

Marla Bilonick Statement of Intent: OFN Board of Directors Candidacy, 2018

I am very excited to put forth my candidacy for OFN's Board of Directors. This is an exciting opportunity for a Latina leader of a CDFI to take on and I am thrilled to be able to face this challenge head on. I have worked in this field for the past twenty years and I am eager to share my experiences with the Board as well as learn from the distinguished leaders who are currently Board Members.

I was named LEDC's Executive Director in 2014. I rejoined LEDC in 2012 as Director of Small Business Development after first working at the organization in 1999 as a microloan officer. As Executive Director, I am leading LEDC's regional efforts to drive the economic and social advancement of low- to moderate-income Latinos and other D.C. and Baltimore area residents by equipping them with the skills and tools to achieve financial independence. We currently have a staff of 43 bilingual and predominantly Latino professionals, spread across 5 sites. There will be a future LEDC office coming online in Puerto Rico in Fiscal Year 2019. In 2017, LEDC acquired a small nonprofit organization focused on entrepreneurial training for women. By the end of 2018, we will have completed a second nonprofit acquisition that is currently in process.

Prior to working at LEDC, I worked for Seedco with businesses in Lower Manhattan New York that were impacted by the 2001 attacks of 9/11 so that they could be retained and could grow. Later, I was hired to the "start-up" team for the very first Business Solutions Center in Lower Manhattan. As director of the Upper Manhattan Business Solutions Center, my team worked with entrepreneurs in Harlem to launch and expand businesses. My work in microfinance for the private economic development consulting firm, DAI; in settings such as Bolivia, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, and my native Panama provides me with the cultural sensitivity that is useful for working with LEDC's core constituents. I am a graduate of the University of Wisconsin at Madison and received my Master of Arts degree from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies-SAIS* (**Lisa Mensah's alma mater*).

I am currently a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Latino Community Asset Builders-NALCAB and served as a member of the Montgomery County Comprehensive Economic Strategy Advisory Group. I also serve on the Board of Directors of the National Housing Trust's ICE-Institute for Community Economics---a CDFI offering pre-development, acquisition, rehabilitation, bridge loans and more to create community land trusts, shared equity and permanently affordable housing; as well as on Enterprise Community Partners' Enterprise Community Loan Fund Board. I am former Aspen Institute Emerging Leaders in Microbusiness-ELM2 Fellow and am a graduate of the Citi/Opportunity Finance Network (OFN)'s Leadership Program for Opportunity Finance at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. I currently serve on Capital One Bank's Community Advisory Council and was a non-Board member of the Equity Committee of the Opportunity Finance Network (OFN)'s Board of Directors. I was also named a Community Champion for the Washington, DC metropolitan area by Capital One Bank in 2015. These leadership experiences would fortify my potential participation on the OFN Board.

I reside in the Maryland suburbs with my husband and three children in the same neighborhood I grew up in after moving to the U.S. from Panama in 1976. I am obsessed with “full circle” moments, which is probably why I have only worked three places in the last 20 years...two of them twice-including LEDC.

If named to the OFN Board, I would love to bring my perspective on and commitment to the following issue areas that I believe to be critical to today’s CDFI industry:

CLIENTS

- Racial, ethnic, and gender equality,
- Asset building for LMI individuals,
- Asset preservation along quickly changing (gentrifying/developing) urban corridors,
- Small business finance,
- Immigrant entrepreneurship,

CDFI INDUSTRY

- Mergers & Acquisitions for nonprofits as a means of accelerated growth and/or sustainability,
- Recruiting and developing a diverse workforce (racially, ethnically, gender-wise, and in terms of socioeconomic background) that effectively reflects your target clients served,

LEADERSHIP

- Female-led CDFIs, and
- Family-friendly leadership that acknowledges the realities faced by working parents.

Thank you very much for your consideration of my candidacy and I hope to represent you on the OFN Board, should I be fortunate enough to be elected.