

**TESTIMONY FROM NYCHA SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR OPERATIONS SUPPORT
SERVICES KEITH GROSSMAN
SANITATION AT NYCHA
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING WITH THE COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE
MANAGEMENT
TUESDAY, JUNE 21, 2022 – 10:00 AM
COMMITTEE ROOM, CITY HALL, NEW YORK, NY**

Chairs Alexa Avilés and Sandy Nurse, members of the Committees on Public Housing and Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, other distinguished members of the City Council, NYCHA residents, and members of the public: good morning. I am Keith Grossman, NYCHA's Senior Vice President for Operations Support Services. Joining me are Vlada Kenniff, Senior Vice President for Sustainability; Josephine Bartlett, Senior Director of Pest Control; and Al Ferguson, Senior Director of Waste Management. We are pleased to have our partners at the NYC Department of Sanitation (DSNY) with us today as well. Our colleagues from the Health Department are also with us to discuss Intro. 414, pertaining to reporting on rat mitigation zones. The Administration supports the intent of this bill and looks forward to working with the Council to align this with available data.

I joined NYCHA this April from the NYC Department of Education (DOE), where I oversaw the emergency management program and the accessibility remediation program for all of the DOE's approximately 1,900 schools. Before that, I was the Director of Emergency Management and Safety at Brookdale University Hospital and Medical Center. It is an honor to bring my passion for managing complex operations and vital services to the NYCHA community.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Authority's progress in improving the quality of life for residents through better waste management and pest control. We know how impactful these areas are for NYCHA residents – and making sure that our buildings and grounds are clean and as pest free as possible is one of our top priorities. We have made significant changes to ensure that our waste management and pest control methods are comprehensive, modern, and effective, and we continue to apply the latest technologies and strategies to further our work in service to residents.

Organizational Improvements

For instance, after an extensive analysis, NYCHA divided Waste Management and Pest Control into two separate departments, which are now under the oversight of the new Operations Support Services division. This separation allows us to have better control over all pest and waste remediations throughout NYCHA's portfolio.

We also implemented IT enhancements that facilitate our work and we trained staff on Integrated Pest Management (IPM). In the past few years, we added a number of exterminators to our team, meaning that we now have a total of 124 exterminators who work hard to provide safe and clean homes, buildings, and grounds for residents. We also increased our caretaker staff, who help keep our buildings and grounds clean, bringing the total number of caretakers to nearly 4,500.

NYCHA's Action Plan on Pests and Waste

Under the leadership of Chair Greg Russ, and in accordance with the 2019 HUD Agreement, we are transforming our organization to improve how we provide services to residents – and we are making the investments necessary for success.

The Federal Monitor, Bart Schwartz, approved our Pest and Waste Management Action Plan in January 2021. The Action Plan is our roadmap for more effective waste management and pest control. It is centered around the use of IPM and development-specific waste management plans for every NYCHA property, and it is supported by capital upgrades and new approaches to pest and waste management.

A key focus of the Action Plan involves improving the way NYCHA collects, stores, and removes waste to meet our goal to remove or store all waste in sealed, rodent-resistant containers every 24 hours. This is critical because better waste management means fewer pests, as we're eliminating their habitats and sources of food. Today I'll go into

detail about some of the waste infrastructure upgrades and programmatic improvements that are enabling us to deliver better for residents.

Combatting Pests and Waste Through Sustainable Improvements

Infrastructure Upgrades

NYCHA's current waste infrastructure – which handles over 200,000 tons of waste every year – is outdated. Since NYCHA's developments were built, the amount of waste generated by Americans has tripled; at the same time, NYCHA's infrastructure hasn't received the investments it's needed to keep up with the increase. In fact, more than 90 percent of our waste assets are past their life cycle and need immediate replacement.

