#### **MEMORANDUM**

TO: File No. SR-NYSEArca-2021-90

FROM: Stacia Sowerby

Office of Market Supervision, Division of Trading and Markets

DATE: April 27, 2022

SUBJECT: Meeting with Grayscale re: Grayscale Bitcoin Trust

On April 26, 2022, Haoxiang Zhu, Meredith Macvicar, David Shillman, Molly Kim, Edward Cho, David Remus, Stacia Sowerby, Arun Manoharan, Steve Oh, Christopher Ray, and Kirk Broadbelt from the Division of Trading and Markets, and Igor Kozhanov and Robert Garrison from the Division of Economic and Risk Analysis, participated in a meeting with the following individuals:

Michael Sonnenshein, Grayscale Investments, LLC ("Grayscale")
Craig Salm, Grayscale
David LaValle, Grayscale
Edward McGee, Grayscale
Hugh Ross, Grayscale
Jennifer Rosenthal, Grayscale
Joe Hall, Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP ("DPW")
Paul Mishkin, DPW
Daniel Schwartz, DPW
Hillary Coleman, DPW
Zachary Zweihorn, DPW

The discussion concerned NYSE Arca, Inc.'s proposed rule change to list and trade shares of the Grayscale Bitcoin Trust under NYSE Arca Rule 8.201-E. Grayscale also provided the attached presentation.



APRIL 26, 2022

### **Executive Summary**

## The SEC should approve NYSE Arca's 19b-4 rule change application to convert Grayscale Bitcoin Trust (GBTC) to an ETF<sup>1</sup>

#### Grayscale Bitcoin Trust (GBTC) presents a compelling conversion case to start trading as an ETF on a national securities exchange

- GBTC has grown to become the largest publicly-traded digital asset fund in the world holding approximately 3.4% of all Bitcoin outstanding with approximately \$30 billion in AUM, \$100s of millions in daily trading volume, and held by more than 850,000 investor accounts in the United States
- GBTC has been an SEC reporting company for more than two years, continually enhancing risk disclosures as we've gathered SEC feedback from Grayscale's other products that are also SEC reporting companies
- Grayscale has a network of partners with well-documented and proven business processes ready to operate GBTC as an ETF today

#### There are persuasive arguments being sent by the public to the SEC in favor of converting GBTC to an ETF

- The conversion of GBTC to an ETF would protect investors and the public interest, allowing the product to better track
  net asset value while giving investors the freedom to invest in Bitcoin in a safe and secure manner
- The SEC is uniquely positioned to **support the White House Executive Order** to ensure America leads in Digital Asset innovation by **further bringing Bitcoin into the regulatory perimeter**
- There is little regulatory difference between an ETF based on Bitcoin futures (which has been approved) and an ETF based on spot Bitcoin (applications for which have all been denied)

Finally, we note there has been extensive commentary on the six topics the SEC has raised in our application



## Agenda

1

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(GBTC) presents a
compelling conversion case
to start trading as an ETF on
a national securities
exchange

2

There are persuasive arguments being sent by the public to the SEC in favor of converting GBTC to an ETF

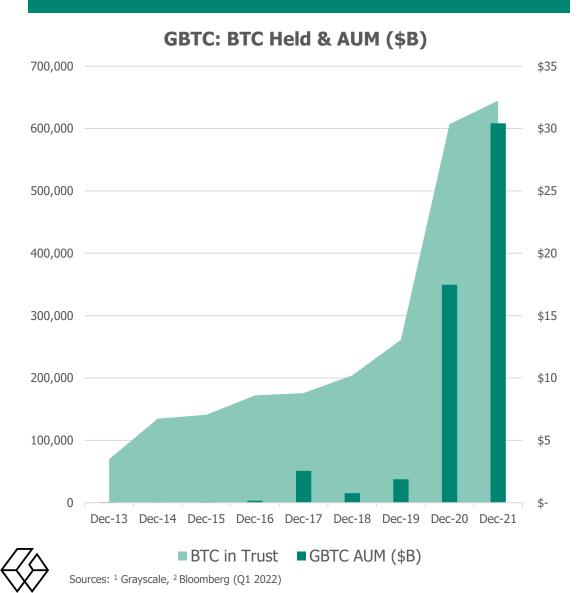
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## GBTC has grown to become the largest publicly traded crypto asset fund and a top commodity fund

### **GBTC** has a strong history of asset growth<sup>1</sup>...



is a top 3 Commodity Fund by	
ΔUM <sup>2</sup>	

Fund	AUM (\$B)	Asset
GLD	68.1	Gold
IAU	32.2	Gold
GBTC	\$29.3	ВТС
SLV	13.9	Silver
ETHE	10.2	Ether
PDBC	7.8	Commodity Futures
GLDM	5.2	Gold
FTCG	4.2	Commodity Futures
DBC	4.1	Commodity Futures
COMT	2.9	Commodity Futures
USO	3.2	WTI Oil Futures
SGOL	2.8	Gold
BITO	1.31	BTC Futures
BTF	0.1	BTC Futures
	GLD IAU  GBTC  SLV ETHE PDBC GLDM FTCG DBC COMT USO SGOL  BITO	GLD 68.1 IAU 32.2  GBTC \$29.3  SLV 13.9  ETHE 10.2  PDBC 7.8  GLDM 5.2  FTCG 4.2  DBC 4.1  COMT 2.9  USO 3.2  SGOL 2.8  BITO 1.31

