





#### UNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY

### PROJECT CITIZENSHIP

ANNUAL REPORT 2020





Immigrants are ambassadors for American values. We value the strength immigrants bring to the economic, social, and civic fabric of our great nation.

## LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & BOARD CHAIR



Dear friends, donors, volunteers, partners, and nonprofit neighbors of Project Citizenship:

What a year! We began 2020 knowing we faced hostility towards immigrants from the presidential administration, but little did we know everything would be soon upended by the pandemic, multiplying our challenges.

## In spite of this, Project Citizenship came through stronger and more resilient than ever.

Our small, dedicated staff swiftly shifted our traditional in-person workshops to a virtual workshop model to ensure our clients access to service. This required not only a massive overhaul to our processes but also required our staff to become technology experts, on top of being citizenship experts. The team shined through: **we closed 2020 having successfully submitted 1,044 naturalization applications and guided 2,061 citizens-in-waiting on the path to naturalization.** 

Project Citizenship's **new virtual model has revealed exciting potential.** We identified disadvantaged populations that can benefit from our virtual model: the elderly, the disabled, and those who juggle responsibilities that preclude them from attending in-person workshops. Energized by this revelation, **we aim to improve the efficiency of our virtual model so that it continues to expand our reach**. We will also, of course, resume our large in-person workshops once public health officials deem it safe. During the pandemic we learned that 73% of our citizens-in-waiting are frontline workers! They sacrificed their safety for the sake of ours, which is reason enough why we need to have them become part of the American family.

Adding to our challenges in 2020, the pandemic arrived just as our Board of Directors was conducting a search for a new executive director. With thanks to Zoom, the Board was able to continue the search with little disruption and was **thrilled to welcome Mitra Shavarini as our new leader in December**. **Herself a naturalized citizen, originally from Iran, Mitra knows all-too-well the challenges that immigrants face** when they want to naturalize. Since her tenure with Project Citizenship began, the Board has welcomed seven new members energized to bring their backgrounds, skills, and insights to help Project Citizenship in its next stage of growth. Together, the Board and Mitra have embarked on developing a strategic plan.

Given the Biden Administration's stated intentions to improve our immigration system, particularly as it relates to expediting naturalization, we at Project Citizenship are excited about the pivotal role that we can play for citizens-in-waiting.

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all your support. **We could not have made it through this year without you**, and we hope that you will continue to help our efforts: <u>volunteer</u>, <u>subscribe to our</u> <u>newsletter</u>, or <u>donate</u>! This is an exciting time for Project Citizenship, and we want you along for the ride.

Sincerely,



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Brenda Diana Chair, Board of Directors

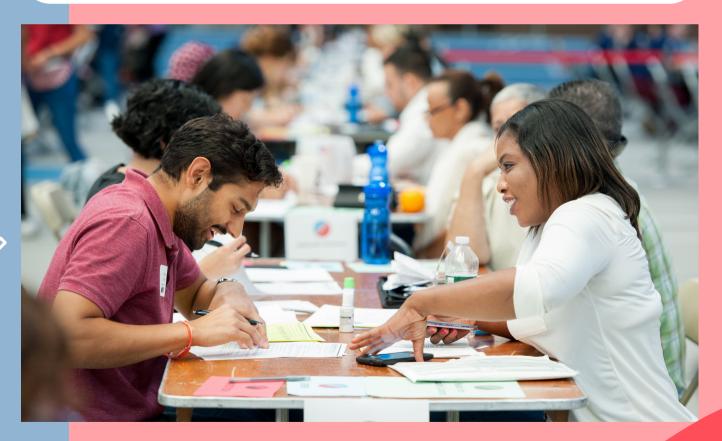


Dr. Mitra K. Shavarini Executive Director

# OUR MISSION

Project Citizenship seeks to increase the naturalization rate in Massachusetts and beyond.

We are a nonprofit agency that provides free, high quality legal services to eligible immigrants to help them become U.S citizens. Project Citizenship offers free workshops, eligibility screening, application assistance, legal referrals and all materials needed to apply for U.S. citizenship. In addition, Project Citizenship works collaboratively with community based partners in Massachusetts to provide a range of support services, including civics instruction and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes.



