



**Press Release – June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
For Immediate Release**

**Contacts:**

*Kristina Naplatarski*, Office of Council Member Antonio Reynoso  
212-788-7095 (O), 646-584-2676 (C), [Knaplatarski@council.nyc.gov](mailto:Knaplatarski@council.nyc.gov)

*Alex Moore*, Teamsters Joint Council 16  
718-289-0204 (O), 347-762-0778 (C), [alex@teamstersjc16.com](mailto:alex@teamstersjc16.com)

*Sunshine Ludder*, ALIGN  
646-866-9065 (C), [sunshine@alignny.org](mailto:sunshine@alignny.org)

**New Yorkers Rally for Sanitation Reforms ahead of City Council  
Hearing**

**New York, NY** – A diverse coalition of New Yorkers rallied alongside City Council members this morning for a bill to create a citywide commercial waste zone system. The new policy will improve safety and cut pollution in a private trash hauling industry responsible for over two dozen deaths, while improving the sector's transparency, accountability, and service to small businesses.

The City Hall rally included sanitation workers and environmental justice, safe streets, and small business advocates, who will also testify at a City Council hearing on the waste zone legislation at 10AM today.

"For years, the private carting industry has operated with blatant disregard for the safety of workers and pedestrians and the health of our environment," **said Council Member Antonio Reynoso**. "My bill, Intro 1574, will authorize the City to enact a commercial waste zone system to finally transform this industry for the sake of workers, communities, and the environment. A zoned system will make routes drastically more efficient— this means improved pedestrian safety and a reduction of vehicle emissions equivalent to the removal of one in five cars off of NYC streets. Furthermore, in order to operate in one of these zones, companies must comply with stringent labor, safety, and environmental standards. I have fought tirelessly alongside my allies to transform the waste industry, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill."

In New York City, more than 90 private sanitation companies handle commercial waste generated by office buildings, restaurants, and other businesses. Each garbage truck can service customers across the city – a single neighborhood may be serviced by more than 50 individual carting companies – resulting in collection routes that are long and circuitous, some with more than 1,000 stops. The chaotic system harms workers, the environment, and the broader public.

“A commercial waste zone system will significantly reduce the number of miles that trucks travel each night and the associated greenhouse gas emissions that are released into our atmosphere. Fewer trucks on the road traveling along more efficient routes means safer streets for everyone. I applaud Council Member Reynoso for his leadership on this comprehensive reform of the private carting industry,” said New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson.

Companies pressure workers to complete these long routes in one shift, and deny them adequate training, compensation, and safely maintained trucks – resulting in 14-to-16 hour shifts, dangerous driving and frequent crashes. Between 2010 and the fall of 2018, the industry has been involved in 26 fatal crashes. One of the most heart-wrenching of these tragedies was the death of an off-the-books worker, Mouctar Diallo, and the company’s attempt to cover it up.

“If you were designing a way to collect commercial waste you could hardly come up with something worse than our current system,” **said Council Member Brad Lander**. “Overlapping and inefficient truck routes cause unnecessary emissions, noise, traffic, and safety hazards on our local streets. Creating a zoned system where one private sanitation company hauls all the commercial trash for the area will make streets safer for pedestrians, improve working conditions for sanitation workers, and cut down on greenhouse gas emissions. With more than two dozen traffic and workplace deaths in the last decade caused by time-strapped waste haulers criss-crossing the entire city, we simply can’t afford to let business continue as usual. Thank you to Council Member Reynoso, and the many sanitation workers, environmental justice and safe streets advocates for working to ensure that we focus on these critical reforms.”

"Without stringent standards in place, the private carting industry will continue to pose danger to our city’s environment, workers, and pedestrians. Council Member Reynoso’s commercial waste zone bill creates the exact standards we need and as a result, will reduce vehicle emissions, protect laborers, and improve street safety," **said Council Member Diana Ayala**. "I am proud to co-sponsor this comprehensive piece of legislation, which will radically transform the carting industry into one that is aligned with our city’s core values."

The industry’s thousands of diesel trucks – which are three times older than the Department of Sanitation’s (DSNY) fleet on average – pollute the air of New York City neighborhoods and contribute to climate change. Currently, private sanitation trucks log 79,000 vehicle miles traveled (VMT) within the city per day, adding up to 12 million unnecessary truck miles per year, according to DSNY estimates.

