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**MAYOR'S OFFICE ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH CITY LIBRARIES TO DEVELOP
"NYCITIZENSHIP" INITIATIVE, KICKS OFF WEEK OF EVENTS TO HELP NEW YORKERS
BECOME CITIZENS**

*Event launches alongside nationwide campaign to improve citizenship rates through Cities United for
Immigration Action and Cities for Citizenship*

Approximately 700,000 immigrant New Yorkers are one step away from citizenship

NEW YORK—Mayor de Blasio today announced a new initiative with the City's library system to develop NYCitizenship, a public-private partnership that will install comprehensive citizenship assistance services at library branches citywide to increase naturalization rates. The NYCitizenship announcement comes alongside a nationwide campaign in support of immigration integration initiatives and naturalization efforts, led by the nearly 100 members of Cities United for Immigration (CUIA) in partnership with the White House, Cities for Citizenship and a number of other national organizations.

"Citizenship is a vital piece of our citywide strategy to promote economic opportunity and equity – and cities are central to protecting and promoting the inclusion and diversity that make our country so great," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "Citizenship is linked to increased wages, higher rates of homeownership, and other important factors in helping people unlock vital civic and economic opportunity. We're proud to stand with cities and other leaders nationwide in expanding opportunity to citizenship for those who have long been hardworking, productive members of our country."

"Barriers such as lack of information or access to quality, affordable legal services prevent immigrants from taking the final step to become a citizen – we can change that," said **Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Nisha Agarwal**. "By providing New Yorkers access to citizenship information and legal support at places they already frequent, such as our City's public libraries, we can work to ensure more city residents are able to access the benefits and privileges they're entitled to as citizens."

"The NYCitizenship Initiative will help forge a clear path to citizenship – a journey that can be daunting and complex for so many New Yorkers. By providing thorough information, legal assistance and help with application procedures, we can ensure that more individuals navigate this process successfully and enjoy the stability and opportunities that come with U.S. citizenship. I thank the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and our City's libraries for partnering together in this effort to increase meaningful civic participation," said **New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**.

Through NYCitizenship, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs will work with the City's libraries to provide free, comprehensive information on applying for citizenship as well as legal assistance in completing applications. The program also integrates financial education to help new citizens on their path to financial sustainability. Mayor de Blasio made the announcement as part of a naturalization ceremony for 100 New Yorkers hosted by City Hall in celebration of Citizenship Day.

Mayor Bill de Blasio also kicked off the City's first-ever Citizenship Week of Action to encourage more New Yorkers to become U.S. citizens through citywide outreach, information sessions and legal clinics. The events will be held in collaboration with faith, labor, and community organizations starting today through September 22, culminating on National Voter Registration Day. Over 150 volunteers will engage with immigrant community members where they live, work and worship to assist over 500 applicants. The list of events can be found at nyc.gov/nycitizenship

Expanding on the recently-created New American Corners in City libraries, a partnership with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (US-CIS) to provide recent immigrants with access to information and resources about citizenship and entrepreneurship, the City is working to further its assistance to permanent legal residents in order to encourage them to apply for citizenship by providing legal services.

Approximately 700,000 immigrant New Yorkers are one step away from citizenship. Half of them are low-income, and increasing access to citizenship services is a powerful tool for promoting economic stability. Achieving citizenship can improve earning potential, increase social and economic mobility, open access to voting, and protect against deportation. As individuals achieve economic security and build more stable families, our city and our communities benefit. Positive outcomes include increased tax revenue, less reliance on emergency assistance programs, and an increase in civic participation.

"Immigrants from all over the world turn to New York City's libraries for free programs and resources to help them through every stage of the immigration process and beyond," said **Brooklyn Public Library President and CEO Linda Johnson**. "We encourage new Americans to visit their local branches for help in achieving United States citizenship, starting businesses, navigating the legal system and participating fully in the life of their city."

"Queens Library has successfully partnered with the Mayor's office to support immigrant-serving initiatives by offering IDNYC enrollment, New Americans corners, and more. As we welcome six-day service to every library, new Americans will have increased access to the full spectrum of library services. We look forward to increasing our value to immigrants through more robust services that will help them along the path toward citizenship," said **Bridget Quinn-Carey, Interim President and CEO, Queens Library**

"The New York Public Library is proud to welcome 100 new American citizens today, and encourage them to visit their local branches to utilize a host of free resources and services, including New Americans Corners, a partnership with the city to provide information on citizenship and other related topics," said **New York Public Library President Tony Marx**. "Libraries are trusted spaces for all New Yorkers, and we are pleased to partner with the City on initiatives that highlight their importance, and expand their already numerous program offerings."