# COVID RESILIENCE RESPONSE



With over **73% of our hopeful citizens-to-be serving as frontline workers**, and **75% of folks we serve living under the federal poverty line**, <u>COVID-19 hit our</u> <u>community particularly hard</u>. We immediately pivoted our in-person programming to adapt to remote operations. As the pandemic raged on and the need grew, **we developed a virtual citizenship workshop model**. This model dramatically increased the number of volunteers needed as well as required our staff to suddenly be technology experts. Ever the resilient team, we adapted and persevered. With 62 virtual workshops we served over 2,000 hopeful citizens-to-be in 2020 despite all our challenges.



Thank you to our wonderful staff who make this work possible AND fun!

# PROJECT CITIZENSHIP STAFF MEMBERS







### **OUR STAFF TEAM**

Mitra Shavarini - Executive Director Melanie Torres - Deputy Director Erin Fricker - Legal Director Irene Egan - Development Director McKenzie Bell - Program Manager Kat Roach - Program Manager Gloria Donati - AmeriCorps Legal Advocate Jennifer Gonzales - AmeriCorps Legal Advocate Sara Kniaz - AmeriCorps NAIP Member Gigi Vujovich - AmeriCorps NAIP Member Lissa Damus - Intake Specialist Owen Diana - Development Associate Eva Ng - Grant Writer/Development Officer

Veronica Serrato - Former Executive Director completed her service in the end of 2020. Thank you for your years of work, Veronica!

### THANK YOU TO OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our Board of Directors, listed on the next page, are important collaborators, strategic planners, supporters, and visionaries of this work.

OUR CONNECTION TO THIS WORK Promoting social, cultural,

& economic well-being

Creates opportunities Honing Skills

# **OUR VOLUNTEER COLLABORATORS**

Each year, we depend on our Board of Directors, our *pro bono* law firms, our foundation and government supporters, law schools, local nonprofits, bar associations, in-house counsel and beyond, in order to support over 2,000 individuals yearly on their path to citizenship. We could not do any of this without all of **YOU**!

### OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### Brenda Diana - <u>Chair -</u> Ropes & Gray

Sameer Ahmed - <u>Vice Chair</u> - Harvard Law School Milton Manousaridis - <u>Treasurer</u> - Cambridge Trust Alicia Rubio-Spring - <u>Clerk</u> -Goodwin Procter Jim McGarry - <u>Chair Emeritus</u> - Goodwin Procter Ed Boyajian - Enterprise DB Natalia Ivanytsky - PwC Peter Torrebiarte - MASS Design Group Teresa Maynard - Sweet Teez Bakery Mitch Montgomery - Chin & Curtis Deva Hirsch - DH Advisors O'Neil Outar - Rhode Island School of Design Charles Sanders - Latham & Watkins Amy Wax - Law Offices of Amy M. Wax

#### In 2021, we also added 7 new Board members

Andy Liebman - EditShare Katherine Rivet - Boston Consulting Group Nancy Rousseau - My Life My Choice Jean Russell - HUB International New England Detlev Suderow - FLIR Systems, Inc. (Retired) Kim West - Ashcroft Law Firm Susan Eaton - Brandeis University

#### OUR LAW SCHOOLS, BAR ASSOCIATIONS & EDUCATION PARTNERS

Boston College Law School Boston University School of Law Harvard Law School City University of New York Law School Northeastern University School of Law Suffolk University School of Law

Boston Bar Association Massachusetts Bar Association South Asian Bar Association of Greater Boston

Boston College Boston University

### **OUR LAW FIRMS**

Chin & Curtis\* Dechert LLP DLA Piper LLP Foley Hoag LLP\* Fragomen\* Goodwin Procter\* Kirkland & Ellis LLP Latham & Watkins, LLP\* MCD Immigration Law Mintz Levin\* Morgan Lewis\* Ropes & Gray LLP\* Sullivan & Worcester LLP WilmerHale\* Hinckley, Allen & Snyder LLP

