



**Remarks of Mayor Martin J. Walsh  
U.S. Conference of Mayors, Task Force on Immigration Reform  
June 22, 2015**

*As prepared for delivery*

Boston has always been a city of immigrants. Today, over 27% of our residents are foreign born. And nearly 50% of our kids have a foreign-born parent. Immigrants are our neighbors, co-workers, and classmates. They want to thrive and raise healthy families. They contribute immensely to our city and country, and they want to contribute more.

I know because I grew up in one of those families. My parents came to Boston from Ireland. I grew up and still live in a diverse neighborhood with people who came from all over the world looking for a better life.

What has been true for my family is true for every family: citizenship bonds immigrants to our communities and our nation. It creates a sense of belonging and a sense of investment.

I speak at naturalization ceremonies and I can tell you, the feelings of gratitude and love for the U.S. are overwhelming. New Americans leave those ceremonies committed to being positive, productive citizens. And the data shows that's exactly what they do.

Citizenship is good for immigrants, it's good for our cities, and it's good for our country. So it's something we must work to support and encourage. In Boston, we've held Citizenship Day at five community centers, helping hundreds of people begin their applications. We have held naturalization ceremonies right at City Hall.

Our Office of New Bostonians coordinates policy, outreach, and engagement with immigrants under **Alejandra St. Guillen**. It's an innovative office that thrives on community partnerships, public-private initiatives, and a wide variety of engagement strategies. It is developing the City of Boston's first Immigrant Integration Plan to ensure access to City services.

This month we signed a Letter of Agreement with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services on education and awareness. It will support "citizenship corners" in our neighborhood libraries.

We also support President Obama's executive actions on immigration, known as DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and DAPA (Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents). They aim to address our broken immigration system and give hard-working immigrants a chance to contribute without fear.

While these actions are held up in the courts, we are helping get people ready to apply. We reached hundreds of people in just the first event. Even those who are not eligible get access to other benefits.

In the end, DAPA and DACA are temporary fixes. We need federal legislative reform that will create pathways to citizenship. For our cities and our country, they are pathways to stronger communities and a stronger economy.