



New York City Environmental Justice Alliance

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On the ground – and at the table

Local Law 145 Oversight Hearing, NYC Environmental Justice Alliance

April 30, 2019

Hello, and thank you to Council Member Reynoso and members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management for the opportunity to speak at this hearing. My name is Dr. Tok Oyewole, and I am testifying 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 fight 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. To handle nearly 35,000 tons of putrescible garbage generated each day in NYC, waste trucks needlessly travel thousands of miles per night through multiple boroughs of New York City, polluting our air with diesel fuel, clogging our streets, and diminishing our quality of life. The impacts are greatest in those few low-income and communities of color where truck-dependent transfer stations are clustered, causing higher proportions of health consequences such as asthma, heart disease, and cancer. Not only do waste carters dispose of 75% of their waste in three communities, but they tend to house depots and garages in these communities as well, essentially doubling the disproportionately high number of trucks already flowing into the communities. In North Brooklyn as part of an air quality monitoring project, citizens counted 203 trucks going by per hour, 30% of which were waste trucks; and in the South Bronx at a particularly bad corner, citizens counted 304 trucks going by per hour, 45% of which were waste trucks. Consequently, these neighborhoods experience PM 2.5 emissions 5 and 7 times higher than ambient levels, respectively. Exposure to air pollution, even at concentrations below regulatory thresholds, causes chronic illnesses such as asthma and bronchitis and contributes to terminal illnesses such as cancer and heart disease.

Local Law 145, passed in 2013, is intended to reduce pollution from waste trucks by mandating the installation of emissions control technologies, however, the law does not incentivize a shift from diesel to cleaner fuels and technology, such as electric or hybrid trucks. We argue that mandating eventual compliance with standards set over a decade ago is a relatively low bar, and that the city must take the necessary steps to ensure dramatic reductions in PM 2.5 emissions in EJ communities, starting with setting and enforcing more rigorous standards, appropriate to the climate crisis and air pollution inequities that our city is currently facing.

Thank you.