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**For Immediate Release**

**Contacts:**

*Kristina Naplatarski*, Office of Council Member Antonio Reynoso

212-788-7095 (O), 646-584-2676 (C), Knaplatarski@council.nyc.gov

*Alex Moore*, Teamsters Joint Council 16

718-289-0204 (O), 347-762-0778 (C), alex@teamstersjc16.com

*Chio Valerio-Gonzalez,* ALIGN

646-352-1316 (C), chio@alignny.org

**New Yorkers Rally for Passage of Commercial Waste Zones Bill Ahead of City Council Vote**

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

The City Hall Park rally was held before the City Council’s 1pm Stated Meeting where the bill is expected to pass and included sanitation workers and advocates from the environmental justice, safe streets, and small business communities.

“For decades, 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**. "The passage of 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 our environment. Under a zoned system, routes will be made drastically more efficient— this means improved pedestrian safety and a reduction of vehicle miles traveled of at least 50%. Furthermore, in order to operate in one of these zones, companies will be required to comply with stringent labor, safety, and environmental standards. I have fought tirelessly alongside my allies in transforming the waste industry, and I thank Speaker Johnson and my Council colleagues for making possible its passage."

“For too long, the private carting industry has been able to operate without adequate safeguards to ensure air quality and street safety. Private carters have customers throughout the City, resulting in long, inefficient routes and millions of excess truck miles driven every year. The Council is deeply proud to pass this legislation that will result in cleaner air, safer streets, and better customer service to businesses throughout the City. I applaud Council Member Reynoso for his leadership on this issue from start to finish,” **said Council Speaker Corey Johnson**.

Currently, over 90 private sanitation companies operate in New York City, handling commercial waste generated by office buildings, restaurants, and other businesses. Because each of these companies can service customers across the city, more than 50 individual carting companies may service a single neighborhood. The chaotic system harms workers, pollutes the environment, and puts the public in danger.

“You couldn’t design a system worse than the one we have now, with overlapping and inefficient truck routes that cause unnecessary emissions, noise, traffic, and safety hazards on our local streets that have injured workers and cost lives. Creating a zoned system to limit the number of private sanitation companies operating in an area will make streets safer for pedestrians, improve working conditions for sanitation workers, and cut down on greenhouse gas emissions. Congratulations to Council Member Reynoso, and the many sanitation workers, environmental justice and safe streets advocates who have worked hard for many years to make a commercial waste zone system a reality," **said Council Member Brad Lander**.

“For too long, our communities have borne the burden of a private carting industry that has forced hard-working New Yorkers into unsafe conditions, exacerbated congestion on our streets, and polluted our air," **said Council Member Margaret S. Chin**. “By creating commercial waste zones and holding companies to stronger standards, this legislation will prioritize labor rights, street safety, and the future of our environment. I am proud to be a co-sponsor on Council Member Reynoso’s bill to fundamentally change the private sanitation industry and create a healthier, cleaner New York City.”

Between 2010 and the fall of 2018, the industry has been involved in 26 fatal crashes. One of the most tragic of these incidents was the death of Mouctar Diallo, an off-the-books worker, and the company’s attempt to cover it up. Companies’ current practices are largely to blame for making this industry as dangerous as it is. Workers are often pressured to complete impossible routes-- some with more than 1,000 stops – in a single shift. To make matters worse, companies routinely deny workers adequate training, compensation, and properly maintained trucks.

"Introduction 1574 will profoundly transform our city's private waste industry. This legislation puts the necessary measures in place to protect sanitation workers, pedestrians, and our environment," **said Council Member Diana Ayala, Co-Chair of the Progressive Caucus.** "As the Council Member representing East Harlem and the South Bronx - both of which are environmental justice neighborhoods - I am incredibly proud to co-sponsor this legislation. I thank Council Member Reynoso and all of the labor, street safety, and environmental advocates for fiercely fighting to drive this bill to the finish line."

“The private carting system has been overdue for reform for a long time, and I proudly applaud my colleague, Council member Antonio Reynoso and advocates, for the passage of today’s long-awaited bill," **said Council Member Stephen Levin**. "The private sanitation industry is grossly unregulated: employees often work 18-hour shifts for unfair wages and in unsafe working conditions to cover 60-mile routes in a single night. The lack of a regulated system has led to egregious safety violations and put workers and communities' lives in danger. Today we say no more. The passage of today’s bill marks an important turning point in our city’s sanitation history, and puts the wellbeing of people over profits.”

