

April 29, 2019

The Honorable Steve Watkins
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Watkins:

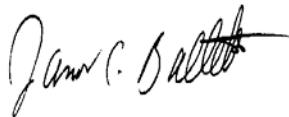
On behalf of the members of the American Bankers Association (ABA), I write to express our support for your bill, H.R. 1872, the Enhancing Credit Opportunities in Rural America Act (ECORA). Your efforts to assist agriculture borrowers is greatly appreciated. As you know nearly 5,000 banks –83% of all banks nationwide– reported agricultural loans on their books at year-end 2018 with a total outstanding portfolio of more than \$186 billion.

H.R. 1872 would benefit rural borrowers of agricultural real estate and rural home mortgage loans through lower interest rates and greater access to credit. With net farm income declining since 2013, farmers and ranchers will need more help in acquiring credit for real estate into the future. This legislation will help community banks provide more agricultural real estate loans to farmers and ranchers by lowering the costs to service these types of loans.

ABA has long advocated for a more level playing field in agricultural lending, and this legislation helps to achieve that parity. The goal of banks in agriculture is ultimately lower costs for all farmers and ranchers, and this will be accomplished by leveling the playing field for all lenders.

We thank you for your leadership on this issue and we will be urging members of the House of Representatives to support rural Americans by supporting H.R. 1872.

Sincerely,



James C. Ballentine

cc: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives