

*Wellington Management established these guidelines to document positions generally taken
on common proxy issues voted on behalf of clients.*

Global Proxy Voting Guidelines

March 2021

Upon a client's written request, Wellington Management Company LLP ("Wellington Management") votes securities that are held in the client's account in response to proxies solicited by the issuers of such securities. These guidelines are based on Wellington Management's fiduciary obligation to act in the best interest of its clients as shareholders. Hence, Wellington Management examines and votes each proposal so that the long-term effect of the vote will ultimately increase shareholder value for our clients. Because ethical considerations can have an impact on the long-term value of assets, our voting practices are also attentive to these issues, and votes will be cast against unlawful and unethical activity. Further, Wellington Management's experience in voting proposals has shown that similar proposals often have different consequences for different companies.

Moreover, while these Global Proxy Voting Guidelines are written to apply globally, differences in local practice and law make universal application impractical. Therefore, each proposal is evaluated on its merits, considering its effects on the specific company in question and on the company within its industry. It should be noted that the following are guidelines, and not rigid rules, and Wellington Management reserves the right in all cases to vote contrary to guidelines where doing so is judged to represent the best interest of its clients.

Our approach to stewardship

The goal of our stewardship activities — engaging with companies and voting proxies on our clients' behalf — is to support decisions that we believe will maximize the long-term value of securities we hold in client portfolios. The mechanisms we use to implement our stewardship activities vary by asset class. Engagement applies to all our investments across equity and credit, in both private and public markets. Proxy voting applies only to public equities.

In addition to our extensive research on sustainable investing, we partner with leading organizations to educate ourselves and provide leadership on asset management perspectives relevant to our stewardship activities. These include the Principles of Responsible Investment (PRI), Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), Ceres, the Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN), Toniic, Climate Action 100+, the Investor Forum, Net Zero Asset Managers Initiatives (NZAMI), and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We are signatories and members of the following stewardship codes and industry initiatives: UK Stewardship Code, Japan Stewardship Code, Hong Kong Principles of Responsible Ownership, Investor Stewardship Group (US), the International Corporate Governance Network (ICGN), the Asian Corporate Governance Association (ACGA), the Transition Pathway Initiative (TPI), CDP (formerly Carbon Disclosure Project), the PRI Statement on ESG in credit ratings, Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change (IIGCC), and GRESB.

Asset manager stewardship extends beyond consideration of ESG issues to any area that may affect the long-term sustainability of an investment. While the objectives of ESG integration could be limited to risk mitigation and sustainable value assessment, stewardship's aim is sustainable value creation. In our view, this can be accomplished by monitoring company behavior, engaging with boards and management teams, and voting proxies. These activities

have long been part of Wellington's investment ethos, so we embrace the industry's heightened focus on stewardship.

Engagement

Direct engagement with company management on strategy, financial performance and risk, capital structure, and ESG considerations, is central to our investment process and is coordinated with voting in our stewardship practices. Direct, persistent contact with company management and boards of directors, both in our offices and with on-site company visits, informs a substantial portion of our company research. Our investors host more than 15,000 company meetings around the world each year. Maintaining this ongoing dialogue is central to how we implement our stewardship responsibilities and informs the investment decisions we make on behalf of our clients.

Prioritization of stewardship activities is a bottom-up process that requires numerous inputs, including level of ownership and materiality of industry- and company-specific risks. Through engagement we seek to gain differentiated insights, develop productive ongoing dialogue, and impact company behavior. In addition to the objectives established for specific company engagements, the ESG Research Team annually sets stewardship priorities relevant across companies and sectors for the coming year.

As a large firm that has been investing in nearly all sectors of the global securities markets for decades, we have ongoing, direct access to company management. Given the number of meetings we conduct, the breadth of our contacts, and the quality of discourse we require, this degree of access is invaluable. We prefer to engage privately with investee companies, which encourages an open, constructive, lasting dialogue. We seek to ensure that companies are acting in the best interest of their capital providers, in the same way we are responsible for acting in the best interest of our clients.

We take a multidisciplinary approach in our engagement process, including perspectives from equity, industry, fixed income, and ESG analysts for a richer dialogue. Our company meetings are open to all interested investment personnel. Our central-research collaboration platform and other forums, such as our daily Morning Meeting, facilitate insight and information sharing. Diversity of perspectives is a key strength of our model, as it encourages debate, which can ultimately help reinforce conviction in investment decisions.

