



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 10, 2015

CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**DE BLASIO ADMINISTRATION AND USCIS ANNOUNCE NEW PARTNERSHIP TO ESTABLISH
“NEW AMERICANS CORNERS” AT LIBRARIES ACROSS THE CITY**

NEW YORK— Mayor Bill de Blasio and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services have joined forces to strengthen citizenship education and awareness efforts in the City of New York by establishing “New Americans Corners” in all 217 library branches of the Brooklyn, New York and Queens public libraries. The new partnership – which will provide recent immigrants with access to information and resources about citizenship, financial empowerment, and entrepreneurship – began today as part of a [signed letter of agreement](#) between Mayor de Blasio and USCIS Director León Rodríguez. Mayor de Blasio and the presidents of New York’s three public library systems have also signed a parallel agreement to help implement this work.

“These new, creative partnerships will spread our message far and wide that the City is on the side of new Americans, and we are ready to help immigrants who are eligible to achieve U.S. citizenship,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “We know that citizenship opens up opportunities – opportunities to vote, to get a better job, to feel more like a part of the community – and we want to support our immigrant friends and neighbors however we can.”

“USCIS is proud to collaborate with Mayor de Blasio and the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs in a meaningful community partnership to help permanent residents learn more about citizenship and the naturalization process,” said **USCIS Director León Rodríguez**. “The Statue of Liberty is one of our nation’s greatest symbols of welcome, while the public libraries are the city’s most welcoming resources. Now more than ever, New Yorkers can begin their journey to U.S. citizenship at their local libraries. It is fitting that we sign this agreement with the City so close to Ellis Island, and with its own rich history as a beacon for new Americans.”

“This new partnership with USCIS provides an opportunity for the City to strengthen its work with the public library systems and engage in strategic partnerships that will create new momentum for immigrants to achieve citizenship. We’re proud to work with an impressive alliance of public and private sector leaders to demonstrate the investment New York City is making in our nation’s future,” said **Commissioner of Immigrant Affairs Nisha Agarwal**.

“Providing access to citizenship is an important tool for economic empowerment. When we help legal permanent residents become citizens we help raise their chances of employment and their earning potential. We are proud to work with MOIA, USCIS, and the public libraries, as well as New American Workforce and Citi Community Development to provide help with citizenship both to New Yorkers in need and to our staff,” said **Commissioner of the Human Resources Administration Steven Banks**.

“The Department of Small Business Services has partnered with NYC’s libraries to help provide free business resources and information to immigrant entrepreneurs, who represent nearly half of New York City’s small business owners, and help create jobs and vibrant neighborhoods across the five boroughs,” said **Commissioner Maria Torres-Springer of the NYC Department of Small Business Services**. “Through the partnership between MOIA, USCIS and the libraries, immigrant entrepreneurs will now be able to access even more resources directly in their neighborhoods and at trusted institutions.”

“Libraries have long supported immigrants and new Americans, offering them a host of irreplaceable free services – such as citizenship and Speakers of Other Languages classes, job search help, materials in multiple languages, and more – in safe, welcoming environments,” said **New York Public Library President Tony Marx**. “We are proud to partner with the City and Federal government to offer New Americans Corners in every branch, perfectly complementing and enhancing our work for the good of the communities we serve.”

“Brooklyn Public Library offers free programs and resources – including ESOL classes, multilingual courses for aspiring entrepreneurs and legal guidance from our Immigrant Justice Corps fellows – to new Americans at every stage of the immigration process,” said **Brooklyn Public Library President and CEO Linda Johnson**. “Libraries are as essential to the modern immigrant experience as Ellis Island was to those who arrived in New York a century ago.”

“Queens Library has a long tradition of welcoming and serving our newest New Yorkers with education, job skills training and so much more. We are pleased to partner with Mayor de Blasio to make more citizenship information easily accessible in every neighborhood through public libraries,” said **Bridget Quinn-Carey, Interim President and CEO of the Queens Library**.

The City’s three public library systems and other city agencies have supported immigrants for many years; however, this initiative formally establishes “New Americans Corners” in all 217 library branches across all branches of the Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, and Queens Library systems. Library visitors will be able to access information and resources about citizenship, financial empowerment and entrepreneurship through these corners. The City’s new agreements with USCIS and the public library systems facilitate the flow of materials, training, and increased cooperation among the federal agency responsible for granting citizenship benefits, New York City, and the public libraries. The USCIS agreement will remain in effect until December 31, 2018.

