

**Prepared for the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste
March 4, 2022**

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony today. I am thrilled to be able to speak to this body and excited to welcome the new leadership and new members. My name is Lisa Bloodgood and I am the Executive Director of North Brooklyn Neighbors, a community organization located in Brooklyn's Community Board 1, encompassing and serving the neighborhoods of Greenpoint and Williamsburg.

Sanitation issues have been and continue to be of particular concern to our community. Our organization was founded 28 years ago to fight the illegal waste transfer stations on our waterfront. Since then, our neighborhood has remained overburdened and continues to feel the impacts of NYC's trash and waste more heavily than most other neighborhoods. As estimated in the 2019 report "Trashing New York's Neighborhoods" put out by Transform Don't Trash, approximately 1,700 tons of commercial waste alone transited through North Brooklyn daily. The accompanying air pollution, traffic and noise is harmful to our community's health and environment. We are therefore very invested in decisions made about sanitation issues in our City.

Of particular concern to us is the fate of the City's organics programs. As I'm sure you know, the potential to divert around a third of the City's waste would be meaningful in so many ways. Not only would fewer trucks rumble through our neighborhood streets moving to and from waste transfer stations, but the benefits of organics recycling through reductions in methane emissions generated from landfills are global and critical in contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

We are very concerned about the Mayor's proposed 50% cut to the Community Composting Program and ask that it be fully funded. For years, this program has been not only diverting organic waste from landfills, but has been processing food scraps and creating compost, an incredibly valuable resource. This compost has benefitted city parks, community gardens, individuals, and perhaps most importantly, has sequestered carbon in our City's soils and benefited our urban forest. The proposed cuts would be devastating to the groups currently working on community composting and that have done so much to build, maintain, and grow enthusiasm and buy-in to composting in the City of New York, and remain one of the City's best avenues to promote organics recycling.

Additionally, we ask that the committee carefully consider, and push back against, the proposed cuts to the curbside compost program. The mayor has dismissively called the

program “symbolic.” We would ask the committee to consider why the program may not be as successful as it could be, work to address those problems and fix what could be a phenomenal program. Curbside composting in North Brooklyn was rolled out as a pilot program, with pickup and rules for services continually changed. Pickups were frequently missed, and then the program was abruptly paused as COVID hit. Later, residents were asked to “opt-in” to a curbside program which most of the City does not have access to, and that has been perceived as constantly being in danger of being canceled once again. History shows us that these suspensions and changes to service do not have temporary effects, but in fact can do long term damage to its success if not addressed. Let us not take organics any further down this path.

Additionally, our neighborhood is home to the Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant, rebranded as the Newtown Creek Resource Recovery Facility. For years, our community has been told about the plan to use organic materials collected from the curbside service to produce methane gas through the wastewater treatment process, enough to power thousands of homes. Yet this program has continually been delayed and timelines missed, the methane is being produced but instead of captured and utilized as a renewable resource, the vast majority of it is flared off, contributing to local pollution and greenhouse emissions.

The City has the resources in place, the innovative people, and the imperatives of the Climate Crisis necessary to make organics recycling a successful program, producing rich compost and valuable renewable energy which would benefit our communities. Unfortunately, through mismanagement and delays, the program has not met its goals. Rather than attributing the curbside composting issues to a lack of enthusiasm for the program and changing the plans yet again, we would ask the City take on the responsibility for the perceived failure of the program and instead truly commit to a plan to allow all New York City residents to access the critical piece of infrastructure that is organics recycling. The Mayor's proposed cuts would save little but would do serious damage to public confidence in our recycling and climate change programs. In summary, we ask that the City fully fund community composting and continue to move forward with plans to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to organics recycling with an eye towards making this waste diversion mandatory.