

**Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment: Testimony before the City Council
Committee on Technology in Government Oversight Hearing
September 25, 2013**

Good afternoon, Chairperson Cabrera and members of the City Council Committee on Technology in Government. My name is Todd Asher, First Deputy Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, and I am joined by Deputy Commissioner John Battista. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

As you know, the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment consists of the Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting, which facilitates and supports film and television production throughout the five boroughs; NYC Digital, which works to realize New York City's potential as the world's leading digital city; and NYC Media, the official TV, radio and online network of the City of New York. Throughout the administration, the agency has innovated and revitalized New York City's entertainment and digital industries, helping to attract new businesses and job opportunities to the City and increase access and transparency in government.

Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting

Over the past several years, we've seen tremendous growth in the City's film and television production industry. A recent economic impact study conducted by the Boston Consulting Group found that the industry is currently the strongest it has been in its history, now generating a direct annual spend of \$7.1 billion, an increase of over \$2 billion dollars annually since 2002. Film and television production now employs 130,000 people, an increase of 30,000 jobs since 2004. This growth has also been accompanied by private infrastructure investment and expanding studio and post-production capacity. Ten years ago, only seven episodic series were produced here; last season there were 27, and we expect additional series to begin filming on location and at stages throughout the City in the coming months.

All of this production activity means several things. First, it means that more New Yorkers are working in well-paying jobs behind the cameras, and aren't forced to move away from the City to find work in their chosen career. Second, it means that thousands of local businesses are being supported by these productions. Small businesses across the city have told our office that the increase in production has been a boon to their business, some even pointing out that, without the money generated from the films and TV shows patronizing their shops, they wouldn't have survived the recent economic crisis. Third, it means that our office has continued to strengthen our efforts to lessen the impact that on-location filming has on local residents and communities.

To that end, we now require that whenever productions post No Parking signs in the community, they must also include contact information for the location manager so that residents can get in touch with the production directly if any situation arises. As always, the staff at the Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting can also be contacted via 311 and can intervene if a resident's concerns aren't immediately addressed on location. For example, our staff has stepped in and had a production move its catering table away from a restaurant and ensured that a moving van would have access to a street where a production was filming. Productions are required to post

No Parking signs at least 48 hours in advance of filming and distribute letters to the residents and businesses that will be affected by filming on their street, and our office has revoked permits from productions that have failed to do so. We send field representatives from our office out daily to monitor a production's footprint in the community and ensure they're in compliance with their permits. The field reps have also visited the offices of the local City Council member as well as the community board to hear any concerns that might exist out in the neighborhoods.

Our office hosts meetings every year, inviting community boards, business improvement districts and City Council members to talk about the upcoming year and discuss any concerns or questions they might have. Based on feedback from the community, community boards now have the ability to access information regarding productions through the Citywide Event Coordination and Management system. We also host community appreciation screenings, working closely with Council Members' offices and community boards, so residents have the chance to see their neighborhood on screen after hosting a film crew on their street and share in the pride of the finished product. And we encourage productions to give back to the communities in which they film. Shows like "Elementary" brought in a food truck and served waffles to residents on the street where the show was working, and in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, volunteers from "Made in NY" productions came out to volunteer at food and water distribution sites, donated supplies and coordinated donation pick-ups and volunteer transport. All of this is part of our numerous efforts to keep New York City film friendly and a place where 130,000 New Yorkers can continue to earn their living and support their families.

In April of this year, we reached the milestone of having graduated more than 400 "Made in NY" Production Assistants since the program's inception in 2006. The program, which was developed in partnership between the Mayor's Office of Media & Entertainment and Brooklyn Workforce Innovations, a local nonprofit organization, includes five weeks of free, intensive, hands-on training for unemployed and underemployed New Yorkers and covers everything from community outreach strategies to life management skills. Upon graduation, the new PAs are put to work on sets and in production offices for feature films, TV shows and commercials. The program continues to support graduates by providing two years of job placement assistance as the PAs also begin to build their network of contacts in the industry. "Made in NY" PAs have worked on over 2,000 productions and are now also advancing in their careers, becoming associate producers, production coordinators, camera operators and set costumers and gaining union membership. In the coming months, we expect to graduate the 450th "Made in NY" PA.

We're also looking to the future of the industry, and next month, the "Made in NY" Media Center will officially open in Dumbo, Brooklyn. Working with IFP and General Assembly, our office has helped to create a centralized hub for the creative community that promotes collaboration, workforce development and entrepreneurship. The Media Center will provide a co-working space, affordable office space, classrooms, a screening room and a café. It is our hope that that this incubator will connect filmmakers, digital designers and storytellers so that they can create cutting edge projects and establish new business opportunities.

NYC Media

As the City's official television, radio and online network, NYC Media has continued to produce

engaging and informative content that lets New Yorkers know about various services offered by the City of New York. NYC Media also shares valuable information to residents in times of emergency. Last fall, NYC Media carried all of the mayoral press conferences before, during and after Hurricane Sandy live to television via the Switch as well as to the new live feed technology and online. Following Hurricane Sandy, on NYC life (Channel 25) we showcased the re-opening of various small businesses affected by the storm in a series of videos and highlighted the re-opening of Rockaway Beach.

