



**New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management
January 28, 2015**

Testimony by Joaquin Brito, Climate Justice Organizer, UPROSE

Good morning, honorable Council Members. My name is Joaquin Brito and I am the Climate Justice Organizer for UPROSE, Brooklyn's oldest Latino community based organization which today is an intergenerational, multi-racial, nationally-recognized community organization that promotes the sustainability and resiliency of Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. UPROSE is in support of Intro 495: Trash Caps to Protect New York City Communities From Waste Overburdening. In communities like Sunset Park, this proposal is of the utmost importance and we applaud this committee for taking up the issue. Recently, we've successfully doubled the amount of open space in Sunset Park, expanded the 4th Avenue median, revived a bus line, opened a 23 acre waterfront park, played a key role in organizing the People's Climate March and have intensified our focus on the adaptation of Sunset Park to the changing climate as well as deepening community resiliency in the wake of Superstorm Sandy. Our work encompasses a plethora of environmental justice and public health initiatives. Intro 495 to Cap Reduction will bring justice to those communities most.

Every day, NYC creates 35,000 tons of garbage and every day, 20,000 tons, or 57% of this waste is trucked to waste transfer stations in a handful Brooklyn's neighborhoods, specifically low-income communities of color like Sunset Park. This is in addition to the 275,000+ vehicles that use the Gowanus Expressway; a seemingly equal number of vehicles utilize the road underneath and another congested roadway just one avenue up. Trash bins are sporadically placed along our avenues but the garbage truck traffic is consistent. The current system is fundamentally unfair; garbage is trucked into OUR already overly burdened communities regardless of where it's generated. The severe concentration of trucks in our neighborhoods, not only damage our roads and congest our roadways, they clog our lungs!

The New Yorkers living in these communities suffer worse health outcomes such as high rates of asthma and lung cancer. Additionally, the extraneous noise pollution created by the trucks is linked to insomnia, stress, heart disease, and hearing damage. Healthy lives as well as economic stability have been stripped from many low income communities of color due to the absence of just spatial distribution/clustering of waste transfer stations.

NYC's landmark 2006 Solid Waste Management Plan included measures to make waste collection less burdensome and more equitable. Intro 495 to Cap Reduction will realize the SWMP's long-delayed commitment to fair share. UPROSE respectfully asks that communities that are most detrimentally impacted.



By capping the percentage of the City's waste that any community can be permitted to handle at 5%, millions of people from environmental justice communities will literally be able to breathe easier. For communities that are or may be above the 5% threshold like Sunset Park, Brooklyn, this measure encourages fair share practices through prohibiting the City from issuing any future increase in waste permits.

UPROSE's commitment doesn't just stop at supporting policy, we're willing to take on our fair share. We supported the construction of a Marine Transfer Station in Sunset Park but moving forward, we need protection.

This plan will provide long due relief to overburdened communities. Intro 495 will:

- 1.) Reduce the daily tonnage of waste handled at transfer stations in the South Bronx, North Brooklyn, and Southeast Queens by 18 percent, distributing the costs more equally
- 2.) Encourage the Utilization of marine and rail transport systems for our waste, thus significantly improving the quality of life for those living in low-income communities of color, which almost always bear the brunt of excessive environmental burdens.
- 3.) Maximize public health benefits through imposing health criterion that focuses on bad acting private facility's worker safety and environmental track records

Siting these facilities in all five boroughs will help ensure that each borough handles its fair share of (residential) waste. If passed, the benefits are vast. Future children will no longer have to miss school for hospital visits and parents can allocate less money on medications. UPROSE strongly supports the passage of Intro 495 on Capacity Reduction because fair share is only fair.

