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For Immediate Release

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New York City Council Introduces Legislation to Overhaul the Private Carting Industry

New York, NY-- Today, Council Member Antonio Reynoso joined fellow New York City Council colleagues, Teamsters Local 813, and environmental justice, small business, and safe streets advocates at a press conference at City Hall to announce the introduction of a bill to create a citywide commercial waste zoning system. The new policy will improve safety and cut pollution in a private carting industry responsible for over two dozen deaths while improving the sector's transparency, accountability, and service to small businesses across the city.

"I am proud to introduce legislation to reign in New York City's private carting industry once and for all," **said Council Member Antonio Reynoso.** "My bill will authorize the City to enact a commercial waste zone system to comprehensively address the labor, safety, and environmental violations that have plagued the private carting industry for years. A zoned system will make routes drastically more efficient—this means a reduction in vehicle miles traveled, meaning less greenhouse gas emissions and improved pedestrian safety. Furthermore, in order to operate in one of these zones, companies must comply with stringent labor, safety, and environmental standards. A commercial waste zone system is a catch-all solution that will finally transform this industry for the sake of workers, communities, and the environment. I have fought tirelessly alongside my allies in transforming the waste industry, and I urge my colleagues to push for swift passage of this legislation."

Each year in New York City, more than 90 private sanitation companies handle more than three million tons of commercial waste generated by office buildings, restaurants, and other businesses. These companies 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.

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](#).

In addition to the industry's direct human impact and rampant safety and labor violations, its current operations are [shockingly inefficient and counterproductive](#) to New York City's environmental sustainability goals.

"The creation of commercial waste zones will result in tremendous benefits for the city. The zones will reduce the number of truck-miles traveled each night by private carters by over 50% and achieve reductions in greenhouse gas emissions of over 40%. It will also require public safety training to workers that will result in safer streets, and improve agency oversight over carter operations. I want to thank Council Member Reynoso for his leadership in this issue, and hope this will be the beginning of a new and safer era for the industry," **said Council Speaker Corey Johnson.**

"We are called on at this moment to do everything in our power to reduce our carbon footprint." **said New York City Council Member Brad Lander.** "This means reducing the number of vehicle miles traveled and meeting our zero waste goals. We must also guarantee the safety of workers, improve working conditions, and reduce polluting truck traffic throughout our city and especially in communities of color. I believe that Commercial Waste Zones is the way to achieve this, while also providing better service to businesses. I want to thank Council Member Antonio Reynoso, the team at DSNY, and the Transform Don't Trash Coalition for the years of work and leadership leading up to today's introduction of this important legislation."

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.

"In order to improve quality of life, reduce pollution and enhance the standard of sanitation services in our neighborhoods, New Yorkers deserve a commercial waste zone system that prioritizes transparency, workplace safety and efficiency," **said Council Member Margaret S. Chin.** "By creating commercial waste zones, our City can provide much-needed reform and accountability to the existing chaos and safety hazards that this system creates. I am proud to be a co-sponsor to this transformative legislation, and look forward to partnering with Speaker Johnson, Committee of Sanitation Chair Reynoso, and all community stakeholders to fight for more smart solutions to build a safer and healthier City."

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.

"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."

"For too long, we have seen the harm the private carting industry has caused our city," **said Council Member Stephen Levin.** "The industry's lack of regulation has resulted in employees working 18-hour shifts for unfair wages and in unsafe working conditions. Since 2010, at least 43 people have died in crashes related to private sanitation operation, while trucks fail federal safety checks, hundreds of thousands in wages go unpaid, and safety concerns are swept under the rug. Enough is enough. I am proud to stand alongside my colleague, Council Member Antonio Reynoso, and our community leaders in introducing legislation that will change our city for the better. This bill will bring long-overdue structure to the system, requiring companies to comply with strict safety, labor, and environmental standards in order to service waste zones -- I look forward to working to help get it passed."

"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).**

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.

A commercial waste zone system would 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.

"New York City's current commercial waste system has let too many bad actors pollute our airways, endanger our streets, and mistreat our workers," **said Council Member Costa Constantinides.** "I stand with Council Member Reynoso and the Transform Don't Trash NYC coalition to reduce the number of miles that a polluting garbage truck drives each day, making New Yorkers healthier and safer in the process."

The legislation introduced by Council Member Antonio Reynoso would authorize the City to create a commercial waste zone system. The system would divide the city into at least 20 zones with each zone serviced by one carter. Commercial carting companies would engage in a competitive bidding process, through an RFP conducted by DSNY for the right to operate within these zones. The RFP process would require bidding companies to comply with certain baseline standards. A number of other criteria would be weighted competitively, requiring companies to demonstrate how they can best meet the needs of a given zone, while raising environmental, labor, and safety standards.

"It is unacceptable that, in 2019, New York City private sanitation workers are risking life and limb to pick up what our city throws out each night," **said Sean Campbell, President of Teamsters Local 813.** "This can be a middle-class job. It can be a safe job. I commend Council Member Reynoso and Speaker Johnson for putting forth this legislation to once and for all clean up the private carting industry and protect these workers of color."

Companies must deliver these benefits in a cost-efficient manner, with a predictable, transparent pricing schedule, and enforceable high customer service standards. This will ensure that small businesses aren't price-gouged and that all services, including those such as organics collection, are offered to all companies regardless of size.