Cultivating relationships with other asset management firms, academia, and broader industry organizations allows us to share insights on corporate governance trends and local market considerations. Whenever permissible under applicable laws and regulations we may communicate with other firms to reach an outcome that is in our clients' best interest. We also speak with business partners, employee representatives, suppliers, and nongovernmental organizations, where this dialogue may provide incremental insight into how a company considers its various stakeholders.

Board engagement

We believe meeting directly with corporate boards which can enhance discussions about long-term material ESG issues, complements our ongoing conversations with management teams, and helps us assess a board's effectiveness — all of which is challenging to do using company disclosures alone. We believe this ongoing dialogue benefits board members as well. Engagement with active managers provides an opportunity for directors to ask questions, gain market insights, and hear how the company compares with peers. Questions from investors often signal emerging areas of emphasis for a company. We view it as a missed opportunity and negative signal when directors appear

defensive or dismissive of external perspectives. We believe continuous dialogue with investors can help ensure honest feedback and foster trust and transparency, which may enable both parties to anticipate and manage potential issues.

Please see [Wellington's Engagement Policy](#) for more information.

Our approach to voting

We vote proxies in what we consider to be the best interests of our clients as shareholders and in a manner that we believe maximizes the value of their holdings. Our approach to voting is investment-led and serves as an influential component of our engagement and escalation strategy. We prefer that clients delegate voting responsibility to their portfolio managers. The Investment Stewardship Committee, a cross-functional group of experienced professionals, establishes Wellington Management's Proxy Voting Guidelines.

The ESG Research Team examines proxy proposals on their merits and recommends voting against proposals that we believe would have a negative effect on shareholder rights or the current or future market value of the company's securities. This team also provides recommendations to each portfolio manager who makes the final decision for their client portfolios, absent a material conflict of interest. Consistent with our community-of-boutiques model, portfolio managers occasionally arrive at different voting conclusions for their clients, resulting in a split decision for the same security. This robust set of voting procedures and the deliberation that occurs prior to a vote decision are aligned with our role as active owners and fiduciaries for our clients.

Voting guidelines

Board composition and role of directors

We believe that shareholders' ability to elect directors annually is an important shareholder right. While we generally support management nominees, we will withhold votes for any director who acts against shareholders' best economic interests. We may also withhold votes from directors who fail to implement shareholder proposals that have received majority support, implement poison pills without shareholder approval, fail to attend at least 75% of scheduled board meetings, or serve on an excessive number of public company boards (see **Director attendance and commitment** below). We support proposals to declassify a board and enable annual director elections.

In our assessment of board effectiveness, we seek to understand how the board collaborates with management and delineates responsibilities. This is why direct engagement with board members is such an important part of our investment process. We look for indications that directors foster healthy debate in the boardroom, develop constructive relationships with management, and challenge the team when appropriate. Where we see opportunities for improvement, we use these discussions to provide feedback and explain how changes we suggest can benefit our clients, the ultimate owner of the company's securities.

We do not have specific voting policies relating to director age or tenure. We prefer to take a holistic view, evaluating whether the company is balancing the perspectives of new directors with the institutional knowledge of longer serving board members. Succession planning is a key topic during many of our board engagements. Companies in certain markets are governed by multi-tiered boards, with each tier having different responsibilities. We hold supervisory board members to similar standards, subject to prevailing local governance best practices.

Board independence

In our view, boards can best represent shareholders when enough directors are present to challenge and counsel management. We believe that most board members should be independent, as defined by the local market regulatory authority. This is particularly true of audit, compensation, and nominating committees.

At times, we may withhold approval for non-independent directors or those responsible for the board composition. We typically vote in support of proposals calling for improved independence. To determine appropriate minimum levels of board independence, we look to the prevailing market best practices; two-thirds in the US, for example, and majority in the UK and France. In Japan, we will consider voting against the board chair (or most senior executive on the ballot) in cases where the board — including statutory auditors — is less than one-third independent.

Because boards are responsible for overseeing execution, evaluating and compensating top management, and coordinating CEO succession, we believe that having an independent chair is the preferred structure for board leadership. Having an independent chair avoids the inherent conflict of self-oversight and helps ensure robust debate and diversity of thought in the boardroom. We will generally support management proposals to separate the chair and CEO or establish a lead director, but we take a case-by-case approach in assessing corporate leadership structures. For example, we may support the involvement of an outgoing CEO as executive chair for a limited period to ensure a smooth transition to new management. However, after the transition, we expect the board to appoint an independent chair and account for separate roles in succession planning. Through engagement and voting, we continue to encourage boards to signal the importance of oversight on behalf of shareholders through the adoption of this leadership structure.

Board diversity

We believe boards that reflect a wide range of perspectives create shareholder value. In our view, businesses create shareholder value by appointing boards that thoughtfully debate company strategy and direction. Such debate is not possible unless boards elect highly qualified and diverse directors who contribute insights from a range of perspectives. By setting a leadership example, diverse boardrooms encourage an organizational culture that promotes diverse thinkers, enabling better strategic decisions and the navigation of increasingly complex issues facing companies today.

We think it is not in shareholders' best interests for the full board to be comprised of directors from the same industry, gender, race, nationality, or ethnic group. We have an expectation for our portfolio companies to be thoughtful and intentional in considering the widest possible pool of skilled candidates who bring diverse perspectives into the boardroom. We encourage companies to disclose the racial and ethnic composition of their board and to communicate their ambitions and strategies for creating and fostering a diverse board. We reserve the right to vote against the reelection of the Nominating/Governance Committee Chair if we think a board is not meeting local market standards from a diversity perspective. In defining the market standard, we refer to quotas established by local governance codes, which exist in many European markets. In the US and Japan, we look for at least one female on the board as a minimum standard. To hold companies accountable to emerging best practice standards regarding racial diversity, beginning in 2021 we will vote against the reelection of Nominating/Governance Committee Chairs at S&P 500 companies that do not disclose the racial and ethnic composition of their boards. We will also support shareholder proposals asking for improved workforce diversity disclosure, e.g. EEO-1 reporting. If the Nomination and/or Governance Chair is not up for reelection, we may vote against other committee members, including the Board Chair. In the UK, we expect portfolio companies to adopt the

recommendations of the Parker Review. In 2022, we plan to vote against the reelection of Nominating/Governance Committee Chairs at S&P 500 companies that lack racial/ethnic diversity on their boards, and we will consider expanding our approach beyond the S&P 500 constituents.

Director attendance and commitment

We consider attending at least 75% of board meetings to be a minimum requirement and may vote against directors who fall below that threshold. We also expect directors to have the time and energy to fully commit to the company and fulfill their board-related responsibilities. Our internal voting guidelines define professional directors as “overboarded” when serving on five or more public company boards; and public company executives when serving on three or more public company boards, including their own. Representation on boards of affiliate or subsidiary public companies do not count toward these thresholds, as we recognize that these are extensions of the directorship on the parent company board. We may make exceptions to this approach to accommodate prevailing market standards. We may also consider a director’s role on the board in assessing his or her overall commitments. For example, we would look less favorably on a director serving as chair of multiple audit committees given the time commitment required by this role.

Majority vote on election of directors

Because we believe the election of directors by a majority of votes cast is the appropriate standard, we will generally support proposals that seek to adopt such a standard. Our support will typically extend to situations where the relevant company has an existing resignation policy for directors that receive a majority of “withhold” votes. We believe majority voting should be defined in the company’s charter and not simply in its corporate governance policy.

Generally, we will not support proposals that fail to provide for the exceptional use of a plurality standard in the case of contested elections. Further, we will not support proposals that seek to adopt a standard of majority of votes outstanding (total votes eligible as opposed to votes cast). We likely will support shareholder and management proposals to remove existing supermajority vote requirements.

Contested director elections

We approach contested director elections on a case-by-case basis, considering the specific circumstances of each situation to determine what we believe to be in the best interest of our clients. In each case, we welcome the opportunity to engage with both the company and the proponent to ensure that we understand both perspectives and are making an informed decision on our clients’ behalf.

Compensation

Executive compensation plans establish the incentive structure that plays a role in strategy-setting, decision-making, and risk management. While design and structure vary widely, we believe the most effective compensation plans attract and retain high caliber executives, foster a culture of performance and accountability, and align management’s interests with those of long-term shareholders.

