

# Liberty Bank, the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, Inc. And NCLC Announce Agreement to Settle Fair Housing Act Lawsuit

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BOSTON- Liberty Bank, the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, Inc. ("Center") and the Center's co-counsel, the National Consumer Law Center, jointly announced today a comprehensive plan to promote homeownership and enhance access to credit in underserved communities. The Center and Liberty have agreed to an innovative residential lending strategy that leverages the Center's research and expertise on barriers to homeownership for Connecticut residents and the Bank's unique lending programs, experienced residential lending personnel, and extensive branch network.

"The National Consumer Law Center is pleased to have had the opportunity as co-counsel to lend its national expertise litigating actions under fair lending laws to the successful resolution of this case in Connecticut," said National Consumer Law Center Director of Litigation Stuart T. Rossman.

"Through NCLC's groundbreaking anti-discrimination litigation and public policy advocacy, training, and support for attorneys and other advocates, we are committed to building economic security for vulnerable families of color so they can achieve the American Dream."

Under the agreement announced today, Liberty Bank has committed to expand its Good Neighbor Mortgage Loan Program by increasing available funds by \$10,000,000. Liberty has also set aside \$300,000 for subsidies to promote home ownership and enhance access to credit in communities with a history of constrained credit along with enhanced outreach initiatives and the establishment of a new loan production office in the City of Hartford. Liberty Bank will also expand its community development loan program by \$5,000,000 over the next three years to further support community service, economic development and diverse affordable housing projects in underserved low- and moderate-income areas. It will support this initiative by making available an additional \$200,000 in grants for qualified organizations from these communities.

The residential lending strategy announced today reflects the key terms of an agreement entered into by the Center and Liberty Bank to resolve the fair lending-related claims alleged by the Center in a complaint filed on October 4, 2018. The case is Connecticut Fair Housing Center, Inc. v. Liberty Bank, D. Conn. Case No.: 18-cv-1654. While Liberty Bank denies any wrongdoing, the parties have entered into the agreement to resolve voluntarily any and all claims asserted by the Center.

"The Connecticut Fair Housing Center is pleased to join Liberty Bank in announcing these important lending and community-building initiatives. We applaud Liberty's commitment of time, energy and resources to a wide range of programs that will help promote financial education, expand opportunities for access to credit, and financially support programs developed to revitalize the housing market in communities in Connecticut that have traditionally had difficulty accessing credit," said Erin Kemple, Executive Director of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center.

"For nearly two centuries, Liberty Bank has been serving the banking and lending needs of

communities across Connecticut. As the oldest bank in the state, we know the importance of relationships – and not just in the communities where we are located, but also in the areas where we aspire to grow,” said Chandler J. Howard, President and CEO of Liberty Bank.

“At Liberty Bank, we are deeply committed to helping people achieve their dream of homeownership,” said Howard. “Through its Good Neighbor Program, the Bank has helped families achieve that dream and increased access to credit in underserved areas by offering mortgages with lower rates and other consumer-friendly features.”

“The mission of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center is to ensure that all people have equal access to housing opportunities in Connecticut, free from discrimination,” said Kemple, “but we need more banks taking steps like those outlined here to help us accomplish this objective. Providing fair and equal access to credit should be a common goal shared by all mortgage lenders in Connecticut. We hope today’s announcement will inspire other financial institutions to follow Liberty Bank’s lead and launch their own initiatives to promote homeownership and address the need to expand fair and non-discriminatory access to credit.”