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2	(pro hac pursuant to LR IC 2-1) SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION		
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5	Securities and Exchange Commission		
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6	UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT DISTRICT OF NEVADA		
7	DISTRICT OF NEV	ADA	
0	SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE	Case No.: 2:13-cv-1658-JCM-CWH	
8	COMMISSION,		
9	Plaintiff,	THE SECURITIES AND	
10	v.	EXCHANGE COMMISSION'S	
10		MOTION FOR AN ORDER APPROVING DISTRIBUTION	
11	EDWIN YOSHIHIRO FUJINAGA, et al.,	PLAN WITH ACCOMPANYING	
	Defendants,	MEMORANDUM OF LAW	
12	and		
13	HINE ELLENA CA		
1.4	JUNE FUJINAGA, CSA SERVICE CENTER, LLC,		
14	THE FACTORING CO., and		
15	THE YUNJU TRUST,		
1.0	Relief Defendants.		
16		•	
17	This action was brought by the Securities and Exc	change Commission (the "SEC") against	
18	defendants Edwin Yoshihiro Fujinaga and MRI Internation	onal for a fraudulent offering that	
19	victimized thousands of investors of more than \$800 million. By Order entered October 5, 2022,		
20	this Court terminated the receivership estate previously established (the "Receivership") and,		
21	pursuant to that Order, the Receiver has transferred over \$32 million to the SEC (the		
22	"Distribution Fund") in partial satisfaction of final judgments imposed in this action.		

The SEC now moves this Court for an Order approving its proposed plan to distribute the

Distribution Fund to harmed investors (the "Plan"). The Plan is attached as Exhibit 1 to the

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(Proposed) Order. By the Plan, the SEC seeks to distribute the Distribution Fund by the same methodology already determined fair and reasonable by the Court in the related class action, *Shige Takiguchi, et al. v. MRI International, Inc., et al.*, 2:13-cv-01183-GMN-VCF (D. Nev.) (the "Class Action"). To save time and costs, there will be no claims process; rather, distribution will be conducted using the claims information submitted in the Class Action claims process as supplemented by the Court-approved Distribution Agent.

Upon translation to Japanese, anticipated within six business days of filing, the SEC will send via Federal Express a copy of the motion, memorandum and proposed order (Japanese translation) to Hiroshi Yamaguchi in the Toyo Kyodo Law Office in Tokyo, Japan, who has identified himself to the SEC as "Lead Attorney for Lawyers Group Representing 4,961 Victims in Japan." These documents will also be publicly available on the SEC's webpage for this matter: https://www.sec.gov/enforcement/information-for-harmed-investors/mri-international-fujinaga.

WHEREFORE, the SEC respectfully requests that the Court enter an Order substantially in the form submitted with this Motion and grant such other relief as the Court deems just and proper.

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSED DISTRIBUTION PLAN

I. <u>Introduction</u>

The SEC respectfully submits this memorandum in support of its plan to distribute the Distribution Fund, currently comprised of over \$32 million received from the Receivership plus accrued interest, to compensate MRI International, Inc. ("MRI") investors for losses suffered as a result of a fraudulent offering (the "Plan"). The Plan is attached as Exhibit 1 to the accompanying (Proposed) Order. As discussed below, because of the overlap between the

allegations in the captioned action and the allegations in the related class action, *Shige Takiguchi*, *et al. v. MRI International, Inc., et al.*, 2:13-cv-01183-GMN-VCF (D. Nev.) (the "Class Action") and the anticipated economies of time and cost, the Plan substantively tracks the plan of allocation found fair and reasonable by this Court (McKibben, J.) in the Class Action.¹

As reflected on the accompanying certificate of service, upon translation to Japanese, anticipated within six business days of filing, the SEC will send via Federal Express a copy of the motion, memorandum and proposed order (Japanese translation) to Hiroshi Yamaguchi in the Toyo Kyodo Law Office in Tokyo, Japan, who has identified himself to the SEC as "Lead Attorney for Lawyers Group Representing 4,961 Victims in Japan." These documents will also be publicly available on the SEC's webpage for this matter:

https://www.sec.gov/enforcement/information-for-harmed-investors/mri-international-fujinaga.

