

**FINANCIAL INDUSTRY REGULATORY AUTHORITY
LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE, WAIVER AND CONSENT
NO. 2013036388801**

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

RE: Christian J. Espinoza, Respondent
Associated Person
CRD No. 6131461

Pursuant to FINRA Rule 9216 of FINRA's Code of Procedure, I submit 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 me alleging violations based on the same factual findings described herein.

I.

ACCEPTANCE AND CONSENT

- A. I hereby accept and consent, 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

Christian J. Espinoza was associated with Merrill, Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith from October 2012 until February 2013. He is not currently associated with any FINRA broker-dealer.

RELEVANT DISCIPLINARY HISTORY

None

OVERVIEW

Espinoza altered the official report of his score on the Series 7 examination. Through this conduct, Espinoza violated FINRA Rule 2010.

FACTS AND VIOLATIVE CONDUCT

Espinoza joined Merrill Lynch in October 2012 as a Practice Management Development Financial Advisor Trainee. As condition of his employment, Espinoza had to obtain his Series 7 and Series 66 licenses by February 19, 2013.

Espinoza first sat for the Series 7 examination at a testing center in Kansas City, Missouri on January 31, 2013. He failed the exam with a score of 58%; a score of 72% or better was needed to pass. After completing the exam, Espinoza received a printed score report from the exam proctor showing his score and the ranges of scores he received on each of five sections of the exam.

Espinoza subsequently notified a supervisor at Merrill Lynch by email that he had failed the Series 7 exam, but stated falsely in the email that he had scored 68% overall, rather than 58%. In addition, he provided Merrill Lynch with a version of the official score report that Espinoza had falsified to show that he had scored 68% overall and higher than he actually scored in each of the five exam sections.

Through this conduct, Espinoza violated FINRA Rule 2010.

B. I also consent to the imposition of the following sanctions:

1. Suspension from associating with a broker-dealer in any capacity for two months; and
2. A \$5,000.00 fine.

The fine shall be due and payable either immediately upon reassociation with a member firm following the two-month suspension noted above, or prior to any application or request for relief from any statutory disqualification resulting from this or any other event or proceeding, whichever is earlier.

I specifically and voluntarily waive any right to claim that I am unable to pay, now or at any time hereafter, the monetary sanction(s) imposed in this matter.

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

I understand that if I am barred or suspended from associating with any FINRA member, I become subject to a statutory disqualification as that term is defined in Article III, Section 4 of FINRA's By-Laws, incorporating Section 3(a)(39) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934. Accordingly, I may not be associated with any FINRA member in any capacity, including clerical or ministerial functions, during the period of the bar or suspension (see FINRA Rules 8310 and 8311).

II.

WAIVER OF PROCEDURAL RIGHTS

I specifically and voluntarily waive the following rights granted under FINRA's Code of Procedure:

- A. To have a Complaint issued specifying the allegations against me;
- 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, I specifically and voluntarily waive any right to claim bias or prejudgment of the General Counsel, 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.

I further specifically and voluntarily waive 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

I understand that:

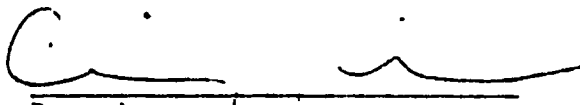
- A. Submission of this AWC is voluntary and will not resolve this matter unless and until it has been reviewed and accepted by the NAC, a Review Subcommittee of the NAC, or the Office of Disciplinary Affairs ("ODA"), pursuant to FINRA Rule 9216
- B. If this AWC is not accepted, its submission will not be used as evidence to prove any of the allegations against me; and
- C. If accepted:

1. This AWC will become part of my permanent disciplinary record and may be considered in any future actions brought by FINRA or any other regulator against me.
2. This AWC will be made available through FINRA's public disclosure program in response to public inquiries about my disciplinary record;
3. FINRA may make a public announcement concerning this agreement and the subject matter thereof in accordance with FINRA Rule 8313; and
4. I 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. I 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 my: (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.

- D. I may attach a Corrective Action Statement to this AWC that is a statement of demonstrable corrective steps taken to prevent future misconduct. I understand that I 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.

I certify that I have read and understand all of the provisions of this AWC and have been given a full opportunity to ask questions about it; that I have 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 me to submit it.

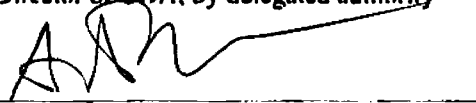
06-18-2017
Date (mm/dd/yyyy)


Respondent

Accepted by FINRA

Date 7/15/14

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Walker', written over a horizontal line.

Adam B. Walker
Senior Regional Counsel
FINRA Department of Enforcement
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