Since 2004, the annual CUNY/Daily News Citizenship NOW! Call-In has provided more than 143,000 callers with free, confidential information on immigration issues ranging from family petitions and residency to U.S. citizenship. Hundreds of volunteers participate in this event each year, many of them trained by CUNY Citizenship Now!

Each year, the event is widely supported by New York’s most influential elected officials. United States Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, current Mayor Bill de Blasio, and for the first time in 2015, New York State Governor Andrew M. Cuomo have visited to offer words of encouragement.

The call-in was a vision shared by Jay Hershenson, Senior Vice Chancellor for University Relations for the City University of New York (CUNY), and the New York Daily News. Together, they approached Allan Wernick, immigration attorney, CUNY Citizenship Now! Director, and Daily News columnist to organize the event.

For one week each spring, we open the phones to answer calls from anyone seeking immigration information or resources. The phones are answered by call-in volunteers, including immigration attorneys, paralegals, advocates, and others who share a passion for immigration issues. Year after year, the dedication of our volunteers has helped make the call-in a success. Many of the volunteers are also members of the NYC/CUNY Citizenship Now! Volunteer Corps and participate in our community-based application assistance events.

Prior to each year’s call-in, Citizenship Now! holds a full-day training session for volunteers. The training covers the basics of immigration law and familiarizes participants with the publications and resources available during the week. The training is also streamed live online.

The call-in has also generated support from the New York business community. Tech sponsors have included Presidio, Cisco and Microsoft. Univision and WABC-TV, our media partners, have been instrumental in building support within the community. Our overall capacity has more than doubled since the event’s kickoff year. In 2014 and 2015, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) sponsored the event answering overflow calls at their Los Angeles call center. In 2015, over 300 volunteers assisted 7,395 callers in 45 different languages.

New York State Governor Andrew M. Cuomo in his first visit to the call-in with CUNY Citizenship Now! Director Allan Wernick, CUNY DREAMers and call-in volunteers Juan Parra, Kasandra Dorce, Guadalupe Muller, Monica Sibri and Jennifer Fernandez.