Due to each company's unique circumstances and wide range of plan structures, Wellington determines support for a compensation plan on a case-by-case basis. We support plans that we believe lead to long-term value creation for our clients. We may also support poorly structured plans where we have seen some improvement, recognizing compensation committees' willingness to engage with shareholder and implement recommendations that enhance the plan. We support the right to vote on compensation plans annually.

In evaluating compensation plans, we consider the following attributes in the context of the company's business, size, industry, and geographic location:

- Alignment — We believe in pay-for-performance and encourage plan structures that align executive compensation with shareholder experience. We compare total compensation to performance metrics on an absolute and relative basis over various timeframes, and we look for strong positive correlation. To ensure shareholder alignment, executives should maintain meaningful equity ownership in the company while they are employed, and for a period thereafter.
- Transparency — We expect compensation committees to articulate the decision-making process and rationale behind the plan structure, and to provide adequate disclosure so shareholders can evaluate actual compensation relative to the committee's intentions. Disclosure should include how metrics, targets, and timeframes are chosen, and detail desired outcomes. We also seek to understand how the compensation committee determines the target level of compensation and constructs the peer group for benchmarking purposes.
- Structure — The plan should be clear and comprehensible. We look for a mix of cash versus equity, fixed versus variable, and short- versus long-term pay that incentivizes appropriate risk-taking and aligns with industry practice. Performance targets should be achievable but rigorous, and equity awards should be subject to performance and/or vesting periods of at least three years, to discourage executives from managing the business with a near-term focus. Unless otherwise specified by local market regulators, performance-based compensation should be based primarily on quantitative financial and non-financial criteria such as ESG-related criteria. There is scope, however, for qualitative criteria related to strategic, individual, or ESG goals, that are critical to the business. Qualitative goals may be acceptable if a compensation committee has demonstrated a fair and consistent approach to evaluating qualitative performance and applying discretion over time.
- Accountability — Compensation committees should be able to use discretion, positive and negative, to ensure compensation aligns with performance, and provide a cogent explanation to shareholders. We generally oppose one-time awards aimed at retention or achieving a pre-determined goal. Barring an extenuating circumstance, we view retesting provisions unfavorably.

We seek to establish mutually beneficial dialogues with companies regarding their compensation policies. Where we see opportunities for improvement, we provide feedback and explain how the suggestions can benefit our clients. We use voting, an extension of our engagement efforts, to convey our views and drive change, if necessary. We expect compensation committees to respond to shareholder engagement and voting outcomes, and to disclose how these external perspectives are considered in the committee's decisions.

Approving equity incentive plans

A well-designed equity incentive plan facilitates the alignment of interests of long-term shareholders, management, employees, and directors. We evaluate equity-based compensation plans on a case-by-case basis, considering

projected plan costs, plan features, and grant practices. We reconsider our support for a plan if we believe these factors, on balance, are not in the best interest of shareholders. Specific items of concern may include excessive cost or dilution, unfavorable change-in-control features, insufficient performance conditions, holding/vesting periods, or stock ownership requirements, repricing stock options/stock appreciate rights (SARs) without prior shareholder approval, or automatic share replenishment (an “evergreen” feature).

Employee stock purchase plans

We generally support employee stock purchase plans, as they may align employees’ interests with those of shareholders. That said, we typically vote against plans that do not offer shares to a broad group of employees (e.g. if only executives can participate) or plans that offer shares at a significant discount.

Non-executive director compensation

Finding highly qualified individuals that bring unique skillsets to a board is not easy. When a potential fit is found, we want companies to be able to compensate a director competitively. We understand that excessive compensation may undermine a director’s independence, however, so we expect companies to strike this balance accordingly.

We expect companies to disclose non-executive director compensation. We prefer the use of an annual retainer or fee, delivered as cash, equity, or a combination. We do not believe non-executive directors should receive performance-based compensation, as this creates a potential conflict of interest. Non-executive directors oversee executive compensation plans; their objectivity is compromised if they design a plan that they also participate in.

