

August 12, 2020

The Honorable Cindy Axne  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Axne:

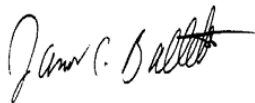
On behalf of the American Bankers Association<sup>1</sup> (ABA), I write to express our support for your bill, the Rural Equal Aid Act. As you know nearly 5,000 banks –80% of all banks nationwide– reported agricultural and rural loans on their books at year-end 2019. Banks are an important part of rural America and the Rural Equal Aid Act will allow banks to better serve their customers in rural areas.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided relief for business owners by covering 6 months of payments for borrowers with existing Small Business Administration (SBA) loans. Similar relief was not given to borrowers that utilized the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development programs. The Rural Equal Aid Act would correct this oversight by making 6 months of payments for rural small businesses and nonprofits using the Community Facilities Loan Programs, Business and Industry Loan Programs, the Intermediary Relending Program, and the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program.

ABA has long supported USDA Rural Development Lending Programs and was very involved in the development of OneRD, which streamlines the loan making process within USDA Rural Development. Banks believe in supporting communities in rural America and the Rural Equal Aid Act will help build strong rural communities.

We thank you for your leadership on this issue and we will be urging members of the House of Representatives to support the Rural Equal Aid Act.

Sincerely,



James C. Ballentine

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<sup>1</sup> The American Bankers Association is the voice of the nation's \$20.3 trillion banking industry, which is composed of small, regional and large banks that together employ more than 2 million people, safeguard \$15.8 trillion in deposits and extend nearly \$11 trillion in loans.