

## **Information Regarding the Review and Approval of the Fund's Advisory Agreement**

The disinterested trustees (the “directors”) of The AB Portfolios (the “Company”) unanimously approved the continuance of the Company’s Advisory Agreement with the Adviser in respect of AB Conservative Wealth Strategy (the “Fund”) at a meeting held by video conference on August 4-5, 2020 (the “Meeting”).

Prior to approval of the continuance of the Advisory Agreement, the directors had requested from the Adviser, and received and evaluated, extensive materials. They reviewed the proposed continuance of the Advisory Agreement with the Adviser and with experienced counsel who are independent of the Adviser, who advised on the relevant legal standards. The directors also reviewed additional materials, including comparative analytical data prepared by the Senior Analyst for the Fund. The directors also discussed the proposed continuance in private sessions with counsel.

The directors considered their knowledge of the nature and quality of the services provided by the Adviser to the Fund gained from their experience as directors or trustees of most of the registered investment companies advised by the Adviser, their overall confidence in the Adviser’s integrity and competence they have gained from that experience, the Adviser’s initiative in identifying and raising potential issues with the directors and its responsiveness, frankness and attention to concerns raised by the directors in the past, including the Adviser’s willingness to consider and implement organizational and operational changes designed to improve investment results and the services provided to the AB Funds. The directors noted that they have four regular meetings each year, at each of which they review extensive materials and information from the Adviser, including information on the investment performance of the Fund and the underlying funds advised by the Adviser in which the Fund invests.

The directors also considered all factors they believed relevant, including the specific matters discussed below. During the course of their deliberations, the directors evaluated, among other things, the reasonableness of the advisory fee. The directors did not identify any particular information that was all-important or controlling, and different directors may have attributed different weights to the various factors. The directors determined that the selection of the Adviser to manage the Fund and the overall arrangements between the Fund and the Adviser, as provided in the Advisory Agreement, including the advisory fee, were fair and reasonable in light of the services performed, expenses incurred and such other matters as the directors considered relevant in the exercise of their business judgment. The material factors and conclusions that formed the basis for the directors’ determinations included the following:

### **Nature, Extent and Quality of Services Provided**

The directors considered the scope and quality of services provided by the Adviser under the Advisory Agreement, including the quality of the

investment research capabilities of the Adviser and the other resources it has dedicated to performing services for the Fund. The directors noted that the Adviser from time to time reviews the Fund's investment strategies and from time to time proposes changes intended to improve the Fund's relative or absolute performance for the directors' consideration. They also noted the professional experience and qualifications of the Fund's portfolio management team and other senior personnel of the Adviser. The quality of administrative and other services, including the Adviser's role in coordinating the activities of the Fund's other service providers, also was considered. The directors concluded that, overall, they were satisfied with the nature, extent and quality of services provided to the Fund under the Advisory Agreement.

### **Costs of Services Provided and Profitability**

The directors reviewed a schedule of the revenues and expenses and related notes indicating the profitability of the Fund to the Adviser for calendar years 2018 and 2019 that had been prepared with an expense allocation methodology arrived at in consultation with an independent consultant retained by the Fund's former Senior Officer/Independent Compliance Officer. The directors noted the assumptions and methods of allocation used by the Adviser in preparing fund-specific profitability data and understood that there are a number of potentially acceptable allocation methodologies for information of this type. The directors noted that the profitability information reflected all revenues and expenses of the Adviser's relationship with the Fund, including those relating to its subsidiaries that provide transfer agency, distribution and brokerage services to the Fund. The directors recognized that it is difficult to make comparisons of the profitability of the Advisory Agreement with the profitability of fund advisory contracts for unaffiliated funds because comparative information is not generally publicly available and is affected by numerous factors. The directors focused on the profitability of the Adviser's relationship with the Fund before taxes and distribution expenses. The directors concluded that the Adviser's level of profitability from its relationship with the Fund was not unreasonable.

### **Fall-Out Benefits**

The directors considered the other benefits to the Adviser and its affiliates from their relationships with the Fund and the underlying funds advised by the Adviser in which the Fund invests, including, but not limited to, benefits relating to soft dollar arrangements (whereby investment advisers receive brokerage and research services from brokers that execute agency transactions for their clients); 12b-1 fees and sales charges received by the Fund's principal underwriter (which is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Adviser) in respect of certain classes of the Fund's shares; brokerage commissions paid by the Fund to brokers affiliated with the Adviser; and transfer agency fees paid by the Fund to a wholly owned subsidiary of the Adviser. The directors recognized that the Adviser's profitability would be

somewhat lower without these benefits. The directors understood that the Adviser also might derive reputational and other benefits from its association with the Fund.

