



Indian Diaspora Council

Shared heritage, aspirations and interests

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IDC Supports Proposal to help eligible New Yorkers become US citizens

The Indian Diaspora Council (IDC) is pleased to endorse the proposal to help eligible New Yorkers become US citizens. IDC is a signator to the May 30, 2017 appeal by NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer to NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to assist "thousands of eligible immigrant New Yorkers from applying for citizenship" due to "skyrocketing application fees".

Excerpt from the letter:

"There are as many as 670,000 immigrants in New York City who are eligible to become citizens but have not applied to do so, in part because of the high costs associated with doing so. One of those costs is a \$725 fee that the Federal government charges to file an application for citizenship, a fee which has risen over 500 percent since 1989. In a city as expensive as ours, when combined with the additional costs associated with legal services and English classes, this fee can deter many immigrants from naturalizing.

"To address this challenge, we recommend that the City create a public-private program that would cover the full \$725 application fee for immigrants with household income between 150 and 300 percent of poverty, or incomes of less than \$61,260 per year for a family of three. With a modest investment of \$20 million, the City could cover the full \$725 application cost for about 35,000 immigrants. And, even more of our fellow New Yorkers could benefit if the program were structured as a public-private partnership that could leverage charitable funds for this purpose."

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Indian Diaspora Council

Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC), established in 1997, is an international non-profit organization with global affiliates and membership in 21 countries with the objective to embrace, engage and enhance the shared heritage, aspirations and interests of persons of Indian origin with optimum inclusivity.



NEW YORK CITY COMPTROLLER
SCOTT M. STRINGER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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80 Immigrants' Rights Organizations, Community Leaders, and Advocates Urge the City to Implement Comptroller Stringer's "Citizenship Fund" Proposal

Support grows for proposal to help eligible New Yorkers become U.S. Citizens

(New York, NY) — As President Trump ratchets up his rhetoric on immigration and aggressively pursues new deportation efforts, 80 immigrants' rights organizations, community leaders, and advocates from across the five boroughs are calling on the City to embrace Comptroller Scott Stringer's proposal to create The NYC Citizenship Fund. Unveiled earlier this month and modeled on successful public-private partnerships, the new fund would help cover the skyrocketing cost of the Federal citizenship application, allowing more New Yorkers to secure the rights and privileges of citizenship. A modest investment of City dollars could leverage private donations, allowing the City to eliminate soaring application fees for tens of thousands of eligible immigrant New Yorkers who need financial support.

In a letter sent to Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Commissioner Nisha Agarwal, Comptroller Stringer, immigrants' rights organizations, leaders, and advocates outline how skyrocketing application fees have kept thousands of eligible immigrant New Yorkers from applying for citizenship. Together, the signatories represent millions of immigrant New Yorkers from all cultures and backgrounds.

"No one should have to choose between becoming a U.S. citizen and putting food on the table. While Washington tries to put up walls, we have to tear down these financial barriers in New York. That's why so many organizations across the city are now speaking out," Comptroller Stringer said. "Since President Trump's Inauguration, families across the five boroughs have been holding their breath, hoping and praying they won't be split apart. New Yorkers are deeply fearful that a stroke of a pen in the Oval Office will forever change their lives. If we want to fight back against this White House, if we want to stand up for our neighbors, this is a common-sense way to do it. This new fund can be reality, and we're thrilled and thankful to see so many advocates, organizations, and community leaders standing behind it."

Since 1989, the base cost to file a citizenship application with the federal government has climbed 500%, reaching \$725. Combined with additional expenses like legal representation, English classes and more, becoming a U.S. citizen can cost thousands of dollars, making the already onerous fee a clear financial barrier to citizenship for many New Yorkers.

Comptroller Stringer's proposal calls for a new fund to mitigate those costs for New Yorkers with incomes between 150% and 300% of the poverty line, or roughly \$61,000 for a family of three (federal waivers are already available for those making less than 150% of the poverty line). The Comptroller's Office estimates 180,000 immigrant New Yorkers would be eligible, and with an initial investment of \$20 million, the application could be subsidized for 35,000 New Yorkers at that income level. The Fund would accept donations from private individuals, giving every New Yorker a way to support their immigrant neighbors, colleagues, and friends.
