

## **Candidate Statement: Diane Gasaway**

I whole-heartedly believe in the power of self-help and determination to create thriving communities and a better world. Cooperative ownership provides opportunity to foster leadership and create transformational change in their lives. When people learn how to pool their resources and share risk the seemingly unattainable can become real and when this happens, communities can flourish.

It's my personal mission to move the co-op model out of the alternative realm and into the mainstream. NCBA CLUSA is perfectly positioned to be the convener of all the stakeholders engaged in cooperative development, which should involve all of its members. Our collective work is not a competition, rather it's the model we need to be sharing with a united front. The demand for more information, technical assistance, and shared lessons from existing co-ops is growing exponentially. Together, we have the chance to leverage our knowledge and bring the cooperative business model to the forefront of economic development.

We are at a crossroads of a new era of cooperative development. With the passage of the Main Street Employee Ownership Act, directing Small Business Development Centers to provide technical assistance to worker co-ops, the existing cooperative community has the opportunity to help guide how this work will be implemented. Early, proactive co-op educational interactions with small businesses and their advisors will position the co-op model among the regular options presented to their clients.

The democratic and equitable nature of cooperatives inherently creates cultures of bridging wealth divides and promoting inclusion, while honoring our differences. Having Northwest representation on this cross-sectoral national board will help highlight the growing and renewed importance of co-ops to our economy, not only across the nation, but in our region as well.