II. <u>Background</u>

A. This Action

On September 11, 2013, the SEC commenced this action (the "SEC Action") against defendants Edwin Yoshihiro Fujinaga ("Fujinaga") and MRI International ("MRI") (collectively, the "Defendants"), and relief defendants CSA Service Center, LLC ("CSA"), The Factoring Company ("TFC"), Fujinaga's wife, June Fujinaga ("J. Fujinaga"), and The Yunju Trust (the "Trust"). ECF No. 2. In its amended complaint, the SEC alleged that the Defendants perpetrated a Ponzi scheme that victimized thousands of investors. ECF No. 118 at ¶¶ 1, 6. The SEC alleged that, as part of the scheme, the Defendants misrepresented to investors that MRI would use investors' money to buy medical accounts receivables ("MARS") from medical providers at a

¹ Class Action Docket ("C.A. Dkt") No. 867, ¶ 2 ("The Court finds that the pro-rata distribution method proposed by the Plaintiff is fundamentally fair, adequate and reasonable and grants approval of the plan").

discount and seek to recover the full receivable from insurance companies. Id. at ¶ 5. In fact, the Defendants used investor money to pay the principal and interest due to earlier investors, operating expenses of MRI and related entities, and for personal expenses. Id. at $\P \P 7, 22$. The SEC alleged that MRI stopped buying MARS from independent healthcare facilities in 2008; that as early as 2008, MRI was insolvent and as of December 2008, MRI had a retained earnings deficit; that, from 2008 through 2013, the Defendants sent false quarterly account statements to existing investors; and that by 2011, MRI was in default on the payments that it was obligated to pay investors. Id. at ¶¶ 7, 22, 26-30. The SEC further alleged that, on April 26, 2013, based on the same misconduct alleged in the SEC Action, the Japanese Securities and Exchange Surveillance Commission recommended administrative action against MRI. *Id.* at ¶ 32. On January 27, 2015, the Court entered final judgment against the Defendants, ordering them, jointly and severally, to pay disgorgement and prejudgment interest of \$544,359,364.08, and each to pay a civil penalty of \$20,000,000, for a total monetary judgment of \$584,359,364.08. ECF No. 189. On May 15, 2015, the Court appointed Robb Evans & Associates LLC as the full equitable receiver (the "Receiver") for all assets owned or controlled by the Defendants and relief defendants CSA and TFC (the "Estate"). ECF No. 226. On March 14, 2016, the Court entered an amended final judgment against J. Fujinaga and the Trust, ordering them to disgorge, jointly and severally, \$2,333,382.18 to the Receiver, and requiring J. Fujinaga to disgorge to the Receiver all of her legal, beneficial, and equitable interest in the Trust. ECF No. 317.

B. The Receivership and the Distribution Fund

The Receiver collected approximately \$36 million and incurred expenses of approximately \$4 million. *See* ECF No. 584, Exhibit A. By Order dated October 5, 2022, the

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Court terminated the Receivership and directed the Receiver to set the balance of the Estate's assets to the SEC in partial satisfaction of the final judgments entered against the Defendants and Relief Defendants in this action. ECF No. 590. In accordance with that Order, the Receiver sent over \$32 million to the SEC. The Distribution Fund of over \$33.8 million currently is held in an interest-bearing account at the U.S. Treasury. All accrued interest will be added to, and become a part of, the Distribution Fund.

C. The Class Action

The misconduct underlying the SEC Action is the same as that underlying the Class Action. By complaint filed on July 5, 2013, the plaintiffs in the Class Action ("C.A. Plaintiffs") alleged that MRI and others operated a Ponzi scheme in which MRI purported to operate a legitimate business dealing in MARS when, in fact, MRI used investor money to pay off earlier investors and fund its principals' lavish lifestyle. C.A. Dkt. No. 6 (amended complaint), ¶¶ 1, 2. Like the SEC, the C.A. Plaintiffs reference the Japanese administrative proceedings and findings, noting that, even after Japan's Financial Services Agency revoked MRI's license in Japan, MRI continued to solicit investments from new investors to keep its scheme alive. *Id.* ¶ 32. In their Fifth Amended Complaint filed on July 24, 2014, the C.A. Plaintiffs additionally reference the SEC Action, and mention the discovery in the SEC action as supportive of allegations in the Class Action. C.A. Dkt. No. 118, ¶¶ 80, 85-90.

