United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 20, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane, SW
Washington, DC 20528

Mr. Joseph B. Edlow
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
5900 Capital Gateway Dr.
Camp Springs, MD 20588

Dear Secretary Noem and Director Edlow,

I write to you following my staff's initial correspondence on November 18, 2025, to express serious concerns shared by my constituents about U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS's) recent cancellation of naturalization ceremonies across New York State. Recent reports suggest that USCIS has canceled local naturalization ceremonies in November 2025 in counties including Westchester, Rockland, Schenectady, Washington, Broome, Tompkins, and Onondaga.[1] To date, my staff has not received a response to my office's inquiry seeking clarification about these canceled naturalization ceremonies.

The Oath of Allegiance has led to American citizenship for more than 220 years.[2] As USCIS states, "[c]itizenship is a unique bond that unites people around civic ideals and a belief in the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. Deciding to become a U.S. citizen is one of the most important decisions an immigrant can make."[3] Accordingly, naturalization ceremonies are important milestones for new Americans as they take their final step to become American citizens by swearing the Oath of Allegiance. For new citizens, these ceremonies are the culmination of years of waiting, personal sacrifice, and intentional effort to integrate into their local communities.

When a scheduled ceremony is canceled, every intending citizen affected is deprived of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. The cancellation of a ceremony should be avoided, or at a minimum, handled with great care and consideration for our newest Americans and the communities they are a part of. But according to the *Times Union*, USCIS's emails informing the county clerks of the recent cancellations included no clear explanation. Instead, the correspondence said that "there will be no more upstate ceremon(ies) moving forward."

Our newest Americans should be allowed to celebrate their citizenship with their families. Accordingly, I respectfully request a response to the following queries within 30 days:

1. What specific internal criteria did USCIS use when deciding to cancel or postpone the reported naturalization ceremonies?

   a. What is the plan and timeline for rescheduling the ceremonies in the affected counties?
   b. When and where will these ceremonies occur if they are rescheduled?
2. Which venues in New York State will cease to have naturalization ceremonies and which will continue?
   a. How did USCIS identify the venues where naturalization ceremonies would no longer occur?
   b. What policy objective informed the recent cancellation of naturalization ceremonies?
3. Are these cancellations the result of budgetary, staffing, or logistical constraints?
4. What policy guidance governs which locations and venues are approved for naturalization ceremonies?
5. How does USCIS ensure that ceremony cancellations are rare, communicated promptly, and minimally disruptive to naturalization applicants?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator