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EDUCATION

Georgetown University Law Center

LLM, with distinction

State University of New York at
Buffalo Law School

JD

Alfred University

BS, cum laude

ADMISSIONS

District of Columbia

New York

Christine Keller

Executive Principal

Christine Keller advises a wide range of clients on all aspects of health and welfare plan design, administration, and funding including compliance with federal tax, ERISA, and other federal and state law requirements, plan and VEBA trust document drafting, participant disclosure, change in election issues, wellness program compliance, and claims and appeals. Her clients include employers, insurers, and service providers of all sizes, and she has particularly extensive experience in the airline industry, retail, and in pharmaceutical concerns.

Chris helps her clients offer the best, most strategic benefits packages while remaining in compliance with applicable regulations. Depending on the industry, she may also negotiate with unions, harmonize benefits packages with a client's overall business strategy, or obtain clarification from regulators concerning the scope and definition of the applicable rules.

Christine joined the firm after practicing for six years at the IRS, Office of Chief Counsel (Tax-Exempt and Government Entities Division). At the Office of Chief Counsel, Christine worked first in the qualified plans litigation branch and later in the health and welfare branch. She is one of the principal authors of two sets of final cafeteria plan regulations published by the IRS in 2000 and 2001.

She frequently draws on her IRS experience to provide practical advice about risk and to assist clients with obtaining informal guidance and rulings from the IRS and other federal agencies. She understands firsthand the process of making regulations and how regulators think. In any decision, Chris strives to integrate the whole picture.

Chris's work often means developing a deep understanding of each client's objectives, constraints, processes, and limitations. For example, when advising clients in the transportation industry, Chris is conversant in such topics as pricing methodologies for their services, hiring procedures for their talent, and endless other factors that often must be

taken into account when counseling clients, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly. This knowledge helps ensure that her recommendations are workable in the day-to-day business operations of her clients and effectively balance risk and opportunity.

Beginning in 2022, Chris has served as the Executive Principal of Groom. She is responsible for the overall strategic direction and professional culture of the firm, including hiring, retention, and communicating management's vision throughout the organization. She is currently a member of the firm's Executive Committee, having also served on the committee previously from 2016 to 2020. Chris is also active in several organizations dedicated to educating others about the rapidly evolving landscape of health plans and other benefits, including the American Health Law Association ("AHLA"), the Practical Law Corporation, and the Employer's Counsel on Executive Compensation ("ECFC"). She is a frequent speaker on these topics and one of the authors of "The HSA Answer Book" published by Wolters Kluwer and the Employee Benefit Institute of America's ("EBIA's") "Cafeteria Plan Book."

When not at the office, Chris and her family spend time cruising in their boat, and visiting small towns along the Chesapeake Bay. She also enjoys running and biking.

"It's impressive that she has such a broad array of law and guidance. She immediately knows the subject matter backwards and forwards and is able to very quickly turn around and explain the rules relevant to the question in a short time frame." – Client

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

Office of Chief Counsel, Tax Exempt and Government Entities Division, IRS

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Fellow, American College of Employee Benefits Counsel
- Technical Advisory Council of the Employers Council on Flexible Compensation (ECFC)
- Women's Bar Association of the District of Columbia
- Vice Chair - Member Engagement of the Tax and Finance Practice Group, American Health Law Association ("AHLA")

HONORS & DISTINCTION

- Listed, *Chambers USA: America's Leading Lawyers for Business*, Employee Benefits & Executive Compensation (2014-2023)
- Listed, *The Best Lawyers in America*, Employee Benefits (ERISA) Law (2021-2024)
- Listed, *The Legal 500 US*, Employee Benefits and Executive Compensation (2013-2014)
- Listed, *The Legal 500 US*, Healthcare (2011)
- Member, *Practical Law Company* Employee Benefits & Executive Compensation Advisory Board

Helping the client solve problems is not really
‘work,’ it is simply helping someone that you
like.