



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Jamie Richardson
Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA)
Email: jamie.richardson@sfgov.org
Phone: 415-531-8034

SF CELEBRATES OVER 10,000 NEW CITIZENS, URGES IMMIGRANTS TO NATURALIZE NOW

SAN FRANCISCO – As the nation celebrates Citizenship Day on September 17, San Francisco encourages eligible green card holders to take advantage of the free resources available to apply for citizenship. The benefits are clear: Studies show that naturalized citizens earn 8 to 11 percent more than green card holders.

On Saturday, October 2, 2021, San Francisco’s Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) and the San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative are hosting a free in-person workshop with COVID-19 safety precautions, in order to help people apply for citizenship and access fee assistance.

“Since the inception of SF Pathways to Citizenship Initiative in 2013, we have been celebrating National Citizenship Day every year,” said Anni Chung, president and CEO of Self-Help for the Elderly, the Initiative’s lead organization. “This year is especially important for our community to pause and reflect on the significance of this special project which has helped well over 10,000 lawful permanent residents become U.S. citizens.”

“I am a most grateful beneficiary of the San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative and am now proudly a fellow citizen,” said Jeremy Lane, a 66-year-old Bernal Heights resident originally from the United Kingdom. “Despite calling [San Francisco] home for over 40 years, I’d not seriously considered becoming a citizen. It was only when, as a food stamp recipient, I received a flyer from SFPCI that I took real notice... I am now a citizen eagerly awaiting my opportunity to vote.”

“We are so pleased to support this opportunity for immigrants to exercise their freedoms and rights to participate in meaningful ways. All eligible immigrants are encouraged to apply for citizenship and access the free services at SF Pathways to Citizenship workshops,” said Adrienne Pon, executive director of the Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) and the San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission. “Together with our community, philanthropic and City partners, we hope that new immigrant citizens can fully engage in our nation’s democracy and exercise their right to vote, serve on juries, run for public office and continue contributing to making America a welcoming, diverse and good place for all people.”

Funded by the City and local foundation partners, the San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative has held 50 free workshops across the city, provided legal screenings to over 15,500 immigrants, and saved applicants a total of nearly \$4.7 million in application fees. In 2017, the Initiative launched its Lawyers in the Library partnership with the San Francisco Public Library to help applicants apply for citizenship through computer-based workshops. In 2018, it partnered with the San Francisco International Airport to allow employees and their families to apply for citizenship at the airport. During the pandemic, the collaborative pivoted to a virtual workshop model, serving over 400 people through online workshops.

Applicants in San Francisco can get help covering the cost of the application through the City's continued partnership with local non-profit organization Mission Asset Fund. The City of San Francisco provides a 50% match through Mission Asset Fund, for applicants who live, work, or attend school in San Francisco. Applicants can use the 50% match to pay the filing fee for naturalization or other immigration benefits including Temporary Protected Status (TPS), U visas for crime victims, family petitions, or renewal of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

Applicants who are not available to attend the workshop can make an individual appointment with a partner organization at sfcitizenship.org, or leave a message on one of their multilingual hotlines:

- English: 415-662-8901
- Spanish: 415-662-8902
- Chinese: 415-295-5894
- Filipino: 415-692-6798
- Vietnamese: 415-644-8392
- Russian: 415-754-3818

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About the San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative

The San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative was established in 2013 by the late Mayor Edwin M. Lee as a public-private partnership between local foundations and the City and County of San Francisco's Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) to promote citizenship and civic participation among San Francisco's naturalization-eligible immigrants.

Connect with The San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative:



www.sfcitizenship.org

About the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA)

The Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) is a policy, compliance, direct services and grantmaking office. OCEIA's mission is to promote inclusive policies and foster immigrant assistance programs that lead to full civic, economic and linguistic integration. OCEIA seeks a safe, engaged and inclusive San Francisco where everyone can contribute and thrive.

Connect with OCEIA:



www.sfgov.org/oceia