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Georgia’s Largest Small Business Lender Welcomes New CEO

*Martina Edwards Leads ACE | Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs
Into its 25th Year of Growth*

Atlanta, Georgia, Jan. 2, 2025 – Martina Edwards is now at the helm of ACE | Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs as the new CEO and President. With nearly 25 years of experience in the financial services industry, Edwards is focused on continuing ACE’s legacy of providing affordable loans to under-resourced business owners.

“I firmly believe in ACE’s mission to provide access to affordable capital — empowering small businesses across the state and creating a ripple effect of prosperity in the community,” said Edwards, who assumed the leadership position on Jan. 1, 2025. “In my new role, I plan to lead ACE on its continuing journey of 25 years of growth by serving more clients, generating more impact, and reaching more markets.” Edwards is a nationally recognized advocate for economic and financial justice and ACE’s ambitious goals will remain a priority under her leadership.

This leadership transition is part of a five-year strategic plan that positions ACE well for continued success. Under Edwards’ direction as ACE’s Chief of Strategic Partnerships for nearly six years, the ACE team raised a historic \$69 million in grant funding, which included two unrestricted gifts from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott, significantly boosting the organization’s visibility and capacity for impact. ACE staff has more than doubled, enabling it to do more in the four years since the pandemic than it has in the past two decades. “During my time at ACE, we’ve nearly tripled our lifetime lending from \$60 million to now more than \$237 million to small businesses,” Edwards said, adding that the economic impact for Georgia is 2,700 businesses that have created or retained more than 22,000 jobs. “There will always be room for partners who believe in supporting this extraordinary work to stand with us to provide the necessary capital to propel the financial stability that strengthens communities and leads to collective prosperity.”

“Since ACE started in 2000 by founder Grace Fricks, it has developed into the largest small business lender in Georgia,” said Bill Zawrotny, ACE Board Chairman. “Martina Edwards offers skilled leadership and deep experience in financial services. She will lead ACE into a successful future, expanding its reach and fostering economic opportunity.”

Under Edwards’ leadership, the ACE team aims to expand its reach and impact, providing more entrepreneurs with the resources they need to succeed. This includes a focus on ACE’s strategic growth plan to loan \$300 million in capital by 2027. ACE’s target is to provide 80% of capital deployed to underserved populations, including 45% of loans to women-owned businesses.

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About Martina Edwards, CEO and President of ACE

Martina Edwards has 25 years of leadership experience in fundraising, strategic partnerships and relationship management. Prior to joining ACE, Edwards was a New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) Equity Trader for Merrill Lynch, the first African American female stockbroker for the company in its 200+ year history; Vice President of Corporate Partnerships at Points of Light in Atlanta; Senior Director of Alternative Investments for Sponsors for Educational Opportunity in New York City; Interim Executive Director and Director of Finance for Kaplan Higher Education College in Maryland; and Private Client Manager at US Trust. Edwards is a Leadership Council member for Junior Achievement of Georgia and Advisory Board member for Zane Venture Fund. She serves on various boards and committees, including GA Social Impact Collaborative (GSIC) as a CDFI Task Force member; GoATL Economic Inclusion Investment Committee; Opportunity Finance Network (OFN) Board of Directors; and Black Executive Leadership Team Community Advisory Council – Bank of America.

About ACE | Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs Inc.

ACE is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and community development financial institution (CDFI) that provides loans and business development resources to help its borrowers create and grow sustainable businesses. For over 24 years, ACE has been the resource of choice for those who are typically not financed fully by traditional lenders. With a focus on underserved people and places, ACE connects small businesses owned by women, people of color and low to moderate income borrowers in metro Atlanta, North and South Georgia with capital and coaching to sustain their businesses, retain their employees, and thereby support their local communities. ACE has offices across Georgia in Atlanta, Cleveland, Dalton, and Tifton, and ACE Women’s Business Centers locations in Norcross, and Savannah. For more information, visit <https://aceloans.org/>.