

**FINANCIAL INDUSTRY REGULATORY AUTHORITY  
LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE, WAIVER, AND CONSENT  
NO. 2023078907901**

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

RE: Vivek Tangudu (Respondent)  
Former Associated Person  
CRD No. 7429841

Pursuant to FINRA Rule 9216, Respondent Vivek Tangudu 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 Respondent alleging violations based on the same factual findings described in this AWC.

**I.**

**ACCEPTANCE AND CONSENT**

- A. Respondent accepts and consents to the following findings by FINRA without admitting or denying them:

**BACKGROUND**

On August 19, 2021, Tangudu associated with Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated (Merrill) (CRD No. 7691) as a nonregistered fingerprint (NRF) person. On May 16, 2023, Merrill filed an amended Form NRF disclosing that Tangudu's association was terminated on May 15, 2023.

Respondent is not currently registered or associated with a FINRA member firm. However, he remains subject to FINRA's jurisdiction pursuant to Article V, Section 4 of FINRA's By-Laws.

**OVERVIEW**

Tangudu violated FINRA Rules 8210 and 2010 by refusing to appear for on-the-record testimony requested by FINRA pursuant to FINRA Rule 8210.

**FACTS AND VIOLATIVE CONDUCT**

This matter originated from a filing made by Merrill pursuant to FINRA Rule 4530 stating that the firm had terminated Respondent due to his failure to cooperate during a firm investigation.

FINRA Rule 8210(a)(1) states, in relevant part, that FINRA has the right to “require a . . . person associated with a member, or any other person subject to FINRA’s jurisdiction to provide information orally, in writing, or electronically . . . and to testify at a location specified by FINRA staff, under oath or affirmation administered by a court reporter or a notary public if requested, with respect to any matter involved in the investigation, complaint, examination, or proceeding.” FINRA Rule 8210(c) similarly provides that “[n]o member or person shall fail to provide information or testimony . . . pursuant to this Rule.”

A failure to comply with a request for information or testimony pursuant to FINRA Rule 8210 is also a violation of FINRA Rule 2010, which requires associated persons in the conduct of their business to “observe high standards of commercial honor and just and equitable principles of trade.”

On September 11, 2023, in connection with its investigation into the circumstances giving rise to Merrill’s FINRA Rule 4530 filing, FINRA sent a request to Respondent for on-the-record testimony pursuant to FINRA Rule 8210. As stated in counsel’s email to FINRA on September 14, 2023, and by this agreement, Respondent acknowledges that he received FINRA’s request and will not appear for on-the-record testimony at any time. By refusing to appear for on-the-record testimony as requested pursuant to FINRA Rule 8210, Respondent violated FINRA Rules 8210 and 2010.

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

- A bar from associating with any FINRA member in all capacities.

Respondent understands that if he is barred or suspended from associating with any FINRA member, he becomes 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, he 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.

The sanctions imposed in this AWC shall be effective on a date set by FINRA. A bar or expulsion shall become effective upon approval or acceptance of this AWC.

## 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 him;
- 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 its acceptance or rejection.

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; and
- C. If accepted:
  - 1. this AWC will become part of Respondent's permanent disciplinary record and may be considered in any future action brought by FINRA or any other regulator against Respondent;
  - 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 its subject matter 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 Respondent's right to take legal or factual positions in litigation or other legal proceedings in which FINRA is not a party. Nothing in this provision affects Respondent's testimonial obligations in any litigation or other legal proceedings.

Respondent certifies that he has read and understands all of the provisions of this AWC and has been given a full opportunity to ask questions about it; Respondent has agreed to the AWC's provisions voluntarily; and no offer, threat, inducement, or promise of any kind, other than the terms set forth in this AWC and the prospect of avoiding the issuance of a complaint, has been made to induce him to submit this AWC.

September 25, 2023

Date

*vivek tangudu*

Vivek Tangudu  
Respondent

Reviewed by:

*Meg Strickler*

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Meg Strickler  
Counsel for Respondent  
Conaway & Strickler, PC  
75 14th St NE #3000  
Atlanta, Georgia 30309

Accepted by FINRA:

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

October 4, 2023

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Date

*Nicolas W. Steenland*

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Nicolas W. Steenland  
Counsel  
FINRA  
Department of Enforcement  
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