**Candidate Statement – LaDonna Standers Redmond**

There are divides everywhere you turn. No matter how you voted, there is almost an equal number of people who believe something different. The racial divide is also evident. Some say that we have never been more divided along the lines of race, and there are others who live in the racial divide gap. They only know of the division. Divisions are places where conflict emerges. Conflict is natural, but it has to be addressed. Conflict can only be addressed by building more bridges.

I am a bridge-builder. Being able to work in the nexus of conflict and difference is a skill. I have cultivated that skill set while working on various issues across diverse communities in urban centers and rural towns. Every community that I can think of wants two things: dignity and respect.

I have had the honor and privilege to work in cooperative businesses in several roles. As a staff member, I worked in a food cooperative. My role was to help the cooperative to build a grocery store in a traditionally African American community.

The community shared their apprehension about co-op coming to their community, and the co- op listened. The co-op developed a strategy to change the community's perception of the co- op. The co-op also changed its practices and policies. The shift in policies allowed the co-op to hire people who lived in the community surrounding the co-op. The new staff was Black, Indigenous, People of color. The new co-op team also included people who were Trans and Non-Binary. The store is a success because the co-op listened and became more inclusive.

As president of a co-op board, I work with the board to cultivate a strong relationship with the members and the management of the co-op. We are listening to our community of owners who have told us that they want an inclusive cooperative. The board has made sure that board policies support equity and inclusion. We support the management as they operationalize equity and inclusion.

As an entrepreneur, I am a member of a marketing co-op. I assist other cooperative businesses to find their path to a more equitable cooperative. I help them dig deep and grow into the co- op they most want to become – a diverse, inclusive, and equitable co-op—a co-op where everyone is welcome.

Cooperators must build more bridges. Sustaining that skill requires a deep belief in cooperation in practice and principle. I believe that NCBA/CLUSA is at the early stages of working at the nexus of cooperation and racial equity. I am sure that NCBA/CLUSA staff and board know that no one can be left behind in our quest to build a cooperative economy, especially Black, Indigenous, communities of color. I want to support NCBA/CLUSA build the bridge of cooperation that leads to a diverse, inclusive, and equitable future for all.