Severance arrangements

We will oppose excessively generous arrangements but may support agreements that encourage management to negotiate in shareholders’ best interest. Because we believe severance arrangements require special scrutiny, we generally support proposals calling for shareholder ratification. We are also mindful of the board’s need for flexibility in recruitment and retention; therefore, we will oppose limitations on board compensation where respect for industry practice and reasonable overall levels of compensation have been demonstrated.

Clawback policies

We believe companies should be able to recoup incentive compensation from members of management who received awards based on fraudulent activities, accounting misstatements, or breaches in standards of conduct that lead to corporate reputational damage. Consequently, we may support shareholder proposals requesting that a company establish a clawback provision if existing policies do not cover these circumstances. We also support proposals seeking greater transparency about the application of clawback policies.

Audit quality and oversight

Scrutiny of auditors, particularly audit quality and oversight, has been increasing. The Big Four global audit firms currently control the market but face minimal regulation. In the UK, recent corporate audit failures have increased regulatory pressures, leading to proposed rules such as mandating joint audits and operational splits. While scrutiny in the US is less intense and regulation is less likely in the near term, in our view, regulatory boards, including the SEC and Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB) are becoming more active. When we assess financial statement reporting and audit quality, we will generally support management’s choice of auditors, unless the auditors have demonstrated failure to act in shareholders’ best economic interest. We also pay close attention to the

non-audit services provided by auditors and consider the potential for the revenue from those services to create conflicts of interest that could compromise the integrity of financial statement audits.

Shareholder voting rights

Shareholder rights plans

Also known as poison pills, these plans can enable boards of directors to negotiate higher takeover prices on behalf of shareholders. Such plans also may be misused, however, as a means of entrenching management. Consequently, we may support plans that include a shareholder approval requirement, a sunset provision, or a permitted bid feature (e.g., bids that are made for all shares and demonstrate evidence of financing must be submitted to a shareholder vote). Because boards generally have the authority to adopt shareholder rights plans without shareholder approval, we are equally vigilant in our assessment of requests for authorization of blank-check preferred shares (see below).

Multiple voting rights

More companies choose to go public with a dual-class share structure, a controversial practice that can raise governance and performance concerns. In our view, dual-class shares are problematic because of the misalignment they can create between shareholders' economic stake and their voting power, and for the control they often give a small number of insiders who may make decisions that are not in the interests of all shareholders. Index providers' actions to address this issue and encourage one share, one vote structures could have significant implications for investors, but we believe these can be mitigated by active management and thoughtful stewardship.

We believe sunset clauses are a reasonable compromise between founders seeking to defend against takeover attempts in pivotal early years, and shareholders demanding a mechanism for holding management accountable, especially in the event of leadership changes. The Council of Institutional Investors, a nonprofit association of pension funds, endowments, and foundations, recommends that newly public companies that adopt structures with unequal voting rights do away with the structure within three to five years.

Without a sunset clause, we would prefer that a company eliminate a dual-class share structure, as shareholders' voting power should be reflected by their economic stake in a company. Similarly, we generally do not support the introduction of loyalty shares, which grant increased voting rights to investors who hold shares over multiple years, because they create misalignment of voting power and economic interest.

Proxy access

We believe shareholders should have the right to nominate director candidates on management's proxy card. We will generally support shareholder proposals seeking proxy access unless current policy is in-line with market norms.

Special meeting rights

We believe the right to call a special meeting is a shareholder right, and we will support such proposals at companies that lack a special-meeting ownership threshold. We also will support proposals lowering thresholds not in-line with

market norms. If shareholders are granted the right to call special meetings, we generally do not support written consent.

Mergers and acquisitions

We approach votes to approve mergers and acquisitions on a case-by-case basis, considering the specific circumstances of each proposal to determine what we believe to be in the best interest of our clients. In conducting our assessment, equity and ESG analysts collaborate to analyze the fundamental and governance implications, if applicable, to advise portfolio managers in their vote decisions.

Capital structure and capital allocation

Increases in authorized common stock

We generally support requests for increases up to 100% of the shares currently authorized. Exceptions will be made when the company has clearly articulated a reasonable need for a greater increase. Conversely, at companies trading in less liquid markets, we may impose a lower threshold. When companies seek to issue shares without preemptive rights, we consider potential dilution and generally support requests when dilution is below 20%. For issuance with preemptive rights, we review on a case-by-case basis, considering the size of issuance relative to peers.

