

Contact: [\(212\) 788-7116](tel:2127887116)

Release #: 079-2017

SPEAKER MELISSA MARK-VIVERITO, PER SCHOLAS AND COALITION FOR QUEENS ANNOUNCE PILOT PROGRAM TO CONNECT NYCHA RESIDENTS WITH TECH TRAINING

Partnership includes diversity pledge with 11 technology employer partners who will consider training in lieu of college degrees for technical positions

Brooklyn, NY - Today, Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, along with Per Scholas and Coalition for Queens (C4Q), announced a pilot program that will provide NYCHA residents with training in IT infrastructure, cybersecurity, and software development. As part of this new Council initiative to help increase diversity in New York City's fast-growing technology sector, 11 founding employer partners have pledged to consider the training of candidates who have completed the program in lieu of a college degree. The announcement was made at the Brooklyn headquarters of Kickstarter, one of the employer partners, and included remarks from alumni of the partnering nonprofits.

The program, Tech 51, is the result of the Speaker's Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Task Force convened by the Speaker one year ago to help address demographic discrepancies among New York City's technology workforce. According to the Center for an Urban Future, 62% of the sector's employees are white, 16% Asian, 11% Hispanic, and 9% African American. Tech 51 will recruit and support diverse technologists through two successful IT training workforce organizations, Per Scholas and Coalition for Queens, by focusing on public housing residents. In collaboration with NYCHA's Office of Resident Economic Empowerment and Sustainability (REES), this program will help deepen the recruitment efforts and workforce development opportunities for residents of NYCHA, and will support individuals and their families who are interested in tech careers, but have previously been able to access critical training and placement support.

"Investment in the economic empowerment of New Yorkers yields far more than just a job; it will have a collective impact within the communities that they live and work," said **Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. "This pilot program will help connect NYCHA residents with access to the cities' most innovative tech companies to help them break into the tech sector. Through the collaboration of our partners in the tech, we are sending a message about the continued commitment to diversity. I want to thank Per Scholas, Coalition 4 Queens, NYCHA and partners to their commitment to achieving concrete, specific benchmarks to transform New York's workforce."

The list of employer partners includes technology firms, start-ups, and enterprise organizations: Kickstarter, Intersection, Yahoo, Alvarez and Marsal, Barclay's Blackstone, Harry's, Troops, TechStars, Managed by Q, and Plated. These companies have signed on to a pledge that commits to considering a candidate's training completion in lieu of a Bachelor's Degree, re-evaluating minimum requirements for technical roles, investing corporate time to support the program's curriculum through volunteerism, and evaluating practices around retention of diverse talent in technical roles.

"When we launched our NextGen NYCHA strategic plan, one of our goals was to connect residents to economic opportunities and that includes the growing tech field," said **NYCHA Chair and CEO Shola Olatoye**. "Now, with Speaker Mark-Viverito's partnership, the NYCHA community has increased access to training and support for careers in tech, including IT infrastructure, cybersecurity and software development. We're investing in job training and in the future of New Yorkers."

"This innovative new partnership will give NYCHA residents access to a highly competitive industry that they may not have access to otherwise," said **Council Member Ritchie Torres, Chair of the Committee on Public Housing**. "Jobs in technology and software development are increasingly in demand, and the training and guidance that NYCHA residents will receive will allow them to be competitive in those roles. I applaud the Speaker and all the employer partners for spearheading this Initiative that can serve as a model for other cities."

"The tech industry continues to rapidly grow within our City, offering a wealth of employment opportunities to New Yorkers," said **Council Member James Vacca, Chair of the Committee on Technology**. "However, many of these jobs require specialized training and education that are difficult for low-income individuals to access. During my tenure as Chair of the Council's Committee on Technology, I have been committed to bridging the digital divide, and I am thrilled that the Speaker has been able to secure funding for this cutting-edge pilot. I'm looking forward to seeing how this program develops and whether it can be used as a model for diversifying the City's tech workforce."

"Per Scholas is thrilled to be part of this collaborative public/private partnership that will add significant resources to recruit and support diverse technologists entering the workforce," said **Plinio Ayala, President and CEO of Per Scholas**. "Working directly with New York City Housing Authority will deepen our reach and solidify on-ramps for individuals who have the passion and aptitude to succeed in meaningful careers and benefit corporations in need of their talent."