As community centers that immigrants trust and turn to for information and assistance, New York City libraries have been important partners for the City on a range of initiatives to reach immigrants, including IDNYC, the City’s municipal identification program.

USCIS and the City of New York also plan to:

- Provide citizenship information through the City of New York and public library websites;
- Expand community partnerships to hold naturalization information sessions throughout the City of New York;
- Offer training on the naturalization process to library staff members; and
- Raise public awareness of immigration services scams.

The Human Resources Administration, the Department of Small Business Services, and the New York City business community have also joined the effort to provide support to New York immigrants. Last month, the Department of Small Business Services announced a partnership with the library systems to provide free business courses and resources to immigrant entrepreneurs in up to eight languages through 18 library locations.

Additionally, this week, the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs convened government and business leaders to launch the New American Workforce in New York City, a model for New York City employers to assist their immigrant employees attain U.S. citizenship. Led by the New American Workforce, an initiative of the National Immigration Forum, this model supports the full participation of immigrant employees in their workplace, community and economy. New American Workforce’s pilot program with the City’s Human Resources Administration has assisted hundreds of employees and clients on the path to citizenship.

Citizenship

There are approximately 650,000 to 750,000 immigrants in New York City who are lawful permanent residents but have not taken the final step of becoming U.S. citizens. Increasing immigrant access to citizenship is a powerful tool for fighting poverty and supporting the economic empowerment and civic integration of foreign-born New Yorkers.

The City's new agreements with USCIS and the public library systems follow substantial leadership and local investment in promoting citizenship among New Yorkers.

Through the NYCitizenship in Schools program, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and partners at CUNY Citizenship Now!, Urban Upbound, and the Office of Financial Empowerment, with funding from Citi Community Development, have assisted thousands of New Yorkers obtain legal assistance, financial counseling, and microloans so that they can successfully apply for and achieve U.S. citizenship.

In 2014, Mayor de Blasio, together with Mayor Rahm Emanuel of Chicago and Mayor Eric Garcetti of Los Angeles, launched Cities for Citizenship (C4C), a new national initiative to encourage cities across the country to invest in citizenship programs and increase naturalization rates. The effort has expanded to include 18 cities, as well as partners in labor and the private sector.

New York is USCIS' [fifth municipal partner](#), joining Los Angeles, Chicago, the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, and Atlanta. As the largest city in the United States, New York is home to immigrants from more than 190 countries. Since 2004, more than 1.1 million permanent residents have become U.S. citizens in the New York City metropolitan area.

“New York City is once again leading the nation by empowering immigrant communities that are a vital part of our City's economic engine. These historic partnerships will help hundreds of thousands of immigrants, families, and business owners access the citizenship services they need to fulfill the American dream,” said **Public Advocate Tish James**.

“Immigration is the foundation on which New York was built, and helping our city's immigrant population to become new Americans is smart, practical, and in the best traditions of our city,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “Cities can't pass immigration reform ourselves, but there's plenty we can do to empower immigrant communities, help new Americans, and lead the nation by example.”

“I'm proud that the Statue of Liberty stands tall in our city to welcome immigrants who have worked so hard to make America stronger and more beautiful. Opening doors for immigrants to become citizens is not only important to honoring our past, but also critical to the success of the present and future. I applaud Mayor de Blasio for taking action to ensure that New York City remains a place where everyone gets a fair chance to achieve the American Dream,” said **Congressman Charlie Rangel**.

“New York has always been a beacon of hope and opportunity for people around the world and I am proud to see our city continue to invest in programs that will help our immigrant communities thrive and fully integrate in our society as naturalized citizens,” said **Congressman Joe Crowley**. “In the absence of legislative action by Republicans in Congress, New York City remains steadfast in its commitment to the American promise and ready to welcome our brave immigrants seeking a better life. Helping immigrant New Yorkers take that important and final step to becoming Americans only makes us a stronger nation.”

“New York has always been a city of immigrants, coming to this country to work for a better life. Today as many as 750,000 of our 8.4 million neighbors are lawful permanent residents. To remain the culturally diverse, economically vibrant place that we are, we owe it to our city to encourage each of them to become full citizens. Everybody deserves a shot at the American dream – New Yorkers know that as well as anybody – and so I applaud Mayor de Blasio for his efforts to support our immigrant neighbors,” said **Congressman Elliot Engel**.

