



NEW YORKERS FOR RESPONSIBLE LENDING

December 18, 2015

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
New York State Capitol Building
Executive Chamber
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As you know, the appointment of a permanent New York State Superintendent of Financial Services is again in the news. We write to urge you to fill this position with a strong, independent, public servant who will hold the financial services industry to the highest standards of legal and ethical conduct. This appointment matters tremendously to New Yorkers and New York communities, and has major national visibility and implications. It is absolutely critical that the next DFS Superintendent carry on your administration's admirable track record of strong and effective enforcement of our state's financial services laws.

Our organizations are members of New Yorkers for Responsible Lending (NYRL), a coalition of 170 organizations from all regions of the state. Founded in 2000, our coalition collectively represents millions of New Yorkers. NYRL members include community-based and affordable housing groups; advocates for seniors and consumers; civil rights, labor, community reinvestment, and foreclosure prevention organizations; community development financial institutions; and good government organizations. NYRL members have for years seen first-hand the devastation that predatory financial practices have caused to families and entire New York neighborhoods.

We commend you for creating DFS as a strong enforcement agency, and for selecting Benjamin M. Lawsky as its first Superintendent. Under Superintendent Lawsky's tenure, DFS emerged in New York and on the national stage as an especially effective agency that works to ensure safe and fair financial products and practices. Among its many important accomplishments, DFS has vigorously enforced New York's strong consumer protection laws, for example, stopping illegal marketing and collection of usurious and discriminatory payday loans. The agency promulgated groundbreaking rules to protect New Yorkers against unfair and abusive debt collection and force-placed insurance, and brought meaningful enforcement actions against mortgage servicers that harmed New York homeowners.

First and foremost, New York State needs a financial services regulator who sees his or her primary role as enforcing the law and serving the public. We witnessed the transformation of New York's banking and insurance departments into a dynamic watchdog agency, and DFS now stands out as a good example of a regulatory agency that uses its power effectively to create a fairer, more balanced financial services system. It has begun to gain a reputation for advancing the interests of all New Yorkers, including low-income residents and other economically-marginalized groups.

We urge you to name someone who is expressly dedicated to carrying DFS's important work forward, and who will build on DFS's emerging national reputation as an enlightened financial services regulator. We consider the DFS appointment of utmost importance to all New Yorkers, and agree with *The New York Times's* recommendation that you "choose Mr. Lawskey's successor from the nation's ranks of prosecutors, legal and consumer advocates or federal or state officials who have shown an aggressive streak toward Wall Street."

Many New Yorkers face economic hardship, including systemic barriers to fair and affordable financial services access. Lower-income and immigrant communities, particularly of color, throughout the state continue to be targets for high-cost and predatory financial services. We urge you to name someone to DFS who finds this picture deeply troubling and seeks fundamentally to rectify it.

Please contact Sarah Ludwig or Andy Morrison at New Economy Project (212-680-5100), if you would like to discuss this matter.

Respectfully,

Albany County Rural Housing Alliance, Inc.
Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development
Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A
Buffalo Urban League
Center for NYC Neighborhoods
Common Cause NY
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation
DC37
Empire Justice Center
Genesee Co-op FCU
Grow Brooklyn, Inc.
Habitat for Humanity New York City
JASA/Legal Services for the Elderly in Queens
Lower East Side People's Federal Credit Union
Margert Community Corporation
MFY Legal Services, Inc.
New Economy Project
NYPIRG
Pratt Area Community Council
The Parodneck Foundation
Westchester Residential Opportunities Inc.
WNY Law Center