The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs' leadership on increasing naturalization rates is a multi-sector collaboration involving federal partners, including: City agencies; libraries; business, labor, faith, and community-based organizations; legal service providers; private foundations like the Citi Community Development and Carnegie Corporation of New York; and the White House.

Citizenship Week of Action

Additionally, in collaboration with faith, labor, and community organizations, starting today and through September 22nd, over 150 volunteers will engage with immigrant community members where they live, work and worship during the Citizenship Week of Action. The list of events can be found at nyc.gov/nycitizenship

Community members who reflect the diversity of New York City will activate their personal and social networks to distribute information in multiple languages at over 100 events throughout the city in order to inform residents about the benefits of citizenship and equip their neighbors with the information necessary to access safe legal services. Volunteers will be present at worksites, houses of worship, transit hubs, community events, and schools. This approach is critical, as many legal permanent residents are unaware that they are

eligible and require additional information to dispel misinformation, and learn about trusted resources that are available. By reaching potential applicants through religious leaders, unions, community leaders, and other trusted groups, the likelihood that eligible residents will activate this benefit is increased.

NYC Joins National Efforts

The NYCitizenship initiative launches alongside nationwide efforts to improve citizenship rates. Cities United for Immigration Action is partnering with the White House, National Partnership for New Americans, Cities for Citizenship, New Americans Campaign, Welcoming America, and other national organizations to highlight efforts to promote citizenship and civic engagement.

Through Cities for Citizenship and Cities United for Immigration Action, 16 municipalities across the country will be hosting events related to Citizenship Day, featuring their mayors. Additionally, the White House will simultaneously announce its new citizenship campaign, which emerged out of the President's Executive Action announcement. For more information on immigration action in cities across the nation, visit citiesforaction.us.

“Increasing access to citizenship will allow thousands of legal residents in New York City to prosper. This program will not only support men and women in their journey to citizenship, it will also open a door to more economic and academic opportunities. I am proud to see our City continuing its legacy of support for our immigrant brothers and sisters,” said **Public Advocate Letitia James**.

“Immigration is the foundation on which New York was built, and the NYCitizenship initiative the mayor is announcing today 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 and ease naturalization.”

“Immigrants play a vital role in our society and establishing a direct path for them to attain citizenship will increase their participation in the social, civic and economic health of our city,” said **State Senator Gustavo Rivera**. “I commend Mayor de Blasio for providing our immigrant community with vital resources and information to more effectively navigate the naturalization process.”

“I commend the Mayor for his effort to provide comprehensive citizenship assistance services at library branches to increase naturalization rates. This will be a great asset in Sunset Park, Bay Ridge and other parts of my diverse multi-ethnic Brooklyn district. We must do all we can to help our newest residents become citizens and participate in all that this great nation provides,” said **Assembly Assistant Speaker Felix W. Ortiz**.

“NYCitizenship is an innovative program that will be a rich resource to those 700,000 New Yorkers who are one step away from citizenship,” said **Assembly Member Rodneye Bichotte**. “It is a great way to leverage our libraries and make these services available to all that would want to access them. And because the city is pairing residents with free and credible legal services, it ensures a layer of protection so that this already vulnerable population is not being defrauded.”

“Once again Mayor Bill De Blasio has demonstrated his consistent leadership and support of New Yorkers who are a vital part of the growth and future of the City of New York and the Nation. The NYCitizenship initiative is an impactful and innovative way to promote and facilitate access to citizenship and other services for so many eligible immigrant New Yorkers. Our City libraries are a natural partner in this effort given their presence and array of services offered to our community residents,” **Assembly Member Marcos A. Crespo**.

“Most new immigrants want nothing more than to become new Americans and this new initiative will help make that dream a reality for more New Yorkers,” said **Assembly Member Francisco Moya**. “As a lawmaker who represents the most diverse district in the country, an area that is rich with immigrants, I can affirm that additional citizenship resources are sorely needed. I commend Mayor Bill de Blasio for championing the needs of immigrants and taking an innovative approach to encouraging citizenship.”

“The process to become a United State citizen can be a long and convoluted procedure, especially for those who may not have access to helpful resources to clarify the application process. I commend Mayor de Blasio for his efforts to bring this important information and legal assistance to those who may be unaware of the help available to them, particularly by working with libraries, which are often an important resource for immigrants to access computers and books. I look forward to seeing this program implemented and to sharing this information with my constituents,” said **Assembly Member Luis R. Sepúlveda**.