By Order dated June 13, 2017, the Court appointed Heffler Claims Group ("HCG") as the claims administrator for the Class Action distribution.² C.A. Dkt. No. 704. On October 25,

21 2 In July 2010, HCC was in

² In July 2019, HCG was indirectly acquired by Duff & Phelps, LLC (n/k/a Kroll, LLC). Upon acquisition, HCG's name was changed to Claims Acquisition, LLC, and it was later further changed to Kroll Settlement Administration LLC. HCG has informed the SEC staff that this change in ownership had no impact upon its engagement in the Class Action and will have no impact on the engagement in this matter.

1 2018, the Court in the Class Action approved the Class Action notice process and plan of 2 allocation (the "Class Action Plan").³ The Class Action Plan proposed to distribute collections 3 to: 4 All persons who were MRI investors and who were injured as a result of the defendant's illegal Ponzi scheme and actions from July 5, 2008 through July 5, 5 2013, [excluding] the defendants, their employees, their family members and their affiliates, and ... 26 individuals who are plaintiffs in the pending litigation against the [class] defendants in Japan.⁴ 6 7 C.A. Dkt. No. 864, p. 4. Under the approved notice process, HCG would solicit claims from 8 investors through solicitations sent to potential claimants through both direct mailings and 9 publication. C.A. Dkt No 863. 10 The Class Action Plan set forth a net investment methodology, offsetting from each 11 investor's aggregate investment their recoveries to calculate their net loss, determining the 12 percent of their net loss to aggregate net losses, and multiplying that percent by the assets 13 available for distribution. The Court presiding over the Class Action found the pro-rata 14 distribution method proposed in the Class Action Plan to be "fundamentally fair, adequate and 15 reasonable," and approved the Class Action Plan. C.A. Dkt. No. 867, ¶ 2. 16 Beginning on June 23, 2022, after completing the claims process, HCG disbursed 17 \$8,602,523.19 to 6,131 harmed investors, compensating them for 1.06% of their harm. 18 D. The Distribution Agent and the Tax Administrator 19 Because of the overlap between the Class Action and the SEC Action and anticipated cost 20 savings in using the same claims information in both actions, the SEC moved, and on March 18, 21 2019, this Court ordered, HCG's appointment in this SEC action as the Distribution Agent. ECF 22 ³ See Class Action Dkt. ("C.A. Dkt.") Nos. 863, 867.

⁴ In addition to the specified exclusions, approximately 30 individuals opted out of the Class

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Action.

No. 509 (the "Appointment Order"). The Court further appointed HCG's then-affiliate, Heffler,

Radetich & Saitta LLP ("HRS"), a certified public accounting firm, as the Tax Administrator for

the Distribution Fund.⁵ *Id*.

E. The Plan

Like the Class Action Plan, the goal of the Plan is to compensate those investors harmed by the Defendants' fraud and to do so, proposes the use of the net investment methodology set forth in the already approved Class Action Plan. Moreover, the Plan addresses the same period of harm and will largely include the same investor pool.⁶ Because of the similarities, the Distribution Agent, with the permission of Class Action counsel, will use information obtained, and work performed, in the Class Action, thereby reducing the costs and, upon the approval of a distribution plan, the time for the completion of the distribution in the SEC Action.

III. The Plan is Fair and Reasonable and Should be Approved.

The Court should approve the Plan because, like the Class Action Plan, it fairly and reasonably allocates the Distribution Fund among the harmed investors.⁷

A district court has broad discretion in approving a plan of distribution. *SEC v. Murray*, Civ. Act. No. 12-CV-01288-EMC, 2018 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 127221, *2 (N.D. Cal. Jul. 30, 2018), *citing SEC v. Wang*, 944 F.2d 80, 85 (2d Cir. 1991). *Cf. SEC v. Aequitas Management, LLC*, 16-

⁵ At the time of the Appointment Order, HCG and HRS were affiliates. HRS, while no longer affiliated with HCG, will continue as the Tax Administrator. HRS has informed the SEC staff that this change in affiliation will have no impact upon the tax administration in this matter.

