The economic and financial structure of this country in combination with the Nation’s natural resources and the productivity of the American people has produced one of the highest average standards of living in the world. However, the Nation has been experiencing inflation and unemployment together with an increasing gap between producers’ prices and consumers’ purchasing power. This has resulted in a growing number of our citizens, especially the elderly, the poor, and the inner city resident, being unable to share in the fruits of our Nation’s highly efficient economic system. The Congress finds that user-owned cooperatives are a proven method for broadening ownership and control of the economic organizations, increasing the number of market participants, narrowing price spreads, raising the quality of goods and services available to their membership, and building bridges between producers and consumers, and their members and patrons. The Congress also finds that consumer and other types of self-help cooperatives have been hampered in their formation and growth by lack of access to adequate cooperative credit facilities and lack of technical assistance. Therefore, the Congress finds a need for the establishment of a National Consumer Cooperative Bank which will make available necessary financial and technical assistance to cooperative self-help endeavors as a means of strengthening the Nation’s economy.