### **Investment Results**

In addition to the information reviewed by the directors in connection with the Meeting, the directors receive detailed performance information for the Fund at each regular Board meeting during the year.

At the Meeting, the directors reviewed performance information prepared by an independent service provider (the “15(c) service provider”), showing the performance of the Class A Shares of the Fund against a group of similar funds (“peer group”) and a larger group of similar funds (“peer universe”), each selected by the 15(c) service provider, and information prepared by the Adviser showing performance of the Class A Shares against a broad-based securities market index, in each case for the 1-, 3-, 5- and 10-year periods ended May 31, 2020 and (in the case of comparisons with the broad-based securities market index) for the period from inception. Based on their review and their discussion with the Adviser of the reasons for the Fund’s underperformance in the periods reviewed, the directors concluded that the Fund’s investment performance was acceptable.

### **Advisory Fees and Other Expenses**

The directors considered the advisory fee rate payable by the Fund to the Adviser and information prepared by the 15(c) service provider concerning advisory fee rates payable by other funds in the same category as the Fund. The directors recognized that it is difficult to make comparisons of advisory fees because there are variations in the services that are included in the fees paid by other funds. The directors compared the Fund’s contractual effective advisory fee rate with a peer group median.

The Adviser informed the directors that there were no institutional products managed by it that utilize investment strategies similar to those of the Fund.

The directors noted that the Fund invests in shares of exchange-traded funds (“ETFs”), subject to the restrictions and limitations of the Investment Company Act of 1940 as these may be varied as a result of exemptive orders issued by the SEC. The directors also noted that ETFs pay advisory fees pursuant to their advisory contracts, and that the Adviser had provided, and they had reviewed, information about the expense ratios of the relevant ETFs. The directors concluded, based on the Adviser’s explanation of how it uses ETFs when they are the most cost-effective way to obtain desired exposures, in some cases pending purchases of underlying securities, that the advisory fee for the Fund is for services that are in addition to, rather than duplicative of, the services provided under the advisory contracts of the ETFs.

In connection with their review of the Fund's advisory fee, the directors also considered the total expense ratio of the Class A shares of the Fund in comparison to a peer group and a peer universe selected by the 15(c) service provider. The Class A expense ratio of the Fund was based on the Fund's latest fiscal year. The directors noted that it was likely that the expense ratios of some of the other funds in the Fund's category were lowered by waivers or reimbursements by those funds' investment advisers, which in some cases might be voluntary or temporary. The directors view expense ratio information as relevant to their evaluation of the Adviser's services because the Adviser is responsible for coordinating services provided to the Fund by others. The directors noted that the Fund's expense ratio was above the medians. After reviewing and discussing the Adviser's explanations of the reasons for this, the directors concluded that the Fund's expense ratio was acceptable.

### **Economies of Scale**

The directors noted that the advisory fee schedules for the Fund contains breakpoints that reduce the fee rates on assets above specified levels. The directors took into consideration prior presentations by an independent consultant on economies of scale in the mutual fund industry and for the AB Funds, and presentations from time to time by the Adviser concerning certain of its views on economies of scale. The directors previously discussed economies of scale with an independent fee consultant. The directors also had requested and received from the Adviser certain updates on economies of scale in advance of the Meeting. The directors believe that economies of scale may be realized (if at all) by the Adviser across a variety of products and services, and not only in respect of a single fund. The directors noted that there is no established methodology for setting breakpoints that give effect to the fund-specific services provided by a fund's adviser and to the economies of scale that an adviser may realize in its overall mutual fund business or those components of it which directly or indirectly affect a fund's operations. The directors observed that in the mutual fund industry as a whole, as well as among funds similar to the Fund, there is no uniformity or pattern in the fees and asset levels at which breakpoints (if any) apply. The directors also noted that the advisory agreements for many funds do not have breakpoints at all. Having taken these factors into account, the directors concluded that the Fund's shareholders would benefit from a sharing of economies of scale in the event the Fund's net assets exceed a breakpoint in the future.