

## **Candidate Statement: Erbin L. Crowell**

It has been an honor to serve on the board of NCBA CLUSA and a privilege to work with my fellow board members and our committed staff. I would welcome the opportunity to continue to serve our movement in this role as we celebrate NCBA CLUSA's centenary, work to fulfill the potential of the International Co-operative Alliance's "Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade" and build our vision for our next 100 years.

I feel fortunate to have seen the potential of the cooperative model from many vantage points, and see NCBA CLUSA's core strength as bringing together cooperatives and mutuals from across sectors, industries and communities. I began my career in co-ops at Equal Exchange—a pioneer in fairly traded products—where I was able to see the potential for a cooperative economy in collaboration among worker, farmer, consumer and financial cooperatives. This experience convinced me of the power of the cooperative model as a tool for economic democracy and as a better, more sustainable way to do business. My passion for cooperation led me to pursue a master's degree in Management: Co-operatives and Credit Unions from St. Mary's University in Nova Scotia, where I was able gain a deeper understanding of the history and philosophy of cooperation, as well as its relevance to contemporary social, economic and ecological issues. My work with the Cooperative Development Institute, the Cooperative Fund of New England, and the Valley Alliance of Worker Co-ops eventually led me to the Neighboring Food Co-op Association, a federation of food co-ops dedicated to the shared success of our member co-ops and a vision for a thriving cooperative economy.

My time on the board of directors of NCBA CLUSA has convinced me that the ability of cooperatives to be successful lies in being able to reach people from all walks of life and to be relevant to all aspects of their lives. While each of our sectors has particular strengths, approaches and priorities, it is as a *cross sector* movement that we offer a viable alternative to business as usual. Our potential lies in the space between our co-ops—the opportunities we have for collaboration within and across industries—where we can see the possibility of a more cooperative economy grounded in our common values, principles and business model.

During my time on the NCBA CLUSA board, I have remained focused on the central question of how we can leverage the strength of our co-ops, credit unions and mutuals to support our shared economic success, engage entrepreneurs, academics, activists and policy makers, and empower people of all backgrounds to enrich their lives and their communities. NCBA CLUSA has made important progress over the past

few years, and I believe that we are well positioned to fulfill this potential as we look toward our next century of cooperation. It would be an honor to continue to serve our movement on the board of directors of NCBA CLUSA as we continue to move forward, together.