“Fundamental reform of the private sanitation industry has been urgently needed for years. Council Member Reynoso’s commercial waste zone legislation presents a comprehensive strategy targeting key priorities for New Yorkers -- the safety of workers and our communities, air quality and public health, major efficiency and customer service improvements, and more. Thank you to Council Member Reynoso, partners across city government, and all of the residents, workers and advocates who have worked so hard and for so long to bring a commercial waste zone plan to reality,” **said Council Member Helen Rosenthal (Manhattan, District 6)**.

“For too long, private carting companies have sent mistreated workers speeding around the city in polluting garbage trucks under unsafe conditions,” **said Council Member Costa Constantinides**. “Creating commercial waste zones will not only protect workers subjected to 16-hour days, but possibly get 2 million tons of greenhouse gases out of New York City’s airways each year. I stand with my friend, colleague, and Sanitation Committee chair, Antonio Reynoso, in supporting this bold legislation.”

Additionally, these private sanitation companies recycle and compost less than one quarter of what they collect and send the rest to landfills and incinerators. Waste, particularly organic food waste, is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions when buried in landfills. By rapidly increasing the city's commercial recycling and composting rate to that achieved by cities like San Francisco and Seattle, a waste zone system would avoid up to 2 million tons per year of greenhouse gas emissions. The burden of this waste falls hardest on three communities of color - the South Bronx, North Brooklyn, and Southeast Queens - where the majority of waste transfer stations are located.

"The movement to create a cleaner New York City continues: commercial waste zones will allow for safer practices, environmentally conscious operations, and more efficient clean up. Thank you to Council Member Reynoso for his continued transformation of the sanitation industry," **said Council Member Kieth Powers.**

"For too long the City's private sanitation industry has operated in darkness. It is desperate need of transparency, innovation, and accountability," **said Council Member Ben Kallos.** "By requiring these companies to finally comply with strict safety, labor, and environmental standards while implementing more efficient routes, this legislation will completely overhaul how this industry works for the better. A commercial citywide zone waste system will better conditions for workers and make the streets safer for pedestrians. Thank you to Council Member Reynoso for being focused on this issue and working to get reforms passed."

The industry also does not do well by New York's small businesses, which are charged 38% more for waste collection than large businesses, risk fines when carters miss pickups, and often cannot obtain affordable recycling and composting services.

"It is important that we reduce the number of miles that these very large commercial waste trucks are driving on our city's streets." **said Council Member Andrew Cohen.** "In addition to the dangers they present to New Yorker's health and safety, these trucks add disgusting pollutants that hurt the city's air quality and threaten our City's nature. As a Bronxite, member of Progressive Caucus, and as a new member of the City Council's Committee on Sanitation: I am passionate about finding a solution that cuts our commercial garbage truck traffic in the city by at least 60% and creates safer and smarter routes."

"Private sanitation is still plagued with racial and economic injustice. It is an industry where many work off-the-books, without benefits or minimum wage. Six-day workweeks are the norm and shifts can stretch as long as 18 hours," **said Council Member Donovan Richards.** "Sanitation workers are also exposed to unacceptable dangers on the job, but New York City has an opportunity to protect workers like him going forward. Council Member Reynoso's Int. 1574 will finally bring accountability to the industry by holding private carters to strict labor and environmental requirements, while confining companies to separate sections of the city to reduce truck traffic. I'd like to thank Council Member Reynoso, Sanitation Commissioner Garcia and the Teamsters for all of their work on the commercial waste zone plan that will finally bring justice to commercial carting."

A commercial waste zone system will comprehensively address the private carting industry's egregious practices by requiring companies to comply with stringent safety, labor, and environmental standards in order to service waste zones. The system will divide the city into at least 20 zones with each zone serviced by one carter. Commercial carting companies will be selected by DSNY through a competitive bidding process that sets baseline standards and judges which carter can cost-effectively meet the needs of a given zone, while raising environmental, labor, and safety standards. Commercial customers

will be protected with a predictable, transparent pricing schedule and enforceable customer service standards.

"The private carting industry treats its workers like the trash they pick up," said **Sean Campbell, President of Teamsters Local 813**. "Commercial waste zones will transform this industry to protect private sanitation workers. With one carter per zone, we will be able to work safely to protect ourselves and everyone else on the street. Instead of a race to the bottom, with bad companies undercutting good companies, all private carters will be held to the same high standard. Pass this bill now."

