

# SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

(Release No. 34-102737; File No. SR-Phlx-2025-14)

## Self-Regulatory Organizations; Nasdaq PHLX LLC; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change to Amend Phlx Options 7, Section 4

March 27, 2025.

Pursuant to Section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (“Act”),<sup>1</sup> and Rule 19b-4 thereunder,<sup>2</sup> notice is hereby given that on March 20, 2025, Nasdaq PHLX LLC (“Phlx” or “Exchange”) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (“Commission”) the proposed rule change as described in Items I and II below, which Items have been prepared by the Exchange. The Commission is publishing this notice to solicit comments on the proposed rule change from interested persons.

### I. Self-Regulatory Organization’s Statement of the Terms of Substance of the Proposed Rule Change

The Exchange proposes to amend Phlx’s Pricing Schedule at Options 7, Section 4, Multiply Listed Options Fees (Includes options overlying equities, ETFs, ETNs and indexes which are Multiply Listed) (Excludes SPY and broad-based index options symbols listed within Options 7, Section 5.A). Specifically, the Exchange proposes to note that Floor Qualified Contingent Cross (“QCC”) Rebates are paid to Floor Brokers.<sup>3</sup>

The text of the proposed rule change is available on the Exchange’s Website at <https://listingcenter.nasdaq.com/rulebook/phlx/rulefilings>, at the principal office of the Exchange, and at the Commission’s Public Reference Room.

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<sup>1</sup> 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

<sup>2</sup> 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

<sup>3</sup> The term “Floor Broker” means an individual who is registered with the Exchange for the purpose, while on the Options Floor, of accepting and handling options orders. See Options 7, Section 1(c).

II. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement of the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

In its filing with the Commission, the Exchange included statements concerning the purpose of and basis for the proposed rule change and discussed any comments it received on the proposed rule change. The text of these statements may be examined at the places specified in Item IV below. The Exchange has prepared summaries, set forth in sections A, B, and C below, of the most significant aspects of such statements.

A. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement of the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

1. Purpose

Phlx proposes to amend Phlx's Pricing Schedule at Options 7, Section 4, Multiply Listed Options Fees (Includes options overlying equities, ETFs, ETNs and indexes which are Multiply Listed) (Excludes SPY and broad-based index options symbols listed within Options 7, Section 5.A). Specifically, the Exchange proposes to note that Floor Qualified Contingent Cross ("QCC") Rebates are paid to Floor Brokers.

Floor QCC Orders, as defined in Options 8, Section 30(e), is an order comprised of an originating order to buy or sell at least 1,000 contracts that is identified as being part of a qualified contingent trade, as that term is defined in Options 3, Section 12(a)(3), coupled with a contra-side order or orders totaling an equal number of contracts. The Exchange separately defines [sic]

Today, Options 7, Section 4 describes QCC Rebates that are offered by Phlx. Today, Phlx pays a QCC Rebate of \$0.12 per contract on electronic QCC Orders, as defined in Options 3, Section 12, and Floor QCC Orders, as defined in Options 8, Section 30(e), when a QCC Order is comprised of a Customer or Professional order on one side and a Lead Market Maker, Market Maker, Broker-Dealer, or Firm order on the other side. This rebate is \$0.17 per contract in the

event that a member or member organization executes greater than 750,000 qualifying QCC contracts in a given month. Additionally, Phlx pays a rebate of \$0.22 per contract in the event that a member or member organization executes: (1) greater than 750,000 qualifying QCC contracts in a given month, (2) Floor Originated Strategy Executions<sup>4</sup> in excess of 1,250,000 contracts in a given month, **and** (3) at least 40% of the member or member organization's QCC executed contracts in that month are comprised of a Lead Market Maker, Market Maker, Broker-Dealer, or Firm order on one side and Lead Market Maker, Market Maker, Broker-Dealer, or Firm order on the other side.

Today, Phlx also pays a QCC Rebate of \$0.14 per contract on electronic QCC Orders, as defined in Options 3, Section 12, and Floor QCC Orders, as defined in Options 8, Section 30(e), when a QCC Order is comprised of a Lead Market Maker, Market Maker, Broker-Dealer, or Firm order on one side and a Lead Market Maker, Market Maker, Broker-Dealer, or Firm order on the other side. This rebate is \$0.19 per contract in the event that a member or member organization executes greater than 750,000 qualifying QCC contracts in a given month. Additionally, Phlx pays a rebate of \$0.27 per contract in the event that a member or member organization executes: (1) greater than 750,000 qualifying QCC contracts in a given month, (2) Floor Originated Strategy Executions in excess of 1,250,000 contracts in a given month, **and** (3) at least 40% of the member or member organization's QCC executed contracts in that month are comprised of a Lead Market Maker, Market Maker, Broker-Dealer, or Firm order on one side and Lead Market Maker, Market Maker, Broker-Dealer, or Firm order on the other side.

Today, these QCC rebates are paid on all qualifying executed electronic QCC Orders, as

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<sup>4</sup> Floor Originated Strategy Executions are defined as a dividend, merger, short stock interest, reversal and conversion, jelly roll or box spread strategy as described in Options 7, Section 4.

defined in Options 3, Section 12, and Floor QCC Orders, as defined in Options 8, Section 30(e), except where the transaction is either: (i) Customer-to-Customer; (ii) Customer-to-Professional; (iii) Professional-to-Professional or (iv) a dividend, merger, short stock interest, reversal and conversion, jelly roll, and box spread strategy executions (as defined in Options 7, Section 4). Further, today, volume resulting from all executed electronic QCC Orders and Floor QCC Orders, including Customer-to-Customer, Customer-to-Professional, and Professional-to-Professional transactions and excluding dividend, merger, short stock interest, reversal and conversion, jelly roll, and box spread strategy executions, will be aggregated in determining the applicable member or member organization qualifying QCC contract volume in a given month.

At this time, the Exchange proposes to note in the rule text that rebates for qualifying executed Floor QCC Orders are paid to Floor Brokers. The Exchange previously noted that rebates for Floor QCC Orders are paid to a Floor Broker.<sup>5</sup> The Exchange believes that adding this rule text to Options 7, Section 4 will provide more clarity as to the manner in which rebates for Floor QCC Orders are paid.

## 2. Statutory Basis

The Exchange believes that its proposal is consistent with Section 6(b) of the Act,<sup>6</sup> in general, and furthers the objectives of Sections 6(b)(4) and 6(b)(5) of the Act,<sup>7</sup> in particular, in that it provides for the equitable allocation of reasonable dues, fees and other charges among members and issuers and other persons using any facility, and is not designed to permit unfair discrimination between customers, issuers, brokers, or dealers.

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<sup>5</sup> See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 66145 (January 11, 2012), 77 FR 2579 (January 18, 2012) (SR-Phlx-2011-189); and 78116 (June 21, 2016), 81 FR 41629 (SR-Phlx-2016-69).

<sup>6</sup> 15 U.S.C. 78f(b).

<sup>7</sup> 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(4) and (5).

The Commission and the courts have repeatedly expressed their preference for competition over regulatory intervention in determining prices, products, and services in the securities markets. In Regulation NMS, while adopting a series of steps to improve the current market model, the Commission highlighted the importance of market forces in determining prices and SRO revenues and, also, recognized that current regulation of the market system “has been remarkably successful in promoting market competition in its broader forms that are most important to investors and listed companies.”<sup>8</sup>

Likewise, in NetCoalition v. Securities and Exchange Commission<sup>9</sup> (“NetCoalition”) the D.C. Circuit upheld the Commission’s use of a market-based approach in evaluating the fairness of market data fees against a challenge claiming that Congress mandated a cost-based approach.<sup>10</sup> As the court emphasized, the Commission “intended in Regulation NMS that ‘market forces, rather than regulatory requirements’ play a role in determining the market data . . . to be made available to investors and at what cost.”<sup>11</sup>