\* indicates financial support

#### **OUR IN-HOUSE COUNSEL**

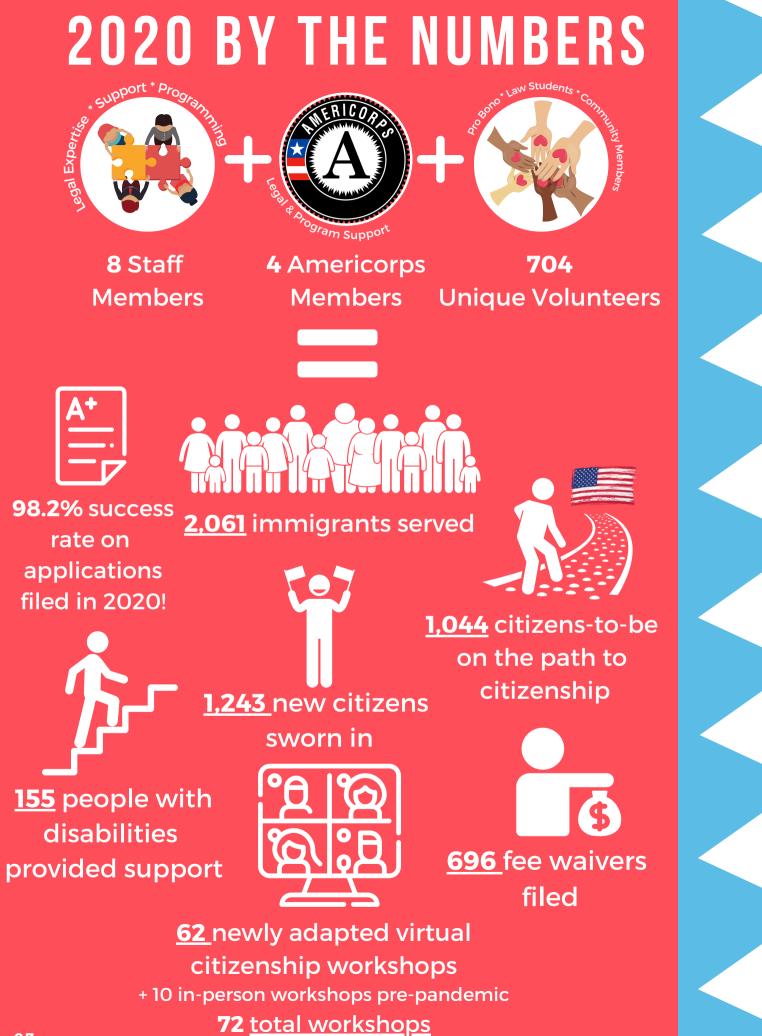
**AON Risk Solutions Bain Capital, LP Bank of America\* Boston Scientific Citizens Bank** Citrix Eastern Bank\* Eversource\* **Foundation Medicine** HarbourVest Partners Harvard - Office of the **General Counsel** Iron Mountain John Hancock\* Liberty Mutual\* **LPL Financial Services** MassMutual **MFS** Investment **Plymouth Rock Assurance Corporation RMR Group\*** Saffron LLC Santander Vertex Pharmaceuticals\*

#### **OUR PHILANTHROPIC PARTNER**

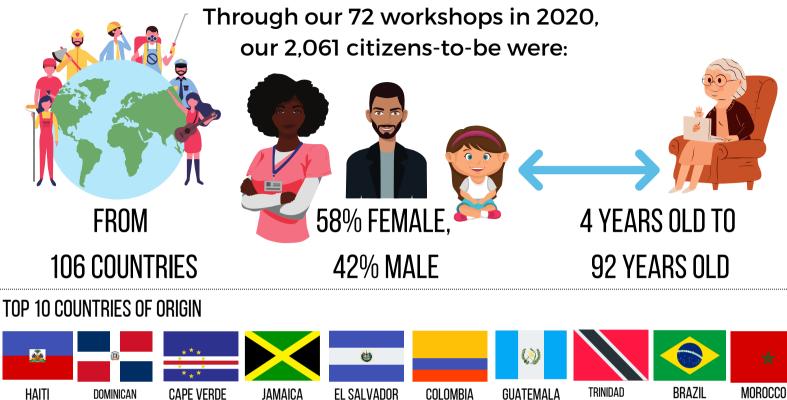
The Philanthropy Connection







# **OUR HOPEFUL CITIZENS-TO-BE**



## **IMPACT STORIES**



REPUBLIC

Oscar and his wife Nidia applied for citizenship with us in September 2020 and became citizens in February 2021. They are both originally from Guatemala. Oscar has had a long and harrowing immigration story, having lost most of his family in a massacre in his village in Guatemala. (Learn more about his story by watching the documentary Finding Oscar or reading this article). Oscar and Nidia were both eligible for citizenship at the same time and were eager to apply with Project Citizenship.