“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)**.

Under the current open market system, 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[[1]](#endnote-1). The thousands of diesel trucks that complete these routes are on average three times older than the Department of Sanitation’s (DSNY) fleet. The industry’s operations pollute our air and contribute to climate change.

"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 focus on transforming the sanitation industry,” **said Council Member Keith Powers**.

“In my district, 125 waste trucks pass through our streets every day, making it the neighborhood with the fourth highest level of waste truck traffic. These trucks are dangerous, dirty, and damaging to the health of my neighbors. Small reforms are not enough. We must have the guts to tackle this system comprehensively. Council Member Reynoso's bill does that by creating real standards, real accountability, and a rational plan for waste collection," **said Council Member Carlos Menchaca**.

The industry’s waste processing practices also work to the detriment of our environment. Currently, private sanitation companies recycle and compost less than one quarter of what they collect. When the remaining waste is sent to landfills and incinerators, it becomes a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. The majority of these waste transfer stations are located in the South Bronx, North Brooklyn, and Southeast Queens, subjecting these three communities of color to the adverse impacts that come with handling a disproportionate amount of our City’s waste.

“As a member of the New York City Council’s Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management I am proud to support this package of commercial waste legislation. This legislation will reduce the millage that massive commercial waste trucks travel around our city by thousands of miles each day. These bills will lead to better wages and stronger job security for the truck drivers that do this back-breaking minimum wage work with little benefits every day.” **said NYC Council Member Andrew Cohen**.

The industry also does wrong by New York City’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.

"We are making private sanitation a good job again**," said Sean T. Campbell, President of Teamsters Local 813.** "For years, private sanitation workers have testified at City Council hearings and protested in the streets for legislation to hold their employers accountable. That legislation is finally being voted on today. Commercial waste zones will overhaul private sanitation to reward the good companies and force the bad companies to shape up. We thank Council Member Reynoso and Speaker Johnson for their leadership."

“For the past six years, our coalition of workers, environmental justice community members and advocates have worked to make the ambitious, transformative policy of a commercial waste zone system the law of New York City," **said Rachel Spector, Environmental Justice Program Director at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest.** "We anticipate seeing wide-ranging benefits for all New Yorkers, including reduction of waste trucks on our streets, safer streets, cleaner air, as well as major climate emissions reductions from improved recycling, composting, and waste reduction. We look forward to working to ensure that this transformative law truly reaches the potential it has to bring more sustainability and equity to our City.”

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 geographic zones. The system will divide the city into at least 20 zones with each zone serviced by no more than three carters per zone.

“This effort originated from concerns of people on the ground who were deemed disposable by an industry that is staunchly resistant to change – it has culminated in critical transformations in the regulations waste carters must finally adhere to, the way trucks are driven, the way workers are treated, the way materials are diverted from landfills and incinerators, the health and safety of communities with transfer stations, and who bears which burdens. We are far from done and there are many next steps needed to protect people - particularly those who are routinely exploited - and the planet, but today’s support behind Intro 1574 reflects that Council Member Antonio Reynoso and the NY City Council have paid attention to those demanding basic human needs of health, safety, dignity, and a future,” **said Dr. Tok Oyewole of the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance.**

“This legislation marks the most significant reform to the problem-plagued commercial waste disposal system since the city’s effort to rid the industry of organized crime influence  in the 1990s. The City Council has turned a triple play — commercial waste zones will yield less truck traffic and air pollution, safer and quieter streets, and better treatment for private sanitation workers.  Bravo to Councilmember Antonio Reynoso, Speaker Corey Johnson and their colleagues and staffs,” **said Eric A. Goldstein, NYC Environment Director at the Natural Resources Defense Council.**

Commercial carting companies will be selected by DSNY through a competitive bidding process that sets baseline standards and determines which carter can cost-effectively meet the needs of a given zone, while abiding by high environmental, labor, and safety standards. Commercial customers will benefit from a predictable, transparent pricing schedule and enforceable customer service standards.

