

NYC Opportunity Backed NYCitizenship Expansion

Matthew Klein's Remarks, Executive Director of the Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity

The Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity is excited to be a partner in the New York Citizenship initiative. These days, anyone who cares about immigrants and economic opportunity is concerned about what is occurring at the federal level. With the uncertainty there, programs like NYCitizenship – which offer New Yorkers inclusion and security – are more important than ever. Immigrants are at the heart of New York City, and we are committed to protecting them to their economic advancement.

Our office works with City colleagues to use evidence and innovation to reduce poverty and increase equity. We do this in part by using a dedicated Innovation Fund to support early, promising practices and helping to assess their impact.

We are proud that our Innovation Fund has provided the first public funding for NYCitizenship to help build on the successful work that has been done so far through the philanthropic partnerships.

Our office's annual poverty report has documented the economic status of immigrants in NYC, including elevated poverty rates among some groups. And we know that obtaining citizenship can be a powerful factor in moving out of poverty. Our research shows that naturalized citizens are less likely to live in poverty than those who are not citizens. And the Urban Institute reported that naturalization increases the earnings of those eligible to naturalize by 8.9%. With the support from HRA, the focus on identifying older New Yorkers who can become eligible for important federal benefits will also help strengthen our seniors' economic security.

As with all of the initiatives that our office funds, we closely monitor the performance in order to document what works and inform future growth. We will be learning more about the economic benefits of citizenship for immigrants, their families, and their communities, and how citizenship relates to civic life.

New York City was built by immigrants, and being open and inclusive has long been one of our core values. Now more than ever, we must do everything we can, as a municipality, to facilitate a path to citizenship – and to help people who come here from across the world have the full rights available in this country and this city.