



September 25th, 2019

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Speaker Johnson:

Our city and our planet are facing a climate crisis that demands action.

We applaud your leadership in advancing the recently enacted Climate Mobilization Act, which as you know will require the city's largest buildings – the major source of global warming emissions here – to dramatically decrease their discharges.

There is, of course, much more work to be done if New York City is to become a true national leader in combating climate change and protecting our residents from the most serious impacts -- blisteringly hot summers, more frequent and intense storms, rising seas and coastal storm surges, and more. And we're running out of time. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned that we have only twelve years before climate change will

significantly worsen risks of drought, flood, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people across the globe.

The current commercial waste disposal system is a significant contributor to New York City's global warming emissions. There is little incentive and therefore little actual composting of organic waste from commercial establishments; this results in thousands of tons of food waste going to landfills every day, where this waste leads to landfill emissions of methane, a very potent global warming gas. In addition, the current irrational routing system -- in which as many as 90 different carters send diesel-powered trucks on redundant routes in every city neighborhood -- means millions of miles of excessive truck travel and resulting air emission discharges every year.

Exclusive waste zones, as proposed in Intro. 1574, sponsored by Councilmember Antonio Reynoso, Speaker Corey Johnson, and 21 of their City Council colleagues to date, would transform the current commercial waste collection system, making it more sustainable and more equitable, while reducing both global warming emissions and ground-level air pollution here in New York City. In terms of methane emissions, data reported by the commercial carters themselves indicates that only about 1 percent of the thousands of daily tons of food waste they collect is sent to composting or anaerobic digestion facilities; virtually all such organic waste now is sent to landfills, where it decomposes and generates methane, or to incinerators, where it interferes with the burning process and boosts the air contaminants being discharged from their stacks.

If New York City were to match the recycling and composting rates of other cities with exclusive commercial waste zone systems, it would avoid 2 million tons of annual greenhouse gas emissions. This is a massive step, equivalent to removing one in five cars from New York City streets.

Moreover, official New York City studies have concluded that a system of exclusive waste zones would cut the amount of waste truck travel by as much as 18 million miles a year -- curtailing ground level pollution, making the streets safer for pedestrians, cyclists, and other vehicles, and making the commercial waste collection system far more rational.

New York City must do all it can to confront the climate emergency and half measures are not acceptable. We urge you to work diligently to enact exclusive commercial waste zones (Intro. 1574) this fall.

Sincerely,

350.org

350.org Brooklyn

Community Voices Heard

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El Puente

Environmental Advocates of New York

GreenFaith

Hazon

Jewish Climate Action Network NYC

Judson Memorial Church

Natural Resources Defense Council

New York City Environmental Justice Alliance

New York City Sierra Club

New York Working Families

Nos Quedamos

Peoples Climate Movement

Sanitation Coalition of Morningside Heights and West Harlem

Sunrise Movement

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