**Statement**

**Statement of the Federal Housing Finance Agency on Certain Super-Priority Liens**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

12/22/2014

Today, the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) is alerting homeowners, financial institutions, and state authorities of the agency’s concerns with state-level actions that threaten the first-lien status of single-family loans owned or guaranteed by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.  In particular, FHFA is concerned about state actions to create super-priority liens in two instances: 1) through certain energy retrofit financing programs structured as tax assessments and 2) through granting priority rights in foreclosure proceedings for homeowner associations.  In issuing this statement, FHFA is acting in furtherance of its statutory obligations as regulator and conservator of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

The existence of these super-priority liens increases the risk of losses to taxpayers.  Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, while operating in conservatorship, currently support the housing finance market by purchasing, guaranteeing, and securitizing single-family mortgages.  One of the bedrock principles in this process is that the mortgages supported by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac must remain in first-lien position, meaning that they have first priority in receiving the proceeds from selling a house in foreclosure.  As a result, any lien from a loan added after origination should not be able to jump in line ahead of a Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac mortgage to collect the proceeds of the sale of a foreclosed property.  However, as is detailed below, FHFA is concerned by some liens being advanced to “super-priority” status over Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac first-lien mortgages.

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​Title 12 United States Code Section 4617(j)(3) states that, while the Federal Housing Finance Agency acts as Conservator, “[no] property of the Agency shall be subject to levy, attachment, garnishment, foreclosure, or sale without the consent of the Agency.” This law precludes involuntary extinguishment of Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac liens while they are operating in conservatorships and preempts any state law that purports to allow holders of homeownership association (HOA) liens to extinguish a Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac lien, security interest, or other property interest.   
  
As noted in our December 22, 2014 statement on certain super-priority liens, FHFA has an obligation to protect Fannie Mae's and Freddie Mac’s rights, and will aggressively do so by bringing or supporting actions to contest HOA foreclosures that purport to extinguish Enterprise property interests in a manner that contravenes federal law. Consequently, FHFA confirms that it has not consented, and will not consent in the future, to the foreclosure or other extinguishment of any Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac lien or other property interest in connection with HOA foreclosures of super-priority liens.