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AB-283 Corporate securities: exemption from requirements. (2021-2022)

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Assembly Bill No. 283

CHAPTER 512

An act to amend Section 25100 of the Corporations Code, relating to corporate securities.

[Approved by Governor October 05, 2021. Filed with Secretary of State October 05, 2021.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 283, Chen. Corporate securities: exemption from requirements.

Existing law, the Corporate Securities Law of 1968, provides for the regulation of the issuance of corporate securities, requires the qualification of an offer or sale of securities, and provides for exemptions from qualification with the Commissioner of Financial Protection and Innovation.

Existing law exempts certain securities and transactions from provisions requiring qualification of the security and provides that certain securities and transactions are not subject to qualification. This exemption includes shares or memberships issued by a corporation organized pursuant to the Cooperative Corporation Law, if the aggregate investment of a shareholder or member in shares or memberships sold does not exceed \$1,000. Existing law also specifies the circumstances in which this exemption does not apply, including, to shares or memberships if a promoter thereof expects or intends to make a profit from a business or activity associated with the corporation.

This bill would expand the above exemption to also apply to any credits to a member's capital issued to a shareholder or member by any corporation organized pursuant to that law, if the aggregate investment in the corporation of that shareholder or member in shares, memberships, or credits to that member's capital sold pursuant to that provision does not exceed \$1,000. The bill would specify that this \$1,000 limitation does not apply to any shares, memberships, or credits allocated to a member's capital as all, or part of, any patronage distributions.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 25100 of the Corporations Code is amended to read:

25100. The following securities are exempted from Sections 25110, 25120, and 25130:

(a) Any security (including a revenue obligation) issued or guaranteed by the United States, any state, any city, county, city and county, public district, public authority, public corporation, public entity, or political subdivision of a state or any agency or corporate or other instrumentality of any one or more of the foregoing; or any certificate of deposit for any of the foregoing.

(b) Any security issued or guaranteed by Canada, any Canadian province, any political subdivision or municipality of that province, or by any other foreign government with which the United States currently maintains diplomatic relations, if the security is recognized as a valid obligation by the issuer or guarantor; or any certificate of deposit for any of the foregoing.

(c) Any security issued or guaranteed by and representing an interest in or a direct obligation of a national bank or a bank or trust company incorporated under the laws of this state, and any security issued by a bank to one or more other banks and representing an interest in an asset of the issuing bank.

(d) Any security issued or guaranteed by a federal savings association or federal savings bank or federal land bank or joint land bank or national farm loan association or by any savings association, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 5102 of the Financial Code, which is subject to the supervision and regulation of the Commissioner of Financial Protection and Innovation of this state.

(e) Any security (other than an interest in all or portions of a parcel or parcels of real property which are subdivided land or a subdivision or in a real estate development), the issuance of which is subject to authorization by the Insurance Commissioner, the Public Utilities Commission, or the Real Estate Commissioner of this state.

(f) Any security consisting of any interest in all or portions of a parcel or parcels of real property that are subdivided lands or a subdivision or in a real estate development; provided that the exemption in this subdivision shall not be applicable to: (1) any investment contract sold or offered for sale with, or as part of, that interest, or (2) any person engaged in the business of selling, distributing, or supplying water for irrigation purposes or domestic use that is not a public utility except that the exemption is applicable to any security of a mutual water company (other than an investment contract as described in paragraph (1)) offered or sold in connection with subdivided lands pursuant to Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 14310) of Part 7 of Division 3 of Title 1.

(g) Any mutual capital certificates or savings accounts, as defined in the Savings Association Law, issued by a savings association, as defined by subdivision (a) of Section 5102 of the Financial Code, and holding a license or certificate of authority then in force from the Commissioner of Financial Protection and Innovation of this state.

(h) Any security issued or guaranteed by any federal credit union, or by any credit union organized and supervised, or regulated, under the Credit Union Law.

(i) Any security issued or guaranteed by any railroad, other common carrier, public utility, or public utility holding company which is regulated in respect of the issuance or guarantee of the security by a governmental authority of the United States, of any state, of Canada or of any Canadian province; and the security is subject to registration with or authorization of issuance by that authority.

