DQW Holdings, LLC
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McLean, Va 22102

September 30, 2020

Mr. Jason DeWitt
Office of Regulations and Interpretations
Employee Benefits Security Administration
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20210

Re: RIN 1210-AB91 Fiduciary Duties Regarding Proxy Voting and Shareholder Rights

Dear Mr. DeWitt:

Thank you for this opportunity to offer my strong support for the Department of Labor's Proposed Rule regarding proxy voting services used by pension plans the Department oversees under ERISA. Additional oversight from the Department's Employee Benefits Security Administration will help ensure that plan fiduciaries vote proxy resolutions based solely on economic factors, and not on "unrelated" matters, such as environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals.

During these trying times for our country, it is essential that pension plan managers remain focused on maximizing retiree accounts with a laser focus on pecuniary factors. The savings of pension plan participants must be protected, not sacrificed for social and political ideology, or the non-pecuniary activist fad of the day. It will come as no surprise to you that the practice of "robo-voting" by pension plans on ESG or other non-financial matters jeopardizes pensioners' savings. As such, the Department should take a powerful position on robo-voting. One way this Rule could do that is by prohibiting specifically this automatic voting practice by pension plans for disputed issues, and for ESG-related resolutions that do not put financial returns first.

There is a robust body of research, moreover, that shows why the Department needs to further enforce robo-voting restrictions. For example, Paul Rose, associate dean of The Ohio State University's law school, states, "[T]he proxy advisory system continues to suffer from widespread robo- or autovoting." His research from last fall explains that "those funds who did not deviate from an ISS recommendation subsequently robo-voted with ISS lockstep another 80,000 times."

As the Wall Street Journal's editorial board wrote in November of last year on the Securities and Exchange Commission's proxy voting guidance ("The Proxy Protection Racket"), "Pension funds support the proxy firms because they tend to share a political agenda and have become a force multiplier to sway CEOs and corporate boards." It is essential, therefore, that the Department of Labor breaks this cozy political relationship and mandates that pension plans do not engage in robo-voting that would potentially sacrifice their beneficiaries' economic interests.

I hope that you and your colleagues finalize this Proposed Rule; and I appreciate the Department of Labor's comprehensive effort on this important issue for our nation's pensioners.

Sincerely,

Delbert Q. Wilber
President
DQW Holdings, LLC