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**SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO, COALITION FOR QUEENS &  
PER SCHOLAS ANNOUNCE LAUNCH OF TASK FORCE ON  
DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND EQUITY IN NYC'S TECH SECTOR**

*Goal is a Unified local platform for advocacy, partnership and outcomes*

**City Hall** – City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito today announced with Coalition for Queens and Per Scholas the launch of a joint effort to convene private and public sector partners to study best practices and initiatives for recruiting and retaining tech workers who reflect the full diversity of New York. In a city that is the crossroads of the world and where the growing tech industry is a major economic engine, the goal is to determine actionable steps that foster equity and inclusion.

"Digital inclusion is a priority for this Council and the 51 districts it represents, and as part of this commitment, we will convene experts, advocates and others towards advancing practices and processes that address racial, economic and gender equity," said Speaker Mark-Viverito. "I am inspired by the tremendous potential of working as a unified voice that champions meaningful outcomes and long-term change in the tech sector."

In a series of meetings over the next year, co-conveners and collaborative partners that include Google, Microsoft, Kickstarter, DropBox, Squarespace and Techstars will discuss issues of equity, organizational culture and processes, and concrete steps for sector-wide change, with the goal of presenting recommendations for work and action. In New York, the tech sector—the city's fastest growing industry— is 62% white, 9% black, 11% Latino and 16% Asian, according to a study by the Center for an Urban Future, and while efforts are underway to diversify the workforce pipeline, a comprehensive look at institutional practices from the beginning to end of that track is critical for addressing under-representation.

The Speaker's call to action was made at the Council's second annual Digital Inclusion Summit: *Innovating Civic Engagement* – a day of panels and discussions at Civic Hall that explored the integration of tech in the engagement of New Yorkers via Participatory Budgeting, the Young Women's Initiative and neighborhood planning, and where the Mozilla Foundation, as part of a Community Digital Learning Series with the Council, hosted a clinic on online privacy for participants who work with vulnerable communities.

"C4Q is proud to partner with New York City Council Speaker Mark-Viverito and our industry partners to create shared goals and tangible outcomes for increasing diversity in tech," said

Jukay Hsu, Founder and Executive Director of Coalition for Queens (C4Q). "We applaud and thank Speaker Mark-Viverito for her leadership in convening industry, government, and non-profits to tackle the urgent problem of increasing pathways out of poverty and diversity in technology. We look forward to bringing the energy and opportunity of Queens, the world's most diverse community, to propel the future of innovation in New York and have our great City be the national leader for tech inclusion."

"Per Scholas is excited to join New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito to find a solution to how to best diversify the workplace," said Plinio Ayala, President and Chief Executive Officer of Per Scholas, which trains New Yorkers from overlooked communities for careers in tech. " With government, nonprofits, and businesses coming together to collaborate, I believe we can transform the tech sector to reflect and celebrate the diversity that makes up our country."

"At Microsoft, we are proud to work with the New York City Council to help empower people by providing digital opportunity for all," said John Paul Farmer, Director of Technology & Civic Innovation for Microsoft, which has previously partnered with Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito to distribute free cloud-based Office 365 software to all 1.1 million New York City public school students and provide Surface tablets to enable digital voting in Participatory Budgeting initiatives. "The city's greatest resource is its people. By empowering New Yorkers with access to the resources they need to fulfill their potential, we can create a stronger economy, a more inclusive community, and a more vibrant city."

"We're honored to join the diversity task force spearheaded by the New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Coalition for Queens (C4Q) and Per Scholas," said Arden Hoffman, Vice President of People at Dropbox. "At Dropbox, our goal is to create a future that is inclusive and reflects the diversity of our users and the country's population. We look forward to working with this task force to help attract and retain more diverse talent, and change the future of the tech industry in NY and beyond."

"Civic Hall is proud to be supporting the City Council and Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito's efforts to focus attention on diversity, inclusion and equity in New York City's growing technology ecosystem," said Andrew Rasiej Founder and CEO of Civic Hall. "If there is anything that separates the New York City tech community from other centers of innovation, it is the leadership by civic and governmental leaders around ways to make sure that the benefits of technology are shared by all."

The Speaker also announced that Labs.council.nyc, a website that the Council's Digital Strategy team has been developing over the past year, will become the Council's online home.

The Speaker and Council's commitment to digital inclusion and transparency is outlined in a plan known as Council 2.0. Through this evolving roadmap, the Council has introduced several initiatives and projects to transform the way it does business. These include:

- The creation of a Digital Strategy Division
- Applying texting to Participatory Budgeting

- The introduction of Council Labs, a plain language, responsive site that demystifies Council processes
- An exploratory hackathon on CouncilStat data
- Integrating social media interaction as a Council-wide standard
- Using data visualization for legislative and budget-related work
- Testing the use of tablets and QR codes during a hearing

The Digital Inclusion Summit was sponsored by the Mozilla Foundation, Google and Civic Hall.

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### **About Per Scholas**

**Per Scholas** is a national nonprofit that drives positive and proven social change in communities across the country. Through rigorous and tuition-free technology training and professional development, we prepare motivated and curious adults who are unemployed or in low wage jobs for life-changing careers as IT professionals, and we create onramps to businesses in need of their talents. Today we provide our solutions in six cities across the country: Atlanta, GA; Greater Cincinnati, OH; Columbus, OH; Dallas, TX; the National Capital Region; and New York, NY. To date, Per Scholas has trained over 5,000 individuals, helping them build lasting, life-changing careers in technology. For more information, visit [perscholas.org](http://perscholas.org), Twitter [@PerScholas](https://twitter.com/PerScholas) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/per.scholas).

### **About Coalition for Queens**

**Coalition for Queens** was established in 2011, as a 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit that aims to create a tech community that is reflective of our society, with individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. They work with leading business and philanthropic companies to build an innovative, inclusive, and diverse Queens tech community. For more information, visit [www.c4q.nyc](http://www.c4q.nyc).