



June 5, 2020

Acting Comptroller Brian P. Brooks  
Comptroller of the Currency  
Comp 400 7th Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20219

Chair Jelena McWilliams  
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation  
550 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20429

Chair Jerome Powell  
Federal Reserve Board  
20th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20551

**Re: Community Reinvestment Act Addresses Racism**

Dear Chair Powell, Chair McWilliams & Acting Comptroller Brooks:

We are writing you today in a call to action to make the financial system more racially equitable.

Racism has long been imbedded in our financial system and in the society it is meant to serve. The official government policy of redlining that began in the 1930s cemented racial segregation in Chicago and throughout the nation, and this foundation continues to support individual and systemic racism that has brought us to today: significant racial disparities in COVID-19 death rates, the over-policing of communities of color that permit modern-day lynchings, and the failure of the government and financial institutions to prioritize impacted communities with relief funds and capital investments. Healing the nation's wounds and implementing solutions that will eliminate racism and its many structural components require bold actions.

The Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), passed less than a decade after the 1968 Chicago riots, was a bold solution. The law directly targeted the effects of redlining by creating an affirmative obligation for banks to invest in and serve low- and moderate-income communities. The Chicagoans whose activism led to the passage of the CRA knew that stopping racist policies was not enough. The disinvestment that targeted communities of color for decades would need to be reversed if we hoped to establish a lasting peace in Chicago and make community prosperity possible.

We should all keep this goal at the forefront as efforts to “modernize” the CRA are undertaken. “Simplifying” or “streamlining” the law should not be the top priorities. Getting it done more quickly should not be a driving intention. Grappling with complexity to effectively steer investment to racially and economically segregated neighborhoods is critical. Taking time to make data-driven decisions is time well spent if it means lifting up the communities that have been and continue to be disregarded.

Our advocacy to strengthen the CRA continues. The pain of the past few days inspires us to work together to get this right because we all have a role in finally dismantling racist systems that hold our entire country back. We call on the three banking regulators to work with us and our allies across the country to strengthen CRA to help rebuild economically vibrant communities where all people can prosper.

Sincerely,

Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County  
BEDS Plus Care, Inc.  
BPI  
Center for Changing Lives  
Center for Neighborhood Technology  
Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance  
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless  
Chicago Community Loan Fund  
Chicago Community Trust  
Chicago Jobs Council  
Chicago Urban League  
Chicago Westside NAACP  
Coalition for Equitable Community Development  
Corporation for Supportive Housing  
Economic Awareness Council  
Economic Security for Illinois  
Fair Housing Legal Support Center, UIC John Marshall Law School  
Faith Community Homes, Arlington Heights, IL  
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights  
Housing Action Illinois  
Housing Choice Partners  
Housing Opportunities and Maintenance for the Elderly (H.O.M.E.)

IFF  
Illinois Asset Building Group  
Institute for Cultural Affairs  
Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing  
League of Women Voters of Illinois  
Menard County Housing Authority  
Northwest Side Housing Center  
Office of Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul  
Office of Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs  
Preservation of Affordable Housing, Inc. (POAH)  
The Resurrection Project  
Revolution Workshop  
South Suburban Housing Center  
Spanish Coalition for Housing  
Universal Housing Solutions CDC  
Woods Fund Chicago  
Woodstock Institute