(j) Any security (except evidences of indebtedness, whether interest bearing or not) of an issuer (1) organized exclusively for educational, benevolent, fraternal, religious, charitable, social, or reformatory purposes and not for pecuniary profit, if no part of the net earnings of the issuer inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual, or (2) organized as a chamber of commerce or trade or professional association. The fact that amounts received from memberships or dues or both will or may be used to construct or otherwise acquire facilities for use by members of the nonprofit organization does not disqualify the organization for this exemption. This exemption does not apply to the securities of any nonprofit organization if any promoter thereof expects or intends to make a profit directly or indirectly from any business or activity associated with the organization or operation of that nonprofit organization or from remuneration received from that nonprofit organization.

(k) Any agreement, commonly known as a "life income contract," of an issuer (1) organized exclusively for educational, benevolent, fraternal, religious, charitable, social, or reformatory purposes and not for pecuniary profit and (2) which the commissioner designates by rule or order, with a donor in consideration of a donation of property to that issuer and providing for the payment to the donor or persons designated by the donor of income or specified periodic payments from the donated property or other property for the life of the donor or those other persons.

(l) Any note, draft, bill of exchange, or banker's acceptance which is freely transferable and of prime quality, arises out of a current transaction or the proceeds of which have been or are to be used for current transactions, and which evidences an obligation to pay cash within nine months of the date of issuance, exclusive of days of grace, or any renewal of that paper which is likewise limited, or any guarantee of that paper or of that renewal, provided that the paper is not offered to the public in amounts of less than twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) in the aggregate to any one purchaser. In addition, the commissioner may, by rule or order, exempt any issuer of any notes, drafts, bills of exchange, or banker's acceptances from qualification of those securities when the commissioner finds that the qualification is not necessary or appropriate in the public interest or for the protection of investors.

(m) Any security issued by any corporation organized and existing under the provisions of Chapter 1 (commencing with Section 54001) of Division 20 of the Food and Agricultural Code.

(n) Any beneficial interest in an employees' pension, profit-sharing, stock bonus, or similar benefit plan which meets the requirements for qualification under Section 401 of the federal Internal Revenue Code or any statute amendatory thereof or supplementary thereto. A determination letter from the Internal Revenue Service stating that an employees' pension, profit-sharing, stock bonus, or similar benefit plan meets those requirements shall be conclusive evidence that the plan is an employees' pension, profit-sharing, stock bonus, or similar benefit plan within the meaning of the first sentence of this subdivision until the date the determination letter is revoked in writing by the Internal Revenue Service, regardless of whether or not the revocation is retroactive.

(o) Any security listed or approved for listing upon notice of issuance on a national securities exchange, if the exchange has been certified by rule or order of the commissioner and any warrant or right to purchase or subscribe to the security. The exemption afforded by this subdivision does not apply to securities listed or approved for listing upon notice of issuance on a national securities exchange, in a rollup transaction unless the rollup transaction is an eligible rollup transaction as defined in Section 25014.7.

That certification of any exchange shall be made by the commissioner upon the written request of the exchange if the commissioner finds that the exchange, in acting on applications for listing of common stock, substantially applies the minimum standards set forth in either subparagraph (A) or (B) of paragraph (1), and, in considering suspension or removal from listing, substantially applies each of the criteria set forth in paragraph (2).

(1) Listing standards:

(A) (i) Shareholders' equity of at least four million dollars (\$4,000,000).

(ii) Pretax income of at least seven hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$750,000) in the issuer's last fiscal year or in two of its last three fiscal years.

(iii) Minimum public distribution of 500,000 shares (exclusive of the holdings of officers, directors, controlling shareholders, and other concentrated or family holdings), together with a minimum of 800 public holders or minimum public distribution of 1,000,000 shares together with a minimum of 400 public holders. The exchange may also consider the listing of a company's securities if the company has a minimum of 500,000 shares publicly held, a minimum of 400 shareholders and daily trading volume in the issue has been approximately 2,000 shares or more for the six months preceding the date of application. In evaluating the suitability of an issue for listing under this trading provision, the exchange shall review the nature and frequency of that activity and any other factors as it may determine to be relevant in ascertaining whether the issue is suitable for trading. A security that trades infrequently shall not be considered for listing under this paragraph even though average daily volume amounts to 2,000 shares per day or more.

Companies whose securities are concentrated in a limited geographical area, or whose securities are largely held in block by institutional investors, normally may not be considered eligible for listing unless the public distribution appreciably exceeds 500,000 shares.

(iv) Minimum price of three dollars (\$3) per share for a reasonable period of time prior to the filing of a listing application; provided, however, in certain instances an exchange may favorably consider listing an issue selling for less than three dollars (\$3) per share after considering all pertinent factors, including market conditions in general, whether historically the issue has sold above three dollars (\$3) per share, the applicant's capitalization, and the number of outstanding and publicly held shares of the issue.

(v) An aggregate market value for publicly held shares of at least three million dollars (\$3,000,000).

(B) (i) Shareholders' equity of at least four million dollars (\$4,000,000).

(ii) Minimum public distribution set forth in clause (iii) of subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1).

(iii) Operating history of at least three years.

(iv) An aggregate market value for publicly held shares of at least fifteen million dollars (\$15,000,000).

(2) Criteria for consideration of suspension or removal from listing:

(A) If a company that (i) has shareholders' equity of less than one million dollars (\$1,000,000) has sustained net losses in each of its two most recent fiscal years, or (ii) has net tangible assets of less than three million dollars (\$3,000,000) and has sustained net losses in three of its four most recent fiscal years.

(B) If the number of shares publicly held (excluding the holdings of officers, directors, controlling shareholders, and other concentrated or family holdings) is less than 150,000.

(C) If the total number of shareholders is less than 400 or if the number of shareholders of lots of 100 shares or more is less than 300.

(D) If the aggregate market value of shares publicly held is less than seven hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$750,000).

(E) If shares of common stock sell at a price of less than three dollars (\$3) per share for a substantial period of time and the issuer shall fail to effectuate a reverse stock split of the shares within a reasonable period of time after being requested by the exchange to take that action.

A national securities exchange, certified by rule or order of the commissioner under this subdivision, shall file annual reports when requested to do so by the commissioner. The annual reports shall contain, by issuer: the variances granted to an exchange's listing standards, including variances from corporate governance and voting rights' standards, for any security of that issuer; the reasons for the variances; a discussion of the review procedure instituted by the exchange to determine the effect of the variances on investors and whether the variances should be continued; and any other information that the commissioner deems relevant. The purpose of these reports is to assist the commissioner in determining whether the quantitative and qualitative requirements of this subdivision are substantially being met by the exchange in general or with regard to any particular security.

The commissioner after appropriate notice and opportunity for hearing in accordance with the provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act (Chapter 5 (commencing with Section 11500) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code) may, in the commissioner's discretion, by rule or order, decertify any exchange previously certified that ceases substantially to apply the minimum standards or criteria as set forth in paragraphs (1) and (2).

A rule or order of certification shall conclusively establish that any security listed or approved for listing upon notice of issuance on any exchange named in a rule or order of certification, and any warrant or right to purchase or subscribe to that security, is exempt under this subdivision until the adoption by the commissioner of any rule or order decertifying the exchange.

(p) A promissory note secured by a lien on real property, which is neither one of a series of notes of equal priority secured by interests in the same real property nor a note in which beneficial interests are sold to more than one person or entity.

(q) Any unincorporated interindemnity or reciprocal or interinsurance contract, that qualifies under the provisions of Section 1280.7 of the Insurance Code, between members of a cooperative corporation, organized and operating under Part 2 (commencing with Section 12200) of Division 3 of Title 1, and whose members consist only of physicians and surgeons licensed in California, which contracts indemnify solely in respect to medical malpractice claims against the members, and which do not collect in advance of loss any moneys other than contributions by each member to a collective reserve trust fund or for necessary expenses of administration.

(1) Whenever it appears to the commissioner that any person has engaged or is about to engage in any act or practice constituting a violation of any provision of Section 1280.7 of the Insurance Code, the commissioner may, in the commissioner's discretion, bring an action in the name of the people of the State of California in the superior court to enjoin the acts or practices or to enforce compliance with Section 1280.7 of the Insurance Code. Upon a proper showing a permanent or preliminary injunction, a restraining order, or a writ of mandate shall be granted and a receiver or conservator may be appointed for the defendant or the defendant's assets.

(2) The commissioner may, in the commissioner's discretion, (A) make public or private investigations within or outside of this state as the commissioner deems necessary to determine whether any person has violated or is about to violate any provision of Section 1280.7 of the Insurance Code or to aid in the enforcement of Section 1280.7, and (B) publish information concerning the violation of Section 1280.7.

(3) For the purpose of any investigation or proceeding under this section, the commissioner or any officer designated by the commissioner may administer oaths and affirmations, subpoena witnesses, compel their attendance, take evidence, and require the production of any books, papers, correspondence, memoranda, agreements, or other documents or records which the commissioner deems relevant or material to the inquiry.

