



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 8, 2016**

**Contact:**

MOME | Stephanie Browne, 212-974-4022; [stbrowne@media.nyc.gov](mailto:stbrowne@media.nyc.gov)

SBS | Nick Benson, 212-618-6778; [nbenson@sbs.nyc.gov](mailto:nbenson@sbs.nyc.gov)

WGA East | Jason Gordon, 212-767-7809; [jgordon@wgaeast.org](mailto:jgordon@wgaeast.org)

**CITY AGENCIES JOIN WITH WRITERS GUILD TO LAUNCH  
“MADE IN NY WRITERS ROOM” PROGRAM TO INCREASE  
DIVERSITY IN NEW YORK CITY’S TELEVISION WRITERS’ ROOMS**

*Intensive six-month fellowship will provide talented writers from diverse backgrounds with the tools they need to excel in NYC’s booming television industry*

*Creatives from hit shows including House of Cards, Empire, Billions and The Affair to serve as mentors to up-and-coming writers*

**New York**—The Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment (MOME), the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS) and the Writers Guild of America, East (WGAE) today announced the launch of the **Made in NY Writers Room**. This bold new initiative will establish a fellowship program to provide intensive support to writers of diverse backgrounds and perspectives in New York City, and amplify their voices in the entertainment industry. The program also aims to increase the number of television productions written in New York City, which has not kept pace with the record number of series now filmed in NYC. The Made in NY Writers Room will be available to New York City-based writers through a competitive application process, which opens for submissions on September 15, 2016.

“Increasing access to opportunities for people from all backgrounds in New York City’s thriving entertainment industry is one of our agency’s top priorities, and the Made in NY Writers Room program is an important initiative in furtherance of that goal,” said **MOME Commissioner Julie Menin**. “Recipients of this fellowship will receive unparalleled opportunities to learn first-hand from leaders in the entertainment world, and receive useful feedback on their works-in-progress. I look forward to seeing terrific results from this strong and groundbreaking partnership.”

“Every day, SBS is carrying out the Mayor’s plan to build a more vibrant and inclusive economy, by opening doors to economic opportunity for all New Yorkers,” said **Gregg Bishop, Commissioner of the Department of Small Business Services**. “The Made in NY Writers Room is an excellent example of how SBS partners with other City agencies and industry leaders to create programs that advance careers - and support a diverse, competitive workforce.”

“As a matter of social justice and industry self-interest, it is imperative that stories told on television-and its digital equivalent-reflect the diversity of audiences. The best way to do that is to have diverse voices

in writing rooms," said **Lowell Peterson, Executive Director of the Writers Guild of America, East**. "We are deeply pleased that WGAE showrunner members are committed to sharing their experience, their wisdom and their industry chops with the Made in NY Writers Room fellows. The six-month fellowships will give a dozen up-and-coming writers unparalleled insight in how to finalize production-ready scripts and how to bring them to fruition on the small screen."

Scripted television production is booming in New York City: a record-breaking 52 series were filmed here during the 2015-16 season, with surging growth in the industry driven by the proliferation of networks and platforms commissioning scripted content. While this unprecedented volume creates immense opportunities, the prospects for women, people of color, and those from underserved communities who are interested in writing for television are more limited. A recent study by the WGA West analyzing entertainment industry employment data through 2014 shows the share of television employment of minority writers was 13 percent, while women writers made up 29 percent of the workforce. Given these numbers, creating opportunities for writers of diverse backgrounds helps foster a more inclusive environment both on set and on camera and one that is more reflective of our diverse society.

To that end, the Made in NY Writers Room program will propel the careers of talented, high-achieving writers whose unique perspectives are currently under-represented in the television writing profession. Through a competitive application process, up to 12 applicants, applying either as an individual or a writing team of two, will participate in a six-month fellowship. Participants in the program will be assigned to a dedicated mentor, who is an established New York City-based showrunner. Confirmed mentors include **Sarah Treem** (*The Affair*), **Lee Daniels** (*Empire*), **Beau Willimon** (*House of Cards*), **Julie Klausner** (*Difficult People*), **Julie Martin** (*Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*), **Brian Koppelman** (*Billions*), **David Levien** (*Billions*) and **Richard LaGravenese** (*The Divide*). This mentorship will provide an unprecedented opportunity for writers to learn what it takes to succeed in the industry here in New York City, and to receive feedback on their works in progress. Participants will also receive additional professional development opportunities and industry feedback, with the goal of developing an original drama or comedy pilot ready for production at the end of the fellowship period.

"I'm grateful to Mayor de Blasio and his administration for supporting this program," said **Beau Willimon, Creator of Netflix original series *House of Cards***. "By offering mentorship to aspiring writers we can continue to grow the TV industry in New York and diversify the stories that we tell."

