

December 9, 2019

The Honorable Gregory Meeks
Chairman
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Financial Institutions
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Meeks:

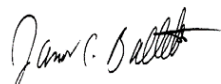
The American Bankers Association (ABA) is pleased to support H.R. 5322, the Ensuring Diversity in Community Banking Act of 2019 and we applaud you for your leadership in highlighting the role of community and minority banks in our country. This important piece of legislation builds on the legacy and work of minority depository institutions (MDIs) and community development financial institutions (CDFIs) that have long served all communities, particularly low and moderate income areas.

For over 150 years, minority owned banks have thrived and worked to serve the needs of small businesses, first-time home buyers and consumers in all regions of the country. Like all community banks, the role that MDIs play in their communities and in the overall economy is often overlooked, yet they are incredibly impactful. Unfortunately, many of our country's minority institutions, particularly African-American owned banks, have merged or closed over the past decade. As regulatory agencies and the banking industry examine ways to address this decline, it is important for Congress to promote legislation, like H.R. 5322, that will assist in this effort.

We commend you for proposing this measure that expands on existing programs that will help sustain minority institutions and create opportunities for all banks to better serve the needs of their communities. Among the many provisions in this legislation is the creation of a Minority Depository Institutions Advisory Committee at each agency that will help maintain vigilance on fulfilling the goals of Section 308 of the Financial Institutions Reform, Recovery and Enforcement Act. Additionally, the expansion of the Department of Treasury's Mentor-Protégé program between large financial institutions and MDIs and CDFIs will greatly assist relationship building and the needs of the Department. We applaud the expansion of this program and would encourage the Treasury to develop guidance to ensure that clear guidelines are in place to fulfill the program's goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on H.R. 5322. We urge all members of the Financial Services Committee to approve this measure. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue and in finding other ways to strengthen MDIs and CDFIs.

Sincerely,



James C. Ballentine

cc: Members of the Committee on Financial Services