(4) In case of contumacy by, or refusal to obey a subpoena issued to, any person, the superior court, upon application by the commissioner, may issue to the person an order requiring the person to appear before the commissioner, or the officer designated by the commissioner, to produce documentary evidence, if so ordered, or to give evidence touching the matter under investigation or in question. Failure to obey the order of the court may be punished by the court as contempt.

(5) No person is excused from attending or testifying or from producing any document or record before the commissioner or in obedience to the subpoena of the commissioner or any officer designated by the commissioner, or in any proceeding instituted by the commissioner, on the ground that the testimony or evidence (documentary or otherwise), required of the person may tend to incriminate the person or subject the person to a penalty or forfeiture, but no individual may be prosecuted or subjected to any penalty or forfeiture for or on account of any transaction, matter, or thing concerning which the person is compelled, after

validly claiming the privilege against self-incrimination, to testify or produce evidence (documentary or otherwise), except that the individual testifying is not exempt from prosecution and punishment for perjury or contempt committed in testifying.

(6) The cost of any review, examination, audit, or investigation made by the commissioner under Section 1280.7 of the Insurance Code shall be paid to the commissioner by the person subject to the review, examination, audit, or investigation, and the commissioner may maintain an action for the recovery of these costs in any court of competent jurisdiction. In determining the cost, the commissioner may use the actual amount of the salary or other compensation paid to the persons making the review, examination, audit, or investigation plus the actual amount of expenses including overhead reasonably incurred in the performance of the work.

The recoverable cost of each review, examination, audit, or investigation made by the commissioner under Section 1280.7 of the Insurance Code shall not exceed twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000), except that costs exceeding twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) shall be recoverable if the costs are necessary to prevent a violation of any provision of Section 1280.7 of the Insurance Code.

(r) (1) Any shares, memberships, or credits to a member's capital issued to a shareholder or member by any corporation organized and existing pursuant to the provisions of Part 2 (commencing with Section 12200) of Division 3 of Title 1, provided the aggregate investment in the corporation of that shareholder or member in shares, memberships, or credits to that member's capital sold pursuant to this subdivision does not exceed one thousand dollars (\$1,000).

(2) The one-thousand-dollar (\$1,000) limitation in paragraph (1) does not apply to any shares, memberships, or credits to that member's capital as all, or part of, any patronage distributions, as defined in Section 12244.

(3) The exemption in paragraph (1) does not apply to any of the following:

(A) The shares, memberships, or capital credits of that corporation if any promoter thereof expects or intends to make a profit directly or indirectly from any business or activity associated with the corporation or the operation of the corporation or from remuneration, other than reasonable salary, received from the corporation.

(B) The nonvoting shares, memberships, or capital credits of that corporation issued to any person who does not possess, and who will not acquire in connection with the issuance of nonvoting shares, memberships, or capital credits, "voting power" in the corporation as defined in Section 12253.

(C) Shares, memberships, or capital credits issued by a nonprofit cooperative corporation organized to facilitate the creation of an unincorporated interindemnity arrangement that provides indemnification for medical malpractice to its physician and surgeon members, as set forth in subdivision (q).

(s) Any security consisting of or representing an interest in a pool of mortgage loans that meets each of the following requirements:

(1) The pool consists of whole mortgage loans or participation interests in those loans, which loans were originated or acquired in the ordinary course of business by a national bank or federal savings association or federal savings bank having its principal office in this state, by a bank incorporated under the laws of this state, or by a savings association as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 5102 of the Financial Code and which is subject to the supervision and regulation of the Commissioner of Financial Protection and Innovation, and each of which at the time of transfer to the pool is an authorized investment for the originating or acquiring institution.

(2) The pool of mortgage loans is held in trust by a trustee which is a financial institution specified in paragraph (1) as trustee or otherwise.

(3) The loans are serviced by a financial institution specified in paragraph (1).

(4) The security is not offered in amounts of less than twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) in the aggregate to any one purchaser.

(5) The security is offered pursuant to a registration under the Securities Act of 1933 (Public Law 112-106), as amended, or pursuant to an exemption under Regulation A under that act, or in the opinion of counsel for the issuer, is offered pursuant to an exemption under Section 4(a)(2) of that act.

(t) (1) Any security issued or guaranteed by and representing an interest in or a direct obligation of an industrial bank incorporated under the laws of the state and authorized by the Commissioner of Financial Protection and Innovation to engage in industrial banking business.

(2) Any investment certificate in or issued by any industrial bank that is organized under the laws of a state of the United States other than this state, that is insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and that maintains a branch office in this state.