Further, “[n]o one disputes that competition for order flow is ‘fierce.’ ... As the SEC explained, ‘[i]n the U.S. national market system, buyers and sellers of securities, and the broker-dealers that act as their order-routing agents, have a wide range of choices of where to route orders for execution’; [and] ‘no exchange can afford to take its market share percentages for granted’ because ‘no exchange possesses a monopoly, regulatory or otherwise, in the execution of order flow from broker dealers’ ....”<sup>12</sup> Although the court and the SEC were discussing the

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<sup>8</sup> Securities Exchange Act Release No. 51808 (June 9, 2005), 70 FR 37496, 37499 (June 29, 2005) (“Regulation NMS Adopting Release”).

<sup>9</sup> NetCoalition v. SEC, 615 F.3d 525 (D.C. Cir. 2010).

<sup>10</sup> See NetCoalition, at 534 - 535.

<sup>11</sup> Id. at 537.

<sup>12</sup> Id. at 539 (quoting Securities Exchange Act Release No. 59039 (December 2, 2008), 73 FR 74770, 74782-83 (December 9, 2008) (SR-NYSEArca-2006-21)).

cash equities markets, the Exchange believes that these views apply with equal force to the options markets.

The Exchange believes that it is reasonable to pay QCC Rebates for Floor QCC Orders to a Floor Broker, because it is necessary from a competitive standpoint to offer this rebate to the executing Floor Broker on a Floor QCC order.<sup>13</sup> The Exchange expects that the rebate offered to executing Floor Brokers will allow them to price their services at a level that will enable them to attract Floor QCC order flow from participants who would otherwise enter these orders electronically from off the floor. To the extent that Floor Brokers are able to attract these Floor QCC orders, they will gain important information that will allow them to solicit the parties to the Floor QCC orders for participation in other trades, which will in turn benefit all other Exchange participants through the additional liquidity and price discovery that may occur as a result. Other options markets similarly pay QCC rebates to floor brokers.<sup>14</sup>

The Exchange believes that it is equitable and not unfairly discriminatory to pay the rebate for Floor QCC Orders to Floor Brokers because it would uniformly apply to all Floor QCC Orders entered by a Floor Broker into FBMS for execution. The rebate is not unfairly discriminatory to firms that enter electronic QCC Orders because the transaction fees and rebates for electronic orders do not require a Floor Broker. In addition, pursuant to Options 8, Section 30(e), only Floor Brokers may enter a Floor QCC order from the trading floor of the Exchange, therefore, providing the rebate for Floor QCC Orders to Floor Brokers does not discriminate against electronic QCC orders entered off the floor. Any participant may engage a Floor Broker

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<sup>13</sup> The Floor Broker is in receipt of Floor QCC Orders and enters those orders into The Options Floor Based Management System or “FBMS”. Specifically, Options 8, Section 30(e) permits Floor QCC Orders to be submitted to the System by Floor Brokers on the trading floor via FBMS. These orders are not required to be exposed in open outcry.

<sup>14</sup> See NYSE American Options Fee Schedule (QCC Fees and Credits) and NYSE Arca Options Fees and Charges (Manual Billable Rebate Program).

in a discussion surrounding the appropriate level of fees that they may be charged for entrusting the entry of the Floor QCC Order to the Floor Broker into FBMS for execution. The additional order flow attracted by this rebate should benefit all participants. Finally, the rebate is meant to assist Floor Brokers to recruit business on an agency basis. The Floor Broker may use all or part of the rebate to offset its fees.

B. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement on Burden on Competition

The Exchange does not believe that the proposed rule change will impose any burden on competition not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act.

