

**FINANCIAL INDUSTRY REGULATORY AUTHORITY
LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE, WAIVER AND CONSENT
NO. 2014041676801**

TO: Department of Enforcement
Financial Industry Regulatory Authority ("FINRA")

RE: Cetera Advisors LLC, Respondent
CRD No. 10299

Pursuant to FINRA Rule 9216 of FINRA's Code of Procedure, Cetera Advisors LLC ("Cetera Advisors" or the "Firm") submits this Letter of Acceptance, Waiver and Consent ("AWC") for the purpose of proposing a settlement of the alleged rule violations described below. This AWC is submitted on the condition that, if accepted, FINRA will not bring any future actions against Cetera Advisors alleging violations based on the same factual findings described herein.

I.

ACCEPTANCE AND CONSENT

- A. Respondent hereby accepts and consents, without admitting or denying the findings, and solely for the purposes of this proceeding and any other proceeding brought by or on behalf of FINRA, or to which FINRA is a party, prior to a hearing and without an adjudication of any issue of law or fact, to the entry of the following findings by FINRA:

BACKGROUND

Cetera Advisors has been a member of FINRA since January 1982. The Firm maintains its main office in Denver, Colorado. It has approximately 1600 registered persons and maintains approximately 850 branch offices.

RELEVANT DISCIPLINARY HISTORY

Cetera Advisors has no relevant formal disciplinary history.

OVERVIEW

From May 1, 2009 to April 30, 2014 (the "Relevant Period"), Cetera Advisors failed to apply sales charge discounts to certain customers' eligible purchases of unit investment trusts ("UITs") in violation of FINRA Rule 2010. In addition, Cetera Advisors failed to establish, maintain and enforce a supervisory system and written supervisory procedures reasonably designed to ensure that customers received sales charge discounts on all eligible UIT purchases in violation of NASD Conduct Rule 3010 and FINRA Rule 2010.

FACTS AND VIOLATIVE CONDUCT

A UIT is a type of Investment Company that issues securities, typically called “units,” representing undivided interests in a relatively fixed portfolio of securities. UITs are generally issued by a sponsor that assembles the UIT’s portfolio of securities, deposits the securities in a trust, and sells units of the UIT in a public offering. UIT units are redeemable securities that are issued for a specific term, and entitle an investor to receive his or her proportionate share of the UIT’s net assets on redemption or at termination.

UIT sponsors offer investors a variety of ways to reduce the sales fee charged on a UIT purchase. The two most common methods to reduce the fee are “breakpoints,” which allow investors to reduce the sales fee by increasing the size of their UIT investments, and discounts on “rollovers” and “exchanges”¹ (collectively “sales charge discounts”).

On March 31, 2004, FINRA issued Notice to Members 04-26, *Unit Investment Trust Sales*, which reminded broker-dealers that they should develop and implement procedures to ensure customers receive available sales charge discounts for UITs. The Notice further stated that UIT transactions must take place “on the most advantageous terms available to the customer” and that it is the firm’s responsibility to “take appropriate steps to ensure that they and their employees understand, inform customers about, and apply correctly any applicable price breaks available to customers in connection with UITs.”

During the Relevant Period, Cetera Advisors failed to identify and apply sales charge discounts to certain customers’ eligible purchases of UITs. Specifically, the Firm failed to apply sales charge discounts to 2,222 eligible UIT purchases resulting in customers paying excessive sales charges of approximately \$452,622. Cetera Advisors has paid restitution to all affected customers. Based on the foregoing, Cetera Advisors violated FINRA Rule 2010.

Also during the Relevant Period, Cetera Advisors failed to establish, maintain and enforce a supervisory system and written supervisory procedures reasonably designed to ensure customers received sales charge discounts on all eligible UIT purchases. The Firm relied primarily on its registered representatives to ensure that customers received appropriate UIT sales charge discounts, despite the fact

¹ UIT rollover and exchange discounts are generally offered to investors who use the redemption or termination proceeds from one UIT to purchase another UIT, either from the same UIT series (rollover) or a different UIT (an exchange). Generally, in order to receive the rollover or exchange discount, proceeds used to purchase the UIT must have come from a UIT transaction that occurred within the previous 30 days. In both rollovers and exchanges, the customer generally receives a discount of 1% of the public offering price.

that the Firm did not effectively inform and train representatives and their supervisors to identify and apply sales charge discounts. Based on the foregoing, Cetera Advisors violated NASD Conduct Rules 3010(a) and (b) and FINRA Rule 2010.

B. Respondent consents to the imposition of the following sanctions:

- Censure; and
- Fine of \$250,000.

