ADVISORY TO THE PUBLIC

EXERCISE CAUTION IN ENGAGING IN LOAN TRANSACTIONS THROUGH TELEGRAM AND OTHER ONLINE MESSAGING APPLICATIONS

The Securities and Exchange Commission ("Commission"), through the Financing and Lending Companies Department ("FinLenD"), reminds the public to exercise utmost caution in dealing with persons, groups, or entities offering loans through Telegram, an online messaging application, and other similar online messaging or social media platforms.

FinLenD has observed a growing number of complaints and reports involving alleged fraudulent or unauthorized lending activities conducted through Telegram and similar online messaging applications, including schemes involving:

- loan offers from unverified individuals or entities;
- unauthorized use of the names, logos, or identities of legitimate financing or lending companies;
- requests for advance fees, deposits, processing charges, unlocking fees, verification fees, or similar charges prior to the release of loan proceeds;
- communications made solely through private messaging accounts or unofficial channels;
- suspicious links, downloadable files, or applications sent through messaging platforms; and
- threats, harassment, or coercive collection practices after personal information has been disclosed.

FinLenD likewise received reports of an alleged *modus operandi* in which individuals offering loans through Telegram invite prospective borrowers to join messaging groups or chat channels purportedly composed of other borrowers or clients. Thereafter, members of the group allegedly send messages or testimonials claiming that they successfully received loan proceeds after paying certain "processing," "verification," or "release" fees. These representations are allegedly used to induce or pressure victims into remitting money. The public is cautioned that such supposed group members may be accomplices or participants in the fraudulent scheme and that the testimonials, conversations, or screenshots circulated therein may be fabricated or orchestrated to create a false appearance of legitimacy.

The public is advised that legitimate financing companies and lending companies are required to be duly registered with the Commission and must possess a valid Certificate of Authority ("CA") to operate pursuant to the Financing Company Act of 1998 and the Lending Company Regulation Act of 2007.

Accordingly, the public is strongly advised to observe the following precautionary measures:

1. **Verify Registration and Authority to Operate.** Before engaging in any loan transaction, verify whether the financing or lending company is duly registered with and authorized by the Commission. The public may consult the official list of registered financing and lending companies and recorded Online Lending Platforms (OLPs) published by the Commission.

2. **Deal Only Through Official and Verified Platforms.** Transact only through the official websites, applications, social media pages, or communication channels of duly registered entities. Exercise caution when dealing with Telegram accounts, chat groups, or agents using unofficial or suspicious accounts, links, or contact numbers.

3. **Avoid Advance Fee Loan Schemes.** Be wary of persons or entities requiring payment of "processing fees," "insurance fees," "verification fees," "unlocking fees," or similar charges prior to the release of loan proceeds. Legitimate lenders do not require borrowers to repeatedly remit funds as a condition for loan release.

4. **Do Not Rely Solely on Testimonials or Group Chats.** Exercise caution when invited to Telegram group chats or channels allegedly containing successful borrowers or satisfied clients. Fraudulent actors may use accomplices, fabricated testimonials, or orchestrated conversations to create a false impression of legitimacy and pressure victims into sending money.

5. **Protect Personal and Financial Information.** Do not indiscriminately provide personal information, identification documents, one-time passwords (OTPs), banking credentials, contact lists, or access permissions to unknown persons, applications, or platforms.

6. **Exercise Caution in Downloading Applications or Accessing Links.** Avoid downloading applications or opening links received from unverified Telegram accounts or similar platforms, as these may expose users to phishing, identity theft, unauthorized data access, or other cyber-related risks.

7. **Report Suspicious Activities.** The public is encouraged to immediately report suspicious, unauthorized, or potentially fraudulent lending activities to the appropriate authorities.

The Commission likewise reminds financing and lending companies to ensure that their authorized agents, representatives, and OLPs strictly comply with applicable laws, rules, and regulations, including those governing consumer protection, disclosure, and fair debt collection practices.

The public is further advised to transact only with duly registered financing and lending companies and through officially disclosed and authorized online platforms.

For complaints, reports, or verification requests, the public may contact the SEC through the following official channels:

☏ SEC Hotline: 14732 (14-SEC)
🌐 SEC iMessage Portal: https://imessage.sec.gov.ph
🌐 Official SEC Website: https://www.sec.gov.ph