In terms of content airing on NYC Media, for the series “That’s So New York,” for example, we’ve spotlighted a range of topics that affect residents and business owners, like a new housing project in the South Bronx featuring a rooftop garden or the New Business Acceleration Team, which helps new businesses open faster and meet the City’s requirements. We’ve produced half hour specials about life-saving technology in City hospitals, emergency preparedness and the job help and online workshops provided by the Department of Small Business Services. In the most recent season of “\$9.99,” which highlights entertaining and educational activities to do throughout the five boroughs on a budget, we devoted an entire episode to local volunteering opportunities. We’ve produced PSAs about the 9/11 Victims Compensation Fund and how to help those in need after the hurricane. We’ve also created PSAs for the Department of Health, Human Resources Administration, Department of Environmental Protection and others, working with the agencies to get their message out to the public.

We also produced a PSA that focuses on the daily live feed of City Council meetings. As you know, since May of 2012, live coverage of City Council hearings has been available on New York City’s government television station, NYC gov, which is also available to non-cable subscribers, and online at council.nyc.gov. With live coverage from the City Council Chambers and the Council’s 250 Broadway committee rooms, New York City has become the largest municipality to carry live legislative hearings. This has been achieved through the close working relationship our agency has developed with the Council to make City government more accessible for New Yorkers. All together we provide over 4,000 hours of annual coverage each year.

NYC Digital

Since its creation in 2011, NYC Digital has made great strides in helping New York City achieve its goal of becoming the world’s leading digital city, following the initiatives laid out in the *Digital Roadmap* and driven by a vibrant technology industry, a strong social media presence, infrastructure improvements and historic investments in education.

Today, the total size of the City’s digital reach is 7.5 million, which includes monthly traffic to nyc.gov and the followers, subscribers and users of City-curated digital media channels. Since the release of the *Digital Roadmap* in May 2011, the City’s social media audience has more than tripled, growing from 1.2 million to a current peak of 3.7 million social media followers across 340 channels. Overall, the City’s digital reach has nearly doubled since the introduction of the *Roadmap*, increasing from 4 million in 2011 to 7.48 million in 2013, an increase of 85 percent. This means that more New Yorkers are able to engage directly with the City services and

agencies that they are most interested in, allowing them to have easy access to vital information that affects their daily lives.

The *Roadmap* itself outlines an array of digital initiatives that are now in place, including more access to the Internet for low-income New Yorkers; increased free Wi-Fi in public spaces; educational programs that promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics learning in City schools; NYC Open Data; and the promotion of the City's thriving tech industry. With the introduction of the newly re-designed NYC.gov later this year, all of the goals outlined in the original *Digital Roadmap* will have been achieved in less than two and a half years. In preparation of the release of the upcoming update to the *Digital Roadmap*, NYC Digital has also reached out to residents in the outer boroughs to hear firsthand how technology affects their lives, and that feedback will be incorporated into the next *Roadmap* update.

Recognizing that the City tech industry is growing and in an effort to attract new startups to the area and connect New Yorkers with new job opportunities, NYC Digital launched the We Are Made in NY initiative in February 2013. Included in this economic development initiative is a comprehensive website – wearemadeinny.com – that brings together all of the City's resources for entrepreneurs, lists opportunities for novices to learn coding and become part of the digital sector and hosts the Digital Jobs Map, an interactive map that currently includes more than 1,300 tech companies in New York City that are hiring. The We Are Made in NY initiative also included an advertising campaign that was seen in subways and on buses as well as in college newspapers of leading technology campuses, in an effort to recruit graduates to the City. The initiative also expanded the "Made in NY" logo, previously given to film and TV shows produced in the City, to those companies that base at least 75 percent or more of their development within the five boroughs.

In addition to helping the tech industry, we want to help small business owners grow their companies and attract new customers online by taking advantage of new digital tools. In August 2012, the Mayor, NYC Digital and the Department of Small Business Services launched the Small Business Digital Toolkit. This initiative offers small businesses free training and resources to digitally attract customers, conduct business online and market their products or services through the use of e-commerce technology. Small businesses have the opportunity to learn how to leverage social media more effectively, launch a website with how-to guides and incorporate search engine optimization and advertising techniques. The resources are also available online, along with a series of training videos created by NYC Media, so that they can be accessed at any time by small businesses.

That is a summary of some of our various initiatives and programs. The Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment looks after an important part of the City's economy with industries that are employing thousands of New Yorkers and creating new jobs and businesses every day. We have worked diligently to make New York City the place to film episodic television, develop a startup and create new content, and we look forward to the work ahead.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I am now to happy to address any questions you may have.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Name: JOHN BATTISTA

Address: 7697 BWAY NY, NY 10598

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