"It was very nice because we learned from each other. We also studied together, and I feel like it was easier this way," Oscar said about applying with his wife. Now that he is a U.S. citizen, Oscar is most excited to participate in U.S. elections.

Citizenship applications are hard enough on their own, but sometimes you need a disability waiver if you are unable to learn English or civics. Marie's case was not accepted at her first interview, and she had to obtain a new disability waiver from her doctor to complete the citizenship process in her native Haitian Creole. Project Citizenship liaised with her **doctor** to make sure the form was completed correctly and she was finally approved at her second interview. Marie is grateful for Project Citizenship's help. 08



+ TOBAGO

# **VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers are the backbone of our work. In 2020, our **704 individual volunteers** were from 49 unique partner organizations. We are so grateful to our volunteers for donating time to help us increase the naturalization rate in Massachusetts.

Hi

Hola!





**VOLUNTEERS** 

49 UNIQUE PARTNER Organizations 28+ MULTILINGUAL 317 RETURNING VOLUNTEERS VOLUNTEERS

## **VOLUNTEERS SHARE THEIR REASONS TO SUPPORT**



"Because my parents immigrated from Egypt to become American citizens, I was privileged to have certain rights and opportunities throughout my life and career as an attorney. I believe it is the least I can do to give back by helping others on their path to citizenship – **volunteering with project citizenship** is a way for me to do just that and is **often the most rewarding part of my week**! " -Tina Zakhary

"By volunteering with Project Citizenship, I'm able use what I learned in law school to assist others on the first step toward their American Dream." -Stephanie Karanevskii

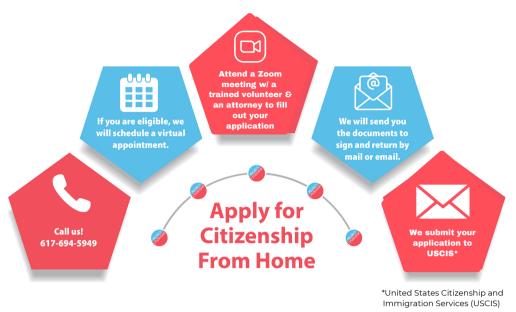
"Volunteering with Project Citizenship is an incredibly rewarding part of my pro bono practice. **My personal experience with helping family through the naturalization process has shown me the significant benefits of citizenship** and how daunting the process can seem, and I look forward to helping those at each workshop to begin their journey to citizenship." - Steven Tjoe



# OUR NEW VIRTUAL MODEL

Our **in-person** citizenship **workshops** were our primary service delivery method. Utilizing large groups of volunteers and completing tens to hundreds of applications in one day was a thing of the past in March 2020

We pivoted to virtual models. At first, we did 2-hour phone appointments. As demand rose and the pandemic continued, we began planning to adapt our entire workshop model virtually.



At Project Citizenship we then:

- Collected feedback from citizens-to-be on their access to technology
- Connected with local and national organizations for advice and best practices
- Tested out a few pilot workshops

In August 2020, we launched our virtual workshop model

- We have served 1,160 clients in weekly virtual workshops
- During the screening process, we ask about their technology access to tailor the appointment to the person's needs
- This model requires more volunteers, so we need more support

While the pandemic has widened the technology divide, Project Citizenship is working to make sure our workshops remain accessible to all immigrants across Massachusetts looking for citizenship legal services.

