



**America's
Credit Unions**

Jim Nussle

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June 12, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Today's Markup: "Fiscal Year 2025 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Bill"

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of America's Credit Unions, I am writing regarding the Committee's markup entitled, "Fiscal Year 2025 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Bill." America's Credit Unions is the voice of consumers' best option for financial services: credit unions. We advocate for policies that allow the industry to effectively meet the needs of their over 142 million members nationwide. Worldwide, there are over 82,000 credit unions in 98 countries with \$3.6 trillion dollars in total assets serving 404 million members. America's Credit Unions is also a member of the World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU), which is the leading trade association and development organization for the international credit union movement.

We respectfully request that Congress appropriate funding for WOCCU's efforts through USAID's Cooperative Development Program (CDP) funding. We are writing in strong support of a fiscal year 2025 funding level of \$50 million for the CDP.

As Congress moves forward with consideration of funding for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), it is important to recognize the important history that credit unions have played in responding to disaster and crisis situations. It should be noted that this is not a political position. Credit unions are not an arm of any government, but instead they embrace their philosophy of "people helping people." During a crisis, credit unions become a source of community stability as people come together to see that their families are fed. Small businesses look to their credit unions for financing to keep their people employed. Farmers seek funding to get their crops in the ground.

The credit union cooperative model is unique in that it provides them with the ability to weather financial shocks that draw consumers to them during times of crisis. This must be recognized by policy makers to allow credit unions to play an important role in the recovery during a time of economic uncertainty.

Credit unions have a long history of providing this much needed relief. They have reconciled post-civil war economies through credit union reactivation in the Central American nations of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. They have empowered township communities through credit union services in post-Apartheid South Africa. They built community reconciliations efforts in post-genocide Rwanda. They rebuilt communities through local credit union leadership after natural disasters including the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, 2017's Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, and many others.

With U.S. government and private U.S. foundation support, WOCCU is working in countries like Ukraine to promote economic freedom and growth, increase financial inclusion, rapidly expand financial access using mobile technology, help farmers and artisans obtain better prices for their goods, and fill the agricultural lending gap to improve food security. As such, we would urge Congress to support WOCCU's short-term and long-term relief and rebuilding efforts in the Ukraine and surrounding regions vis-à-vis credit unions and their financial infrastructure that are working to address increasing food security issues and other economic needs in that war-torn country and around the world.

Since 1971, WOCCU has offered nearly 300 technical assistance programs around the globe—all while serving the mission of improving lives through credit unions and other cooperative financial institutions. WOCCU's programs provide education and international networking for the exchange of information and ideas. Through these projects, WOCCU promotes the sustainable development of credit unions and other financial cooperatives around the world to empower people through access to high quality, affordable financial services.

Administered by USAID, the CDP is a global initiative that focuses on building capacity of cooperative businesses and cooperative systems for self-reliance, local ownership, and sustainability.

Speaking more broadly to the CDP, with their specialized expertise, the CDP's implementing partners have advanced cooperative businesses and systems in more than 18 countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Activities are targeted to strengthen cooperative businesses in several ways including improved governance, capitalization, gender empowerment, youth engagement, financial management, market performance, and advocacy. The program also prioritizes collaboration among partners through working groups, cooperative research, learning, and dissemination of cooperative development resources.

During the life of the program, activities have supported more than 500 cooperatives and credit unions with a combined savings of \$495 million. The program has also:

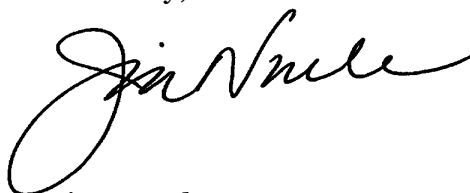
- Provided health insurance and services to more than 42,000 people in Uganda;
- Leveraged more than \$95 million of investments for cattle cooperatives in South Africa;
- Increased member equity among cacao cooperatives in Ecuador, Peru, and the Dominican Republic by more than \$4 million; and
- Reformed cooperative law and regulation in Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya.

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On behalf of credit unions and their millions of members worldwide, thank you for your assistance, for holding this important markup, and considering our views on these subjects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Nussle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning of the first name.

Jim Nussle, CUDE
President & CEO

cc: Members of the Committee on Appropriations