The Federal Monitor approved NYCHA's City Capital Action Plan last year, which unlocks over \$563 million in funding to help the Authority fully upgrade and modernize its waste infrastructure. That's coupled with an investment of \$56 million toward the City's Neighborhood Rat Reduction program, which has enabled us to accomplish the following:

- Install larger trash chute doors that can accommodate a standard 13-gallon tall kitchen garbage bag on the first level of 60 developments, which helps residents dispose of trash properly;
- Install new interior trash compactors at 51 developments, exterior compactors at 18 developments, 5 bulk crushers, and 39 cardboard compacting baling machines – all of which enable us to manage waste more effectively and efficiently;
- Install over 8,000 door sweeps and seal over 600 window wells to prevent pests from getting into our buildings; and
- Install 27 (of 50) “rat slabs” that eliminate places for rodents to live, eat, and breed by replacing the original dirt basement floors with concrete.

With this total funding of more than \$619 million, we'll be able to replace aging waste, recycling, and bulk waste equipment across 194 developments. The procurement process is currently underway for the next round of projects at 64 developments.

In 2019, the Authority released the NYCHA 2.0 Waste Management Plan, a comprehensive set of strategies for delivering state-of-the-art infrastructure and providing residents with convenient locations for disposing recyclables and food waste – all to greatly reduce pests and make our developments cleaner.

To advance the Waste Management Plan, last year we released Requests for Proposals for the redesign of seven waste yards, and for new pneumatic waste collection systems at Polo Grounds Towers and Rangel Houses. We expect to finish design and start construction on these projects this year. By 2028, a complete overhaul of the waste yards at up to 194 developments will be underway. The new waste yards will feature more operational functionality for staff, recycling infrastructure, and reliable compactors, making waste handling more efficient and benefitting residents' quality of life. The new waste yards will also incorporate resident feedback in their design and will be more aesthetically pleasing.

The pneumatic waste collection systems at Polo Grounds and Rangel Houses will transport waste underground from each building to a centralized facility, where it will be compacted in a sealed, pest-resistant container. The new system will reduce the labor involved with transporting waste and minimize pests.

Innovative and Sustainable Initiatives

We are also implementing programmatic improvements. For example, our "Clean Curbs for All" initiative with the Sanitation Department will pilot mechanically collected curbside containers for refuse and recyclables, resulting in more efficient waste collection and cleaner grounds. We expect to release a Request for Proposals by the end of the summer.

We worked with the Sanitation Department to obtain a significant increase in the number of DSNY-funded bulk container dump tickets. This enabled us to remove over 15,000 additional tons of bulk waste from NYCHA developments in 2021. And we worked with the carting vendors who currently service most of our bulk containers to increase the frequency of bulk waste removal at our developments. To demonstrate the benefits of increased waste collection frequency at a small group of developments, we purchased two 6-yard rear-loader compacting garbage trucks that can each hold approximately three tons of household refuse per load. These trucks are equipped with the latest in Vision Zero safety designs (including 360-degree cameras for enhanced driver awareness) and have the latest in hybrid (diesel and electric) technology.

NYCHA also worked with our Sanitation Department partners to develop a Recycling Reset pilot program in 2020 to improve recycling rates at 12 sites: Baruch and Baruch Addition, Bushwick, Hylan, Butler, Marcy, Morris I and II, Riis I and II, Webster, and Morrisania. Several sites, such as Baruch Houses and Riis Houses, are recycling at record high rates. In September 2021, we rolled out the Recycle First Initiative in Staten Island, a mindset change that prioritizes recycling when it comes to waste management operations. Working with DSNY and development staff, we improved recycling rates at all 10 Staten Island sites (Berry, Cassidy-Lafayette, Mariner's Harbor, New Lane Area, Richmond Terrace, South Beach, Stapleton, Todt Hill, West Brighton I, and West Brighton II). This May, we rolled out the initiative to Queens at Queensbridge North, Queensbridge South, and Ravenswood.