⁶ Those investors who opted out of the Class Action Plan, including the plaintiffs in the pending litigation against the defendants in Japan whose litigation has not resulted in any collections, will be given the opportunity to participate in the SEC's distribution, as will investors who filed untimely claims in the Class but whose claim can be timely evaluated in connection with the SEC's distribution.

⁷ See C.A. Dkt. No. 867, ¶ 2 (McKibben, J.), finding the pro-rata distribution method proposed by the plaintiff class to be fair, adequate, and reasonable, and approving the plan.

cv-00438, 2020 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 57325, *11-12 (D. Or. Mar. 31, 2020) (internal citations excluded) (a court has extremely broad power when determining the appropriate action to be taken in receivership administration, especially where a federal agency seeks enforcement in the public interest). The district court's determination is reviewed for abuse of discretion. See Official Comm. Of Unsecured Creditors of WorldCom, 467 F.3d 73, 84 (2d Cir. 2006); Cf. CFTC v. Topworth International, Ltd., 205 F.3d 1107, 1115 (9th Cir. 1999) (supervision of an equitable receivership is reviewed for an abuse of discretion); CFTC v. Inc21.com Corp., 475 Fed. Appx. 106, 108 (9th Cir. Mar. 30, 2012) (reviewing a district court's order directing a pro rata distribution for abuse of discretion). The job of the district court is to ensure that the plan of distribution is fair and reasonable. Murray, 2018 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 127221 at *2-*3; WorldCom, 467 F.3d 73, 83-85 (2d Cir. 2006) (because the SEC is fulfilling a statutory role in determining how to distribute recovered funds to investors, it is entitled to the deference of a "fair and reasonable" standard—that the plan fairly and reasonably distributes limited funds among the potential claimants). See also, Aeguitas, 220 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 67325, *12 (in the context of a receivership); SEC v. Bivona, 16-cv-01386-EMC, 2017 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 148575, *17 (N.D. Cal. September 13, 2017), citing SEC v. Wang, 944 F.2d 80, 85 (2d Cir. 1991) (in reviewing a plan proposed by the SEC and the Receiver, the Court must "satisf[y] itself that the distribution of proceeds . . . is fair and reasonable"); SEC v. Copeland, 11-cv-8607-R, 2014 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 195315, *5 (C.D. Cal. May 19, 2014), aff'd, 645 F.3d. Appx. 596 (9th Cir. 2016) (same). Under the Plan, the Relevant Period is the same as approved in the Class Action – July 5, 2008 through July 5, 2013, inclusive.⁸ Persons who invested or reinvested in MRI during that

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period are potentially eligible for a distribution from the Distribution Fund. The coincidence of the time period in the SEC Action and the Class Action will enable the Distribution Agent to use the claim information from the Class Action rather than conduct a new, costly, and time consuming claims process. Moreover, the front-end limitation in 2008 coincides with MRI's alleged financial difficulties (insolvency and retained earnings deficits), as well as the time during which MRI provided false quarterly account statements to investors. The end of the Relevant Period is the date of the filing of the Class Action and the consequent U.S. publication of the MRI fraud. *See SEC v. AR Capital, LLC,* 19 Civ. 6603 (AT), 2021 WL 1988084, *5 (S.D.N.Y. May 18, 2021) (finding the SEC's use of the fraud announcement date as the cutoff date in a distribution plan fair and reasonable).

Persons¹⁰ identified by the Distribution Agent through its access to the Class Action claims process, who may have suffered losses on investments in MRI made or reinvested during the Relevant Period, including those who filed untimely claims in the Class Action and Opt-Out Investors, are potentially eligible for a distribution under the Plan ("Preliminary Claimants").¹¹ Eligible Claimants are Preliminary Claimants who are determined to have suffered a Recognized Loss under the Plan's methodology, and who respond to attempts by the Distribution Agent to obtain any necessary information.¹²

The Plan excludes those arguably responsible for the harm suffered: the defendants in the SEC Action and in the Class Action, their family members, affiliates, and their legal

⁹ Plan ¶19.n.

