers. At the same time, I've been helping to rebuild NYC's soil, I'm helping to grow food locally by distributing finished Compost to community initiatives, and I'm reducing the amount of methane produced on Landfills. The existence of Community compost sites, make the world a better place!!!!!!!!!!!!

Why is the Compost site so special?

1. We recycle food scraps that would otherwise, be trucked to landfill.
2. We educate the public about all forms of Sustainability.
3. We don't use machines, this means 'people' are essential on our site.
4. We give away finished Compost to Farms, gardens, Street trees, School gardens, residents and parks; free of charge.
5. We give Compost a good name. (Little to no odors, no rats since 2011, and our site is always presentable.
6. We give NYC residents the ability to escapes their everyday life, while creating a resource that will rebuild our soil.

7. We host volunteer sessions all year round. Over 2000 people volunteer every year and participation was increasing before the shutdown.
8. We provide professional development to people of all backgrounds and ages with an emphasis on GCF corps members.
9. We support other Compost sites and we have a positive presence in the Communities we serve.
10. We serve as a food scrap drop-off for Red Hook residents and all NYC residents alike.

The Red Hook Compost site is one of many sites in the City. The New York City Compost Project and Grow NYC do this work all year round. The C.O.R.E. act is a step in the right direction but it would be short sighted for city council to cut funding from these programs to then try and build something new. As a resident of NYC and a professional in the Compost sector, I ask that City Council reinstate the funding for existing Compost program just like mine. The NYC Compost Project and Grow NYC already have a network that covers about 70 percent of NYC. Let's use the infrastructure you helped build and expand on it. For years city council has funded these initiatives but it has been historically looked at it as a privilege. Composting is essential!!!! Composting is essential!!! We have a duty as humans to take care of our home (Earth). If Council doesn't reinstate funding for the NYC Compost Project and Grow NYC, the investments made by the City will go to waste. Let's give people hope that NYC actually cares about the environment. Bring those sustainable jobs back and help the Compost sector regain momentum. If this City can implement a City-wide composting culture the Country will follow!!!!!!!!!!!!

Good afternoon All,

My name is Konstancja Maleszyńska and I am a sustainability consultant at Two Trees Management who manages Domino Park in Williamsburg with NYC Parks. I am testifying on behalf of Two Trees Management and Domino Park today, specifically park director Michael Lampariello.

On June 1, Domino Park opened its internal organics processing operation to dropoffs from the public. The decision was made after discussions with local partners such as North Brooklyn Neighbors and our council members, Reynoso and Levin, who heard from many distraught constituents.

To date, Domino Park has had five 2-hour collection windows, and each broke a record set by the previous one. Last Thursday for example, we collected more in one day than in three previous days combined, for a current total of 2000 lbs from 400 community members. Though well-utilized, our mission-driven and privately funded operation is not enough and only highlights the crisis the DSNY budget cuts created.

I help sort through the beautiful, resource-rich community scraps brought to us. We have had repeat visitors from as far as Forest Hills in Queens, the Bronx and Manhattan, who have brought months' worth of scraps. We heard from folks who researched and found us to be one of three or so open facilities citywide accepting scraps at no fee.

I am as proud of this as I am heartbroken. NYC is a frontline community of a climate emergency, social and racial justice emergency, and a public health emergency. We need to integrate the City's fiscal bottom line with environmental and social costs and benefits to reflect the true cost of inaction on climate and racial justice. Organics recycling may cost us money now, but it will cost us health and lives in the future. For individuals, separating one's food scraps is one of the most practical at-home climate action items. Let's empower our communities to do so with no less than mandatory curbside collection.

Thank you.

--

Konstancja Maleszyńska  
Sustainability consultant  
Two Trees Management  
C: (631) 260-1224

Testimony for funding for community composting and recycling outreach programs  
Vanessa Ventola  
June 15, 2020

My name is Vanessa Ventola and I am testifying in support of funding for community composting and recycling outreach programs. The preservation of GrowNYC's Zero Waste Programs and the 26 year old NYC Compost Project is essential to reducing waste, building community, and changing the minds of New Yorkers about their impact on the environment and each other.

I began composting in 2011 during an internship with the Western Queens Compost Initiative. Since then, I have been privileged to work with some of NYC's most loved environmental institutions including a season with GrowNYC's composting program, and over 4 years with the NYC Compost Project hosted by the Lower East Side Ecology Center and by Queens Botanical Garden.

I want to speak about the tremendous impact of the NYC Compost Project. During my time there, I taught the NYC Master Composter Course, workshops, and trainings, and provided hands-on technical assistance to community spaces interested in composting. I would estimate, that individually, I met with thousands of New Yorkers, each year, and helped to change minds and attitudes about waste management. I worked with dozens of community-based organizations to promote sustainability and facilitated programs for students in pre-K through college. And my experience working with the NYC Compost Project was in no way unique.

Later today testifiers will remind you of the beneficial environmental impacts of composting. Cities around the country look to NYC for inspiration and advice. By cutting funding for community composting and recycling outreach, we would send a message that we do not take innovative waste management seriously.

You may be familiar with the tagline of the NYC Compost Project - Rebuilding our soils, neighborhood by neighborhood. I hope that I have made the case that these programs do much more than divert waste from landfills and produce compost, which by the way, there is overwhelming demand for from residents and community groups.

Cutting this funding will result in more waste to landfills, less locally made compost, hurt and betrayed community members, and undoubtedly, less support for organics collection when it is restored. We cannot let this happen.

Thank you.

Vanessa Ventola

**Abby Grosslein**

**Brooklyn, NY Resident**

**Submitted for #saveourcompost Member Testimony Before NYC Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Hearing on Intros 1942 and 1943, the CORE Act, to be held on June 15, 2020, 1pm**

Honorable City Council members, my name is Abby Grosslein and I am a former GrowNYC Compost Coordinator. I worked with the organization from 2017-2018 at Bay Ridge Greenmarket and a Compost On-the-Go site in Harlem. I give this testimony as a friend of GrowNYC, Common Ground Compost, Big ReUSE, and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. I've lived in New York City for five years and have come to love its unique mix of nature and urban life. City College of CUNY has a degree in that mixture: the Masters of Science in Sustainability in the Urban Environment. I earned my M.S. from the school in 2018. Both in my studies and in practice, I have seen and admired the ways that New York City is leading the country in sustainable efforts. I am devastated by how far back we will slide if the budget passes as it stands today.

