

Pearl Wicks  
Hope Enterprise Corporation

Opportunity Finance Networks colleagues,

I serve as the Senior Vice President for Retail Operations at HOPE (Hope Enterprise Corporation and Hope Credit Union) and I look forward to serving a second term as your next Opportunity Finance Network Board member.

In addition to over 20 years of experience in the banking and community development industry, I am a product of rural America and will bring this important perspective to the OFN board.

I vividly remember the opportunity gaps encountered by people – between those with networks and financial services and power and those without. Far too often those gaps broke along color lines. Those experiences fuel my passion for economic justice and my deep commitment to increase access to affordable financial services for our nation's most vulnerable people and places.

As a member of the OFN board, I will also bring my experience as a senior leader at HOPE. When I joined HOPE, the organization was 9,000 members strong. Today, our membership has grown to over 47,000 – 80 percent of whom are people of color. It has been my privilege to have played a central leadership role in this growth.

Three years ago, the membership of OFN granted me the opportunity to serve on the Board of Directors and I am proud of what we've accomplished together, particularly the hiring of our gifted leader, Lisa Mensah. I look forward to working alongside her and the entire OFN board and staff for another three years to support and implement the vision of inclusion, capital equity, and collaboration. Looking ahead, I am firmly committed to the move to Washington, DC. With the move, I look forward to being a voice for all of us – especially those from rural America, who are far too often not given a seat at the table.

In recent years, OFN has undertaken a number of steps to advance equity in our field. Fostering financial inclusion – increased access to responsible credit, savings and transaction accounts will take on increased importance in furthering this work. My personal and professional backgrounds uniquely position me to provide leadership to these efforts.

Finally, I believe strongly in the mission of OFN and the invaluable role that it plays as an advocate for change – to make the system work better – to align capital with justice. I humbly ask membership for the opportunity to continue to serve as an ambassador for OFN to lead the charge in moving the mission of the development finance industry forward.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to working with you, and the communities we serve, as your next OFN Board Member.