



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

## Elected Officials Demand NYC Parks Department Save Community Gardens At Risk Due To New Licensing Agreement

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL October 31, 2019

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NEW YORK—Thirteen elected officials, in a letter spearheaded by Councilwoman Carlina Rivera (D/WF-Manhattan) and State Senator Brad Hoylman (D/WF-Manhattan), called on the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to resolve outstanding issues in the latest proposed GreenThumb licensing agreements. The new 2019 [Community Garden License Agreement](#) and [GreenThumb Gardeners' Handbook](#) proposes new burdensome requirements that could force the closure of dozens of community gardens in New York City.

**Senator Hoylman said:** “Community gardens are my favorite places in New York City. They provide fresh air, local food and a respite from our hectic urban landscape. City Hall’s attempt to change GreenThumb licensing agreements, while I’m sure done with the best of intentions, threatens the ongoing operation of our community gardens. Commissioner Silver and the Parks Department must revise this licensing agreement so we can preserve these vital community spaces for years to come. That’s why Councilwoman Rivera and I stand united with my elected colleagues, community groups, gardeners and neighbors to call on the Parks Department to protect our gardens and carefully consider changes to these licensing agreements.”

**Councilwoman Carlina Rivera said:** “It is critical, that as we begin to recognize and address the decades of environmental injustice and racism, our city does not turn its back on the one area of environmental independence our minority communities have grown and fostered - our community gardens. I join Senator Hoylman and all of our elected and community allies in calling upon the Parks Department and Green Thumb to return to the negotiating table with Community Garden leaders and reach a fair deal for gardeners that allows them to continue operating with a neighborhood-led approach.”

**Charles Krezell, President of Loisaida United Neighborhood Gardens (LUNGS) said:** "We are still attempting to negotiate the license with the City with very little progress. Instead the City uses threats and intimidations to force garden groups to sign this onerous document. By disrespecting community gardeners, the City continues to display its arrogant attitude towards its citizens."

**Ayo Harrington, founder of Orchard Alley Community Garden and Co-Chair of LES Ready said:** “Thousands of community gardeners have made tremendous personal and financial sacrifice to clear land and develop public, green spaces, with zero funding and few resources from the City, for over 40 years. For the City to insist that we sign an agreement that doesn’t provide liability coverage, allows them to close gardens without due process and requires us to fork over a percentage of the meager amount of funds we are forced to raise to care for community gardens is simply outrageous.”

**Susan Howard, long-time Lower East Side garden activist, said:** “Community gardens are vastly different from City Parks and do not need burdensome red tape. For example, requiring gardeners to get prior approval to hold events is unnecessary and can only result in fewer grassroots activity in these important venues.”

On October 10th, thirteen elected officials [sent a letter](#) to New York City Department of Parks & Recreation Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver to ask for continued conversation with community leaders and garden advocates in order to resolve outstanding issues in the latest GreenThumb licensing agreement. The new licensing agreement contains burdensome requirements for community gardens related to the termination clause, permitting, and the definition of responsibility for risk and liability.

Other elected officials who joined the letter included: **U.S. Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, U.S. Congressman Jerrold Nadler, U.S. Congresswoman Nydia M. Velazquez, State Assembly Member Harvey Epstein, State Assembly Member Deborah J. Glick, State Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried, State Assembly Member Yuh-Line Niou, State Assembly Member Dan Quart, State Assembly Member Linda B. Rosenthal, City Council Member Margaret Chin, and City Council Member Helen Rosenthal.**

A copy of the letter can be found [at this link](#).