"Today we are taking the reins as a city to transform a system that has been broken and undermining our workers, our communities, and particularly communities of color, for way too long," said **Maritza Silva-Farrell, Executive Director of ALIGN**. "The time for racial and economic justice is today. We can only do this by enacting a commercial waste zones system that works for our workers, communities, and the small businesses that rely on this service while making an impact on reducing pollution. The leadership of Council Member Reynoso and Speaker Johnson is critical for New York City to tackle these issues head on and enact the kind of policy that will get us to where we need to be as a progressive city and that we can hold up as a model to be proud of."

By assigning designated companies to specific zones, routes will become significantly more efficient. Shorter and denser routes will improve safety for workers and pedestrians by allowing haulers to work manageable hours in a safe and deliberate manner without having to rush to their next stop. A 60-70% reduction in vehicle miles traveled will lead to drastically reduced greenhouse gas emissions and further improve pedestrian safety.

"In addition to achieving safety and equity for workers and communities, Intro 1574 is a major piece of environmental legislation and should be the immediate step in New York City's effort to slow climate change. By requiring and enabling commercial waste providers to sharply increase composting and recycling services, CWZ can help us avoid up to 2 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions per year caused by landfilling commercial waste, while creating hundreds of good, local jobs in recycling and re-use industries," said **Justin Wood, Director of Organizing and Strategic Research at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest**.

"On November 8th 2015, as I biked home from work, a reckless driver of a private waste hauling vehicle pulled parallel to me and moments later, the back two wheels of his 20,000lb vehicle sucked in my body and pulverized it against the pavement. I was dragged for about 20 feet before the driver finally stopped. My body was mutilated and I suffered immensely for months. I will never fully recover. We need to make sure that what happened to me, and what happened to so many others because of this dangerous industry with a long and bloody track record, doesn't happen to anyone else. City council must pass Intro 1574," said **Daniel Gabbay, member of Families for Safe Streets**.

"For the first two years I worked at Sanitation Salvage, they made me work off the books," said **Alexis Robinson, a private sanitation worker**. "I only got paid \$80 a day no matter how many hours I worked. The shifts would be 14 hours, 15 hours, even 18 hours. And when I got hurt, they threw me to the curb. Now I work at Action Carting. The routes are shorter and you don't have to work so many hours in a week. Please pass this law so that the routes will be shorter for all workers and we can be taken care of."

The City will also be able to incentivize designated haulers to make critical investments in low-emissions trucks, modern recycling, composting, and transfer station infrastructure, and extensive customer education. These improvements will create hundreds of new, green jobs throughout New York City.

“There are many good reasons to support the exclusive commercial waste zone legislation introduced by Sanitation Committee Chair Antonio Reynoso and his colleagues. But none is more important than the need for New York City to slash global warming emissions and air pollution from its commercial waste handling operations. The City’s own studies reveal dramatic cut-backs in diesel truck pollution and significant reductions in climate-changing methane emissions will occur if the City Council reforms the existing and completely irrational system for commercial waste collection,” **said Eric A. Goldstein, New York City Environment Director at the Natural Resources Defense Council.**

“Passing a robust exclusive commercial waste zone bill is an overdue overhaul of this system considering the gravity and urgency of our climate crisis and waste mismanagement. As written this bill would achieve dramatic reductions in vehicle miles travelled by diesel waste trucks, along with reductions in associated aerial particulate emissions, greenhouse gas emissions, road damage, and noise – as well as more equitable distribution of waste disposal in the city – all tremendous benefits from climate and environmental justice standpoints. We are honored to have taken part in this fight for waste reform, we support the improvements this well-researched and prescient piece of legislation would bring about, and we will continue our work advancing the most just and sustainable exclusive commercial waste zone plan for our communities and future,” **said Dr. Tok Oyewole, NYC Environmental Justice Alliance.**

"We know that exclusive zones will lead to fewer vehicle miles traveled by carters across the city, meaning our streets would be safer for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers alike. It is imperative that the city passes this law -- lives will be saved," **said Marco Conner, Co-Deputy Director of Transportation Alternatives.**

Following today’s hearing, the waste zone legislation will be one step closer to a vote and ushering in a new day for New York’s commercial sanitation industry.

###