

December 9, 2014

Alfred M. Pollard, General Counsel
Attention: Comments/RIN 2590-AA39
Federal Housing Finance Agency – Fourth Floor
1700 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20552

Re: Notice of Rulemaking and Request for Comments – Members of Federal Home Loan Banks (RIN 2590-AA39)

Dear Mr. Pollard:

WE at Ocean Bank appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Federal Housing Finance Agency's proposed rule *RIN 2590-AA39 Members of the Federal Home Loan Banks*. As a member and shareholder of an FHLBank, we appreciate your desire to ensure the FHLBanks remain focused on the housing portion of their mission. However, we believe the proposed rule will actually inhibit the FHLBanks' ability to execute their mission and ultimately will reduce liquidity, tighten credit, and restrict the flow of funds for housing and economic development.

Under the current membership structure established by Congress, the Federal Home Loan Banks have proven to be a safe and sound business model that reliably supplies liquidity to a broad range of cooperative members through all market cycles. Even during the nation's recent financial crisis, when disruptions to the capital markets made funding from other sources unavailable, the FHLBanks were a critical source of liquidity for a broad range of U.S. financial institutions. We understand that our FHLBank has reliably supported the Southeast region for more than 80 years and we are not aware of any credit loss or safety and soundness issues the FHLBanks have experienced associated with doing business with FHLBank members.

We are concerned that the increased FHLBank membership requirements for existing and prospective members by the proposed rule would significantly reduce the availability and reliability of liquidity on which we and many FHLBank members depend. The proposed rule would make it more difficult for community banks, such as ours, to deliver important credit to their communities, and would discourage potential members from joining.

The proposed rule calls into question one of the core tenets of the FHLBank cooperative; members in good standing can depend on their FHLBank as a reliable source of liquidity in all economic cycles. By imposing ongoing asset tests and redefining membership eligibility and requirements, the proposed rule introduces uncertainty to a financial institution's membership in an FHLBank and their ability to obtain vital liquidity to serve the credit needs of their communities. This uncertainty and instability of FHLBank membership could pose a systemic risk to the FHLBank System.

Discouraging new members from joining and terminating existing members in good standing will reverse the growth of the FHLBank System. Penalizing a financial institution with lost membership or reduced access to FHLBank funding would only serve to reduce that institution's role in the provision of housing opportunity. In addition, fewer advances will result in less money in the FHLBank System and impede its ability to fulfill its statutory mission.

FHLBank members serve the housing needs of their communities in a variety of ways. Some hold assets on their balance sheets that reflect a role in the residential housing market; others originate home mortgages and sell them into the secondary market; others may have a greater focus on community and economic development lending; and some may play a key role in small business lending. All of these activities help create the economic foundation for housing opportunity. These various roles that FHLBank members play in local economies strengthen the FHLBank system and should be embraced.

Over the past 25 years, Congress has broadened access to FHLBank funding and liquidity by expanding membership eligibility. While Congress has stipulated that most members must meet certain asset-related eligibility requirements to join an FHLBank, Congress has never sought to require continuous testing of such requirements or a percentage of assets to demonstrate a commitment to housing finance. We believe the proposed rule amends current law rather than establishing safety and soundness regulations to support the statute and FHLBank mission. We also believe that any changes to the statutorily-established FHLBank membership, such as changes that would narrow the FHLBanks' mission as the proposed rule appears to do, should be initiated by Congress.

Ongoing compliance with membership requirements of the proposed rule would impose additional regulatory burdens on FHLBank members and add uncertainty to FHLBank membership. To remain a strong financial institution that is able to serve our customers, we must continually adapt and adjust our business and asset-liability strategies. The proposed rule would severely limit our flexibility to manage our balance sheet in response to changing market conditions in a safe and sound manner. Our goal is to serve our customers and local community, and unnecessary compliance costs make this more difficult. Instead of operating in a way that is responsive to our customers and community, we could find ourselves managing to regulations in a way that could weaken our financial condition. Furthermore, FHLBank members are currently subject to ongoing requirements that demonstrate commitment to housing finance. When a member borrows an advance, it must provide eligible collateral to secure the advance. Nearly all eligible types of collateral, which are determined by Congress, are related to housing.

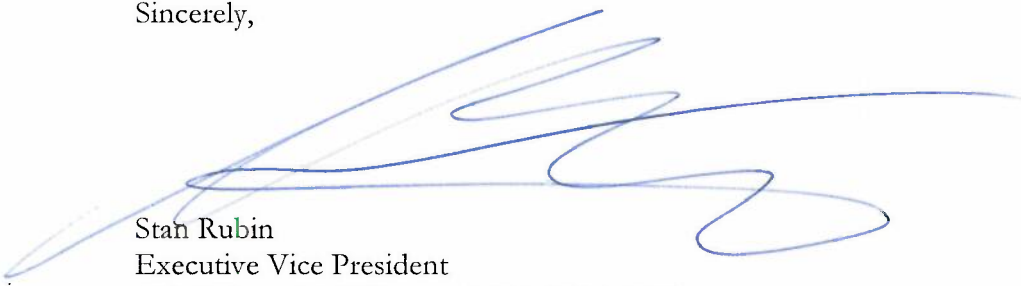
The proposed rule would also shrink the amount of private capital flowing from the global markets through the FHLBanks and their members to the U.S. mortgage market and the communities we serve. Of particular concern is the effect on the Affordable Housing Program ("AHP"), the largest single, private source of funding for low-to-moderate-income housing. Each FHLBank sets aside 10% of net earnings annually into the AHP. The FHLBanks have awarded nearly \$4.5 billion in AHP funds to build or preserve affordable housing for more than 724,000 households from 1990 to 2013. The adverse impact the proposed rule would have on the FHLBanks' ability to grow or maintain advance levels would directly lead to reduced funding for affordable housing initiatives.

Our membership in FHLBank Atlanta and the reliable access to liquidity it provides is very important to our bank. Furthermore, FHLBank Atlanta's reliable funding to all of its members in the district has had a positive effect on the recovery of local housing markets and economies.

The proposed rule would result in a fundamental change to an FHLBank system that has, and continues to, work well. It will constrain the FHLBanks' ability to serve their members and the communities these members serve, terminate memberships or increase the costs on current members in good standing, and ultimately reduce the funding and value of the Affordable Housing Program.

For these reasons, we request that the proposed rule be withdrawn. Thank you for the opportunity to submit a comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form a cursive representation of the name Stan Rubin.

Stan Rubin
Executive Vice President
Chief Financial Officer and Chief Risk Officer