

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1104

February 4, 2019

Mr. Mark Begor
Chief Executive Officer
Equifax
1550 Peachtree St NW
Atlanta, GA 30309

Mr. Craig Boundy
Chief Executive Officer
Experian North America
475 Anton Blvd
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Mr. James Peck
Chief Executive Officer
TransUnion
555 W Adams St
Chicago, IL 60661

Dear Mr. Begor, Mr. Boundy, and Mr. Peck:

I am writing to request information about whether your organizations intend to take, or have already taken, any actions to protect the creditworthiness of federal workers and government contractors impacted by the recent federal government shutdown.

The recent government shutdown began on December 22, 2018 and lasted a record 35 days— impacting more than 800,000 federal employees, and numerous government contractors. During the shutdown many of these workers contacted me to express their concerns about how the shutdown would impact their creditworthiness. These included federal employees like those at the Federal Detention Center Honolulu (“FDC Honolulu”), who dutifully reported to work with the added stress of their financial well-being and that of their families. Food inspectors, weather service forecasters, air traffic controllers, transportation security officers, and other employees and contractors, who were denied paychecks due to circumstances beyond their control, demonstrated their commitment to keeping our commerce flowing and our communities healthy and safe.

The unfortunate reality is that far too many families in Hawaii and elsewhere live paycheck to paycheck, and, as this shutdown has made painfully clear, even the temporary loss of income can force workers to exhaust their savings and make hard choices about which bills to pay and expenses to prioritize. Workers who chose to pay for basic living expenses and necessities like food, electricity, child care, and gas (to get to work) over other expenses like mortgage

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payments, credit card bills, and car payments now face the prospect of diminished creditworthiness—again, due to circumstances beyond their control.

While many lenders stepped up during the shutdown to provide financial relief for workers who were impacted, with banks and credit unions in Hawaii offering mortgage forbearance and other relief options for many workers, not all institutions may have been able to promise that missed payments would not be reported to credit bureaus. In addition, some impacted workers may not have been aware of these efforts or may have failed to appropriately notify their lenders. As a result, even as federal employees receive back pay following the shutdown, some who missed payments during the shutdown could see lasting negative impacts that may affect their creditworthiness, and thus their livelihoods, through no fault of their own. Furthermore, government contractors, particularly those in low-wage occupations, are not guaranteed back pay for the time they were furloughed, meaning that not only were they denied critical income, but they now also face the prospect of getting even further behind in paying their financial obligations.

Your organizations produce and maintain consumer credit information on millions of Americans every year, which is used to determine borrowers' creditworthiness. Negative credit reports can impact individuals' ability to purchase homes or cars, and their continued employment may be contingent on positive credit reports.

Given the important role your organizations play in producing this information, I respectfully request information on the steps you are taking to identify and provide assistance for federal employees and government contractors who were impacted by the shutdown, and the financial institutions that serve these workers. Additionally, I also urge you to consider the unique circumstances of the government shutdown and take all appropriate actions to preserve the creditworthiness of those workers who may have been affected.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator

CC: Francis Creighton, President & CEO, Consumer Data Industry Association (“CDIA”)