

Christine E. Connelly

Partner, General Counsel

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Chris serves as the firm's General Counsel, advising attorneys on professional responsibility, risk management, conflicts of interest, and other issues relating to the firm's governance, day-to-day operations, and client service. She draws on her extensive knowledge of legal ethics, and her experience helping clients across a wide range of industries achieve their business goals. Her prior experience includes representing franchisors, licensors, and manufacturers on transactional and regulatory issues involved in developing and growing franchise programs, both domestically and internationally. She has also counseled corporate clients in various aspects of employment compliance, enforcement, and investigations matters, and in responding to new challenges including workforce and business continuity issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Representative Matters

- Counseling franchisors ranging in size from start-ups to category leaders in connection with the development and maintenance of franchise programs, including creating and updating franchise disclosure documents (FDD) and related franchise, license, and development agreements.
- Assisting clients in regulatory FDD compliance, enforcement of system standards, handling of franchise disputes, transfers and terminations, captive market development, and purchase and sale of franchise systems.
- Representing franchisors expanding internationally through development agreements, master franchise agreements, and joint ventures, and assists with international regulatory compliance.

Credentials

Education

J.D., *cum laude*, Georgetown University Law Center

B.S., *magna cum laude*, University of Maryland; Phi Beta Kappa

Law Journals

Lead Articles Editor, *The Tax Lawyer*

Bar and Court Memberships

District of Columbia Bar

Maryland Bar

- Representing buyers and sellers of franchise systems in a wide range of stock and asset transactions.
- Counseling clients on compliance with federal labor and employment law including issues related to the Americans With Disabilities Act Title III, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and Title II of the Civil Rights Act.
- Drafting employment and separation agreements, as well as counsels management and individuals in protection of non-competition, non-solicitation, trade secrets, and other business torts.
- Drafting corporate employment policies, handbooks, and confidentiality agreements.
- Defending Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) employment practice agency charges.

Affiliations

- American Bar Association (ABA), Forum on Franchising
- International Franchise Association (IFA)
 - Planning Task Force, Annual Legal Symposium (2009-2010, 2017-2018)

Recognitions

- Included in *The Best Lawyers in America* directory for Franchise Law (2017-2026)
- Named by *Franchise Times* as a "Legal Eagle" (2016-2019)
- Included in *Who's Who Legal: Franchise* (2016-2017, 2019)
- Included in the *International Who's Who of Business Lawyers* in Franchise (2016-2018)
- Included in *Best Lawyers Business - Women in the Law* for Franchise Law (2017)