

# Ciriaco, McCausland & Podolin, P.C.

4727 SE 92nd Avenue, Portland, OR 97266 | (503) 555-6789

April 10, 2021

Joan Q. Student  
123 Valley View Road  
Portland, OR 97035

Re: Offer of Employment at Ciriaco, McCausland & Podolin, P.C.

Dear Joan:

Following up on our meetings of April 5, 2021 and earlier today, I am excited to offer you an Associate Attorney position with Ciriaco, McCausland & Podolin, P.C. (the "Firm"). This offer is **contingent on your admission to the Oregon bar** and it is our understanding that you will be sitting for the bar exam in July 2021. Your official start date would be the first business day following the day you are sworn in as a member of the Oregon Bar.

We expect that you will begin your practice with us representing clients in minor traffic cases, as well as handling eviction proceedings. Later, based upon the Firm's needs and your professional development, you will begin to work in more involved commercial litigation cases. It is anticipated that much of your work will be through the Firm's Portland office, but travel to other parts of the region may be regularly required.

As an entry-level attorney, the Firm offers the following financial benefits:

- A starting salary of Sixty-Eight Thousand Dollars (\$68,000) per year, to be paid on a bi-weekly basis on alternating Fridays.
- A car/fuel allowance of \$100.00 per month and a health insurance allowance of \$400.00 per month.
- Group life insurance with a \$20,000 benefit and short-term disability insurance with a benefit of 60% of earnings, capped at \$700 per week.
- A firm cell phone or tablet, or an allowance if you have your own
- An annual bonus, awarded after the conclusion of the firm's accounting year, the amount of which depends on your years of service, quality of work produced, and revenues realized during the preceding year.

The Firm also offers these additional benefits:

- One week of paid vacation each year (unused time does not accrue from year to year) and an additional 5 days of paid sick leave (unused time does not accrue from year to year).
- Five paid firm holidays each year, as designed by the Firm's Policy and Procedure Manual.
- A retirement plan, administered by a custodian selected by the firm, to which the firm may contribute up to ten (10) percent of your gross annual salary on your behalf.



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Dear Joan:

Following up on our meetings of April 5, 2021 and earlier today, I am excited to offer you a position with Ciriaco, McCausland & Podolin, P.C. (the "Firm") as a law clerk. We are offering you **admission to the Oregon bar** and it is our understanding that you will be admitted to the bar in July 2021. Your official start date would be the first day you are sworn in as a member of the Oregon Bar.

Negotiate for a more specific timeline for advancing to more involved matters, or more detail on expected professional development.

Negotiate for starting as a law clerk (probably at a lower salary) while waiting for bar results.

You will begin your practice with us representing clients in minor traffic cases, as well as handling eviction proceedings. Later, based upon the Firm's needs and your interests, you will begin to work in more involved commercial litigation cases. Most of your work will be through the Firm's Portland office, but you may be regularly required to travel to other offices.

How does the car/fuel figure compare to the expected travel? How does the health insurance figure compare to expected costs?

What's missing? Incentive for bringing in clients? Bar association dues? CLE expenses? Malpractice insurance?

As an attorney, the Firm offers the following financial benefits: a base salary of Sixty-Eight Thousand Dollars (\$68,000) per year, to be paid on a bi-weekly basis on alternating Fridays.

Would the firm specify the \$\$ tech allowance or what they'll provide?

Consider querying the size of the typical bonus compared to salary.

A car/fuel allowance of \$100.00 per month and a health insurance allowance of \$100.00 per month. Group life insurance with a \$20,000 benefit and short-term disability insurance with a benefit of 60% of earnings, capped at \$700 per week. A firm cell phone or tablet, or an allowance if you have your own. An annual bonus, awarded after the conclusion of the firm's accounting year, the amount of which depends on your years of service, quality of work produced, and revenues realized during the preceding year.

Is this vacation typical for the market? Does it change over time?

Are these common to all associates, or do they change with seniority?

