

Washington, DC (Oct. 24, 2011) – Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings released the following statement in response to changes announced today by the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) to the Home Affordable Refinance Program (HARP). The changes are aimed at helping “underwater” homeowners take advantage of today’s record-low interest rates.

“I commend the President for proposing this idea in his speech to Congress, and I thank Mr. DeMarco for listening to the concerns of Members and their constituents,” said Cummings. “The changes announced today will provide additional relief for middle-class Americans and an important boost for our economy. But we must not stop here. Economists warn that the housing crisis is ‘ground zero’ for the economy and jobs, and this is only one modest step towards addressing it.”

In September, President Obama announced in his joint address to Congress that he would work with federal housing agencies to expand refinancing opportunities for homeowners who are current on their mortgages but are carrying above-market interest rates, and cannot refinance because they owe more on their mortgages than their homes are worth.

Cummings spearheaded efforts to hold meetings between FHFA and Members of Congress to discuss steps to implement President Obama’s mortgage refinance proposal. After a meeting with FHFA officials on September 15, Cummings and more than two dozen Members [requeste](#)
[d](#) a meeting with FHFA Acting Director Edward DeMarco directly, expressing “profound frustration with the apparent lack of urgency shown by your agency and by agencies within the Administration in addressing the foreclosure crisis.”

Three weeks later, Cummings [led a](#) meeting with DeMarco and 16 other Members to discuss ways to implement the President’s proposal to help the greatest number of American families avoid foreclosure. When it became evident that DeMarco did not yet have a plan ready to share, Cummings asked him to return before the end of the month with a comprehensive proposal.