



DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20220

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

May 9, 2014

The Honorable Christy L. Romero  
Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program  
1801 L Street, NW  
Fourth Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20036

RE: Treasury Response to SIGTARP Fraud Prevention Recommendation

Dear Ms. Romero:

I write in response to your recent letter regarding the Making Home Affordable (MHA) Program's scam prevention efforts. Treasury is always looking for ways to strengthen our programs, and we value SIGTARP's input to help us further protect homeowners who have entered or wish to enter MHA programs.

Treasury has worked diligently to help homeowners identify, avoid and report mortgage modification scams. Treasury's Office of Financial Stability (OFS) communicates with homeowners about scam prevention through our websites, at our community events, and via the Homeowner's HOPE™ Hotline.

Moreover, Treasury's Antifraud Unit plays an important role in reducing the number of harmful websites and advertisers targeting homeowners. To date, the Antifraud Unit has sent cease and desist letters to 581 websites for allegedly misusing OFS intellectual property and has notified search engines about 679 internet advertisers with confusing or misleading advertisements regarding mortgage-related products and services. The Antifraud Unit also has defensively registered 1,287 website domain names that could be used to imitate Treasury's housing programs.

We also collaborate with government agencies and community groups to leverage our collective knowledge base to protect homeowners. Treasury, along with SIGTARP and the Department of Justice, are co-chairs of the Rescue Fraud Working Group of the President's Financial Fraud Enforcement Task Force. We also support the Loan Modification Scam Prevention Network and its complaint database, which provides a comprehensive picture of the loan modification scam crisis nationwide and supports federal, state, and local law enforcement efforts.

In response to SIGTARP's initial recommendation on how to improve further MHA's scam prevention efforts, we immediately added a link from MHA's webpage -- [MakingHomeAffordable.gov](http://MakingHomeAffordable.gov) -- to a page containing information from the SIGTARP/CFPB

/Treasury “Tips for Avoiding Mortgage Modification Scams.” We have since updated the content on this page<sup>1</sup> to reflect better the language in Tips for Avoiding Mortgage Modification Scams and added a similar alert page on the housing section of FinancialStability.gov.<sup>2</sup> We have also added a prominent “Consumer Fraud Alert” on the MHA homepage in the rotator box.

Thank you again for your suggestions. We appreciate SIGTARP’s recommendations and look forward to continuing our joint work protecting homeowners from scams and bringing to justice those who aim to manipulate MHA programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy J. Bowler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Timothy J. Bowler  
Acting Assistant Secretary  
Office of Financial Stability

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.makinghomeaffordable.gov/learning-center/Pages/beware.aspx](http://www.makinghomeaffordable.gov/learning-center/Pages/beware.aspx).

<sup>2</sup> [www.treasury.gov/initiatives/financial-stability/TARP-Programs/housing/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.treasury.gov/initiatives/financial-stability/TARP-Programs/housing/Pages/default.aspx), “Beware of Foreclosure Scams.”