Capital allocation (Japan)

Because poor capital stewardship has led to a lack of shareholder value creation in some Japanese companies, we have begun to hold board chairs accountable for persistently low returns on equity (ROE), using a five-year average ROE of below 5% as a guide. Our assessment of a company's capital stewardship complements our assessment of board effectiveness without dictating specific capital allocation decisions. We may make exceptions where ROE is improving, where a long-cycle business warrants a different standard, or where new management is in place and we feel they shouldn't be punished for the past CEO/Chair's record.

Environmental and social issues

Consistent with our ESG integration philosophy, we assess portfolio companies' performance on environmental and social issues we deem to be material to long-term financial performance, and we support shareholder proposals where we think doing so can encourage improvement on relevant issues. We evaluate shareholder proposals related to environmental and social issues on a case-by-case basis, and we expect portfolio companies to comply with applicable laws and regulations with regards to environmental and social standards. We consider the spirit of the proposal, not just the letter, and generally support proposals addressing material issues even when management has been responsive to our engagement on the issue. In this way, we seek to align our voting with our engagement activities. If our views differ from any specific suggestions in the proposals, we will provide clarification via direct engagement.

Climate change

As an asset manager entrusted with investing on our clients' behalf, we aim to assess, monitor, and manage the potential effects of climate change on our investment processes and portfolios, as well as on our business operations. As supporters of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) recommendations, we actively engage with portfolio companies to encourage adoption. We believe that climate change poses a material risk across sectors and geographies, so understanding how companies are assessing and managing climate risk is key to making informed investment decisions for our clients. For this reason, we generally support shareholder proposals asking for improved disclosure on climate risk management and we expect to support those that request alignment of business strategies with the Paris Agreement or similar language. We also generally support proposals asking for board oversight of political contributions and lobbying activities or those asking for improved disclosures where material inconsistencies in reporting and strategy may exist, especially as it relates to climate strategy.

In December 2020, Wellington Management became a founding member of the Net Zero Asset Managers Initiative. Through this initiative, we are committing to work in partnership with clients on their decarbonization goals and to set an interim target for the proportion of assets to be managed in line with the attainment of net-zero emissions by 2050. This commitment is grounded in our belief — forged by extensive research — that climate change poses material risks for companies, economies, and society, and therefore, our clients' investment portfolios. We have been pleased to see rising adoption of the TCFD framework in response to shareholder recommendations. Reporting on climate readiness will help stakeholders understand companies' willingness and ability to adapt to or mitigate climate-related risks. However, so far, many disclosures have been incomplete. Most make scant mention of the physical risks posed to their business by a changing climate. We will continue to focus our stewardship activities in this area, and we are encouraging companies to provide more detail.

To help us do this, we are leveraging findings from our collaborative initiative with Woodwell Climate Research Center, the world's leading independent climate research organization, and established [disclosure guidance](#) to help companies improve their physical risk disclosures. We believe integrating the work of Woodwell's climate scientists and our investment research teams enables us to ask nuanced questions about specific physical risks and more accurately test climate-risk assumptions embedded in companies' strategies. By narrowing our engagement dialogue to address relevant threats, we believe we can encourage companies to take early action to address these threats, potentially improving long-term investment outcomes for shareholders.

Corporate culture, human capital, and diversity & inclusion

The ability to perpetuate a strong, inclusive culture; align management incentives accordingly; and incorporate employee feedback contributes to a company's competitive position. Since culture is challenging to assess from the outside, we examine a company's holistic approach. For example, we evaluate whether a company has a well-articulated culture statement and talent development strategy. To us, these efforts suggest that a company appreciates culture and talent as competitive advantages that can drive long-term value creation. It also sends a strong message when management compensation is linked, when appropriate, to employee satisfaction. If the company conducts regular employee engagement surveys, we look for leadership to disclose the results — both positive and negative — so we can monitor patterns and hold them accountable for implementing changes based on the feedback they receive, we consider workplace locations and how a company balances attracting talent with the costs of operating in desirable cities.

Understanding how a company cultivates its human capital is integral to our assessment of culture. In our view, attracting and retaining talent can create a competitive long-term advantage for any company. These efforts may take time to implement and realize results, but we maintain that a deliberate human capital management strategy should foster a collaborative, productive workplace in which all talent can thrive. Companies that invest in and cultivate human capital are well-positioned to realize a competitive advantage and deliver better business outcomes.

