



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
SCOTT M. STRINGER

August 18, 2020

Kathryn Garcia
Commissioner
New York City Department of Sanitation
125 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013

Dr. Dave A. Chokshi
Commissioner
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
42-09 28th Street
7th Floor CN81
Long Island City, NY 111-01

Dear Commissioners Garcia and Chokshi:

Over the last few weeks, our offices have received dozens of complaints from business owners across the city regarding overflowing litter baskets along commercial corridors. The mounds of garbage are both unsightly and unsanitary, driving away customers at a time when small businesses are struggling to survive, and attracting rats and vermin which spread disease while our City is in the midst of a deadly pandemic.

New York City's sanitation workers are heroes. Their commitment to our city's health and safety was especially essential during the darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic, and now are an integral part of our recovery efforts. We must ensure that our sanitation workforce has the tools and resources to do this critical work. According to the BID Association, DSNY has cut waste basket pick-up from seven days a week to three days a week. However, DSNY still must meet its obligation to 'keep New York City healthy, safe and clean.'

New Yorkers deserve a full and complete explanation of how you intend to develop creative solutions to help prevent litter baskets from overflowing. For that reason, please respond to the following questions:

- Some business owners would like to put trash bins in front of their stores, but they are afraid of getting fined by DSNY. Will DSNY commit to work with BIDs and business owners to provide flexibility to businesses that want to add street bins at their own expense?
- In early March, the DSNY launched the "Clean Curbs" pilot program allowing private entities, such as BIDs, "to apply for the opportunity to have sealed, on-street containers

for their trash and recycling storage, which will reduce their need to set out bags of recyclables and garbage for collection on City sidewalks.” Please provide us with any updates on the pilot program, including the name and location of all private associations that have applied. Is there an opportunity for the Clean Curbs pilot to be broadened so that BIDs can distribute overflowing litter baskets into sealed, on-streets containers?

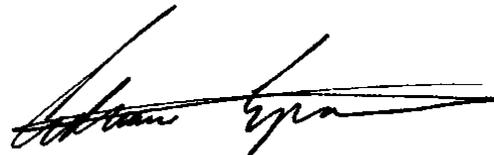
- The New York City Parks Department recently unveiled four new smart garbage cans to deal with problems of overflowing trash cans in Gantry Park. As you know, these “Big Belly” cans can hold five times as much trash as a standard litter basket, have built-in sensors that notify personnel when they are full, and can be opened by foot. Has DSNY examined the possibility of deploying more of these innovative smart receptacles to commercial corridors?
- Since the advent of outdoor dining, City data shows that rat sightings have increased dramatically from less than 1,000 in April 2020 to 1,658 in June, despite committed efforts by the City’s dedicated pest control workforce.¹ Given the extension of outdoor dining through October and the reduced collection services in rat mitigation zones, how does DSNY and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene intend to address the uptick in rats and better support pest control workers in this goal?

Please reply to these questions in writing by September 1, 2020. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Scott M. Stringer
New York City Comptroller



Adriano Espaillat
U.S. Representative, New York’s 13th
Congressional District

¹ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8581375/Trash-piling-NYC-sanitation-departments-budget-cut-106million.html>