



## **PROJECT CITIZENSHIP**

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### **For Immediate Release:**

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### **PROJECT CITIZENSHIP PARTNERS WITH HARVARD IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE CLINIC (HIRC) TO SUE USCIS**

BOSTON - [April 28, 2026] - Project Citizenship has partnered with Harvard Law School's Immigration and Refugee Clinic (HIRC) to file a lawsuit in federal district court challenging U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)'s undue delay in adjudicating naturalization decisions for applicants from 39 so-called "high-risk" countries.

The lawsuit, filed today, requests that the district court grant the naturalization applications for fourteen Project Citizenship clients from Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire, and Venezuela, or compel USCIS to make a final decision on their applications and administer the oath of allegiance. These individuals completed their citizenship interviews months ago. Most had already been scheduled for oath ceremonies before their appointments were abruptly cancelled, and since then have had no explanation or communication from USCIS. U.S. immigration law requires a decision be made within 120 days from the applicant's initial interview, a basis for the suit.

"Although only a small number of our clients qualified for this lawsuit, it's a step in the right direction to demand USCIS take action," said Gail Breslow, Executive Director of Project Citizenship. "I'm grateful to HIRC and our clients who have chosen to participate in the lawsuit. For them, it's a mark of courage but also frustration and disappointment to be treated like this by the country they love and call home."

On December 2, 2025, the Trump administration announced a sweeping pause on immigration processing—including naturalization—for individuals originally from countries already impacted by the June 2025 travel ban. In January 2026, the policy expanded to include an additional 20 countries, citing the need for enhanced security vetting for individuals who have already undergone multiple rounds of background checks.

"USCIS's own policies recognize that the decision to grant naturalization is not discretionary," said Anna McDougall, a law student at HIRC. "Once a person goes through the long process of meeting

the requirements for naturalization, they should be able to become U.S. citizens. A hold based solely on national origin is entirely inappropriate and discriminatory.”

“The prolonged uncertainty resulting from these policies has been very disruptive to people’s lives,” said Lauren O’Connell, another law student at HIRC working on the lawsuit. “The longer that these arbitrary delays continue, the more our community members and neighbors awaiting results are forced to put their personal, professional, and educational lives on pause. It’s extraordinarily stressful.”

“While we await resolution of this matter in federal court, we continue to submit citizenship applications on behalf of clients, no matter their country of origin,” added Breslow. “For those who are eligible, citizenship is still the best protection against the risk of deportation or detention. At Project Citizenship, we’re committed to individualized case management and advising clients based on what is right for them and their families.”

“As our country approaches its 250th anniversary, we’re at a time in our nation’s history that demands a renewed commitment to justice and opportunity,” said Breslow. “Immigrants in this country who have done everything right and live in our communities deserve a clear path forward—not indefinite uncertainty.”

### **About Project Citizenship**

Project Citizenship is a nonprofit agency that provides free, high-quality legal services to permanent residents to help them become U.S. citizens. It offers free workshops, eligibility screening, application assistance, legal referrals, and all materials needed to apply for citizenship. To learn more, visit: [projectcitizenship.org](http://projectcitizenship.org).

### **Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic (HIRC)**

For over thirty years, the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic (HIRC), in partnership with Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), has sought to advance immigrants’ rights. Law students take the lead in representing low-income immigrants on a broad range of immigration issues, including those who are requesting release from detention, fighting deportation, and seeking asylum and other forms of humanitarian protection in the United States.

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