As part of our focus on human capital, diversity and inclusion is an ongoing engagement issue. We seek to better understand how and to what extent a company's approach to diversity is integrated with talent management at all levels. A sound long-term plan holds more weight than a company's current demographics, so we look for a demonstrable diversity and inclusion strategy that seeks to improve metrics over time and align management incentives accordingly. We expect companies in the US to publicly disclose their EEO-1 reporting and their strategy to create an inclusive, diverse, and equitable workplace. We see DEI practices as a material input to long-term performance, so as our clients' fiduciaries, we seek to better understand how and to what extent a company's approach to diversity is integrated with talent management at all levels. This is only possible when there is consistent, robust disclosure in place.

Gender and racial pay equity is an important part of our assessment of a company's diversity efforts. Pay equity can impact shareholder value by exposing a company to challenges with recruiting & retaining talent, job dissatisfaction, workforce turnover, and costly lawsuits. Consequently, we may support proposals asking for improved transparency on a company's gender and/or racial pay gap if existing disclosures are lagging best practice and if the company has not articulated its efforts to eliminate disparities and promote equal opportunities for women and minorities to advance to senior roles.

We believe diversity among directors, leaders, and employees contributes positively to shareholder value by imbuing a company with myriad perspectives that help it better navigate complex challenges. A strong culture of diversity and inclusion begins in the boardroom. See the Board Diversity section above for more on our approach.

Stakeholders and risk management

In our assessment of social risks, we pay attention to how companies treat a key stakeholder: their workforce. We look for signs of constructive labor relations if employees are unionized, and a focus on key employee concerns, such as safe working conditions and competitive compensation.

In recent years, discourse on opioids, firearms, and sexual harassment has put the potential for social externalities — the negative effects that companies can have on society through their products, cultures, or policies — into sharp focus. These nuanced, often misunderstood issues can affect the value of corporate securities. Today, these are no longer just shareholder concerns; companies need to consider the opinions and actions of broader stakeholder constituencies, including employees, customers, and the public.

In our engagement with companies facing these risks, we encourage companies to disclose risk management strategies that acknowledge their societal impacts. When a company faces litigation or negative press, we inquire about lessons learned and request evidence of substantive changes that aim to prevent recurrence and mitigate downside risk. In these cases, we may also support proposals requesting enhanced disclosure on actions taken by management.

Human rights

Following the 2015 passage of the UK's Modern Slavery Act, a handful of countries have passed laws requiring companies to report on how they are addressing risks related to human rights abuses in their global supply chains. While human rights have been a part of our research and engagement in this context, we seek to assess companies' exposures to these risks, determine the sectors for which this risk is most material (highest possibility of supply-chain exposure), enhance our own engagement questions, and potentially work with external data providers to gain insights on specific companies or industries. To help us assess company practices and drive more substantive engagement with companies on this issue, we will support proposals requesting enhanced disclosure on companies' approach to mitigating the risk of human rights violations in their business.

Cybersecurity

Robust cybersecurity practices are imperative for maintaining customer trust, preserving brand strength, and mitigating regulatory risk. Companies that fail to strengthen their cybersecurity platforms may end up bearing large costs. Through engagement, we aim to compare companies' approaches to cyber threats, regardless of region or sector, to distinguish businesses that lag from those that are better prepared.

Political Contributions and Lobbying

We generally support proposals asking for board oversight of a company's political contributions and lobbying activities or those asking for improved disclosures where material inconsistencies in reporting and strategy may exist. In assessing shareholder proposals focused on lobbying, we also focus on the level of transparency of existing disclosures and whether companies clearly explain how they will respond if policy engagement of trade association membership to which they belong do not align with company policy.

Conclusion

At Wellington, stewardship is a core part of how we deliver on our goal of maximizing the long-term value of the investments we make on behalf of our clients. In order to be the best possible stewards of that capital we engage meaningfully and continuously with our investee companies and do so with a multifaceted approach that brings our collective expertise to bear across financial, industry, credit, and ESG analysis. We look forward to continuing to engage with the management teams and directors of the companies we invest in as we seek to help them build long-term, sustainable value in their enterprises.