

## **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 over the past three years. During this time, NCBA CLUSA celebrated its 100th Year, recruited new executive leadership, and embarked on a visioning process to guide us into our next hundred years. I feel particularly fortunate to have worked with board members, management, and members as we have developed our vision for an inclusive economy and would welcome the opportunity to continue to serve on the board.

From my perspective, NCBA CLUSA's strength lies in our ability to bring together co-ops and mutuals from across sectors, industries, and communities to address the challenges and opportunities that we see around us. I began my career at Equal Exchange, a worker co-op and pioneer in fair trade, where I saw the potential of collaboration among worker, farmer, consumer, and financial cooperatives. This experience convinced me of the power of this model as a better way to do business and a tool for building a more participatory and sustainable economy. My passion for cooperation led me to pursue a Master of Management: Co-operatives & Credit Unions from Saint Mary's University in Nova Scotia, where I gained a deeper understanding of cooperative history and philosophy, and the relevance of the co-op model to contemporary 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 secondary cooperative of food co-ops dedicated to the shared success of our members and a vision for a thriving cooperative economy, where I serve as Executive Director.

I am convinced that the ability of our movement to fulfill our potential lies in being able to reach people from all walks of life, to be relevant to all aspects of their lives, and to help them see a better future through cooperation. 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. It is in the space between our co-ops—the opportunities we have for greater collaboration within and across industries—where we can see the possibility of a more inclusive economy, grounded in our shared values, principles, and business model.

During my time on the board, I have focused on working with my colleagues to clarify our vision, stay focused on our core mission, and leverage the strength of our movement 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 our potential. It would be an honor to continue to serve you on the board of directors as we continue to move forward, together.