

**Acting Comptroller of the Currency Michael J. Hsu**  
**Remarks at the**  
**Financial Literacy and Education Commission’s Public Meeting**  
**“Understanding Consumer Financial Health and Well-being in a**  
**Turbulent Market”**  
**July 14, 2022**

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Financial Literacy and Education Commission (FLEC). The FLEC’s mission of financial education and financial well-being for individuals and families is especially critical during these times of uncertainty and change.

Today, I want to start by following up on my remarks at the March FLEC meeting about risks from crypto and then zoom out and briefly discuss broader efforts by the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) to advance financial health, access, and equity for all consumers.

**Careful and Cautious on Crypto**

When we as regulators and policymakers discuss crypto, it is important to remember that those who are invested in it are disproportionately young, diverse, and underbanked.<sup>1</sup> The recent collapse of the crypto market has been particularly painful for them.<sup>2</sup> Even more concerning, in a recent survey, over 20 percent of respondents indicated that they had *borrowed* money to buy crypto—including from payday lenders.<sup>3</sup>

The crypto sell-off and its knock-on effects, which continue to reverberate today, reinforce the need for all of us to take a careful and cautious approach when it comes to crypto and digital assets.

At the OCC, we have been doing so for some time. In November last year, we issued a reminder to national banks that their crypto activities need to be done in a safe, sound, and fair

---

<sup>1</sup> [Acting Comptroller Discusses Crypto Literacy | occ.gov](#); [Acting Comptroller Discusses Crypto-Assets and Regulation | occ.gov](#)

<sup>2</sup> [TerraUSD Crash Led to Vanished Savings, Shattered Dreams | WSJ.com](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Survey: Americans Borrow Money, Default on Bills to Buy Cryptocurrency | DebtHammer](#)

manner and that they need to obtain supervisory non-objections from us before engaging in new activities.<sup>4</sup>

We also have focused on advancing crypto and digital asset consumer education to enable and encourage individuals to be careful, cautious, and well-informed about the space.

In March, OCC staff joined the FLEC Digital Assets working group to develop consumer materials clearly explaining new products in the cryptocurrency arena. Building on collaborative efforts already under way among FLEC member agencies, the group will work to develop consumer-friendly, trustworthy, and consistent educational materials, tools, and outreach to help consumers make informed choices about digital assets.<sup>5</sup>

In April, the OCC hosted a [discussion](#) focused on the tension within communities of color regarding the risks and opportunities of crypto and digital assets. It was the first discussion in our “Financial Health: Vital Signs” initiative,<sup>6</sup> which I’ll say more about shortly. I was joined by two leaders in the Black community, one with a focus on financial literacy and the other a law professor with extensive experience with blockchains.

Then in May, I co-hosted a [summit](#) in Atlanta on cryptocurrency and digital assets with the financial education group, Operation Hope. We gathered diverse viewpoints from a wide range of panelists and discussed the durability and risks of digital assets, as well as the role and potential for regulation to enable responsible innovation and protect consumers.

### **Financial Health: Vital Sign Series**

Zooming out, I would like to briefly mention the OCC’s “Financial Health: Vital Signs” discussion series, which explores issues affecting consumer financial health and well-being.

The discussions are intended to explore ways to analyze, monitor, and improve the financial health of consumers and communities—not unlike how medical practitioners utilize health vital signs. Tracking temperature, heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing are simple, yet critical to assessing a person’s health and to improving health outcomes. What if we could do the same for financial health?

I believe that developing better tools to assess and monitor financial health has the potential to help banks and other financial institutions better serve their diverse consumers and

---

<sup>4</sup> [OCC Clarifies Bank Authority to Engage in Certain Cryptocurrency Activities and Authority of OCC to Charter National Trust Banks | occ.gov](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Treasury Launches Consumer Education Effort on Digital Assets | U.S. Department of the Treasury](#)

<sup>6</sup> [OCC Launches Discussion Series on Financial Health | occ.gov](#)

communities. A financial health lens focused on individuals and communities, rather than solely on products or services, should enable a more sophisticated and effective approach to balancing the financial empowerment and protection of consumers.

Later this summer, we'll announce our next Vital Signs discussion. In these discussions, I look forward to speaking with a diverse range of experts about how to improve financial health outcomes for consumers and communities.

Meanwhile, I encourage FLEC members and the public to share suggestions on issues the OCC might address in our "Financial Health: Vital Signs" series by emailing us at [financialhealth@occ.treas.gov](mailto:financialhealth@occ.treas.gov).

### **Project REACH**

Finally, I'd like to mention that this week the OCC marked the second anniversary of [Project REACH](#)—which stands for the Roundtable for Economic Access and Change. REACH is an innovative OCC-sponsored initiative to address the key barriers to financial inclusion.

The OCC held a symposium to commemorate this milestone where I met with leaders of community groups, banks, civil rights organizations, technology firms, and businesses focused on Project REACH's four workstreams: Affordable Homeownership, Inclusion for Credit Invisibles, Revitalization of Minority Depository Institutions, and Access to Capital for Small and Minority-Owned Businesses. We discussed the advancements developed in each workstream for the financially underserved. As Project REACH enters its third year, I am proud to continue to convene this broad range of actors who are committed to reducing the barriers that prevent the American Dream from being accessible to all.

I look forward to sharing more with you about Project REACH at a future FLEC meeting.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I want to thank the Department of the Treasury for convening this meeting and reiterate our support for the FLEC's important work.