I grew up in the suburbs of Connecticut, not too far from the city as the crow flies, but far from "city living." There's a lake and woods behind the house I grew up in, and we had a big backyard. We had a compost pile. We had a garden. I was raised with my hands in the dirt. Children in New York City who live near green spaces -- parks, community gardens, farmer's markets -- grow up with more appreciation for the planet. Organics recycling is a part of that education, and we need to keep up the momentum we've gained.

As it stands today, Mayor de Blasio's proposed budget eliminates all organics recycling, as well as a number of additional DSNY services designed to reduce sending waste to landfills, where they emit methane and greenhouse gases. I want to stress the word "eliminates." In less than a decade, the programs of GrowNYC and other organizations in the city built an organics recycling program that works. It is a success. Residents report that their garbage doesn't stink anymore; it isn't as heavy or leaky; they take it out less often; and there are fewer pests.

Numbers always speak volumes, so here is a number for you: 300%. As a Compost Coordinator with GrowNYC, I worked at the 137th Street City College MTA station in Harlem. This program brought composting to people on their way to work. It was convenient, and fruitful. After three months of tabling and flyering every Wednesday morning, we increased food scrap donations by 300%. When I left my position, we were collecting over 100 pounds each week. That number increased the health and wellness of the people living in Harlem, and the people who live near the landfills where we send our waste. Their health matters.

And so I urge you to take the following actions:

- **Three major steps:**

1. Immediate Impact: Restore the cuts to community composting in the budget:

- This point is paramount. Without restoration of funding (see the next bullet), there will be no remaining infrastructure upon which to build future programming. **Every city-funded residential organics program will be gone, and any future action will have to start from scratch.** Eight years of progress lost: GrowNYC diverted over 10 million pounds of food scraps from landfill, removing up to 30% of New York's waste stream.
- The Mayor's budget cut approximately \$7 million of funding directed to GrowNYC and the NYC Compost Project and partners, some of which I mentioned above, which has sustained more than 170 drop off and community education sites as well as many processing sites. We ask that this comparatively small amount of funding be restored to at least provide residents and communities with sites to drop off organic waste in the short term and immediate future.

2. Pass the CORE Act:

- The reason we are here today is to discuss Intros 1942 and 1943, known as the CORE Act.
- This is sensible legislation that we see as the second step, after restoring the \$7 million budget cuts, to continue to move our city closer towards zero waste in an equitable manner.

- Intro 1942: It is absolutely essential for us to provide organics recycling in every community district. Every one of us needs to eat, so every one of us can help New York City to reach her 20x50 goals by recycling our food scraps. This puts us one step closer.
  - Intro 1943: The mounds of discarded, still usable clothing around the planet are massive. Fast fashion is producing cheap textiles that go in and out of season every few months. All of that becomes landfill waste, or, it could be recycled and used again. Every community district needs textile recycling to reduce our contributions to landfill.
  - I keep talking about how we need all of us to reach our goals. In getting my Masters of Science, I learned that without equity, sustainability is impossible. Some people don't know it, but there are three E's: environment, economy, and equity. There's no shape without all three. Every action we take to reduce our emissions and increase the health and wellness of New Yorkers must be accessible to all.
3. Introduce and Pass Legislation Mandating for Citywide Mandatory Curbside Organics Collection to be Implemented in the Next Four Years:
- Finally, the ultimate goal is for every resident of NYC to have free, convenient organics recycling collection from their home in the not-too-distant future.
  - In order to get there, though, we cannot squander the progress we have made so far, and must restore the budget cuts to community based composting and pass the CORE Act to bridge us to the brighter greener future of citywide mandatory curbside collection.

To conclude: I urge you to pass the CORE Act and keep our city moving forward. Thank you for your time.

Hi, please do not cut the budget for the New York City Compost Project and Grow NYC. I'm a farm educator at the Queens County Farm and also, a compost volunteer for the Queens Botanical Garden. I got a compost master certificate last year. As everybody knows, we really has to put our effort to reduce garbage, otherwise we don't save our planet for our children. Composting is the easy way that everybody can start and efficient way to reduce garbage.

We eat plants and animals and we can recycle the waste. The waste is going to change into compost and go back to the soil for nutrition. This is the time to increase the budget for the New York City Compost Project and Grow NYC, not to reduce. Composting is a team work. Each community has to work together. Please do not cut the budget for community based composting.

Natsuko Isono

I urge the City to fund and continue and expand the composting program. Putting our organic waste to productive use makes civic sense. Our block of 12<sup>th</sup> St. between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenues is benefitting from it directly, as we use compost to enrich the soil in tree pits on our block, thanks to our work with the Gowanus Conservancy. The program is valuable, too, because it is a daily, weekly reminder to all of us of the importance of recycling and reuse. Please please keep this great program going. It would be very short-sighted to end it just as it has become part of the sanitation routine of New Yorkers.



TESTIMONY TO RESTORE FUNDING FOR NYC COMPOST PROJECT/GROW NYC AND IN SUPPORT OF THE CORE ACT (INTRO. 1943, INTRO. 1944), June 15th, 2020

My name is Jane Selden, and I'm here representing 350NYC, an environmental activist organization focusing on local NYC climate issues. We are a grassroots climate group that depends on volunteers to advocate for political and social solutions to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

350NYC has joined the #SaveOurCompost Coalition because we recognize the vital role recycling of organic and non-organic waste plays in confronting the climate crisis. 1/3 of the City's waste stream is composed of organic material. If composted, it has the environmental benefit of sequestering carbon. However, if it enters landfill, it produces methane, a greenhouse gas 30 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Landfills are, in fact, the third largest emitters of methane. Therefore, we urge the Mayor to restore funding for the NYC Compost Project and GrowNYC. With the suspension of curbside recycling, the 170 drop-off sites and six compost-processing facilities operated by these organizations are now the only way New York City residents will be able to divert organic waste from landfill.

The shut-down of neighborhood-based composting facilities means even more waste will be trucked to waste transfer stations located primarily in low-income communities and communities of color, where residents are already subjected to unhealthy levels of noise and air pollution. Exposure to particulate matter produced by diesel exhaust from heavy garbage truck traffic has resulted in high asthma rates and is now being linked to higher rates of Covid 19.

