



**Testimony of Adriana Espinoza
NYC Program Director
New York League of Conservation Voters**

Preliminary Budget Hearing on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management
March 8, 2019

Good afternoon. My name is Adriana Espinoza, and I am Director of the New York City Program at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV represents over 31,000 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. NYLCV would like to thank Chair Reynoso and members of the Sanitation Committee for the opportunity to testify here today.

NYLCV supports the passage a city budget in FY 2020 that secures progress on many of the environmental, transportation, and public health priorities Mayor De Blasio has called for in OneNYC and beyond. Our city is staring down a crisis of existential importance, and it is incumbent upon our elected leaders to invest our tax dollars in climate action and solutions.

The Department of Sanitation's Preliminary FY20 budget invests heavily in personnel, exporting waste, and general administration. However, only a fraction of the Department's preliminary budget -- \$55.1 million, or about 3.1% -- is dedicated to waste prevention, reuse, and recycling. This number represents a 9% decrease from the FY19 adopted budget, and is in stark contrast with the 23% of the budget being used to export our waste.

Moreover, these figures are inconsistent with the City's stated goal of Zero Waste to landfills by 2030 (0x30). In FY19, the total curbside and containerized recycling diversion rate was 17.6%, an increase of just over 2% from FY14. If we continue at this pace, diversion citywide will be a meager 24% in 2030. DSNY's waste prevention budget must reflect a more aggressive attempt to achieve our 0x30 goal.

Reaching the City's zero waste goal will require work from all New Yorkers--cooperation of city officials, private industry, and buy-in from the general public. If we are to reach our goal of Zero Waste to landfills by 2030, NYLCV believes the City should invest \$10 million in public engagement around the organic waste and recycling programs available to residents.

It is imperative that New Yorkers know not only the options available to them, but also the environmental significance of participation.

Current marketing for Vision Zero, a goal which has the focus and budget indicative of a serious policy priority, should serve as a template. This outreach should inform New Yorkers of the programs available and teach them how to properly sort recyclables and organics, but solely focusing on the *what* and *how* is not enough. The campaign should explain *why* these changes are necessary, and make a direct connection to climate change and the City's sustainability goals.



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In addition to traditional marketing, the City should expand its targeted outreach. In particular, maintenance staff in large buildings should be seen as key ambassadors to the City's zero waste goals. Sustainability training for this sector could have an exponential impact on diversion rates.

Finally, child and youth engagement is key. The earlier we can instill the importance of eco-friendly behaviors, the more likely they are to carry it into adulthood. The City should continue to expand its educational programs in schools and encourage better source separation in cafeterias, particularly of organic waste.

Diverting organic waste from landfills is perhaps the most critical component of 0x30, as organics represents 31% of the residential waste stream. Further, when this waste ends up in landfills, it releases significant quantities of methane as it decomposes. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas. It absorbs heat from the sun at *32 times* the rate of carbon dioxide, trapping that heat in our atmosphere and contributing to global warming.

Unfortunately, instead of growing the residential organics program to keep more of this waste from landfills, last year DSNY "paused" their expansion. To date, advocates have not been told when the program will resume. Before the expansion was paused, NYC's organics program was already the largest of its kind in the country. NYLCV recognizes the complexity of sustaining (and growing) a program of this size. However, if Zero Waste is truly a goal of this administration, the budget figures should reflect a investment significant enough to bring the organics program to scale citywide and stimulate demand in the market for regional processing capacity of this waste.

I would like to thank Chair Reynoso and the entire Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management for your leadership, and I look forward to working with you all to secure more funding in the FY20 budget for 0x30 initiatives.

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