



New York City Environmental Justice Alliance

166A 22nd Street, Brooklyn, NY 11232 | www.NYC-EJA.org

On the ground – and at the table

Testimony Supporting Int 157-B: In relation to reducing permitted capacity at putrescible and non-putrescible solid waste transfer stations in overburdened districts.

My name is Priya Mulgaonkar, and I am here on behalf of the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA). Founded in 1991, NYC-EJA is a non-profit citywide membership network linking grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in their struggle for environmental justice.

For decades, NYC-EJA has led efforts for comprehensive policy reforms to address the disproportionate burden of New York's solid waste system on a handful of environmental justice communities. New York City creates roughly 35,000 tons of garbage every day. Garbage trucks needlessly travel thousands of miles throughout New York City polluting our air with diesel fuel, clogging our streets, and diminishing our quality of life. These impacts are greatest in those few low-income and communities of color where truck-dependent transfer stations are clustered. Not surprisingly, these same communities deal with many sources of pollution and the negative health consequences thereof – such as asthma, heart disease, and cancer.

NYC-EJA has long advocated for the city to help reduce truck traffic in our communities by cutting the amount of waste sent to private, land-based waste transfer facilities. Currently, 64% of citywide waste throughput is handled in just four community districts in North Brooklyn, the South Bronx, and Southeast Queens. The DSNY has taken steps to shift residential waste export to the three operational city-owned export facilities North Shore MTS, Hamilton MTS, and the Staten Island Rail TS, an important step toward reducing vehicle traffic and pollution in EJ communities. Unfortunately, roughly 75% of commercial waste still ends up in truck-intensive facilities, many of which currently hold permits that would allow them to nearly double their waste throughput.

The toxic impacts of these facilities are well documented. In 2016, along with our partners in Transform Don't Trash, NYC-EJA released a report that assessed the overconcentration of truck traffic in communities in the South Bronx, North Brooklyn and South Brooklyn. Our volunteers counted waste trucks and collected data on particulate matter associated with diesel exhaust. To offer just one example, volunteers in the South Bronx at a particularly bad street corner counted 304 commercial trucks per hour, almost half of which were commercial waste trucks, which amounts to one commercial waste truck every 24 seconds.

Intro 157-B is a critical first step to addressing this long standing environmental racism. While the bill alone is not a panacea, it will help cut the permitted capacity at facilities located in overburdened communities, while also protecting these communities from handling any more waste in the future. NYC-EJA hopes that this protective bill will help spur the future policies that will truly address waste equity, such as requiring that commercial waste be diverted to the city-owned Marine and Rail-Transfer Stations, and that commercial waste zones require higher standards for land-based facilities to reduce impacts on communities and the environment.

Thank you, Chair Reynoso, for your commitment to advancing waste equity, and for the opportunity to testify.