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***Testimony to New York State Joint Legislative Budget Hearing
on Environmental Conservation***

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Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the significant toll the Recycling Recession is taking on our upstate county and how leadership in the legislature can help fuel New York State's Recycling Renaissance. Most importantly is that the investments in municipal recycling must be maintained and additional resources need to be allocated to sustain municipal recycling programs statewide.

First, I want to tell you a bit about The Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency or OCRRA. My name is Andrew Radin and I am honored and privileged to lead the Agency's Nationally Award winning recycling program. OCRRA was established by the New York State Legislature in 1981 as a public benefit corporation empowered to engage in a wide variety of solid waste management activities for the benefit of Onondaga County residents. My board of directors are appointed by the Onondaga County Executive, the Mayor of Syracuse and the Towns of Van Buren and Onondaga.

Since the establishment of the Environmental Protection Fund, the New York State Legislature has consistently supported establishing household recycling practices. These investments, combined with OCRRA's allocations, have paid off.

Every year, almost 4 million tons are recycled statewide, according the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Today, OCRRA boasts an award-winning recycling program, with one of the highest recycling rates in the state; an internationally recognized municipal composting operation; convenient transfer stations; and a best-in-class environmentally sound waste-to-energy facility. OCRRA effectively engages with the public to put their unwanted goods to the highest—and safest use possible.

OCRRA's public education, outreach and engagement is well respected and the Agency is a trusted voice on issues for proper and environmentally-sound disposal options for the 465,400 people in our county. OCRRA inspires our community to "Save the World a little Each Day" and has effectively curated a strong following via direct email and social media. For example, over 10,000 people follow OCRRA on Facebook and more than 140,000 people visit OCRRA's website each year. OCRRA offers year-round appointments for drop-off of household hazardous waste to ensure this ick gets out of basements and garages and doesn't go in the trash or worse—down the drain. OCRRA organizes one of the largest Earth Day Litter

CleanUp events in North America and to date has ensured that 2.6 million pounds of litter are no longer blighting our community. OCRRA's events to capture textiles from the trash or offer free shredding services for the public's confidential papers, are patronized by an average of 1,860 people each year. Annually, OCRRA visits all the school districts in Onondaga County, spending time in the classroom and collaborating with custodial staff to make recycling and composting a daily habit for the leaders of tomorrow.

I am here today to tell you that recycling, as we know it, is in crisis. As John F. Kennedy observed, the Chinese character for crisis is both "Danger" and "Opportunity." The good news is that recycling isn't dead—the commodities placed on our curbside continue to have value, despite supremely depressed market conditions. The over-reliance on off-shore markets and now their closure is inflicting immediate and sustained harm to effective and critical recycling programs impacting communities along the Long Island Sound to the shores of Lake Erie. Merely maintaining existing funding levels for recycling is not enough for municipalities to ensure recycling continues during these abysmal market times. Why? Because these costs are so much higher than ever anticipated. For example, OCRRA's cost to recycle 38,000 tons in **2017** netted the agency over \$120,000. In **2018**, in the wake of crashing material markets, OCRRA spent close to \$700,000 to maintain recycling. And in **2019** OCRRA's costs for recycling market support alone will be nearly \$2 million dollars. We are one county struggling to keep our award-winning program afloat and we are not alone. For all counties across NY State, excluding New York City, the combined increased costs are estimated to be more than \$42 million additional dollars. **None of these costs are eligible for funding through the state's Environmental Protection Fund.**

A quick point of explanation that might be helpful: The cost to locally sort and process recyclables is about \$70 to \$100 per ton. That hasn't changed too much. What is really driving the recycling crisis, is that the value of the materials which often covers those local processing costs has nosedived with the loss of the Chinese market.

I am here today to ask you to appropriate additional monies in the FY 2019 State Budget to provide municipal relief to ensure recycling programs continue and to empower local communities to fuel a resilient recycling future where local businesses turn curbside materials into new products right here in New York State.

Onondaga County is a great example of resilient recycling – a portion of our recycle bin is used locally. In Solvay, NY, a nearby mill buys close to one million tons a year of cardboard. This cardboard comes from streets in my neighborhood and beyond. It is recycled into new cardboard which could deliver your next Amazon purchase. OCRRA then takes the by-products of the cardboard recycling process to recover metal and energy. It is this type of "Strong Loop" thinking that helps build resiliency for New York industry, while reducing waste and ensuring strong markets for commodities that New Yorker's recycle at the curbside.

Opportunity clearly exists now to support local manufacturers that re-process paper and other recyclables; helping give these items another useful life while growing the local economy. This opportunity can only be realized with an investment by New York State that keeps recycling going and supports industries that use the plastics, paper, glass and cardboard sorted from the recycle bin.

Why keep recycling? I could explain the environmental benefits, from reduced greenhouse gas emissions to energy conservation, saving trees, and all the things you all already know. But I won't. I will stress the need to conserve the strategic disposal capacity in New York State and the Northeast. As you know, landfills are closing. Some garbage is hauled more than 600 miles away from New York City. But, what you may not realize is that garbage is a good indicator of prosperity. As the economy began to pick up in Onondaga County, we began to see increased levels of garbage. Folks were able to put on a new roof and replace their outdated bathroom; investors built new hotels and homes. Each of these activities produced waste—that could be recycled and / or needed to be disposed.

While no one wants to trash recyclables, in truth that isn't really a viable option. The strategic takeaway here is that New York State does not have the sustained capacity to trash recyclables. Onondaga County does not have the sustained capacity between our Waste-to-Energy Facility or relationships with regional landfills to discard 38,000 tons of recyclables annually. The same holds true statewide, which lacks a sustained disposal capacity to otherwise manage the close to 4 million tons recycled annually. Recycling is fundamental to managing solid waste.

I implore you, please make sustaining recycling in New York a top priority this budget year. There are a number of good policies to adopt, such as expanding the bottle bill to include more glass containers like wine and spirits and requiring producers to take responsibility for their packaging and products, like New York already has done with rechargeable batteries.

In the short term, what this state needs more than anything is direct municipal support to ensure recycling programs built over these past decades continues to protect vital disposal capacity while providing an opportunity for New York's recycling renaissance to be realized.

In closing:

- ✓ Don't trash recyclables.
- ✓ Keep Municipal Recycling Programs alive—and Keep Trash in its place.
- ✓ Maintain strong funding for the Environmental Protection Fund.
- ✓ Add \$42 million to support municipal recycling in the FY 2019 budget.
- ✓ Support New York based industries that rely upon feedstock sourced from materials in our recycle bins.

Thank you for the opportunity to share Onondaga County's recycling reality.