

Opening Statement

Thank you Mr. Chairman for scheduling this hearing whose topic in my view goes straight to the heart not only of government support of the housing market, but also to the question of what our values and priorities are as a nation. I look forward to getting America's housing finance system back on track, which is why I'm also looking forward to my Housing hearing tomorrow afternoon on New Ideas in Refinancing and Restructuring Mortgages. As families back in New Jersey, whether they own their homes or they are renting, are struggling through these tough times, we need to make sure that they have access to 30 year fixed rate mortgages. I don't think we should give up on the American Dream of homeownership because of the current housing market setbacks. As we consider various options for ensuring that taxpayers are protected, I hope we recognize that with the private securitization markets still badly broken, government currently needs to play a role in ensuring that these affordable housing objectives are still met so that America's well-qualified middle class families can still get mortgages when it comes time to buy a home and raise their families. Given that the housing market has not done as well as expected, I think now would be the wrong time to withdraw that government crutch that has been one of the only things holding up the housing market. That's why I believe allowing higher loan limits to expire

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would be a preventable mistake and why I hope this Committee will support the bipartisan Homeownership Affordability Act introduced by myself and Senator Johnny Isakson to maintain those limits temporarily. We extended them last year when the housing market was bad, and I don't see why we wouldn't extend them again given that the housing market has gotten worse since that time a year ago and 42 states would take a hit to their housing markets if we allow the limits to go down. So I look forward to addressing that, and I look forward to your testimony.