The Firm also offers these additional benefits:

- One week of paid vacation each year (unused time does not accrue from year to year) and an additional 5 days of paid sick leave (unused time does not accrue from year to year).
- Five paid firm holidays each year, as designed by the Firm's Policy and Procedure Manual.
- A retirement plan, administered by a custodian selected by the firm, to which the firm may contribute up to ten (10) percent of your gross annual salary on your behalf.

What factors affect when and how much the firm contributes?



## **Always Be Closing: Advising Students and Alumni on Strategy and Tactics of Salary Negotiation – Hypotheticals**

Samantha Ciriaco, Director of Experiential Opportunities and Outreach, Case Western Reserve School of Law

George Podolin, Assistant Dean, Office of Career Services, William & Mary Law School

Marti McCausland, Associate Director of Placement, Willamette University College of Law

### Hypothetical #1

Student has an offer at a firm the student worked at as a paralegal before coming to law school. There are no details yet, but the employer wants to discuss the terms next week. **The student thinks the employer will ask what salary she should be paid.** She thinks her past experience at the firm, coupled with law clerk experience she obtained during law school, make her more value to the firm than a typical first year associate. She doesn't want to appear greedy, but she also doesn't want to sell herself short.

#### Adviser:

- Research market rate salary for the area and size of firm. Ask for more than market rate because of past experience at firm and efficiencies that brings. Start higher than ultimate goal to give room to negotiate.
- Plan budget of personal and professional expenses. Identify and be prepared to discuss benefits that could help in those costs.
  - Bonus structure
  - Bar maintenance costs
  - Insurance coverage

### Hypothetical #2

Student has a fair offer and salary at a larger firm she is excited about, but **heard she should always negotiate a starting salary.** She heard that women make less than men and one reason is that women don't negotiate a job offer. As a law student who hasn't taken a bar exam yet, is it appropriate to negotiate? Do male law students negotiate their salary offers?

#### Adviser:

- Generous base salary is likely non-negotiable, but can check with others who are familiar with the firm.
- Pay attention to the benefits and see if there is a benefit or bonus that could be obtained.
- Even if offer is firm, can't hurt to have a discussion (in person, zoom, or phone) with employer about overall compensation and benefits.
- Come in prepared with an amount and other possible ways for the offer to be sweetened.

### Hypothetical #3

Student has an offer from a 20-attorney plaintiff's personal injury firm. He wasn't thrilled with the salary number but when they made the offer they said that **they don't negotiate entry level salary.** It sounds like it is the market rate, but the salary seems so low.

#### Adviser:

- Look at the salary information to confirm at market rate in one of our resources.
- Ask about how often are attorneys reviewed with potential for a base salary jump
- Also consider other factors in non-financial benefits to see what might be in play for employer
- Smaller firms often give more increases than larger firms because associate value increases with experiences and they want to retain the attorneys that they have spent time and resources training.

#### Hypothetical #4

Student got an offer for a position at an elder law firm she's heard good things about. The student liked the people she met at the interview and felt she would learn a lot from these attorneys and the firm. **The offer is appealing, but it is a lot lower than hoped for.**

Adviser:

- Looking at resources, salary does appear to be lower than market rate.
- Could try to negotiate for a higher starting salary
- If uncomfortable doing that, could consider these options:
  - Ask about setting up a bonus structure based on hours billed
  - Ask to revisit the base salary number after 6 months or after a certain amount of hours billed
  - See if the firm will reimburse some bar exam/bar study/licensing expenses in lieu of raising salary
  - Consider whether there are any other predictable work related expenses (IT/travel) that would justify reimbursement/stipend

#### Hypothetical #5

Student received offer at immigration public interest organization. It is the type of work the student came to law school to do. However, **the salary is less than what student was making before law school.** And now there are student loans. After focusing on public interest work while in law school, don't have a desire to go into private practice. Student now feels like need to give up that goal to pay off student loans. How to make this salary work with student debt?

Adviser:

- Advise on income-based loan repayment options, loan forgiveness and LRAP programs.
- Connect with others who work in similar organizations.
- Budget living expenses
- Highlight how other benefits impact the overall bottom line and quality of life