“Mayor de Blasio and all involved should be commended for having the courage to step up and help immigrants across New York City become American citizens. Unfortunately, Washington Republicans have stonewalled

our efforts to achieve comprehensive immigration reform on a national scale, but we are hopeful that our persistence in this fight will pay off for the millions of children and families who seek a better life in our great nation. In the meantime, this is an important first step in the right direction,” said **Congressman Hakeem Jeffries**.

“By helping immigrants on their pathway to citizenship, we can improve the lives of a generation of new Americans,” said **Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney**. “Congress has failed to fix our broken immigration system, forcing the country to rely on a patchwork of executive actions and local government initiatives to fill the void in leadership. I applaud Mayor de Blasio for taking another progressive step forward, which will enhance economic opportunities and civic engagement for immigrants.”

“The new partnership between New York City, USCIS and the public library systems is a great boost to helping immigrants become citizens,” said **Congresswoman Grace Meng**. “We need Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform in order to fix our broken immigration system. But with the legislation still hanging in limbo, the City has decided to move forward with this ambitious plan, and I applaud the Mayor for taking this bold step.”

“The American Dream belongs to everyone – regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or socioeconomic station,” said **Congressman Jerrold Nadler**. “If we believe in that dream, we cannot treat the opportunity to pursue it as a commodity that is in limited supply. We must support those who wish to come to our country, work hard, and make a positive contribution to society. I commend Mayor de Blasio for his leadership in working to make it easier for eligible immigrants to become citizens and I hope New York City will serve as a model for the rest of the country.”

“This unprecedented and innovative partnership will help thousands of foreign born New Yorkers who are already an integral part of our communities achieve full citizenship and access greater economic and civic opportunities. By joining efforts and facilitating resources to help immigrants attain citizenship and grow their businesses without having to go too far from home or work, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, New York City’s local government, and New York City business leaders will help thousands of new Americans be one step closer to achieving the American Dream. With this new effort, Mayor de Blasio has once again put New York City at the forefront of efforts to address our nation’s broken immigration system at the local level,” said **Congressman José E. Serrano**.

“I commend Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Agarwal for providing our immigrant community with the resources they need to navigate the naturalization process,” said **State Senator Gustavo Rivera**. “Immigrants play a vital role in our society and giving them the opportunity to fully participate in the social, civic and economic health of our city will only make us stronger.”

“I commend Mayor Bill de Blasio and Commissioner Agarwal on this innovative approach to encouraging citizenship and economic empowerment for immigrants,” said **Assemblyman Francisco Moya**. “We must use every tool in our tool belt to help our newest New Yorkers become citizens who are fully integrated into American life. As a lawmaker who represents a large immigrant population, I can tell you that attaining citizenship is not only a point of pride for many immigrants, it’s also a stepping stone to the middle class. Using libraries as a portal to naturalization services and assistance with financial literacy is a smart and practical way to help immigrants achieve the American dream.”

“I want to thank Mayor de Blasio and our public libraries for being a champion on expanding services for immigrants. Our local branches in Lower Manhattan have some of the highest visitorship rates in the city – and many of their tens of thousands of visitors are immigrants, looking to access services and programming. In the 21st century, our libraries are still the front door for access to civic participation and services,” said **Council Member Margaret Chin**.

“The City of New York, known for its unique and vibrant culture, is home to millions of foreign-born residents who have immigrated to the United States in search of new opportunities for their families. As a Member of the

New York City Council, with one of the most culturally diverse districts in Brooklyn, I applaud the leadership of the de Blasio Administration to sustain our city's economy and workforce by engaging and empowering our immigrant population. The newfound partnerships between government agencies will enable thousands more foreign-born New Yorkers to successfully navigate the path towards United States citizenship and become full participants of our city and state," said **Council Member Laurie A. Cumbo**.

"New York has become a national leader with the successful rollout of our nation's largest Municipal ID program. Today we take another step forward by expanding public services for individuals applying to be citizens. In my District Office alone we receive hundreds of cases a year and my district is not unique in this instance. This morning it is clearer than ever that while Washington, stalled by partisanship fails to act, our nations city's lead the charge," said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez**.

###