Restitution to affected customers in the total amount of \$452,622. A registered principal on behalf of Respondent firm shall submit satisfactory proof of payment of restitution or of reasonable and documented efforts undertaken to effect restitution. Such proof shall be submitted to Sara N. Raisner, Brookfield Place 11th Floor, New York, NY 10281 either by letter that identifies Cetera Advisors LLC and Case No. 20140416768 or by e-mail from a work-related account of the registered principal of Cetera Advisors to EnforcementNotice@FINRA.org. This proof shall be provided to the FINRA staff member listed above no later than 120 days after acceptance of the AWC.

Respondent agrees to pay the monetary sanction upon notice that this AWC has been accepted and that such payment is due and payable. Respondent has submitted an Election of Payment form showing the method by which it proposes to pay the fine imposed.

Respondent specifically and voluntarily waives any right to claim that it is unable to pay, now or at any time hereafter, the monetary sanction imposed in this matter.

The sanctions imposed herein shall be effective on a date set by FINRA staff.

II.

WAIVER OF PROCEDURAL RIGHTS

Respondent specifically and voluntarily waives the following rights granted under FINRA's Code of Procedure:

- A. To have a Complaint issued specifying the allegations against it;
- B. To be notified of the Complaint and have the opportunity to answer the allegations in writing;
- C. To defend against the allegations in a disciplinary hearing before a hearing panel, to have a written record of the hearing made and to have a written decision issued; and

- D. To appeal any such decision to the National Adjudicatory Council ("NAC") and then to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and a U.S. Court of Appeals.

Further, Respondent specifically and voluntarily waives any right to claim bias or prejudgment of the Chief Legal Officer, the NAC, or any member of the NAC, in connection with such person's or body's participation in discussions regarding the terms and conditions of this AWC, or other consideration of this AWC, including acceptance or rejection of this AWC.

Respondent further specifically and voluntarily waives any right to claim that a person violated the ex parte prohibitions of FINRA Rule 9143 or the separation of functions prohibitions of FINRA Rule 9144, in connection with such person's or body's participation in discussions regarding the terms and conditions of this AWC, or other consideration of this AWC, including its acceptance or rejection.

III.

OTHER MATTERS

Respondent understands that:

- A. Submission of this AWC is voluntary and will not resolve this matter unless and until it has been reviewed and accepted by the NAC, a Review Subcommittee of the NAC, or the Office of Disciplinary Affairs ("ODA"), pursuant to FINRA Rule 9216;
- B. If this AWC is not accepted, its submission will not be used as evidence to prove any of the allegations against Respondent;
- C. If accepted:
 - 1. this AWC will become part of Respondent's permanent disciplinary record and may be considered in any future actions brought by FINRA or any other regulator against it;
 - 2. this AWC will be made available through FINRA's public disclosure program in accordance with FINRA Rule 8313.
 - 3. FINRA may make a public announcement concerning this agreement and the subject matter thereof in accordance with FINRA Rule 8313; and
 - 4. Respondent may not take any action or make or permit to be made any public statement, including in regulatory filings or otherwise, denying, directly or indirectly, any finding in this AWC or create the impression that the AWC is without factual basis. Respondent may not take any position in any proceeding brought by or on behalf of FINRA, or to which

FINRA is a party, that is inconsistent with any part of this AWC. Nothing in this provision affects its: (i) testimonial obligations; or (ii) right to take legal or factual positions in litigation or other legal proceedings in which FINRA is not a party; and

- D. Respondent may attach a Corrective Action Statement to this AWC that is a statement of demonstrable corrective steps taken to prevent future misconduct. Respondent understands that it may not deny the charges or make any statement that is inconsistent with the AWC in this Statement. This Statement does not constitute factual or legal findings by FINRA, nor does it reflect the views of FINRA or its staff.

The undersigned, on behalf of the Firm, certifies that a person duly authorized to act on its behalf has read and understands all of the provisions of this AWC and has been given a full opportunity to ask questions about it; that the Firm has agreed to its provisions voluntarily; and that no offer, threat, inducement, or promise of any kind, other than the terms set forth herein and the prospect of avoiding the issuance of a Complaint, has been made to induce the Firm to submit it.

9-11-2015
Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

By:

Bernard A. Breton
Bernard A. Breton
VP & Chief Compliance Officer
Cetera Advisors, LLC
4600 S. Syracuse Street, Suite 600
Denver, CO 80237

Reviewed by:

MARK QUINN

Accepted by FINRA:

10/19/15
Date

Signed on behalf of the
Director of ODA, by delegated authority

[Signature]