

Emily Lippold Cheney's Candidate Statement:

I am interested in serving on the NCBA Board of Directors as a leader within both the national and international cooperative youth movements. Having spent nearly a decade in the cooperative movement working with my student and youth peers in various ways, I am well positioned and well qualified to serve as a strong bridge between the cooperative youth movement and our nation's cooperative institutions and leadership. I regard my responsibility as a youth leader to work towards expanding and supporting the engagement and participation of young people in both independent cooperatives and our federations. Attracting and empowering youth is essential to the future of our sector.

There is an immediate and tremendous need for cooperation in the United States. Millions of people, young and old, are increasingly aware of and motivated by economic inequality, ecological crisis, and social injustice. Many of the initiatives and efforts addressing these challenges are led by young people — in many ways, this historical moment belongs to youth. In reading the media coverage of our cooperative community over the past few years, it is clear that interest in our movement is growing because of our relevance to this work — we offer solutions to these problems and have core principles and values that remain universal even in times of turmoil and divisiveness.

In the past few years, the number of national organizations serving student and youth communities with cooperative education and development support has more than doubled. The landscape of our movement has changed considerably and will continue to change with the growth in numbers of young people coming from diverse backgrounds and experiences. In 2011, a student representative was appointed to the NCBA Board, a step towards meaningfully engaging young people, more broadly, in our cooperative philosophies and strategies.

Through my direct involvement in this significant period of development of the cooperative youth movement, I have gained valuable perspective. My leadership roles allowed me to make significant contributions to the growth of the youth cooperative movement. In turn, my transformative experiences have strengthened my skills as a cooperativist. My priorities in and purpose for seeking service on the NCBA Board of Directors are rooted in this history, work, and perspective. As a result, I am able to bring the following to the NCBA Board:

- an understanding of the priorities and needs of the cooperative youth movement,

- knowledge of the contributions young people have to make to our national cooperative community,
- strategies our national federation and its members can utilize to better engage young people in their work and institutions, and
- a broad network that keeps me in communication with a large number of cooperative youth constituents.

While I cannot speak for all youth cooperativists, I feel a strong responsibility to serve on the NCBA Board in order to nurture the mutually beneficial relationship between our cooperative youth movement and the broader movement's national leadership. To successfully leverage this connection, we must go beyond youth-focused programmatic initiatives and coordination with NCBA staff to genuinely involving more young people in our national governance.

I know it will be challenging for me to be elected to the Board as a young person, but I feel the process of electing a youth voice to the NCBA Board is important and meaningful. It is imperative that the involvement of young members shapes the future of our shared cooperative work, as young people are among the most affected by those decisions made today that will reverberate for decades. In this context, it is our collective responsibility to work across generations to fully realize the potential of the cooperative model to be a positive transformative force within the United States and the world.