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**MAYOR BLOOMBERG, IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER FATIMA SHAMA
AND SCHOOLS CHANCELLOR DENNIS WALCOTT ANNOUNCE EXPANSION OF
NYCITIZENSHIP TO NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*NYCitizenship in Schools will Help Eligible Parents of Students in New York City Public Schools
Apply for U.S. Citizenship*

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Immigrant Affairs Commissioner Fatima Shama and Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott today announced the expansion of the NYCitizenship program to the New York City public school system. NYCitizenship was launched by Mayor Bloomberg in October 2011 to help City employees and their families apply for citizenship. NYCitizenship in Schools will provide free immigration information, assistance and financing options to eligible parents of students in the city's public schools who are lawful permanent residents and seeking to begin the application process to become U.S. citizens. Mayor Bloomberg made the announcement during Citizenship Week which commemorates Constitution Day or Citizenship Day, a federal observance on September 17 recognizing the adoption of the U.S. Constitution and those who have become U.S. citizens. The Mayor was also joined by CUNY Senior Vice Chancellor Jay Hershenson, CUNY Citizenship Now Director Allan Wernick and Citi's Global Director of Microfinance and Community Development Robert Annibale.

"Our Administration is determined to help ensure that all immigrants who want to become citizens have that opportunity," said Mayor Bloomberg. "The enterprise and hard work of immigrants helped make our country great. They create jobs and invest in our City, so we will continue to invest in them by working even harder to help those who are here and are determined to work hard, have the opportunity to stay and help us build a better city and nation."

"New York City is a city of great immigrant success, and NYCitizenship in Schools furthers that proud tradition," said Deputy Mayor for Legal Affairs Carol Robles-Román. "In collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Department of Education and their partners, this program provides guidance for those New Yorkers already eligible for citizenship whose only barrier to becoming citizens may be a lack of information or resources."

"Citizenship is an important step to fully integrating into the civic, social and economic fabric of our City and our country," said Fatima Shama, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of

(more)

Immigrant Affairs. “NYCitizenship in Schools will ensure that eligible immigrant parents are able to take full advantage of the civic and economic benefits of citizenship.”

“Our 1.1 million students, and their families come from every nation on earth, speaking over 180 different languages, creating the most globally-diverse school system in the nation, if not the world,” said Dennis Walcott, New York City Schools Chancellor. “NYCitizenship will build on our efforts to make immigrant families feel welcome in their school communities, and help them achieve their dream of becoming U.S. citizens.”

Nearly 30,000 parents with children in New York City public high schools are eligible to become citizens. Yet barriers, such as lack of access to quality legal assistance and the high cost of the application fee, may prevent them from applying for naturalization. NYCitizenship in Schools is a school-based initiative that will bring legal assistance and information to participating schools in the five boroughs through a series of information sessions and service events. Through the 2012-2013 school year, eligible parents will have access to free legal information from experienced volunteer attorneys, secured through the assistance of NYC Service and CUNY Citizenship Now!, to guide them through the application process. Additionally, for those unable to pay the \$680 application fee, fee waivers and information about access to micro loans and financial counseling will be available to help with the cost of the naturalization application.

NYCitizenship in Schools is a coordinated effort between the New York City Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, NYC Department of Education, CUNY Citizenship Now!, NYC Department of Consumer Affairs’ Office of Financial Empowerment, the East River Development Alliance Credit Union and Neighborhood Trust Financial Credit Union. NYCitizenship in Schools is supported by a grant from Citi Community Development made to the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City. The Mayor's Fund is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to innovative public partnerships and programs such as NYCitizenship in Schools.

“Through our support for NYCitizenship in Schools, Citi is committed to working with community and public partners to assist eligible, aspiring citizens in establishing both a national identity and a financial identity, which is essential to fully realizing their American dream,” said Bob Annibale, Citi Global Director of Community Development and Microfinance. “Programs like NYCitizenship in Schools provide access to legal advice and financial resources that can lead to expanded education, employment and asset-building opportunities. Citi Community Development’s financial inclusion efforts aim to ensure that all families have access to appropriate financial services so they can achieve their long-term financial goals.”

“CUNY is very pleased to partner with the Mayor's Office and Immigrant Affairs and the NYC Department of Education to help immigrant parents successfully navigate the maze of citizenship laws and regulations,” said CUNY Senior Vice Chancellor Jay Hershenson. “Our Citizenship Now project will provide expertise and manpower to assure that applications are completed accurately. The realization of the American Dream is within reach when we lend a helping hand to newcomers and their families.”

“ERDA is thrilled to be part of this innovative partnership to ensure New Yorkers can become US citizens,” said East River Development Alliance President Bishop Mitchell Taylor.

“ERDA -- through our individual financial counseling services and credit union -- will ensure participants both have access to the needed financing and money management skills to managing the financing and achieve their financial goals. We look forward to working with such a great array of program partners to help these New Yorkers realize their dreams of becoming citizens.”

“DCA’s Office of Financial Empowerment is a proud partner in the NYCitizenship in Schools program and the City’s financial empowerment counselors are ready to provide support through the process,” said DCA Commissioner Jonathan Mintz. “This new innovative loan, coupled with financial education, will go a long way towards helping families who do not have enough savings to cover the high cost of citizenship application to take advantage of this opportunity and embark on that journey.”

“Supporting NYCitizenship in Schools is a clear way for New Yorkers to use their legal skills and knowledge to make a measurable impact on our City by helping their neighbors seeking citizenship,” said Chief Service Officer Diahann Billings-Burford. “With the help of volunteer lawyers, paralegals, and law students, we will support individuals in their application for U.S. citizenship, as well as offer other important information and we believe that these steps are important to their success and the success of New York City.”

The first NYCitizenship in Schools service event will be held at the Morris Educational Campus (formerly Morris High School), built in 1897 and the first high school built in the Bronx. The school is named after one of the Founding Fathers of the United States and famous Bronx landowner Gouverneur Morris. He is credited as the author of the Preamble to the United States Constitution. School alumni include comedian Milton Berle, Queens Borough President Helen Marshall, and the former Secretary of State of the United States, Colin Powell.

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