It is these same communities that have often not had access to recycling programs. The CORE Act, sponsored by City Council Members Keith Powers and Antonio Reynoso would address this inequity by mandating at least three organic waste drop-off sites in every community district (Intro. 1943) and would also include sites for recycling textiles, which comprise 6% of the City's waste stream, amounting to 200,000 tons of waste a year (Intro.1943).

We are acutely aware that our city is facing an unprecedented financial crisis and is forced to make some drastic and painful budget cuts. However, decisions about where these cuts should be made must reflect the priorities of New Yorkers. We can see from the huge public outcry when the curbside pick-up and local composting program suspensions were announced, that New Yorkers recognize the need for organics recycling and the importance of the educational

and job opportunities the neighborhood-based facilities provide, especially in underserved communities. In May, over a thousand people participated in a virtual town hall to find out how to save these programs. New Yorkers clearly regard organic waste recycling as an essential service, and the City must as well.

We fully support both continuing to fund GrowNYC and the NYC Compost Project and passage of the CORE Act as important measures that will keep these recycling programs going during the current budget crisis. However, ultimately, we need to restore curbside pick-up and make organics recycling mandatory, as has been done with great success in cities like Seattle and San Francisco.

Twenty years ago, after 9/11, plastics and glass recycling was suspended in the wake of another financial crisis, and the City's recycling rate has never fully recovered. Today we no longer have the luxury of time in ensuring a sustainable future. We can't afford to make the same mistake twice.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jane Selden  
350NYC

June 13, 2020

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

I write to you as a lifelong resident of the Bronx. I am advocating for restoration of the community composting subsidy which funds the seven nonprofits that make up the NYC Compost Project in every borough, including the one that serves my neighborhood, Bedford Park. The NYC Compost Project is a citywide program that provides composting education and hands-on skills to community gardeners and urban farmers like myself. Overall, composting provides ecological, social, psychological and spiritual benefits.

I was trained as a Master Composter in 2014 and since then I have volunteered at community gardens helping spread awareness of the benefits of composting. I was fortunate to be hired to work for the NYC Compost Project in the Bronx back in 2016.

But, my job position aside, I am speaking up on behalf of myself and my neighbors. We cherish our more than 200 community gardens in the Bronx where we have access to soil and land to cultivate food and flowers in uplifting green spaces. Bronxites deserve continued access to organizations providing environmental education and community empowerment, especially when there is a looming climate change crisis in our city.

Composting is key to fostering communities at a grassroots level. **Community gardeners and urban farmers** of all ages and ethnic backgrounds are already composting their food scraps and yard trimmings in their local gardens. **Teachers** that attend Compost Project workshops have gone on to create classroom worm bins to show their students the science of vermicomposting to turn their fruit and veggie peels and seeds into compost. **Students** are learning that this same compost can be used to feed the soil of indoor and outdoor plants. Composting education programs foster learning, creativity, self-reliance and show our youth that they can dream and dare to ameliorate their neighborhoods. That their education will be supported beyond the classrooms - in our City's green spaces.

**Homeowners and residents of apartment buildings (like at Amalgamated Housing Coop, District 11)** are using their available, backyard spaces to set up composting bins. They reach out to the Compost Project helplines at the city's botanical gardens and other nonprofit organizations to purchase low-cost composting equipment and receive tips, tricks, and encouragement from knowledgeable composting staff. **Senior citizens** get the opportunity to engage in the physical act of composting in a safe and accessible manner. They are able to contribute labor, wisdom, and cultural history to their communities. To pass down their gardening knowledge to the next generation of Bronx residents.

The act of composting as a group builds connections, fosters community bonding, and gives people something to be proud about. I am Bronxite who did not have to witness the fiery destruction of Bronx neighborhoods back in the 1970's. I have only heard from Bronx senior citizens about their fight to clean up and rebuild empty lots into community gardens.

I have been inspired by their stories and their bravery. I am now speaking up for them, to preserve their countless years of hard work. So that children in the Bronx, who have already seen their education and school lives flipped on them because of the pandemic, can at least have opportunities to learn about the captivating science of composting in safe community spaces. That if they are lucky enough to be able to go into a community compost site, they can see worms, pill bugs, spiders, ants, and fungi interacting in a

compost bin. That nature can be a source of awe, inspiration and comfort for them in this time of uncertainty.

In the Bronx, we are resilient. However, now we must be careful and follow COVID-19 social distancing guidelines. These guidelines can be enforced by communities in their own, existing, composting sites. The existing community composting program encourages self-reliant communities. Many of these community gardens, that will no longer receive composting physical and virtual resources from the NYC Compost Project, will lose their connection to the network of community compost sites established since the 1990's.

Many Bronx districts already have more than 3 places where hands-on composting in compost bins is already happening on a community level. These systems have already been set up but need continued support from compost educators. Many New Yorkers like myself do not have a vehicle and do not wish to travel on a bus to just drop off food scraps. Community composting organizations serve New Yorkers where they are already at: in their homes, backyards, community gardens down the street, and local nonprofit organizations

At this moment in time, we need to have programs in our community that promote reusing, reducing, and recycling materials. Composting initiatives that encourage a reduced carbon footprint while reaching residents on their own level. We should not be telling people that there is "no money" for community composting programs. But, then turn around and continue paying to dump our garbage in a landfill where it will release methane and only contribute to contaminating our planet. IT IS NOT an option at this point, we are faced with a bleak future as CLIMATE CHANGE requires us to reimagine and improve our waste management systems while educating ourselves and local residents about what they can do at home, in their backyards, in their own neighborhoods.

Now more than ever, we need the NYC Compost Project to continue to support our community as we work together to create a more healthy, equitable, and sustainable City.

