



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

Opportunity Centers to Help Immigrants Fully Participate in New York's Civic and Economic Life

VELMANETTE MONTGOMERY March 10, 2013

| ISSUE: **HUMAN RIGHTS, IMMIGRATION**

The *Office for New Americans*, the first statewide office with a sole focus to assist our state's immigrants in their efforts to contribute to the economy and become a part of the family of the New York has opened locations in Brooklyn and statewide.

The cornerstone of the Office for New Americans is a network of 27 neighborhood-based Opportunity Centers, hosted within existing community-based organizations, throughout the State. The centers will help New Americans learn English, prepare them for the U.S. citizenship exam, and help them start and grow businesses so they can fully participate in New York State's civic and economic life.

The Office for New Americans (ONA) will also be supported by the New York State New Americans Hotline, a toll-free, multi-lingual information center, as well as by an ONA-dedicated website to guide New Americans to available resources. **The hotline number is 800-566-7636 and the website is www.newamericans.ny.gov.**

At the center of this effort is the creation of the 27 Office for New Americans Opportunity Centers, which are located in areas of the State with high concentrations of newcomers. At

the centers, ONA will pioneer a community-based education system using state-of-the-art technology and community volunteers, to support New Americans and give them the tools they need to succeed. The public will have access to a network of educational, advocacy and referral services including workplace language skills, business planning, loan access information, consumer protection and community engagement. Each center is also supported by a team of rotating attorneys who are experts in immigration law.

New York State is committed to strengthening its welcoming environment for New Americans and facilitating their success in numerous ways, including:

- Increasing access to English-for-Speakers-of-other-Languages (ESOL) training.
- Preparing New Americans for the naturalization process.
- Connecting New Americans to business resources to harness their entrepreneurial spirit.
- Developing and leveraging the professional skills of New Americans.
- Maximizing the number of young people receiving Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.
- Strengthening the connections between New Americans and their communities through civic engagement and other opportunities.
- Reduce exploitation of New Americans by scammers and con artists.
- Marshal State resources to better serve New Americans.

New York State ranks second in the nation in immigrant population, a total that includes more than 1.2 million immigrants who reside outside the New York City area. More than one in four New York State residents of working age is foreign-born. This presents a major

opportunity for economic growth, as 18 percent of small business owners in the U.S. are foreign-born. And that rate is even higher in New York, where 29 percent of all small businesses are owned by immigrants.

Office for New Americans Opportunity Center Locations in Brooklyn, include:

- Brooklyn (Midwood) – FECS Health & Human Services – 938 Kings Highway, Brooklyn, NY

11223

- Brooklyn (Williamsburg) – Opportunities for Better Tomorrow – 280 Wyckoff Street,

Brooklyn, NY 11237

- Brooklyn (Bay Ridge) – Arab American Association of NY – 7111 5th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

11209

For information on other locations throughout New York, contact the Office for New Americans at 800-566-7636 and the website is www.newamericans.ny.gov.

###