

JOINT COUNCIL No. 16
INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS



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Thank you for the opportunity to testify to your committee today. My name is Bernadette Kelly and I am the Recording Secretary of Teamsters Local 210 and an International Representative of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

Teamsters Local 210 is proud to represent the workers at America's largest Materials Recovery Facility, Sims on the Brooklyn waterfront.

Our members sort and process all of the metal, glass, and plastic that is collected by the New York City Department of Sanitation from curbsides and city agencies.

The City's agreement with Sims is a model for how municipalities can create the infrastructure, investment, and economics to raise recycling rates and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

New York City, through a request for proposal process, entered into a long-term agreement with Sims to construct and operate the MRF in Brooklyn. The City got a state-of-the-art facility and a partner in getting the most out what is collected curbside. Sims was able to invest with confidence, due to a long-term contract and long-term source of recyclable material.

For the global recycling market, everything changed last year. After China instituted its National Sword policy, largely banning recycling imports, many recycling programs in cities around the country were thrown into turmoil.

Many cities stopped recycling, or curtailed what materials they would accept. Others shifted exports to other countries, but many of those have since followed China's lead and instituted various types of bans.

New York City has fared better than most, because the high-tech facility at Sims and the trained, experienced Teamster member who operate it, are able to efficiently achieve lower rates of contamination. This makes our recyclables more marketable.

But the national recycling crisis has shown the flaw in basing our recycling programs on the commodity markets.

It should have been obvious all along. We should be recycling because it is essential to combatting climate change, not because – or if – it makes money. Our garbage is a huge source of greenhouse gases and we must rapidly increase our recycling rates if we are serious about avoiding catastrophic changes to our climate.

One solution is an Extended Producer Responsibility policy for packaging. Like we already do for electronics and certain hazardous materials, we can ensure that recycling of our growing packaging waste is not dependent on market shifts.

Further, we should continue to advance bottle bill policies that support, not undermine, recycling programs across New York State, like Sims. While past proposals to expand the bottle bill were well intended, they would actually have hurt recycling more than they helped. The goal should always be to strengthen the economics of recycling for local programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. We look forward to continuing to be part of the conversation going forward about recycling policy in New York State.