As City Council members, you strive to make sure that your constituents' needs are heard and ultimately fulfilled. I hope that you hear my voice and that of other Bronxites asking for continued composting education and outreach programs in our city.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Tobon, Master Composter  
2860 Decatur Avenue #54A  
Bronx, NY, 10458  
(347) 933-9530

June 15, 2020

To the New York City Council the day of its hearing on organic waste and recycling centers

Cc: Mayor De Blasio

I understand this written comment of mine will be considered after hearing close today on

- [Int. No. 1942](#), in relation to organic waste drop off sites
- [Int. No. 1943](#), in relation to community recycling centers

Sometimes, the stars align and **a government body having decided to take on something good opens up another opportunity for good government.** A case in point is our Mayor's decision to move some funding originally intended for the Police Department Budget and to use the money for community services that raise up poor black citizens of our city. That is something very good indeed. So let's consider the two bills before the Council today. I submit the two bills are a second opportunity emerging from the first good action.

**At the start of the pandemic, when drop off sites and recycling centers were halted for budget reasons a disservice was paid to poor black people in New York city communities we affirm we want to help.** The halt in organic waste collection and recycling eliminated *many jobs that had been held by the very black citizens who have been treated unjustly by an antiquated police department.* And in fact, elimination of the organics program added insult to injury because *on their own* a number of poor black citizens who were denied curbside pick up in their neighborhoods became entrepreneurs and created a system of pick up for their immediate neighbors. This creative action was survival but it was also patriotic. The extra organic services they chose to provide helped more than their small neighborhood. It helped everyone in the city because although there are some very unjust exceptions in many other ways we still all breathe the same air.

**Dear Member of the New York City Council:**

**If you approve organic waste drop off sites and recycling centers immediately you will be re-creating lost jobs for many black citizens the Mayor and the Council have pledged to help by re-examining the police department budget. At the same time, you will be much more consistent with our city's long term plan to end the climate crisis. Your vote will certainly improve trust between citizens and government and inspire all of us to work to end global warming. I see no downside.**

**Rachel Makleff**

**320 Riverside Drive apt 1-H**

**New York NY 10025**



Lower East Side Ecology Center  
Testimony to New York City Council  
Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management  
Hearing on Intros 1942 & 1943 CORE Act  
June 15, 2020

The Lower East Side Ecology Center started its program in 1987 by offering community based recycling opportunities for paper, bottles and cans by creating drop off programs in the Lower East Side. Today, we provide e-waste and composting services, environmental stewardship opportunities, and educational programming for all New Yorkers. We are testifying in support of the CORE Act, to implement community based recycling drop off opportunities that create equitable access to environmental programs and green jobs while reducing the burden of truck traffic to waste transfer stations located in communities of color.

The City needs to immediately restore the \$7 million cuts that were made to GrowNYC and NYC Compost Project partners, which LES Ecology Center is a part of. For the last 30 years these programs grew into an expansive network of 170 food scrap drop-off sites across the 5 boroughs. Additional compost education to hundreds of community groups offering technical assistance to build up their own community composting programs is at risk. The implementation of the CORE Act allows for an opportunity to strengthen what is already there. The existing programs need to stay in place.

**Composting at the Ecology Center**

The Ecology Center has run a community based composting program since 1990, and has been the Manhattan partner for DSNY's NYC Compost Project since 2005. Each week we serve approximately 3,500 households, who drop off over 850,000 pounds of organic waste a year at 10 locations within a 3-mile radius of the East River Park Compost Yard, where we turn the collected food waste into compost. We have created a hyper-local, closed-loop system, distributing the finished compost to community gardens; parks; and for use in maintaining green infrastructure, such as street trees. This program contributes to the health of our community, creates green jobs and job training opportunities, and offers community engagement and education through volunteer opportunities and workshops.

**Restore Community Composting**

We were extremely disappointed to learn that the Mayor's FY 2021 budget proposes a total elimination of all funding for composting organic waste. The Ecology Center lost half of its staff to DSNY budget cuts at the end of March, and will lose the entire seven compost staff positions by June 30 if the budget does not get reinstated.



New Yorkers are eager to continue composting their food waste. The Mayor's cuts to this program, as well as its curbside collection pilot, leave New Yorkers with no options for diverting their food waste from landfills, which will lead to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions and will set the City back from its own stated goals of sending zero waste to landfills by 2030.

Participation in organics recycling programs have increased in recent years because of educational messaging, but that momentum will be lost with the suspension of the program, as we saw in the early 2000s when recycling programs were suspended.

**We join with our partner organizations in the NYC Community Compost Coalition to ask that the \$7 million in cuts to community-based collection programs be restored. Additionally, we urge passing the CORE Act, which will help New York City to continue to move towards zero waste in an equitable manner.**

### **The Importance of the CORE ACT**

The CORE Act will ensure that New Yorkers have the opportunity to drop off compost at sites in every community district, which is vital not only to ensure equitable access to composting, but also to fill the gaps left by the suspension of DSNY's curbside collection program.

Together with creating drop off opportunities, efforts should be made to create local processing capacity for organic waste. Turning food waste into rich compost that rejuvenates depleted urban soil is a driver for sustainable community development and local green job creation. Finished compost benefiting community greening and urban agriculture programs amplifies the educational message of why composting is important by providing tangible benefits to local communities and offering engagement.

### **The Future of Mandatory Curbside Organics Collection**

Lastly, we urge the City Council not to stop here, but to introduce and pass legislation for mandatory citywide curbside organics collection program. Investing a modest amount of resources in our current budget crisis to community based composting programs and implementing the CORE Act are important steps to continue our momentum to creating access to composting city wide through curbside collection.

Organic materials make up 30% of our overall waste stream. Scaling up composting by diverting this portion of the waste stream away from landfills and incineration will not only save the City money in waste disposal costs, but will bring environmental justice to community of color by reducing truck traffic to waste transfer stations, create local green jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



We would also like to express our support for Intro 1943 to create drop off opportunities for textiles. New Yorkers throw out 200,000 tons of clothing and textiles each year, which can be collected and reused, instead of piling up in landfills. The EPA estimates that textile waste makes up 5% of landfill space.

The Ecology Center supports the passage of the CORE Act, and is looking forward working with the City to implement it and create access to organics recycling through a citywide curbside program.



get it right BEFORE it goes wrong

# Chef Gaddabout

professionally made home cooking

Christopher Gaddess 320 West 19th Street, #6C NY, NY 10011

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I am a professional chef and have seen first hand the massive bi product waste food preparation and even simple cooking creates. NYC between home and commercial food preparation creates many tons of such waste daily. This useful resource is needlessly filling our landfills. This should not be happening. Waste first and foremost we must be reduced to a minimum w all parts of plant products & put to creative use. Then as an extended part of an enhanced recycling program what's left should be collected to processing centers for creation of compost for fields & bio energy production in the tri state area. Investment must be made in public and private sector plant building to make this a reality. We need to re-think ALL CONSUMER products from cradle to grave and find a way to make the state & city sustainable & some income for a strapped city while were at it. Lets start here!