We are also working with DSNY to develop a Caretakers Recycling Guidebook that will facilitate our caretakers' management of recyclables. Informed by the Recycle First mindset, this Guidebook will provide the reference point for all caretaker training on waste management operations. We are also developing a training series that will inform staff about our sustainable waste management programs and infrastructure, such as cardboard balers and mattress recycling.

We developed Individual Action Plans that present short-, medium-, and long-term goals to improve waste management at each of our developments, such as additional

monthly bulk tickets or expedited compactor replacement. All the plans are posted on our website. With the assistance of the Federal Monitor, we are finalizing a “Scorecard Cleanliness Rating System” that identifies where we need to focus our resources at our developments.

Last year, we launched NYC’s first and only mattress recycling program. To date, we’ve recycled over 6,000 mattresses at 39 developments across all five boroughs.

We worked with DSNY to convert under-used trash compactors into cardboard compactors at three developments (Marcy, Morris I, and Queensbridge South), which collect cardboard from a total of 16 neighboring developments. More than 200 tons of cardboard have been recycled at these sites, and we’re working with DSNY to expand the program.

As outlined in NYCHA’s 2021 Sustainability Agenda, the Authority is committed to removing organic waste from household waste streams, eliminating food sources for pests, and diverting organic materials from landfills. Our Farms at NYCHA sites are helping to achieve these goals: Since 2016, our lead partner, Green City Force, has collected over 32,000 pounds (or 16 tons) of compostable food scraps from NYCHA residents. One Green City Force alum and former NYCHA resident, Domingo Morales, is working to expand composting at NYCHA developments through an initiative he started called Compost Power. In 2020, Compost Power organized composting at five NYCHA developments that can now process at least 50 tons of organic waste per year. Compost Power provides NYCHA residents with the opportunity to reduce waste from landfills while creating eco-friendly jobs. Additionally, DSNY placed a compost bin at Ravenswood Houses; NYCHA and DSNY will engage residents for their input on where additional compost bins could be placed.

Our waste management efforts are being carried out in partnership with residents and other stakeholders. For example, NYCHA is developing a “Campaign for a Clean NYCHA” to better communicate with, and engage, residents on proper waste management and recycling programs. The Campaign was piloted at five developments

last year; pilot evaluation and the development of a rollout plan is underway. The Campaign applies the tools of public awareness and behavior change to define and promote a positive waste culture at NYCHA.

Thanks to the City Cleanup Corps initiative, we were able to hire more than 1,300 seasonal workers, of whom nearly half were NYCHA residents, to help keep our grounds, playgrounds, and buildings clean and to assist with pest control. Over 400 of these workers were hired for permanent roles.

Integrated Pest Management

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is the cornerstone of our new approach to pest management. IPM focuses on long-term, sustainable solutions that target the underlying causes of pest infestations. Exterminators minimize pesticide use and focus on non-toxic pest control methods: They perform a thorough inspection, removing sources of food and water and sealing any points of entry through caulking and installation of escutcheon plates.

We rolled out IPM Authority-wide, incorporated IPM protocols into our IT systems, and issued updated standard procedures and guidance regarding IPM to staff. We trained over 900 staff – exterminators, caretakers, supervisors, and other property management staff – on the fundamentals of IPM, and we launched quarterly trainings on IPM topics, including trainings for new hires. Since education is an essential part of pest control, we provided residents with informative materials on pest prevention, such as handouts, rent inserts, and a comprehensive pest control NYCHA webpage.

To aid our work, we also developed a model for tracking and measuring pest data. This involves determining an estimate of the pest population – to date, we've conducted nearly 2,100 inspections to establish this baseline.

Our Commitment to Residents

While we acknowledge that more work needs to be done to provide residents with the homes they deserve, we are making progress to become a better landlord, through targeted investments with the limited resources we have, as well as innovative programs and strategies. By working together with residents, City agency partners, and other stakeholders, we can continue to improve pest and waste management and make a difference for residents.

Thank you for your support as we strive to improve residents' quality of life. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.