

July 18, 2023

The Honorable Ben Cardin  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship  
428A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joni Ernst  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship  
428A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for the Community Advantage Lending Program Act of 2023

Dear Chairman Cardin and Ranking Member Ernst:

Opportunity Finance Network (OFN) writes today to support the *Community Advantage Lending Program Act of 2023* and to urge all members of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee to support this legislation. The bill aims to codify the Community Advantage Lending Program and in doing so, increase access to capital for underserved small businesses.

Opportunity Finance Network (OFN) is a leading national network of more than 390 community development financial institutions (CDFIs), specialized lenders that provide responsible financial products and services in low-income rural, urban, and Native communities nationwide. As a trusted intermediary between CDFIs and the public and private sectors, OFN works with its partners – banks, philanthropies, corporations, government agencies and others – to create economic opportunity for all by strengthening and investing in CDFIs.

The Community Advantage pilot program has been a critical tool for many of the CDFI industry's small business lenders. While the SBA has implemented a rule that creates a permanent path for CA lenders as CA SBLCs, the agency was limited in their authority over creating a permanent program designed to reach market gaps in underserved communities. As introduced, the bill is a culmination of the 12-year history of the pilot program, marrying the efforts of small business mission lenders, Congress, and the SBA.

The bill recognizes the critical role of mission lenders as specialized institutions providing responsible capital to small businesses that cannot access traditional financing. OFN is pleased to support this important bill that would make permanent the Community Advantage program and enable lenders to provide the capital needed to address market gaps.

Sincerely,



Dafina Williams



Executive Vice President, External Affairs  
Opportunity Finance Network