Chef  
Christopher

Please feel free to contact me directly for more detailed information  
Tel: **917 886 3744** email: **[chef@chefgaddabout.com](mailto:chef@chefgaddabout.com)**



## **New York City Environmental Justice Alliance Testimony Regarding the CORE Act and the New York City Budget**

6/15/2020

Hello, thank you to the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Dr. Tok Michelle O. Oyewole, and I am testifying on behalf of the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA).

Founded in 1991, NYC-EJA is a non-profit citywide membership network linking grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in their fight for environmental justice. For decades, NYC-EJA has led efforts for comprehensive policy reforms to address the disproportionate burden of New York's solid waste system on a handful of environmental justice communities. To handle nearly 35,000 tons of garbage generated each day in NYC, waste trucks needlessly travel thousands of miles per night through multiple boroughs of New York City, polluting our air with diesel fuel, clogging our streets, and diminishing our quality of life. The impacts are greatest in those few low-income and communities of color where truck-dependent transfer stations are clustered, causing higher proportions of health consequences such as asthma, heart disease, and cancer. Today we are testifying to urge that the City not sidetrack its Climate Justice and Zero Waste goals by eliminating opportunities for recycling organics and other waste streams - in the short term, we urge the City to immediately restore food scrap drop-off sites by funding them at the relatively small amount of ~ \$7 million. Additionally, passing the CORE Act (Intros 1942 and 1943) would increase access to food scrap and textile recycling for all New Yorkers, including the outer boroughs and NYCHA residences, by ensuring that there are at least three drop-off sites per community district.

### **Organics collection and local processing**

Local-scale organics processing can divert waste from being trucked to transfer stations clustered in three environmental justice communities in NYC: North Brooklyn, the South Bronx, and Southeast Queens. Completely eliminating all forms of organics collection in the City means that the majority of this will go to the intermediary local transfer stations, then to landfills and incinerators in environmental justice communities outside of the city. A better solution would be to process this organic waste locally, which in the long run could reduce costs from truck transport and tipping into facilities. This requires the City to make a commitment to increasing its local organics processing capacity in the very near term. Some of the drop-off sites selected within the CORE Act should be coupled with processing capacity, to ensure that we are streamlining processing organic waste at a local level.

It is also critical that the collection programs do not replicate harms in environmental justice communities, by ensuring that we are optimizing truck routes for organics collection throughout the city. One way to aid this would be to have GPS tracking and route submissions for drivers collecting organic and other waste streams.



Collection using zero- or low-emissions vehicles like bicycles and electric trucks would also significantly reduce PM 2.5 emissions in the areas where waste is collected and processed.

Cutting just 5% of the NYPD's \$516,000,000 overtime budget would provide 3-4x the amount of funding needed to restore the composting program at \$7 million, while avoiding the compounding negative effects of completely eliminating all forms of public organic waste collection on our road to Zero Waste by 2030. This funding would also be a great start toward increasing organics processing capacity and ensuring staffing for these sites.

### **Textiles, e-waste and hazardous materials**

We also support the safe collection of e-waste and hazardous materials, either via drop-off sites or collection events, because it would reduce the incidence of materials improperly going to landfills, or burning in incinerators near communities such as Newark's noxious Covanta facility. Improper disposal of things like medical waste into incinerators can increase the amount of particularly harmful chemicals like dioxins and iodine in the air, which can cause or exacerbate respiratory illness.<sup>1 2</sup> Ideally, opportunities for e-waste and hazardous material drop-off would be more frequent, more publicized, and highly accessible (in terms of personal ability, and geography).

Regarding e-waste and textiles, our member organization Morningside Heights/ West Harlem Sanitation Coalition (Sanitation Coalition) was instrumental in leading such recycling programs in NYCHA.<sup>3</sup> Expansion of textile recycling through the CORE Act would be beneficial in that it would help to divert up to 6% of NYC's residential waste that consists of textiles, from going to landfills and incinerators - and it would reduce water pollution from textile dye and treatment contamination.<sup>4 5</sup>

### **Education and staffing**

Part of the reason for the success of new and existing recycling programs is the education that goes alongside them. The Sanitation Coalition's 2006-2009 recycling program in a NYCHA residence was successful because neighbors of the housing development taught one another. Anecdotally, we have also learned that spurring composting in the existing drop-off program has been improved by having consistent hours that are paired with education about how best to separate materials.

<sup>1</sup> Op-Ed: Coronavirus Crisis Demands Environmental-Justice Response

<https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/05/op-ed-coronavirus-crisis-demands-environmental-justice-response/> (5/19/2020)

<sup>2</sup> In the Shadows of America's Smokestacks, Virus is One More Deadly Risk <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/17/climate/pollution-poverty-coronavirus.html> (5/17/2020)

<sup>3</sup> Mark Levine, Recycle Your E-Waste & Textiles [http://www.marklevine.nyc/recycle\\_your\\_e\\_waste\\_textiles](http://www.marklevine.nyc/recycle_your_e_waste_textiles)

<sup>4</sup> GrowNYC Recycling Facts

<https://www.grownyc.org/recycling/facts#:~:text=Waste%20in%20New%20York%20City&text=7.5%25%20of%20our%20waste%20stream,up%205.7%25%20of%20our%20waste.>

<sup>5</sup> Kant, R. (2011). Textile dyeing industry an environmental hazard. [https://www.scirp.org/Html/4-8301582\\_17027.htm](https://www.scirp.org/Html/4-8301582_17027.htm)



## New York City Environmental Justice Alliance

462 36th St, 3F, Brooklyn, NY 11232 | [www.NYC-EJA.org](http://www.NYC-EJA.org)

On the ground - and at the table

Any community recycling programs should include staff that are able to provide this educational component, and ideally would allocate a significant portion of these jobs to low-income Black and Brown residents from within the communities themselves - with leadership and decisions driven in partnership with the communities.