"Today we accomplished what for many years was considered an impossible task," **said Maritza Silva-Farrell, Executive Director of ALIGN**. "Reforming the commercial waste industry means that we are valuing people over profits. Intro 1574-A protects the safety and dignity of private sanitation workers, reduces greenhouse emissions, makes our streets safer, and guarantees that our communities breathe cleaner air. This work happens because we built a movement of workers and communities unafraid of transforming a system from the ground up. We are thankful to Speaker Corey Johnson and Council member Reynoso for carrying our vision forward by passing this critical legislation."

“For the past two decades, North Brooklyn residents have endured pollution, illegal truck traffic on side streets, noise and dangerous driving as a result of the private carting industry’s reckless practices,” **said Ray Kairys, OUTRAGE Chair.** “For over twenty years, OUTRAGE has been one of the organizations on the front lines of demanding change and accountability from the private carting industry. The time to act is now; The Commercial Waste Zones Bill is necessary to reform an industry that operates uncontrolled and utilizes dangerous practices that put the public at risk.”

A zoned collection system will make routes drastically more efficient. Fewer stops and concentrated geographical zones will make this industry safer for its workers and the public. Furthermore, a reduction in vehicle miles traveled of at least 50% will dramatically cut greenhouse gas emissions.

"This legislation will bring common sense to New York City’s waste carting system. Fewer vehicle miles traveled by private waste haulers — who have been among the deadliest drivers on our streets — means a safer city for for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers alike. Transportation Alternatives is grateful to Council Member Reynoso, Speaker Johnson, the bill’s cosponsors, and our fellow advocates for their work toward winning a safer New York for everyone," **said Danny Harris, Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives**.

“After I was run over by the driver of a private carting truck in 2009, I spent six weeks in a medically induced coma, underwent 21 surgeries, including the amputation of my left leg at the hip level, two months in the ICU, and over a year of rigorous rehabilitation. If this commercial waste zone legislation had been in effect at the time, my crash may have been prevented. This bill is a chance to make our city safer for us all. I thank Council Member Reynoso, Council Speaker Johnson and the City Council for prioritizing Intro 1574 today. I’m confident this vote will prevent future catastrophic injuries on the streets of our city,” **said Jed McGiffin, a member of Families for Safe Streets.**

Sanitation companies will be required to provide every worker with extensive safety training. A rate floor will prevent companies from financing irresponsibly low fees by underpaying workers.

"We are proud to stand with Council Member Reynoso, the Teamsters, ALIGN and the entire Transform Don't Trash coalition in support of the passage of Intro 1574, which will create much needed commercial waste zones in New York City. Commercial waste zones will lift labor standards for drivers, help protect the environment, and improve pedestrian safety," **said 32BJ Vice President Shirley Aldebol**.

"This is an opportunity for the New York City Council to show political courage, to support the workers and communities harmed by the current dysfunctional system.  We can end the race to the bottom in this industry. The safety and livelihood of workers will finally be put ahead of profits for sanitation owners and real estate developers,” **said Stephan Edel of the New York Working Families Party.**

Under the policy, carters will be incentivized to transition their fleets to zero emission trucks and use facilities that meet safety and health standards. The City will also be able to incentivize designated haulers to make critical investments in modern recycling, composting, and transfer station infrastructure. These improvements will help spur the creation of hundreds of green jobs across New York City.

“New York City has a lot of work to do in terms of being a global city leader in addressing climate change, but today we celebrate the passing of Commercial Waste Zones as a huge progressive step. Commercial Waste Zones will positively provide much overdue relief for waste overburdened environmental justice communities like North Brooklyn by vastly reducing the oppressive number of miles driven by commercial waste trucks and ultimately working to mitigate unnecessary causes of the climate crisis,” **said Jen Chantrtanapichate, founder of Cleanup North Brooklyn.**

"Commercial waste zones are part of the fight for good green jobs, immigrant rights, and climate justice,” **said Angeles Solis, Lead Organizer at Make The Road New York.** “Many Make the Road New York members work or have worked in the private carting industry. This is an industry that exploits workers of color, especially undocumented or formerly incarcerated workers. We are proud to stand with many of our allies supporting intro 1574, a transformative policy we need to finally hold these companies accountable.”

The passage of the commercial waste zones bill will usher in a new era for the private sanitation industry, helping to improve it for workers, communities, and our environment.

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1. New York City Department of Sanitation, *Commercial Waste Zones A Plan to Reform, Reroute, and Revitalize Private Carting in New York City* (November, 2018) [↑](#endnote-ref-1)