Testimony Before the New York City Council
Committee on Education
September 21, 2016

Good afternoon Chair Dromm and members of the Committee on Education.

My name is Julie Samuels and I am the Executive Director of Tech:NYC. Tech:NYC is a non-profit trade group that launched in May of this year with the mission of supporting the technology industry in New York, by, among other things, increasing engagement between our industry and New York City and State government. Our five founding member companies are AOL, Bloomberg, Facebook, Google and Union Square Ventures. In the roughly five months since we started, more than 300 companies have joined as members of our organization.

As a quick aside, today marks the first time that a representative from Tech:NYC is testifying before the City Council. We look forward to having an extensive and constructive working relationship with this body. My colleagues and I have met some of you already and will be scheduling meetings with many of you and your staffs in the coming months. We are always available if you have questions or issues related to technology companies in New York.

On behalf of our roughly 300 member companies, I am here today to testify in support of Intro. 1193, sponsored by Council Member Mark Levine, which would require the New York City Department of Education to track and report information regarding computer science programs offered to students K to 12.

Representing a broad collection of technology companies with a significant presence in New York City, Tech:NYC is particularly interested in emphasizing the value of, and need for, a sustained and meaningful commitment to computer science education for students at all grade levels in New York City public schools.

Without a doubt, technology is a rapidly growing part of the New York City economy. The technology industry in New York City is responsible for roughly 300,000 jobs and generates nearly 15 percent of the city's total tax revenue. Between 2007 and 2014, tech employment in the city grew 57 percent, nearly six times faster than overall citywide employment growth. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects more than 1.4 million computer specialist job openings nationally by 2020.

Our organization firmly believes that in a city as uniquely diverse as New York, technology education in public schools must serve as a vital springboard for young workers entering the workforce from a wide variety of economic and cultural backgrounds.

But despite the clear need for computer science education to prepare our students for the jobs of tomorrow, as recently as last year, fewer than five percent of New York City public school students have access to computer science education. Nationwide, the statistics for educating female students and students of color are similarly disappointing: according to the College Board, of the 30,000 students that took the 2013 AP computer science exam, fewer than 20 percent were female, only three percent were African American, and approximately eight percent were Hispanic.

As a result of this and similar trends nationwide, our industry is increasingly concerned that we will not be able to fill these jobs. And students who will be qualified to fill these jobs are less likely to reflect the diversity that is so vital to New York's character. This is why we must work together to give all of our 1.1 million students the tools they need to succeed in the technical fields where so many jobs do, and will, exist.

We applaud Mayor de Blasio's Computer Science for All (CS4All) initiative, a 10-year, $80 million public/private partnership to offer computer science to every student and every school in the City. This is an unprecedented effort to expand a new content area inside urban schools, and it will train nearly 5,000 teachers across all grade levels, K through 12. This type of commitment is already delivering on the promise of preparing our city's students to thrive in the new economy while also ensuring that New York City preserve its place as the preeminent global city to locate and develop a business.

As part of our support for the CS4All initiative, we urge the Council to pass Intro. 1193. Its detailed public reporting requirement will help to ensure that collectively, as lawmakers and business leaders, we follow through on the Mayor's commitment to provide computer science education for all students. We offer our assistance to help move this bill forward and will gladly answer any questions at this time.