In closing, while here we have made a case for the importance of immediately restoring drop-off sites, increasing the equity and access of drop-off sites and collection events, and co-locating drop-off and organic processing in the short term, we reiterate to the council the urgency of introducing legislation for mandatory organics collection and increased organics processing capacity citywide. Together, these pieces of legislation would enable access to convenient recycling of various waste streams for all residents; divert one-third of all waste from landfills, incinerators, and polluting clusters of transfer stations in NYC; and would enable NYC to locally process organics - providing good, green jobs within our communities; reducing greenhouse gas emissions; and sequestering carbon in soils.

Thank you for your consideration.

How is it in 2020 the most progressive city in the United States does not have a permanent composting program. If NYC is truly committed to fighting climate change and creating sustainable solutions this is a no brainer. The cost of NOT composting is too high.



**Testimony of Carlos Castell Croke  
New York League of Conservation Voters  
City Council Hearing  
May 26, 2020**

Good afternoon. My name is Carlos Castell Croke, and I am a representative from the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV represents over 30,000 members in New York City and we are committed to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier and more resilient. I would like to thank Chair Reynoso, Chair Cabrera, and Councilmember Powers for the opportunity to testify today.

In 2015 Mayor de Blasio made a pledge that excited environmentalists and citizens alike. This pledge was to reduce the waste we send to landfills by 90% by the year 2030. Yet here we are, five years later, having made little progress toward the Zero Waste goal. Now, due to the COVID-19 recession, the Mayor has suspended curbside collection of organic waste and is proposing to cut funding for community composting.

While these cuts are upsetting to see, we understand that the financial strain on our city must be addressed. However, we would like to use these cuts as an opportunity to reevaluate, revamp, and expand our waste diversion programs so that we come out of this crisis ready to achieve Zero Waste by the original 2030 deadline.

Intros 1942 and 1943 would be a crucial step in the journey to our Zero Waste goals. By establishing three community drop-off sites per community district, New York City will be able to continue its composting and recycling efforts even as curbside collection is suspended. Bringing these recycling opportunities to every community district is a crucial step towards a more equitable waste diversion program, and we are pleased that these bills would provide opportunities to recycle materials such as textiles and electronic waste in addition to organic waste.

It is also crucial that we maintain the recycling culture we have already established. As we saw when the metal, glass, and plastic recycling program was suspended during the post-9/11 recession, when recycling programs are cut, participation rates struggle to recover when the programs are reinstated. Therefore we are also asking that the Council restore \$7 million (dollars) in the FY21 budget for existing community collection sites for organic waste. This would not only provide an outlet for New Yorkers to continue to recycle their organic waste, but also maintain dedicated composting personnel at GrowNYC, Big Reuse, the Lower East Side Ecology Center, and the other groups that have operated these essential community-based programs for years.

Our goal of Zero Waste to landfills by 2030 is an achievable one, but we must make decisions and establish programs that work towards it, not cut the programs necessary for us to progress. We urge the council to pass Intro 1942 and Intro 1943, and reinstate the \$7 million (dollars) for community composting in the budget to help New Yorkers continue to recycle their organic waste.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Online Testimony for the Hearing of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management (Monday, June 15th, 2020, @ 1:00 PM)

To the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,

My name is Maya Lydia Bushell and I am a lifelong resident of Douglass Street in Brooklyn, New York. Myself and my family have been composting for decades, even before the Community Composting Initiative was introduced by the City in 2013. Before the signature brown bins were available across NYC, we would tote our compost to the Farmers' Market at Grand Army Plaza every Saturday, happy in the knowledge that our food waste would not be entering a landfill. When NYC began its Compost Program, we were ecstatic that the City was taking such important measures to ensure landfill waste reduction, and support sustainable measures for ensuring the health and safety of the future of NYC residents and their environment. Suspending this program until 2021 would be catastrophic for the environment, at a time when it needs our support more than ever. If we are to ensure a healthy future for our communities and our environment, it is essential programs such as these are not only *not* cut, but further expanded in order to prove our commitment to ensuring a future that will not be destroyed by climate change. At a time when citizens across America are rightfully calling for the defunding of their police departments—I suggest that the funds subsequently divested from these racist, draconian institutions, which seek to further violence in our communities rather than defend them from it—be reinvested in programs that seek to perpetuate equality among the City's residents and that support the protection of our environment, the failing of which will lead to the greatest catastrophe the human race has ever faced. I urge you to consider the future of our environment and the people who inhabit it when considering whether to cut funding for the City's Composting Program. Please reinstate the funding for this program to ensure the health of our future, which hangs in the balance of these critical decisions. Thank you for your time.

I am a resident of Manhattan on the Upper West Side and have participated in organics drop-offs for several years. It is no extra burden for me or my family. I strongly favor this program to reduce our footprint on the planet. I would be happy to make an annual donation to help fund the program, if necessary.

Further, I support mandatory recycling, because I know that many of my neighbors would either not take the trouble or would not try it due to preconceptions about vermin & odors, unless it is required.

Sam Kingsley, 330 W 72<sup>nd</sup> St, 10023

Hello,

My name is Shakara Petteway. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Intro 1942.

As of June 15th, I am the former Site Operator of the Salt Lot Community Compost Site in Gowanus, and a former employee of the NYC Compost Project Hosted by Big Reuse. I have been laid-off 15 days shy of my one year anniversary as the first--and evidently only--female Site Operator of a DEC-registered facility in the NYC Compost Project (NYCCP) and 3.5 years total as an employee of this organization. I am not writing to testify about this loss of employment and income so much as I am writing to emphasize why this program specifically and composting more broadly are so important to the city. I am also requesting that you shelve the CORE Act in its current form until it can be fleshed out and made truly equitable, and would like to share with you why I don't believe that it is currently ready.

Since you can't see me, I want to state that I am a black woman, because, to my knowledge, many of the voices behind the scenes shaping the CORE Act seem to be overwhelmingly male and overwhelmingly white. Though I am not a native New Yorker, I have lived in four neighborhoods in this city that have struggled with being the last to receive services and the first to lose services. In other words, I am not *the* authority, but I am tuned into the issues and have tried to actively combat them through both my work and participation in local community groups.