### **COMMUNITY PARTNERS & CITIZENSHIP COLLABORATORS**

#### **Citizenship Collaborators**

- Boston Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement
  (MOIA)
- KIND (Kids in Need of Defense)
- Lawrence CommunityWorks

#### **Community Partners**

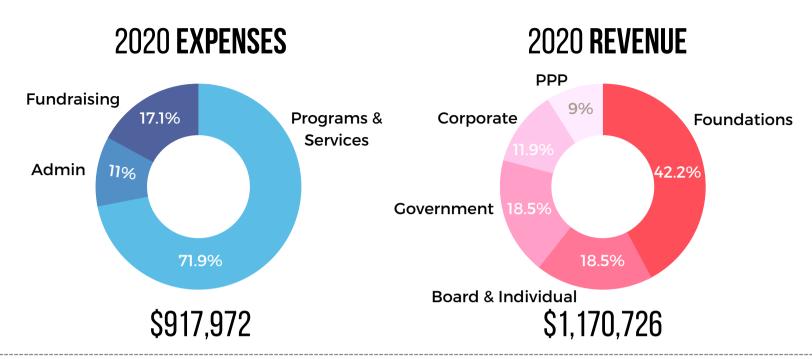
- Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD)
- Agencia ALPHA
- Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center
- Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (CMAA)

#### **Community Partners**

- International Institute of New England (IINE)
- Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (MAPS)
- Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA)
- New Americans Campaign
- Northeast Justice Center
- Quincy Asian Resources, Inc. (QARI)
- Refugee & Immigrant Assistance Center (RIAC)
- St. Mark's Community Education

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# OUR FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2020









# **OUR IN-KIND SERVICES**

**3,521** volunteer hours + **2,460** pro bono hours from 704 volunteers

**\$3,441,743** million dollars of donated services

2020 required nearly 2x the number of volunteers to meet our new virtual needs!



## BEYOND APPLICATIONS: LITIGATION SUPPORT



At the start of the pandemic, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) cancelled biometrics appointments, interviews, and oath ceremonies. At that time, **249 of our clients had been approved for naturalization, but were not sworn in as U.S. citizens due to pandemic cancellations**.

We <u>led an effort</u>, along with 9 nonprofits, **asking USCIS to administer the Oaths of Allegiance to applicants remotely**. With **Harvard's Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program**, we <u>urged</u> the U.S. District Court of Massachusetts to do the same.

We mobilized our pro bono attorneys to **advocate for 38 particularly vulnerable clients to be naturalized immediately and several were** <u>sworn in</u> while USCIS was still closed.

In August 2020, with support from **Ropes & Gray**, **we filed a lawsuit against USCIS' proposed fee increases** and effective elimination of fee waivers. Instead of hosting an in-person workshop to celebrate Citizenship Day, we filed a motion for a preliminary injunction to stop USCIS from enacting the proposed fee rule. The City of Boston along with 34 other cities, counties, and municipal agencies, filed an amicus brief in support of our lawsuit.

In October 2020, a federal court highlighted our work in ruling against USCIS' proposed fee changes. Out of 43,108 comments submitted to USCIS, the Court specifically quoted our comments, which were drafted and submitted with the *pro bono* assistance of WilmerHale.

"The comments offered by Project Citizenship reflect...detailed, analytic evidence presented to DHS...DHS's response to this and similar comments is both inconsistent and inadequate."

The court's decision can be viewed *here*.

## **OUR SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS** 2020

#### Foundation Support

#### \$220,000+

Fish Family Foundation

#### \$30,000-\$50,000

Clowes Fund Ludcke Foundation The Klarman Family Foundation The Rands Foundation

#### \$10,000-\$29,999

Combined Jewish Philanthropies Nathaniel and Elizabeth Stevens Foundation Sailors' Snug Harbor of Boston The Philanthropy Connection

#### \$1,000-\$9,999

Aubert J. Fay Charitable Fund Boston Bar Foundation Burkehaven Family Foundation Bushrod H. Campbell & Adah F. Hall Charity Fund Cambridge Community Foundation Greater Lowell Community Foundation Lincoln and Therese Filene Foundation Social Innovation Forum

#### Corporate Sponsors

#### \$10,000+

Eastern Bank Goodwin Procter Latham & Watkins Ropes & Gray LLP Vertex Pharmaceuticals

#### \$2,500-\$9,999

Bank of America Bank of the West Cambridge Trust Company East Boston Savings Bank EnterpriseDB Eversource Foley Hoag Fragomen Liberty Mutual

#### **Corporate Sponsors**

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Morgan Lewis Plymouth Rock Assurance Corporation Walmart Wellesley Bank WilmerHale

