

**Esperanza Community Housing Corporation**

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April 1, 2004**Docket No. 04-06**

Communications Division
Public Information Room, Mailstop 1-5
Office of the Comptroller of the Currency
250 E St. SW
Washington **20219**

Docket No. R-1181

Jennifer J. Hohnson
Secretary
Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System
20th Street and Constitution Avenue, **NW**
Washington **DC 20551**

Robert E. Feldman

Executive Secretary
Attention: Comments
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
550 17th St NW
Washington **DC 20429**

Regulation Comments, Attention: No. 2004-04

Chief Counsel's **Office**
Office of Thrift Supervision
1700 G Street NW
Washington **DC 20552**

Dear Officials of Federal Bank and Thrift Agencies:

As a member of the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, Esperanza Community Housing Corporation urges you to withdraw the proposed changes to the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) regulations. CRA has been instrumental in increasing access to homeownership, boosting economic development, and expanding small businesses in the nation's minority, immigrant, and low- and moderate-income communities. Your proposed changes are contrary to the CRA statute because they will halt the progress made in community reinvestment,

The proposed CRA changes will thwart the **Administration's** goals of improving the economic **status of** immigrants and creating **5.5 million new** minority homeowners by the end of **the** decade. **Instead,** the proposed **CRA changes** would **facilitate** predatory lending **and reduce the ability of the** general **public to hold** financial **institutions** accountable for compliance with consumer protection laws.

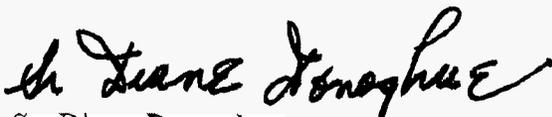
The proposed changes include three major elements: 1) provide streamlined and cursory exams for banks with assets between **\$250 million and \$500 million**; 2) **establish a weak** predatory lending compliance standard under CRA; and 3) expand data collection and reporting for **small business** and home lending. The beneficial impacts of the third proposal are overwhelmed by the **damage** imposed by the first two proposals. In addition, the federal banking agencies did not update procedures regarding affiliates and assessment areas in their proposal, **and thus** missed a vital opportunity to continue CRA's effectiveness.

Enhanced data disclosure. The federal agencies propose that **they will publicly** report the specific census tract location of **small** businesses receiving loan in addition to the current items in the CRA small business data for **each** depository institution. This will improve the ability of the general public to determine if banks are serving traditionally neglected neighborhoods with small business loans. Also the **regulators** propose separately reporting purchases from loan originations on CRA exams and separately reporting high cost lending (per the new HMDA data requirement starting with the **2004** data).

The positive aspects of the proposed data enhancements do not begin to make up for the significant harm **caused by** the first two proposals. Furthermore, the federal agencies are not utilizing the data enhancements in order to make CRA exams more rigorous. The agencies must not merely report the **new** data on CRA exams, but must use the new data to provide **less** weight on CRA exams to **high** cost loans than prime loans and assign less weight for purchases than loan originations.

The proposed changes to CRA will directly undercut the Administration's emphasis on minority homeownership and immigrant access to jobs and banking services. The proposals regarding streamlined exams and the anti-predatory lending standard threaten CRA's statutory purpose of the safe and sound provision of credit and deposit services. The proposed data enhancements would become much more meaningful if the agencies update procedures regarding assessment areas, affiliates, and the treatment of high cost loans and purchases on CRA exams. CRA is simply a law that makes capitalism work: for all Americans. CRA is too vital to be gutted by harmful regulatory changes and neglect. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Sr. Diane Donoghue
Executive Director

Cc: National Community Reinvestment Coalition
President George Bush
Treasury Secretary John W. Snow