Over the past 3.5 years, I have served numerous functions in the NYC Compost Project Hosted by Big Reuse. I started out staffing food scrap drop-offs (FSDOs) in Queens, managing the distribution of finished compost to community groups, collecting data of our work, and assisting my colleagues with outreach, processing, and more. It was in these varied roles that I learned so much about the value of the work that my organization did. We helped guide residents on the journey to understanding not only the how to collect and store organic waste, but also the why. We aided resource-poor community groups with free high-quality compost, technical assistance, and access to passionate experts. And, of course, we benefited the environment by minimizing greenhouse gas emissions, remediating local soils, leading environmental stewardship workshops, and more. My team alone, processed millions of lbs of food scraps and yard waste, and returned it in a rich, usable form to the communities that needed it. Other Compost Projects, similarly collected and processed materials.

However, my host site, Big Reuse, was purely operational, which meant for all the good we did, our reach was not far enough. With our budget and staffing, we could only offer so many FSDOs in so many neighborhoods that were either underserved or completely unserved by DSNY's Curbside Organics Collection program. We lacked the educational space to guide members of the public eager to build a compost network in their neighborhoods. That's why the other host sites, such as New York Botanical Garden, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Queens Botanical Garden, and Snug Harbor are so valuable. While they could not compost materials at the same capacity as Big Reuse, Earthmatter, and LES Ecology Center, they *could* reach into the forgotten neighborhoods, train, educate, support, and advocate for them. In other words, because of these NYC Compost Projects, even in neighborhoods without Curbside Organics Collection, without GrowNYC- or NYCCP- hosted FSDOs, composting was still happening on a small, local, community-oriented level. This is why, if we are arguing for the preservation of composting for the sake of the environment, we cannot completely divorce NYCCP from the conversation. With city-funding, they offer free and/or low-cost services that would otherwise be cost prohibitive for the communities most in need.

Alternatively, the CORE Act promises equitability through operations alone. It threatens to reduce the number of FSDOs in the districts that built them with the help and guidance of NYCCP, while placing others in neighborhoods that have not lacked for public and private sources of funding or support. It threatens to create low-wage, part-time jobs with high turnover rate, instead of the steady, stable full-time work of the Compost Project, while simultaneously ignoring the skill, knowledge, and passion necessary to do this work. Finally, it threatens to--as Curbside Organics Collection did--take footing in low-density, high-income neighborhoods first since they already have the "buy-in" (having lost access to brown bins), before slowly spreading to the neighborhoods that need it most. If they even make it there at all.

Before we even consider adopting this act, which threatens to undermine and excise any potential future funding from a more equitable and already-existing network, we must reinforce, fund, and amplify the NYCCP. Say yes to restoring our funding, say yes to mandated composting, and put the CORE Act on the backburner until it can be fleshed out and made truly equitable with the input of the people who stand to lose the most if it is enacted as it is currently written.

Thank you for your time,  
Shakara Petteway



## **TESTIMONY OF THE QUEENS SOLID WASTE ADVISORY BOARD ORGANIZING COMMITTEE**

**Hearing on Intros. 1942 and 1943, the CORE Act, to be held on June 15, 2020, 1 p.m.**

Good afternoon Chairman Reynoso and members of the Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Committee. My name is Wylie Goodman and I am the Chair of the Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board Organizing Committee (QSWAB). I am here today to testify on behalf of our organization regarding the #SaveOurCompost campaign and Intros. 1942-2020 and 1943-2020 proposed, respectively, by CM Powers and CM Reynoso.

The QSWAB Organizing Committee represents our borough's community boards, recycling and carting businesses, environmental organizations, government agencies, labor and business groups, property owners and tenants, and members of the public who care about the impact of waste on Queens and New York City. Modeled after the Manhattan and Brooklyn SWABs, the QSWAB Organizing Committee seeks formal appointment by the Queens Borough President and Queens Councilmembers to effectively carry out the mandate outlined in the City's Administrative Code (§ 16-317 and § 16-318). As background, Queens had a SWAB from the late 1980s through the early 2000s at which time members retired or left the city; our group has been working since January 2018 to re-activate the organization for the current moment. In recent weeks, moved by the difficult public conversations taking place about racial inequity and injustice, we have begun modifying our mission to reflect this issue as it pertains to the environment. With waste as our focus, we seek to expand our function to include serving as a conduit from Queens community members to elected officials at the City, State, and Federal level to achieve interjurisdictional solutions to waste challenges; ensure waste burdens are equitably distributed across communities rather than disproportionately impacting communities of color; and advocate for accountability and transparency in waste processes to ensure environmental justice.

It is in this spirit that we advocate for the immediate restoration of FY21 funding for the New York City Compost Project (which impacts Queens Botanical Garden and Big ReUse), GrowNYC's organics and textile drop-offs (impacting four farmers' markets, eight commuter drop-offs, and one NYCHA drop-off site in Queens), and DSNY-led e-waste collection events as well as passage of the CORE Act to guarantee every Queens community district has equal opportunity to put residential organic material (food scraps, yard waste, and food-soiled paper) to productive use to benefit their green spaces and safely recover textiles, which represent 6% of New York City's waste stream, rather than sending both to landfill

(62%) or incineration (21%), where they harm our environment by increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

We understand that the proposed cuts were made as a result of the nearly \$9 billion budget gap predicated by COVID-19. While we recognize the enormity of the pandemic on the City's economy, we feel strongly that austerity measures that suspend the community composting subsidy and reduce funding for recycling outreach; eliminate entirely funding for GrowNYC's Zero Waste Programs and the NYC Compost Project -- *which affects eight nonprofits that provide public composting and recycling services and education to New Yorkers citywide, 170 Food Scrap drop-off sites across five boroughs, six community composting facilities, compost distribution for urban agriculture and stewardship, and Zero Waste education and outreach* -- will only further exacerbate health and quality of life disparities linked to race and income and is thus the wrong response to this crisis.

However, to take the argument at its face, we will use our time to challenge the fiscal rationale for these cuts by showing that purported savings will be offset or outweighed by negative economic and environmental costs in parallel. We will conclude our time by contending that, even if the current programs are spared, funding a robust and clearly articulated CORE Act is still necessary to expand recycling benefits equitably across the city.