#### \$1,000-\$2,499

Chin & Curtis John Hancock Leader Bank Open Society Institute

#### \$500-\$999

Hinckley, Allen & Snyder LLP KKR Parker Gallini LLP

#### \$1-\$499

AmazonSmile Foundation Karpas Strategies Natixis Network for Good Temple Israel of Boston TisBest Philanthropy Trip Advisor

#### **Government Support**

#### \$4,000-\$140,000+

Massachusetts Office of Refugees and Immigrants City of Boston U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services Harvard-Allston Partnership Fund



#### **Individual Donors**

#### \$30,000+

Brenda & Peter Diana

#### \$10,000-\$29,999

Gary & Cora LaPlante Jim & Carolyn McGarry Charles & Nora Sanders

#### \$5,000-\$9,999

Elaine Boltz Ed & Alisha Boyajian Craig Gilmartin Robert & Katherine Haas

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Sameer Ahmed Jim Barstow & Susan Ensign John Barstow & Genie Ware Leslie Ditrani & Philip Curtis Ken Gordon Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence Greenberg Janet Rickershauser & José Estabil Alicia Rubio-Spring & Brian Spring Steven & Ellen Segal Veronica Serrato Rom Watson & Susan Bazett

#### \$1,000-\$2,499

Courtney Allessio Jane Bernstein David & Nancy Bradbury Robert Carroll Juan Davila Irene Egan Jamie & Sarah Fleckner Martin & Sarita Hall Oscar Herrera Deva Hirsch Deborah Jackson Weiss Paul & Beth Jakubowski Paula Levin Andrew Loucks Geoffrey & Jaime Mason Ann Milner Mitch Montgomery Paul & Laura Nardone John O'Toole O'Neil Outar & Jane Mahoney Outar



## **2020 INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT**

#### \$1.000-\$2.499

William & Leslie Patton leanne Reid Rhoda Ritzenberg & Ken Heitner Larry & Nancy Rowe Stephen & Patti Steinour James & Debra Thomas Kim & Patrick West Jim & Erika Wilton Said Ziouani

#### \$500-\$999

Lucy Adams Iftekhar Ahmed Keith Barnett Thomas Barstow Elaine Blais Colleen Boyle & Sarah Freedman Gerald Cianciolo & Kathleen Brennan Nina Cohen & Craig Barrows Samantha Cooper Michael Diana Michael Diener & Barbara Soojian Nathan Edwards Stuart Falber Robert & Joanne Fallon William Fick Scott FitzGerald Tameem Hourani Susan Johnston Jagdish Kaur Theresa Kavanaugh Ron Leshem & Oren Ganor Mahmood Malihi Ronan McCullough Anne Mulvey & Donna O'Neill Carolyn & Robert Osteen Rajdai & James Outar Susan Pereira Joseph Savage Wendy Swart Grossman Anisha Vachani **Rick Wetmore** Kathleen Yazbak Christine Youngren

#### \$100-\$499

Ali Aboubakr Linda Adams Rafael & Rosa Andrade Seher Anjum Kelly Au

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Reuven Aviyonah Wendy Ballinger Jerri Banner John Baraniak Gyasi Barber Chet Barnard David Baron Molly Barstow Lauren Belemijan Susan Benford Thomas Bianchi Elizabeth Bjorkman Heather Bout Dorian Bowman Wendy Bradley Mark & Nancy Brown Doug & Connie Burton Stephen Cairns Marian Calabro Leann Canty Lynne Castronuovo Toby Chaiken Carmen Chan Tha Chan Steve Charkoudian Ed Chazen & Barbara Gross Andrew & Brenda Cheifetz Sara Clevering Margaret Coakley Keith Colvin Trish Conway Marcela Curry Daniel Dain Mr. & Mrs. Jock Danforth Janice & Juan Darias Daniel Davis Sander De la Rambelje Mimi Deck Rutledge Elisabeth Diana Keelan Diana Rena Diana Patrick Diaz & Liz Weaver Danielle Diguid & Christopher Fox Philip Dudley William Edge Ms. Edwards-Pitt & Mr. Weinzierl Katherine Fahey Donya Faridazar David Felton Susan Fish **Betty Francisco** lustin Frazier

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## **2020 INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT**

