



July 31, 2017

**VIA FHFA ELECTRONIC PORTAL**

The Honorable Melvin L. Watt  
Director  
Federal Housing Finance Agency  
400 7<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20219

**RE: Improving Language Access in Mortgage Lending and Servicing**

Director Watt,

I have the honor of serving as President of the Mortgage Bankers Association of Georgia (“MBAG”) which actively engages with the National Mortgage Bankers Association. MBAG has worked with its Legal Counsel in connection with this letter and appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) Request for Input on issues facing qualified mortgage borrowers with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). We write today to urge FHFA not to amend the Uniform Residential Loan Application (URLA) to include a question regarding the language preference of potential borrowers. While MBAG and its members support and have demonstrated their commitment to diversity, we are concerned that adding such a question at this time would present numerous practical and legal challenges for our members. Moreover, as we elaborate below, it could result in confusion for borrowers or create an inappropriate expectation that the transaction could be completed in a language other than English.

MBAG is strongly supportive of efforts to expand sustainable homeownership opportunities for borrowers throughout Georgia and in all states served by our members. We also believe that a more complete understanding of the challenges unique to LEP borrowers will help our members better serve their communities. The share of LEP borrowers is expected to continue rising in the coming years, and our members understand the importance of ensuring broad access to credit for this segment of the population.

Our members bring a host of practical knowledge to this issue through their daily interactions with a diverse customer base. It is this knowledge of the realities of a mortgage transaction and

real world experience that leads us to the conclusion that adding a question on the URLA inquiring about borrower language preferences would be a mistake. Such a question may lead potential borrowers to believe that all interactions with their lender or servicer, verbal or written, will be conducted in the language for which they declare a preference on the URLA – even if there was a disclaimer of some sort. If this expectation cannot be met, it would create confusion for the borrower, and may create the impression that they are being treated unfairly by the lender or servicer. The proposed URLA question could also lead borrowers to be concerned that their answer may be harmful to their loan application or their ability to access mortgage credit. Neither outcome is consistent with the customer service on which our members pride themselves.

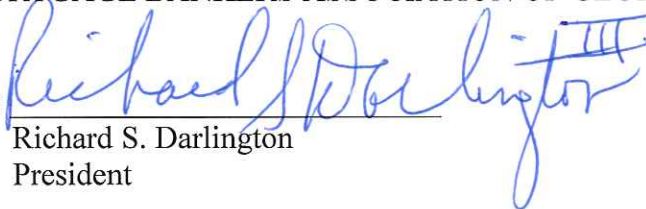
While an objective of the proposed URLA question may be data collection on language proficiency, MBAG is unconvinced that the URLA is the appropriate venue for this effort. MBAG understands that existing sources, such as the American Survey of Mortgage Borrowers and the U.S. Census, already provide detailed information on various demographic indicators. We believe that utilizing or adding to these or other pre-existing sources would be a far more suitable approach since they would not interfere with or otherwise harm our members' relationships with their customers.

Because of these concerns and unaddressed risks, MBAG believes that FHFA should not include a question on the URLA about the language preference of the applicant. MBAG would be happy to work with FHFA, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and other government agencies to identify challenges unique to LEP borrowers and develop solutions that expand access to sustainable homeownership.

We thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

MORTGAGE BANKERS ASSOCIATION OF GEORGIA

By:   
Richard S. Darlington  
Its: President

cc: Loretta Salzano, MBAG Legal Counsel  
William Kooper, MBA