The programs now at risk cost New York City approximately \$7 million per year. This represents one half of one percent of the NYC Department of Sanitation's entire \$1.75 billion budget and one tenth of one percent of the City's budget. Once cut, however, this money will not simply be recouped. That is because nearly 100 New Yorkers employed by these programs will lose their jobs. New York City recently applied for a \$4 billion federal loan to cover the ballooning cost of unemployment benefits. In other words, expenses to support furloughed workers, along with lost tax revenue, and dampened economic multiplier effects across businesses these organizations and workers purchase from must also be included in the City's cost-benefit analyses to justify these program suspensions.

There will also be additional costs around waste export. In 2019, the City spent \$411 million disposing of nearly 2.5 million tons of residential, school, and governmental trash to landfills -- just over \$164 per ton. That same year, the programs collected nearly 16,680 tons of textiles at drop-offs; diverted 2,300 tons of organics from landfills; and gathered 1,056 tons of material at e-waste events. Transporting these materials to landfills in the new scenario will cost approximately \$3.34 million, thus reducing the \$7 million savings by nearly half. It should also be noted that export costs are projected to increase to \$421 million by 2021.

We also need to look at sunk capital and related costs highlighted in DSNY's *2019 Strategic Plan*. These include construction at the Staten Island Compost Facility to increase local and regional processing of food and yard waste and contract procurement to install an aerated static pile compost system; a three-year study examining energy production from food waste by the Department of Environmental Protection, Waste Management, and National Grid that, if implemented, would support up to 250 tons per day of food waste co-digestion at the Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant; and a community composting facility in Gowanus ready to accept three tons of material per week and serve as a community education and engagement center. This costly infrastructure and costs to bring it online, left dormant for a year, will require that much more personnel and other-than-personnel expenditures to be reactivated after a long delay.

There are also soft costs (marketing, supplies, personnel) that were expended on DSNY's *Make Compost, Not Trash* campaign, which last year reached communities such as Queens Districts 5 and 13. These programs aimed to increase participation in the curbside organic brown bin program -- another program lost, although not the focus of this testimony.

Among the successes of that initiative: in two months the program recruited 50 volunteers to canvas more than 1,200 households; hosted six community meetings and five special events; enrolled 38 buildings for organics service; and engaged thousands of residents. Last year, DSNY also held 532 Zero Waste education events, distributed 2,000 tons of compost, and enrolled 3,012 buildings in organics collection participation, and expanded the food scrap drop-off program to 165 sites, up from 113 the year before. Those successes? They will be lost to the trash heap of history if a year passes without community engagement which will lead, again, to more money needing to be spent on renewed education when programs come online in FY 2022.

Finally, tangible and measurable social and environmental benefits will fall to the wayside with these programmatic cuts. Among them no composting of 2,650 tons of food scraps and garden waste each year; nor distribution of 500 tons of finished compost to 12,000 residents; nor care of 500 street trees with finished compost; nor engagement of 7,200 volunteers providing over 30,000 hours of volunteer community service. Again, costs that have not fully been considered in the City's simple number-crunching calculations.

Harder to measure, but even more important, is the cost of organic and inorganic material re-entering our waste stream on that most critical of indicators: climate change. Once sent to landfills or incinerated, the methane gas released by this material is 28 times more powerful than carbon dioxide. The environmental and economic cost to our City for years to come will be astronomical.

There is another option. Rather than resort to short-term panic selling of community composting, textile collections, and e-waste diversion in light of COVID-19, we need to reinvest in the Mayor's 2015 *OneNYC* goal to "become the most resilient, equitable, and sustainable city in the world and send at least 90 percent less waste to landfills by the year 2030."

That means making organics collection mandatory, as Council Speaker Johnson recommended before the pandemic, which would not only save money long-term, as it already does in Seoul, South Korea, a city of 10 million, but make New York an environmental leader rather than laggard.

The majority of NYC's private waste transfer stations are concentrated in three New York City neighborhoods, including one in Queens: Jamaica. Two zip codes in Jamaica rank 10th and 11th, respectively, in terms of Citywide positive COVID-19 test rates at 66.7% each. These predominantly low-income communities of color are already overburdened by trucks collecting and driving garbage, resulting in odor, leachate, and particulate matter with compromised air and health in parallel. If wealthier communities start to pay to have their organics taken away by these private carters with the goal of their material being virtuously composted, it is neighborhoods like Jamaica that will be hurt.

Although not all health disparities co-occurring with waste inequity will be eliminated by #SavingOurCompost, Intros. 1942 and 1943 will help ensure more expansive and equal opportunities for every community district to understand and participate in meaningful waste recovery to their own benefit so long as finished materials are used to benefit neighborhood green spaces. This will significantly improve on the current system which, even when active, left huge swaths of our borough unserved.

In truth, we will soon have no choice but to adopt innovative strategies around waste generation and disposal. China no longer wants our recyclables and U.S. cities no longer want our putrescibles. If we do not solve reduce, reuse, and recycle soon, we are looking at far higher costs down the road, which the City has said it can ill afford.

In closing, cutting GrowNYC food scrap drop-offs, Compost Learning Centers, and e-waste events saves little of consequence in terms of the City's budget. In contrast, restoring funding brings a host of social, environmental, and economic benefits that have been minimized in a rush to appear fiscally stringent. Likewise, waiting a year to restart a complex operational and logistical recycling infrastructure doesn't flatten rising costs, it only makes them more expensive when the calendar moves another year closer to 2030 and even farther from our zero-waste goal.

Pausing environmental progress and exacerbating waste inequity cannot be how we respond to this pandemic. We must do better.

In conclusion, thank you Chairperson Reynoso and members of this Committee for your consideration of our testimony and thank you to the Queens Council Members who have thus far signed onto the CORE Act -- Constantinides, Grodenchik, Vallone, Van Bramer, and, as we learned before this hearing, Richards.

**The Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board Organizing Committee:**

Wylie Goodman, Chair

Amy Marpman, Vice-Chair

Active Members: Mary Arnold, Rachel Boeglin, Janet Kalish, Jon Klar, Susan Latham, Robert Lee, Mortimer Lawrence, Perry Leung, Gil Lopez, Jennifer McDonnell, Adam Mitchell, Kara Napolitano, Mary Parisien, Andrea Scarborough