"C4Q is proud to partner with New York City Council Speaker Mark-Viverito and our tech industry partners to increase opportunity in tech," said Jukay Hsu, Founder and CEO of C4Q. "Together, we will deepen our efforts to serve our city's most vulnerable populations and provide them with training and career services to help them launch their careers in tech. At the same time, we will be able to provide companies with the diverse talent they need to continue to innovate. We applaud the Speaker for leading the charge to create more pathways for New Yorkers into tech careers, and we look forward to working with her office to ensure that New York City becomes the national model for an inclusive and innovative tech economy."

"Coalition for Queens has been an incredible force for good in New York City since its founding in 2011," said **Michal Rosenn, General Counsel at Kickstarter**. "Kickstarter is proud to continue supporting C4Q's efforts to diversify tech and invigorate our local communities."

Last year, Speaker Mark-Viverito formed the Speaker's Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity in Tech Task Force with Coalition for Queens and Per Scholas, two organizations that recruit potential tech talent citywide and provide intensive workforce development training programs in IT infrastructure, cybersecurity, and software development. The Speaker's Office convened leaders from New York City's top tech employers to identify action steps to improve the sector's diversity, especially of low-income people of color.

"Barclays is pleased to support Speaker Mark-Viverito's initiative to focus on recruiting, training, and hiring residents of the New York City Housing Authority to training organizations like Per Scholas and Coalition for Queens (C4Q)," said **Wayne Kunow, Global Head of Information Risk Management, Investment Bank, of Barclays**. "Barclays' workforce, and our client offering, are stronger when diverse talent is represented at all levels and we believe that intentional recruitment and training opportunities will open doors to underrepresented talent across the city."

Intersection is a firm believer that diverse teams produce better products and outcomes for our company," said **Jennifer Hensley, General Manager, Link at Intersection**. "In the ongoing effort to strengthen our own workforce and increase equity across the city we are proud to support Speaker Mark-Viverito's initiative to recruit and train residents of the New York City Housing Authority. Through strong training courses offered by Per Scholas and Coalition for Queens (C4Q), we will continue to see impact and outcomes growing diversity and equity in the tech sector."

"We need creative, technology-enabled problem solvers at Blackstone and throughout New York City to help us grow the economy," said **Bill Murphy, Senior Managing Director and the Chief Technology Officer at Blackstone**. Diversity in our workplace helps spur that creativity and spark innovation. We are proud to partner with Speaker Mark-Viverito, C4Q, and Per Scholas on this worthy initiative to help expand training and recruiting opportunities for a broader range of New Yorkers seeking to work in the high-tech field."

"Techstars and the Techstars Foundation are proud to partner with Coalition for Queens to support economic development and increase opportunities in tech for the Queens ecosystem," said **Amy Smith, Vice President of Partnerships of Techstars**. "Coalition for Queens graduates are changing the landscape of talent in technology, and have been a great asset to our Techstars portfolio companies in the area. We look forward to expanding opportunities through our partnership and creating a more inclusive community by connecting Techstars companies with C4Qs graduates."

"Harry's proudly supports C4Q and our shared mission for a more diverse and inclusive workforce that is reflective of our great city but also demonstrative of the strength that comes from our differences." said **Dion Ridley, Harry's Director of Engineering**. "C4Q's Access Code program has been building opportunities and changing lives by raising the graduating students' annual income, on average, from \$18,000 to over \$85,000 over the past four years. We look forward to continuing to partner with C4Q to provide the city's most diverse and non-traditional talent access to jobs in technology."

The creation of Speaker Mark-Viverito's Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity in Tech Task Force demonstrates a continued commitment to diversity in the city's fastest growing economic sectors, such as providing additional support for minority- and women-owned businesses, and helping achieve sustainability for worker cooperatives. The Speaker previously collaborated with technology leaders on a wide-ranging set of program initiatives, including the Digital Literacy Series with the Mozilla Foundation, the 2015 Council 2.0 roadmap with civic engagement experts, annual Digital Inclusion Summits with Civic Hall, and the implementation of Participatory Budgeting digital voting sites. Most recently, Speaker Mark-Viverito launched the Rapid Response Lab series to aid community organizations working on criminal justice and immigration issues to expand their technology innovation work.

###

###