

February 5, 2026

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Support Passage of The Housing for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 6644)

Dear Speaker Johnson and Minority Leader Jeffries:

On behalf of the Independent Community Bankers of America (ICBA) and the nearly 45,000 community bank locations we represent, I write to thank you for offering floor time for consideration of the Housing for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 6644) and to express our strong support for the legislation. **ICBA and community banks urge all members of the House to vote YES on this important package.**

H.R. 6644 is critically needed legislation that would spur home construction nationwide, promote housing affordability, and help alleviate the housing crisis. This is a serious and thoughtful effort to address a serious problem, and we are grateful to House leadership and the House Financial Services Committee for prioritizing it.

Title VI of the Act, “Strengthening Community Banks’ Role in Housing,” is based on a number of bipartisan community bank measures reported out of the House Financial Services Committee during the 119th Congress. ICBA-supported community bank provisions include:

- **Section 601**, the Community Bank Deposit Access Act (H.R. 5317), sponsored by Chairman French Hill, would allow custodial deposits to be held by community banks without being considered brokered deposits, provided the custodial deposits do not exceed 20 percent of the banks’ total liabilities. Brokered deposits are subject to certain capital and interest-rate restrictions. The more favorable treatment would only be available to banks of less than \$10 billion in assets with a strong composite rating (“outstanding” or “good”) that are well-capitalized or have obtained a waiver from the FDIC. Section 601 would help community banks maintain lower funding costs, expand lending opportunities, and serve their communities by attracting stable, low-cost funding.
- **Section 602**, the Keeping Deposits Local Act (H.R. 3234), sponsored by Rep. Tom Emmer, would raise the percentage threshold of reciprocal deposits that may be held by a bank without being considered brokered deposits. Reciprocal deposits are swapped among banks participating in a network and result in higher aggregate levels of deposit insurance coverage. Currently, a community bank may exclude the lesser of \$5 billion in reciprocal deposits or 20 percent of its total liabilities from being treated as brokered deposits. Section 602 would create a scale of tiered thresholds according to bank-asset levels. Community banks would be able to treat 30 to 50 percent of liabilities as non-brokered. Insured deposits are critical to community banks’ ability to support local credit needs, and reciprocal deposits are one tool to help secure greater insured deposits. Raising the percentage of reciprocal deposits allowed would

assist banks approaching the current-law threshold and support lending needs.

- **Section 603**, the SMART Act (H.R. 4437), sponsored by Representatives William Timmons and Bill Foster, provides well-managed and well-capitalized financial institutions under \$6 billion in assets with regulatory relief, such as alternating limited-scope examinations and a combined safety-and-soundness exam and consumer compliance exam. We believe these reforms provide exam relief without compromising safety and soundness.
- **Section 604**, the TRUST Act (H.R. 4478), sponsored by Representatives Tim Moore and Ritchie Torres, would allow banks with up to \$6 billion in assets to qualify for an 18-month exam cycle. As with the SMART Act, this section would allow more community banks to direct more resources toward serving their communities.
- **Section 609**, the Advancing the Mentor-Protégé Program for Small Financial Institutions Act (H.R. 3709), sponsored by Rep. Joyce Beatty, would establish a Treasury Financial Agent program enabling partnerships between Minority Depository Institutions (MDIs), rural community banks, and other financial institutions. This legislation reinforces and supports the critical role MDIs and rural community banks serve as a lifeline in their communities, providing tailored financial products, and fostering greater economic growth
- **Section 610**, the American Access to Banking Act (H.R. 4544), sponsored by Ranking Member Maxine Waters, would promote the formation of de novo community banks by streamlining the application process and provide for review of capital raising.
- **Section 611**, based on Chairman Barr's Promoting New Bank Formation Act, would create a two-year pilot program to promote the creation of de novo banks, especially in rural areas, by providing more regulatory, capital and lending flexibility for these banks.
- **Section 612**, the Rural Depositories Revitalization Study Act (H.R. 6536), sponsored by Rep. Ralph Norman, would require the Federal banking agencies to study improving the growth, capital adequacy, and profitability of rural depository institutions.

These Title VI provisions would provide meaningful regulatory relief for community banks and strengthen them to provide more credit for housing, small businesses, families, and other purposes.

Thank you for your support for housing affordability and community banks. ICBA looks forward to working with House leadership to advance H.R. 6644 into law.

Sincerely,

/s/

Rebeca Romero Rainey
President & CEO

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