"As New York City continues to become a destination for entertainment, we must ensure that our homegrown writers and producers have the opportunities and resources they need to be successful in the television and movie industry," said **Public Advocate Letitia James**. "The Made in NY Writers Room will provide in-depth curriculum and experiences to New Yorkers from a wide variety of backgrounds that will enable them to thrive. We must support programs that will attract and maintain this type of talent to ensure New York continues to be a leader in this space."

"New York is a storied city, but it's New Yorkers who have the stories to tell," said **New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. "The Made in NY Writers Room is a vital step forward in diversifying the experiences we see reflected onscreen. I applaud the Writers Guild of America, East (WGAE) and the administration of Mayor de Blasio for collaborating on such a valuable mentorship program."

"Bringing diversity to television should always be paramount, especially in creative industries, as it provides for varying perspectives," said **Assemblyman Joseph R. Lentol**. "Luckily, my district is home to two of the greatest television studios in the world – Steiner Studios and Broadway Stages – so I

welcome the fellows of the Made in NY Writers Room to my district with open arms.”

"I'm glad that MOME, SBS, and WGAE are taking a proactive approach to increasing diversity in NYC's television industry. I'm optimistic that the Made in NY Writers Room program will have a significant impact in addressing issues of opportunity in the entertainment industry," said **Council Member James Vacca**, Chair of the New York City Committee on Technology.

“In order for the media industry to become more diverse, there needs to be roles written for actors and actresses from diverse backgrounds that are outside of the mold. The new “Made in NY Writers Room” initiative will empower writers and hopefully elevate scripts that will diversify this industry,” said **Council Member Ritchie Torres**.

“The shows that are written and shot in New York City are seen all over the world. When the television industry promotes diversity, it makes their content better and it has a positive, far-reaching influence on workplaces across the country. I thank the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment, the New York City Department of Small Business Services and the Writers Guild of America, East for strengthening a culture of diversity in our entertainment industry with this fellowship program,” said **Council Member Corey Johnson**.

“The Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce congratulates the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment and the New York City Department of Small Business Services for joining with the Writers Guild of America, East to establish the Made in NY Writers Room,” said **Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce President Lloyd Williams**. “We applaud the collective effort to provide increased opportunities to twelve writers of diverse backgrounds in New York City, and to promote strengthening their presence in the entertainment industry.”

The submission period for applications to the Made in NY Writers Room program will open on **September 15, 2016** and close at **11:59 p.m. ET on October 20, 2016**. No more than 500 applications will be reviewed for the fellowship, and the submission period will close at either the 500-application capacity or at the submission deadline, whichever occurs first.

The 6-month fellowship is expected to begin in June 2017 and continue through December 2017. Final dates will be dependent on various factors including mentor schedules.

**For more information on the Made in NY Writers Room, including program and eligibility guidelines, please visit:** <https://www.wgaeast.org/writersroom>

-30-

### **About the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment**

The Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment (MOME) is comprised of two divisions. The Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting encompasses film, television, radio, theatre, music, advertising, publishing, digital content and real estate as it relates to the creation of creative content. It serves as a one-stop shop for the entertainment industry. The Office promotes New York City as a thriving center of creativity, issuing permits for productions filming on public property, and facilitating production throughout the five boroughs. The Agency also oversees NYC Media, the City’s official broadcast network and media production group, which has a reach of over 18 million people and provides programming for six local cable stations, including award-winning programs on the popular NYC Life (channel 25), as well as one radio station. For more information, please visit:

<http://www1.nyc.gov/site/mome/index.page>

**About the NYC Department of Small Business Services**

The Department of Small Business Services (SBS) helps unlock economic potential and create economic security for all New Yorkers by connecting New Yorkers to good jobs, creating stronger businesses and building a fairer economy in neighborhoods across the five boroughs. For more information, please visit: [www.nyc.gov/sbs](http://www.nyc.gov/sbs)

**About the Writers Guild of America, East**

The Writers Guild of America, East, (WGAE) is a labor union of thousands of professionals who are the primary creators of what is seen or heard on television and film in the U.S., as well as the writers of a growing portion of original digital media content. Our members write everything from big budget movies to independent films, late night comedy/variety shows to daytime serials, broadcast and radio news, web series, documentaries, and animation. The WGAE works on their behalf to promote and protect the professional and artistic interests of this diverse community. On joining the Guild, writers from an extraordinarily vast range of backgrounds and abilities unite to promote, protect, and maintain important artistic and professional principles. The Guild's assistance is provided regardless of the writers' degree of success. For more information, please visit: [www.wgaeast.org](http://www.wgaeast.org)