July 10, 2026

Chairman Tim Scott
Ranking Member Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
534 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Warren:

As the only federal agency specifically dedicated to looking out for everyday consumers, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) has an immensely important job. In its relatively short existence, the CFPB has returned more than $21 billion to consumers' pockets. Money that was taken from consumers through predatory or unlawful business practices could then instead be put to better use fueling local economies and fulfilling households' everyday needs. Consumers of different incomes, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and political affiliations have benefited from the Bureau's work. The importance and value of the CFPB seems self-evident; and yet, the CFPB has been the target of vitriolic attacks threatening its very existence. So, it falls to groups like Woodstock Institute to remind Congress of the CFPB's purpose, duty, and crucial importance.

Woodstock Institute is a Chicago-based research and advocacy nonprofit that works to build a financial system in which lower-income communities and communities of color can safely borrow, save, and build wealth to achieve economic security and community prosperity. Much of Woodstock's advocacy efforts to pursue its mission of community prosperity is informed by the work of the CFPB. The ongoing attacks on the CFPB are deeply troubling, and we appreciate the opportunity to share our concerns.

Illinois families, like many across the nation, continue to face a mounting affordability crisis. Rent, gas, and grocery costs keep climbing while paychecks fail to keep pace with inflation. Predatory lenders across the country base their business models on squeezing every dollar out of the wallets of families trying to close the gap in their budgets. Small businesses across the state—particularly those owned by women and entrepreneurs of color—continue to struggle to access affordable credit, depressing the growth of our local economies.

The data and guidance that the CFPB administers is a vital component of Woodstock's work to address these systemic inequalities. Effective policymaking depends on the kind of robust, publicly accessible data that the CFPB provides. At every turn, Woodstock has urged the CFPB to implement strong data reporting under section 1071 of the Dodd-Frank Act. Requiring lenders to collect and report demographic and pricing data on small business loans would illuminate opportunities and gaps to be filled in the market and would enable regulators and advocates to identify discriminatory lending patterns before they escalate.

Woodstock Institute has long relied on Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) data to track mortgage lending trends across Illinois. Since 2022, we have maintained a live Community Lending Data Portal to "democratize the data," giving policymakers, lenders, and community organizers real-time information on mortgage lending, neighborhood demographics, foreclosure trends, and data on top lenders. This data portal is built in large part on HMDA data that the CFPB collects and publishes. We have helped build similar portals with partner organizations in Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and Indiana, and we rely on this same data in our direct work with lending institutions and policymakers.

Since Russell Vought became Acting Director in February 2025, he has stated publicly that he intends to close down the agency, going as far as to adopt a new legal theory to justify cutting off its own statutorily guaranteed funding from the Federal Reserve rather than requesting the money Congress said the Bureau is entitled to. Woodstock Institute joined Rise Economy and the National Community Reinvestment Coalition in suing the CFPB to compel the Bureau to request the funding the law requires. On March 13, 2026, the court granted summary judgement in our favor and ordered the Bureau to continue requesting the funding necessary to carry out its statutory duty. The court itself declared that the novel legal theory the defendants used was "arbitrary, capricious, and in violation of law."

No organization should have to sue a government agency to provide data and services that Congress has already mandated. As long as the attacks on the CFPB persist, organizations across the country will be forced back to court, again and again, simply to keep the CFPB doing the job it was created to do. We urge the Committee to protect the CFPB's existence

WOODSTOCK INSTITUTE

Advancing Economic Justice and Racial Equity

so it can continue to serve consumers across the country through our current affordability crisis and for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Horacio F. Mendez
President & CEO, Woodstock Institute
67 E Madison St., Ste 2108
Chicago, Illinois 60603

Cc:
Chairman French Hill and Ranking Member Maxine Waters
House Committee on Financial Services
2129 Rayburn House Office Building,
Washington, DC 20515