



Statement from Bronx Health REACH
Before the New York City Council on Trash Caps: Protecting New York City Communities
From Waste Overburdening (Intro 495 of 2014)
February 13, 2015
New York, New York

Kelly Moltzen
Program Coordinator, Bronx Health REACH
Institute for Family Health
212-633-0800 x 1328
kmoltzen@institute.org

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the proposal to protect New York City Communities From Waste Overburdening. I come here today to voice my support for the adoption of Intro 495. The Institute for Family Health was founded over 30 years ago to provide high quality, patient-centered health care to medically underserved communities. The Institute's Bronx Health REACH Coalition was formed in 1999 to address barriers to health equity and eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes. Through our partnerships with community members, faith-based organizations, health care providers, and legislators, we strive to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities, particularly those caused by environmental risk factors.

The Intro 495 bill would provide relief for overburdened residents of the South Bronx, who suffer from disproportionate rates of environmental health problems. The current waste transfer system targets the South Bronx, as well as Southeast Queens and North Brooklyn, to bear the greatest burden of NYC's garbage production. There are 9 waste transfer stations in the South Bronx permitted to handle nearly 12,000 tons of waste each day. On a typical day, nearly 6,000 tons of garbage are hauled in and out of the South Bronx, requiring about 1,400 diesel truck trips. The waste is transported in fossil-fuel intensive garbage trucks: only 10-14% of private NYC garbage trucks meet 2007 EPA emissions standards. Not surprisingly, asthma rates in the Bronx are eight times the national average. So are rates of other diseases and illnesses tied to air pollution. In addition, nighttime truck noise from diesel hauling vehicles has been linked to stress, heart disease, and hearing damage.

We have seen the effects of this inequitable system first-hand through our work with schools and community residents. Many students at the schools we work with suffer from severe asthma,

which is exacerbated by pollution from idling buses and trucks in close proximity to their homes and schools, as well as nearby waste facilities that emit particulate matter into the air. A study conducted by NYU found that children in the South Bronx are twice as likely to attend a school near a highway as compared with students in other parts of the city, increasing their exposure to the air pollution generated by waste transfer vehicles. This affects students' ability to play outside and be physically active in their neighborhoods, contributing to lower levels of physical activity and higher rates of obesity. It can also interfere with students' academic performance and overall wellbeing if they are not able to manage their condition effectively. In fact, asthma is a leading cause of absences from school, and in the South Bronx neighborhoods of Hunts Point and Mott Haven, asthma hospitalization rates among children are more than double the city-wide rate. While these problems would not be completely eliminated by passing Intro 495, this bill would eliminate several hundred truck trips in the South Bronx every day. Our communities would still handle more waste than most communities, but it would be a significant reduction. The proposed cap on the amount of city waste that any community is permitted to handle would be the start of ensuring that our neighborhoods ultimately aren't being unfairly burdened with waste generated in other parts of the city. We recommend that the committee adopt Intro 495 to help reduce disproportionate environmental health risks in the South Bronx, North Brooklyn, and Southeast Queens. Thank you for your time and consideration.