#### \$100-\$499

Kathleen Long Magdalena Lopez & Rory Murphy Susan Lynch lasvir MacIntosh Clara Ann Macko Milton Manousaridis Andrea Matar Mark Mathers Mark Matuschak Sandy Matuschak Teresa & Kelvin Maynard Lisa McChesney Molly McGovern Casey McLaughlin Douglas McLaughlin Alberto Migliore Eileen Miller Tara Miller Zaruhi Mkrtumyan Mara Moldwin Carmine Molinaro Andrew Moore Geraldine Muir Mary M. Mullarkey Susan Musinsky & David Krieger Margaret Nguyen Katelyn O'Brien Nicholas O'Neill Cristine Oh Dan Pasquarello Nancy Pettinelli Judy Phillips & David Kudas Alex Poon Sarah Rahman Patrick & Brooke Redmond Megan Reilly Yvonne Rincón Erika Rodriguez Nancy Rousseau Joshua Ruman Dan Ryan & Hilary Detmold Barbara Saltzstein Radhika Samant Deborah Segal Federico Sequeda Cynthia Serrato Susan & Dennis Shapiro Stacy Sheehan Lou Shipley Aida Shtiwi & Edward Kawash Sonia Shurlock Susan Sidel

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Sami Abedin Hagar Aboubakr Faroog Ahmed Lennox Alexander Kenneth Avocetien Chris Bagley Pegi Bano Cassie Barrett Colleen Bayard Lucia Berman Rossi Nancy Blumberg Nicole Boyajian Loren Brandford Abdelhadi Brik Kathleen Byrne Frantz Jean Charles Peter Cheifetz Tina Chen

#### \$50-\$99

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## INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

#### \$50-\$99

**Carmine Pierre** Caitlin Pittel Stark Andrea Porras Victor Revolorio Hal Roach **Gregory Ronquillo** Mustafa Saadi Toshie Sadamura Beatrice Serrato Erick Serrato Gabi Serrato Marks Griselda Silva Pam Sylvor John Szabo & Elizabeth O'Brien Amy Torres & Paul Leyzerovich Ines Valentim Lucy Veloz Susan Weiner lennifer Wittlin Wai Yau Chung Yin Kuo

#### \$21-\$49

Fatimah Aboubakr Ola Aboubakr Ocilia Augustin Gabriel Balzano-Brookes Hiwot Behabtu Camille Campion Lynn Christmas-Major Linda Clevering

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#### \$21-\$49

Ian Ynda-Hummel Kevin Yurkewich Renxian Zhao

#### \$5-\$20

Sister Margaret Andrako Milourdes Augustin Rvan Balise **Birch Davis** Paul Finesse Nancy Giesel Jennifer Kyne Alice Lam Vicente Lopez Mariam Matos Eleanor McKenney Guerlande Merisier Isaura Michelon Moriah Nelson Christina Paul Eve Rabinowitz



## An Extra Big Thank You to the Fish Family Foundation

Throughout our formal 7 year tenure as a non-profit and informal community projects before that, the Fish Family has **always** generously supported our aims to increase the naturalization rate and support democracy-building through citizenship. THANK YOU!

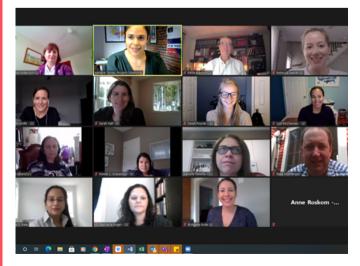


### THANK YOU FOR HELPING US WITH OUR DEMOCRACY BUILDING IN 2020, WE LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUING THE ONGOING WORK!

"Estoy llamando para darles gracias por la ayuda que me brindaron. gracias a ustedes, ya soy ciudadana norteamericana. gracias, gracias, muchas, muchas gracias

[I am calling to thank you for the help you provided me. Thanks to you, I'm a US Citizen. Many, many thanks!]





"Tuve el examen de ciudadanía y todo fue un éxito, inclusive se juramentaron el mismo día.Deseo expresarle mi agradecimiento por su cooperación en este caso, especialmente por haberme gestionado el grant para la aplicación de mi form N-400."

[I had my citizenship exam and everything was a success, including my oath ceremony the same day. I want to express my gratitude for your help with this case, especially for awarding me the grant for my N-400 application]