

Proposal: 1723 (AF94) Reg BB - Community Reinvestment Act

Description:

Comment ID: 137545

From: Sarah Parker-Scanlon

Proposal: 1723 (AF94) Reg BB - Community Reinvestment Act

Subject: R-1723 Community Reinvestment Act

Comments:

Dear Federal Reserve System,

I appreciate the Federal Reserve Board encouraging public input on ways to modernize and improve the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA).

CRA credit should not be awarded for providing financial education to households at any income level. The CRA is intended to increase access to credit for low- and moderate-income consumers, and to address historic redlining that impacted their ability to get home and business loans and credit. Because of this, only financial education for low- and moderate-income households and small business owners should count for CRA credit. In my line of work, I see how bad financial choice saddle the poor and especially people of color for years to come, if not the rest of their lives. Targeted financial education is important.

An updated CRA that responds to changes in the banking sector-such as the decrease in community-based banks and the evolving ways in which consumers use banks-will have a modest impact unless the evaluation process for banks awards "outstanding" and "satisfactory" grades less frequently than in the past. The current rating system suggests that the banking system is doing a good job meeting the CRA's goals, which is clearly not the case.

We need an evaluation process that more meaningfully addresses systemic inequities in access to credit, expands financial inclusion, and combats redlining, particularly for communities of color and rural communities. Access to credit includes affordable mortgage and home equity loans for sustainable homeownership, as well as affordable and flexible small business credit, savings, and loan products that create a foundation for sustainable small businesses.

This means a CRA that includes an explicit focus on racial equity. Data consistently shows that if income is controlled for as a variable, loan denials correlate to race. Examiners should downgrade bank ratings when persistent disparities are found in lending or banking services, including for small business loans.

Sincerely,
Sarah Parker-Scanlon