“The success of our immigrant communities depends heavily on the commitment of government to meet them where they are – to help them navigate the complex legal systems that are connected to our immigration policies. In New York City, government is ensuring that immigrants of all walks of life are able to access services that are relevant and in their communities. The partnership of immigration service providers and the NYC library systems represents a joining of forces that will undoubtedly prove to be useful for those 700,000 New Yorkers who are just steps away from citizenship. I applaud the de Blasio administration on this important step forward,” said **Council Member Carlos Menchaca, Chair of the Committee on Immigration**.

“This initiative will be an important part of our continuing efforts to get more of our city’s immigrants on the path to citizenship that will allow them to fully participate in our city, state, and country’s future. New Americans provide much of the cultural vibrancy and economic vitality of our city. I applaud Mayor de Blasio for standing up for immigrants by developing these vital and comprehensive citizenship services,” said **Council Member Margaret Chin**.

“New York City is a vibrant place filled with culture and character and we are incredibly lucky that people from all across the world want to build their lives here. All hard-working families and individuals who have chosen to make this city their home deserve to have the opportunity to become citizens—and many of our New Yorkers are very close to receiving citizenship. NYCitizenship is a crucial initiative that will make it easier for our neighbors to have access to beneficial resources that will help them complete their citizenship journey. We all know applying for citizenship is a complex process and I commend Mayor Bill de Blasio, the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, and our city’s library system for creating a vital program that will help hundreds of thousands of people,” said **Council Member Mathieu Eugene**.

“At my district office, my staff puts hundreds of hours into helping individuals navigate our country’s convoluted immigration system. Not only will this initiative give an extra resource for us to provide services, but will give the tools to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who might not live in a district with immigration help. I could not be more proud of Mayor de Blasio, this Administration as well as Speaker Mark Viverito and this Council for our collective action on immigration,” said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez**.

“Faith in New York joins with those celebrating Citizenship Day on September 17. Faith in New York Clergy, DREAMers, and immigrant and non-immigrant community leaders are fighting for humane immigration reform that includes a pathway to citizenship with a fair timeline, citizenship for all 11 million immigrants, and family unity,” said **Onleilove Alston, M.Div., MSW Executive Director of Faith in New York**.

“Taking the time and making the effort to become a citizen of the United States of America has always been a rewarding step for new Americans. But Citizenship Week 2015 reminds us that now may be the most important time in US history for eligible immigrants from all around the world to make their voices heard as citizens. It is part of what we must do today to make the American Dream real for the next generation,” said **Bill Granfield, President of UNITEHERE Local 100**.

“Increasing the number of Americans who contribute fully to the City of New York’s economy and political system helps us all thrive,” said **Arturo Vargas, Executive Director of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund**. “We are proud to partner with the Mayor’s office and leading organizations throughout the month of September in the effort to help increase the number of registered voters and eligible legal permanent residents who are able to successfully complete the naturalization process in the nation’s largest city.”

“The Coalition is proud to partner with New York City to assist immigrant New Yorkers in their path to becoming New Americans,” said **Steven Choi, executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition**. “Facilitating easy and accessible means to naturalize is critical to empowering immigrant communities; and this year the City's 'Citizenship Day' will work to keep our communities engaged and informed. With 100,000 New Americans naturalizing in New York each year, we aim to ensure that even more will be able to do so.”

“Completing the naturalization process is a huge feat for an immigrant. Being an American citizen only begins at naturalization process; our next step is registering new citizens to vote, especially when our nation's immigration laws are under heavy debate,” said **Grace Shim, Executive Director of the MinKwon Center for Community Action**.

“Whether you are born here, naturalized or are currently seeking citizenship, our diverse histories find common ground in the pride we feel about being American citizens. Despite all the vitriolic rhetoric regarding eliminating birthright citizenship in the U.S., National Citizenship Day offers an opportunity to highlight the great privileges and responsibilities that come with this cherished right and reinforces why we all must oppose efforts aimed at damaging what makes this country special. As important, National Voter Registration Day is a natural extension of this principle. Hispanic Federation will continue to mobilize to ensure all who are eligible are registered to vote, while also opposing existing and any future efforts that make it harder to register or vote at the polls,” said **Jose Calderón, President of Hispanic Federation**.

“The power of our communities grows every day as immigrants embrace the opportunity to become citizens. These new Americans are taking this inspiring and critical step because they cherish the opportunity to fully participate in our democracy and embrace the full rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Meanwhile, immigrant community organizations will keep encouraging the more than 8 million lawful permanent residents who are eligible to join their fellow new Americans and become citizens. As the ranks of new citizens grow, immigrant communities will continue to elevate their voice throughout our democracy as we work to build a more just and inclusive society,” said **Javier Valdes, Co-Executive Director, Make the Road New York**.

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