²² All capitalized terms used in this memorandum but not defined are used as defined in the Plan.

^{23 &}lt;sup>11</sup> See note 6, above. Plan ¶¶ 19.i, k., n.

¹² Plan, ¶¶ 19.d, t.

representatives, heirs, successors-in-interest, and assigns. ¹³ *See SEC v. Bivona*, 16-cv-01386-EMC, 2017 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 148575, **41-44 (N.D. Cal. 2017) (district courts have discretion to exclude from a distribution plan active wrongdoers, persons whose unlawful activity resulted in investor harm, and claims of persons who received, or would receive, a profit from the fraud). *See also SEC v. McGinn, Smith & Co.*, 10-cv-457, 2020 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 118746, *6-8 (Jul. 7, 2020); *SEC v. McGinn, Smith & Co.*, 10-cv-457, 2019 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 35678, *5-8 (N.D.N.Y. Mar. 6, 2019) (and the cases cited therein) (district courts have discretion to exclude claimants involved in the underlying fraudulent scheme).

Moreover, to maximize the recovery to investors who respond to the SEC's Notice, investors who failed to negotiate payments in the Class Action distribution or to whom the Claims Administrator could not make payment, will be excluded from the SEC's distribution unless they provide updated contact information prior to distribution calculations under the Plan. Finally, the employees of the Distribution Agent are excluded to avoid any conflicts of interest, as well as entities that seek to capitalize on the distribution through the exclusion of any entity that seeks to recover by purchasing for value a Potentially Eligible Investor's eligibility for a Distribution Payment.

Because there are insufficient funds to make all harmed investors whole, the SEC is using the net investment methodology¹⁶ -- that determined to be fair and reasonable in the Class Action Plan¹⁷ -- which will treat all victims equally based on the amount of their net loss. *See Topworth*,

^{21 &}lt;sup>13</sup> Plan, ¶19.e.(1).

¹⁴ Plan, ¶19.e.(2).

^{22 &}lt;sup>15</sup> Plan, ¶19.e.(3), (4).

¹⁶ Plan, Exhibit A (Plan of Allocation, Allocation of Funds).

¹⁷ C.A. Dkt No. 867

205 F.3d at 1116 (finding the district court's approval of a distribution plan using the net investment methodology to be within the Court's broad discretion); (supervision of an equitable receivership is reviewed for an abuse of discretion); Murray, 12-cv-01288-EMC, 2018 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 127221, *3 (N.D. Cal. July 30, 2018); SEC v. Capital Cove Bancorp, LLC, SACV15-00980 –JLS, 2015 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 174854, *7 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 25, 2015) (authorizing receiver's use of net investment method). Using the same methodology as that used in the Class Action Plan is also efficient – the same calculation algorithm will apply in both cases. Under the methodology, the Distribution Agent will first calculate each harmed investor's loss as the difference between their Investment(s) and their Recovery(ies). For those with a loss greater than zero, the Distribution Agent will then calculate their pro rata percent of the Distribution Fund less administrative costs ("Net Distribution Fund") by multiplying their Recognized Loss by the Net Distribution Fund and dividing that by the aggregate losses of all harmed investors. 18 No investor will receive a Distribution Payment less than \$20 – the Minimum Distribution Amount.¹⁹ After issuing payments, the Distribution Agent will undertake outreach efforts to maximize the number and value of checks cashed and payments received.²⁰

With respect to the method of payment, the Plan permits payment by check, electronic payments, or other payment method upon the approval of the SEC staff.²¹ The Distribution Agent has determined, based on its experience in issuing payments in the Class Action, that wire payments are the best method by which to distribute funds to the common pool of harmed investors, and that method of payment will be favored if the harmed investor, upon solicitation

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¹⁸ Plan, Exhibit A (Plan of Allocation, Allocation of Funds, *Pro Rata* Percent).

