



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

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Brooklyn Borough President

**New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
Oversight Hearing: Waste Equity, Transfer Facilities, and Update on Commercial Waste Zones
April 29, 2022**

Good morning, I am Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso. Thank you so much to Chair Nurse for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I also want to take this opportunity to welcome Commissioner Tisch to DSNY, I'm very much looking forward to working with you.

I'm very excited to be here today to talk about waste equity and commercial waste zones, two policies that are very close to my heart. As Chair of the Council's Sanitation Committee for eight years, developing these pieces of legislation and seeing them passed were two of my biggest priorities, and two of the victories of which I am the most proud. I really appreciate Chair Nurse holding this hearing so that we can continue to publicly track DSNY's progress toward implementation of these bills.

Waste Equity

I want to start with waste equity, a policy I championed even before I became a City Councilmember. This bill was so personal to me, because growing up on the Southside of Williamsburg, I saw firsthand the impact that pollution from waste trucks was having on my health and the health of my friends and family. The fact that waste transfer stations were concentrated in three communities of color in this city – North Brooklyn, the South Bronx, and Southeast Queens – was no accident. It was because of decades of racist planning policies that sited these facilities next to low-income communities of color. And these communities have suffered the health and safety consequences as a result. I fought to reduce waste processing capacity at the facilities in these districts to help provide these neighborhoods some relief. The legislation also included a cap on new facility siting so that no other community could become the next dumping ground.

I hope that this new Council will uphold this important legislation, and help us go even further by encouraging existing facilities to transport waste by rail and barge when possible, rather than by truck. I also am excited for the potential of private carters to use the City's Marine Transfer Stations, which will be allowed for the first time under Commercial Waste Zoning. The MTSs exist thanks to the environmental justice community's work on the City's Solid Waste Management Plan, and expanding their use will help further reduce truck traffic in overburdened communities.



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Commercial Waste Zoning

This brings me to the next topic, commercial waste zoning (or as we refer to it, CWZ). I was also proud to champion this legislation, which will transform the commercial waste industry. According to DSNY's own calculations, implementing CWZ will:

- Dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the private carting industry and, as mentioned, deliver on environmental justice commitments;
- Improve our city's diversion rates for recycling and organics;
- Make our streets safer; and
- Improve conditions for workers in the industry.

After passing this bill in 2019, I have been disappointed that DSNY has delayed implementation for two years. I understand that the pandemic caused unique challenges for every industry, including sanitation, but the most recent delay of the RFP response deadline from April to July is concerning. Chair Nurse and I, along with Comptroller Lander, Manhattan Borough President Levine, and 30 Councilmembers delivered a letter to DSNY in March expressing our desire to see this program implemented as soon as possible, and I want to underscore that today. Every day we wait, our communities breathe more dirty air, more workers are exposed to dangerous working conditions, and we get further and further away from our City's zero waste goals as more recyclable and organic commercial waste is unnecessarily sent to landfills.

I want to conclude by acknowledging that, though we're not even close to done fighting to overhaul how our city handles its waste, we've made major progress in the name of justice and sustainability, and it's important to celebrate our victories. I especially want to acknowledge the NYC Environmental Justice Alliance, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, Natural Resources Defense Council, the Teamsters, and the entire Transform Don't Trash coalition – this absolutely could not have happened without you. To Chair Nurse, thank you for carrying on the work we started and for using your platform to focus on important policies like these. And finally to DSNY, thank you for having vision bold enough to shake up broken systems. Let's keep doing that together. Thank you.