Inter-market Competition

The proposal does not impose an undue burden on inter-market competition. The Exchange believes its proposal remains competitive with other options markets and will offer market participants with another choice of where to transact options. The Exchange notes that it operates in a highly competitive market in which market participants can readily favor competing venues if they deem fee levels at a particular venue to be excessive, or rebate opportunities available at other venues to be more favorable. In such an environment, the Exchange must continually adjust its fees to remain competitive with other exchanges. Because competitors are free to modify their own fees in response, and because market participants may readily adjust their order routing practices, the Exchange believes that the degree to which fee changes in this market may impose any burden on competition is extremely limited.

Intra-market Competition

The Exchange believes paying the rebate for Floor QCC Orders to Floor Brokers does not impose an undue burden on competition because it would uniformly apply to all Floor QCC Orders entered by a Floor Broker into FBMS for execution. Firms that enter electronic QCC Orders do not require a Floor Broker as compared to Floor QCC Orders which must be entered

by a Floor Broker from the trading floor pursuant to Options 8, Section 30(e). Any participant may engage a Floor Broker in a discussion surrounding the appropriate level of fees that they may be charged for entrusting the entry of the Floor QCC Order to the Floor Broker into FBMS for execution. The additional order flow attracted by this rebate should benefit all participants. Finally, the rebate is meant to assist Floor Brokers to recruit business on an agency basis. The Floor Broker may use all or part of the rebate to offset its fees.

C. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement on Comments on the Proposed Rule Change Received from Members, Participants, or Others

No written comments were either solicited or received.

III. Date of Effectiveness of the Proposed Rule Change and Timing for Commission Action

The foregoing rule change has become effective pursuant to Section 19(b)(3)(A)(ii) of the Act<sup>15</sup> and Rule 19b-4(f)(2)<sup>16</sup> thereunder.

At any time within 60 days of the filing of the proposed rule change, the Commission summarily may temporarily suspend such rule change if it appears to the Commission that such action is necessary or appropriate in the public interest, for the protection of investors, or otherwise in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. If the Commission takes such action, the Commission shall institute proceedings to determine whether the proposed rule change should be approved or disapproved.

IV. Solicitation of Comments

Interested persons are invited to submit written data, views, and arguments concerning the foregoing, including whether the proposed rule change is consistent with the Act. Comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

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<sup>15</sup> 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A)(ii).

<sup>16</sup> 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(2).



Electronic Comments:

- Use the Commission's internet comment form (<https://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>);  
or
- Send an email to [rule-comments@sec.gov](mailto:rule-comments@sec.gov). Please include file number SR-Phlx-2025-14 on the subject line.

Paper Comments:

- Send paper comments in triplicate to Secretary, Securities and Exchange Commission, 100 F Street NE, Washington, DC 20549-1090.

All submissions should refer to file number SR-Phlx-2025-14. This file number should be included on the subject line if email is used. To help the Commission process and review your comments more efficiently, please use only one method. The Commission will post all comments on the Commission's internet website (<https://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>). Copies of the submission, all subsequent amendments, all written statements with respect to the proposed rule change that are filed with the Commission, and all written communications relating to the proposed rule change between the Commission and any person, other than those that may be withheld from the public in accordance with the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552, will be available for website viewing and printing in the Commission's Public Reference Room, 100 F Street NE, Washington, DC 20549 on official business days between the hours of 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Copies of the filing also will be available for inspection and copying at the principal office of the Exchange. Do not include personal identifiable information in submissions; you should submit only information that you wish to make available publicly. We may redact in part or withhold entirely from publication submitted material that is obscene or subject to copyright

protection. All submissions should refer to file number SR-Phlx-2025-14 and should be submitted on or before [INSERT DATE 21 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*].

For the Commission, by the Division of Trading and Markets, pursuant to delegated authority.<sup>17</sup>

**Sherry R. Haywood,**

*Assistant Secretary.*

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<sup>17</sup> 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).