



September 5, 2018

Mr. Joel C. Baxley
Administrator, Rural Housing Service.
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

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Submitted via: <https://www.federalregister.gov>

RE: Guarantee Systems User Fee for Lender Use of the Single Family Housing Section 502 Guaranteed Loan Program Automated Systems

Dear Administrator Baxley:

On behalf of the 1.3 million members of the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR), I thank you for moving forward on the implementation of the guarantee underwriting user fee, or technology fee, related to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Housing Program (RHS) automated guaranteed loan systems. NAR strongly supported the language in the Housing Opportunities Through Modernization Act of 2016 that gave the USDA the right to assess the technology fee for the RHS Guaranteed Loan Program technological upgrades and maintenance.

The National Association of REALTORS® is America's largest trade association, representing 1.3 million members, including NAR's institutes, societies, and councils, involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries. NAR's membership is composed of residential and commercial REALTORS® who are brokers, salespeople, property managers, appraisers, counselors, and others engaged in the real estate industry. Members belong to one or more of approximately 1,200 local associations/boards and 54 state and territory associations of REALTORS®.

RHS provides critical housing opportunities for the millions of Americans that live in rural areas and small towns. The RHS Section 502 Guaranteed Loan Program is often the only option for purchasing or improving a home in rural communities, where access to mortgage financing can be limited. With funds collected through the technology fee, the USDA and RHS will be able to make the technological upgrades necessary to begin the direct endorsement of lenders for the guaranteed loan program. Direct lender endorsement will streamline the process, reducing time and cost to taxpayers. The RHS would be able to utilize more staff time towards strengthened lender monitoring process and risk management. In addition, the USDA and RHS will be able to better serve the many home buyers using this vital program.

RHS loan programs are essential to maintaining the health and vitality of rural America. NAR urges quick implementation of the technology fee, to improve the efficiency of home purchases and sales in rural communities, benefitting those communities and the American taxpayer.

NAR appreciates the opportunity to comment on this matter. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me or NAR Policy Representative, Sehar Siddiqi, at 202-383-1176 or SSiddiqi@REALTORS.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Elizabeth G. Mendenhall'.

Elizabeth Mendenhall
2018 President, National Association of REALTORS®



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