"For way too long, New York City's commercial waste hauling industry has been operating like the Wild West -- with extremely dangerous, often illegal, practices -- and with almost no accountability. Now we're taking the reins as a city and creating a system that will work for our communities, for the industry's workers, and for small businesses that rely on this service," **said Maritza Silva-Farrell, Executive Director of ALIGN.** "We thank Council Member Reynoso for his leadership in taking on this challenge to address the underlying problems with the commercial waste industry. This is the kind of policy that will get us where we need to be as a progressive city that protects workers and reduces climate pollution and health risks for families."

"The Commercial Waste Zone bill introduced by Council Member Reynoso today is an anti-pollution bill on many levels: It slashes excessive miles driven by private diesel garbage trucks throughout our City every night; it will improve air quality for environmental justice communities and for workers by incentivizing and enabling investments in cleaner, lower-emissions trucks and in cleaner waste facilities," **said Rachel Spector, Director of the Environmental Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest.** "This legislation also has the potential to reduce the substantial greenhouse gases from landfilling commercial waste by setting waste reduction and recycling standards for both businesses and private sanitation companies in all zones."

Those gathered at the press conference – Council Members, sanitation workers, union representatives, environmental advocates, and grassroots organizations – testified to the transformative effect that a waste zone system would have for the industry and New York City.

"Neighborhoods throughout North Brooklyn have a history of being subjected to environmental injustices," **said Roland Guzman, on behalf of OUTRAGE.** "Many of the environmental issues that we face in North Brooklyn today can be attributed to the staggeringly high volume of sanitation trucks that

travel in and out of our communities each night. These trucks spew greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to low air quality levels and tear down our streets with complete disregard for public safety in an attempt to complete inefficient routes. By making routes more efficient and holding carters to stringent recycling and environmental standards, a commercial waste zoning system will bring long-sought improvements to the environmental health and safety of North Brooklyn and our city at large. Thank you to Council Member Reynoso for introducing this legislation. OUTRAGE looks forward to supporting this bill as a measure to advance environmental equity citywide.

“Environmental justice communities have long sought the reform of the commercial waste industry,” **said Eddie Bautista, Executive Director of the NYC Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA)**. “The arrival and massive spread of waste transfer stations in our communities beginning in the late 1980’s coincided with jumps in local asthma rates and other poor public health impacts. The introduction of commercial waste zones promises the cleaner air, greater recycling and safer and more efficient carting choices these communities - indeed, NYC as a whole - have long deserved. We applaud Councilmember Reynoso and Speaker Johnson for their leadership on this overdue reform of the City’s commercial waste system.”

By confining designees to specific zones, routes will become significantly more efficient. More efficient 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 to vehicle miles traveled will lead to drastically reduced greenhouse gas emissions and further improve pedestrian safety.

"Creating an exclusive waste zone system is an absolute winner when it comes to cutting truck traffic and curbing air and noise pollution in neighborhoods throughout New York City," **said Eric A. Goldstein, New York City Environment Director at the Natural Resources Defense Council**. "The routing efficiencies from creating exclusive zones will slash diesel truck vehicle-miles-traveled on New York City streets by as much 15 million miles every year. Sanitation Committee Chair Antonio Reynoso, Speaker Corey Johnson and the bill’s other co-sponsors are leading the charge to enact what would be the biggest environmental and social justice reform on city waste policy in decades."

The DSNY’s regulatory authority will authorize the agency to enforce recycling laws, which will divert material from landfills and lead to further reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

"BK ROT welcomes the introduction of the Commercial Waste Zones bill as a critical step in reforming NYC’s private waste sector. Given the climate crisis that grows worse daily, NYC policymakers must continue to push for bold, transformative reforms that drastically cut greenhouse gases and air pollution," **said Sandy Nurse of BK ROT, a youth powered composting service based in Brooklyn**. "We welcome reforms that ensure worker rights and safety and that allows for organized labor. This policy must also address the environmental injustice and inequities bore by NYC’s low income communities of color, where most of the city’s waste infrastructure is housed."

The City will also be able to incentivize designated haulers to make major 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.

"No New Yorker should have to go to work and fear for their life," **said Hector Figueroa, president of 32BJ SEIU, the largest property service union in the country with headquarters in New York City.** "We were horrified to hear about what has been happening to our fellow workers in the commercial waste removal industry and 32BJ's 175,000 members are proud to stand with sanitation workers as they introduce a bill that will protect workers while also creating a more efficient and sustainable waste removal system for New York."

"We strongly support passage of Council Member Reynoso's bill creating a commercial waste zone system in New York City," **said Eric McClure, Executive Director, StreetsPAC.** "Such a system will have many benefits, not least of which will be a tremendous reduction in the miles driven nightly by private carters — which will in turn greatly improve the safety of the city's streets."

"Zone-based waste collection means fewer miles traveled by haulers across the five boroughs," **said Transportation Alternatives Senior Director of Advocacy Thomas DeVito.** "That's good news for everyone who uses New York City streets. Drivers operating trucks owned by private waste haulers have killed more than two dozen New Yorkers in the last five years. This bill represents an important step toward righting this wrong."

Council Member Reynoso, advocates, neighborhood and grassroots groups, and workers have fought tirelessly to reform the private sanitation industry. A commercial waste zone system will finally deliver the comprehensive changes that this industry needs to live up to New York City's progressive values.

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