¹⁹ Plan, Exhibit A (Plan of Allocation, Minimum Distribution Amount)

^{23 &}lt;sup>20</sup> See Plan ¶¶ 52-55.

²¹ Plan, ¶ 48.

by the Distribution Agent, timely provides the information necessary to make such payments or confirms the information previously submitted. The Distribution Agent, in consultation with the SEC staff, may provide harmed investors with electronic payment alternatives if the harmed investor so chooses and this can be done without jeopardizing the safety of the Distribution Fund. Checks will be used as a final alternative, if the Distribution Agent has the harmed investor's address but no additional payment information.

Additional distributions may occur if additional funds are received and/or if otherwise feasible. ²² Upon completion of the final distribution, the SEC staff will file a motion with this Court to approve the final accounting, including a recommendation as to the final disposition of the Residual, consistent with Sections 21(d)(3), (5), and (7)²³ of the Exchange Act and *Liu v*. *SEC*, 140 S. Ct. 1936 (2020). ²⁴ If distribution of the Residual to investors is infeasible, the SEC staff may recommend that the monies be transferred to the general fund of the U.S. Treasury subject to Section 21F(g)(3) of the Exchange Act. ²⁵ In moving this Court to approve the final accounting, the SEC staff will also seek from the Court, as appropriate, an Order that discharges the Distribution Agent and terminates the Fair Fund. ²⁶

NDAA, Section 6501(b).

or credited into the SEC Investor Protection Fund.

^{17 &}lt;sup>22</sup> Plan, ¶ 58.

²³ 15 U.S.C. § § 78u(d)(3), (5), and (7). Section 21(d)(7) was added to the Exchange Act by Section 6501(a) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, Pub. L. No. 116-283, enacted January 1, 2021. The relevant provisions of the NDAA apply "to any action or proceeding that is pending on, or commenced on or after, the date of" the NDAA's enactment.

²⁴ Plan, ¶ 61.

²⁵ *Id.* Section 21F(g)(3) of the Exchange Act, 15 U.S.C. § 78u-6(g)(3), provides, in relevant part, that any monetary sanction of \$200 million or less collected by the SEC in any judicial action brought by the SEC under the securities laws that is not added to a disgorgement fund or Distribution Fund or otherwise distributed to victims, plus investment income, shall be deposited

²⁶ Plan, ¶ 68.

1 The remaining provisions of the Plan provide for the careful and orderly distribution of 2 the Distribution Fund. 3 The SEC believes that the Plan fairly and reasonably distributes the Distribution Fund to 4 investors harmed by the conduct underlying the Complaint and respectfully requests that the Plan 5 be approved. 6 IV. **Conclusion** 7 Based on the foregoing, the SEC respectfully requests that the Court grant the Motion 8 and enter the proposed Order submitted with the Motion. 9 10 Dated: July 12, 2023 Respectfully submitted, 11 12 /s/Catherine E. Pappas Catherine E. Pappas 13 (pro hac pursuant to LR IC 2-1) Attorney for Plaintiff 14 SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE **COMMISSION** 15 One Penn Center 1617 JFK Blvd., Ste. 520 16 Philadelphia, Pa. 19103 Tel: 215-597-0657 Fax: 215-597-2740 17 pappasc@SEC.gov 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

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1	<u>CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE</u>	
2	I, Catherine E. Pappas, hereby certify that on July 12, 2023 caused a true copy of this	
3	document and accompanying papers to be served upon the defendant by filing the same via the	
4	CM/ECF system.	
5	A full copy of these papers, and the proposed order, upon translation to Japanese,	
6	anticipated within six business days, will be sent to Hiroshi Yamaguchi in the Toyo Kyodo Lav	
7	Office in Tokyo, Japan as follows:	
8	Federal Express International	
9	Hiroshi Yamaguchi	
10	Tokyo Kyodo Law Office 5th Floor, SAWADA Building	
11	SHINJUKU 1-15-9 SHINJUKU KU	
12	Tokyo (self-described "Lead Attorney for Lawyers Group Representing 4,961 Victims in	
13	Japan'')	
14	/s/ Catherine E. Pappas	
15	Catherine E. Pappas	
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