### ...and a Top 10 Product by Liquidity<sup>2</sup>

Rank	Fund	ADV (\$M)	Asset
1	GLD	2,388	Gold
2	SLV	747	Silver
3	IAU	624	Gold
4	USO	592	WTI Oil Futures
5	BITO	205	BTC Futures
6	GBTC	<b>\$168</b>	втс
7	PDBC	157	Commodity Futures
8	DBC	153	Commodity Futures
9	UCO	142	WTI Oil Futures
10	UNG	136	Nat. Gas Futures
11	GLDM	132	Gold
12	ETHE	106	Ether
13	BOIL	101	Nat. Gas Futures
29	BTF	0.8	BTC Futures

# GBTC is held by 865,000+ investor accounts across nominees holding varying amounts of investor accounts without a specific concentration

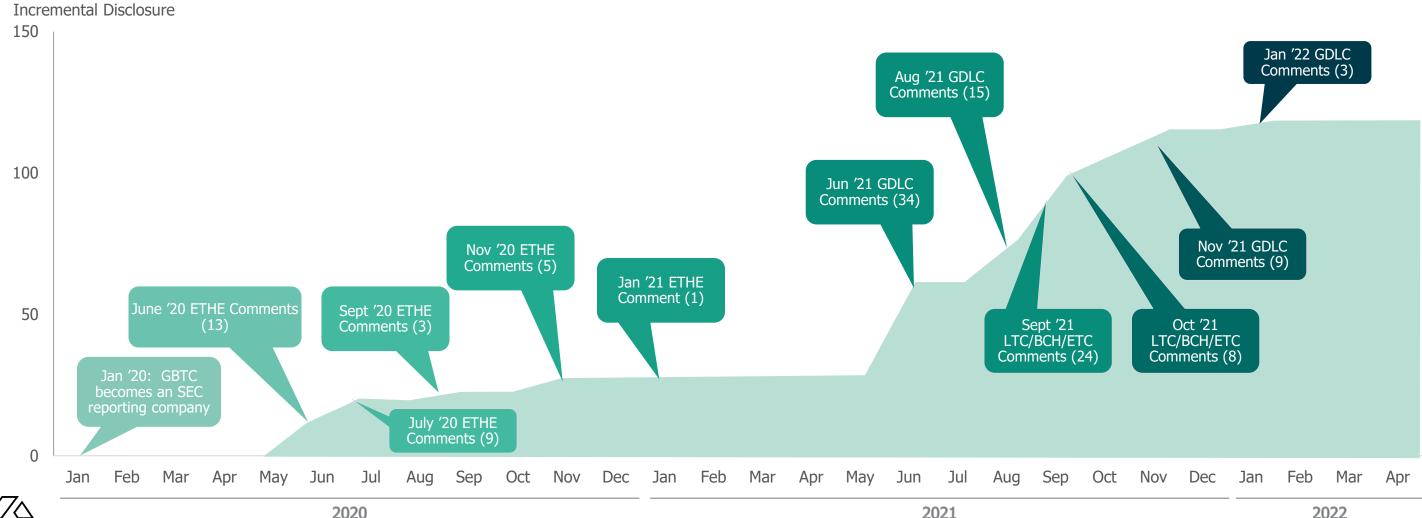
NOMINEE ACCOUNT RANGE (# shares)	ACCOUNTS IN RANGE	TOTAL SHARES IN RANGE	NOTIONAL VALUE (based on closing price of \$42.28)	%
1-50	1,763	66,524,933	\$ 2,812,674,167	11.49%
51-249	2,603	68,234,236	\$ 2,884,943,498	11.79%
250-499	2,509	13,402,165	\$ 566,643,536	2.31%
500-749	4,653	26,849,513	\$ 1,135,197,410	4.64%
750-999	774	416,153	\$ 17,594,949	0.07%
1,000-1,499	1,458	2,184,758	\$ 92,371,568	0.38%
1,500-1,999	1,829	1,356,905	\$ 57,369,943	0.23%
2,000-3,999	11,638	17,516,701	\$ 740,606,118	3.03%
10,000-19,999	29,598	17,298,009	\$ 731,359,821	2.99%
30,000-34,999	34,527	20,079,874	\$ 848,977,073	3.47%
50,000-59,999	54,881	31,567,079	\$ 1,334,656,100	5.45%
150,000-152,999	150,586	90,535,555	\$ 3,827,843,265	15.64%
153,000-169,999	153,145	68,591,170	\$ 2,900,034,668	11.85%
170,000-172,999	172,507	151,145,116	\$ 6,390,415,504	26.11%
173,000-250,000	242,821	3,244,176	\$ 137,163,761	0.56%
Totals	865,292	578,946,343	24,477,851,382	100%



Source: Broadridge (3/31/22

### Grayscale and the SEC have worked together to enhance disclosures for the benefit of investors

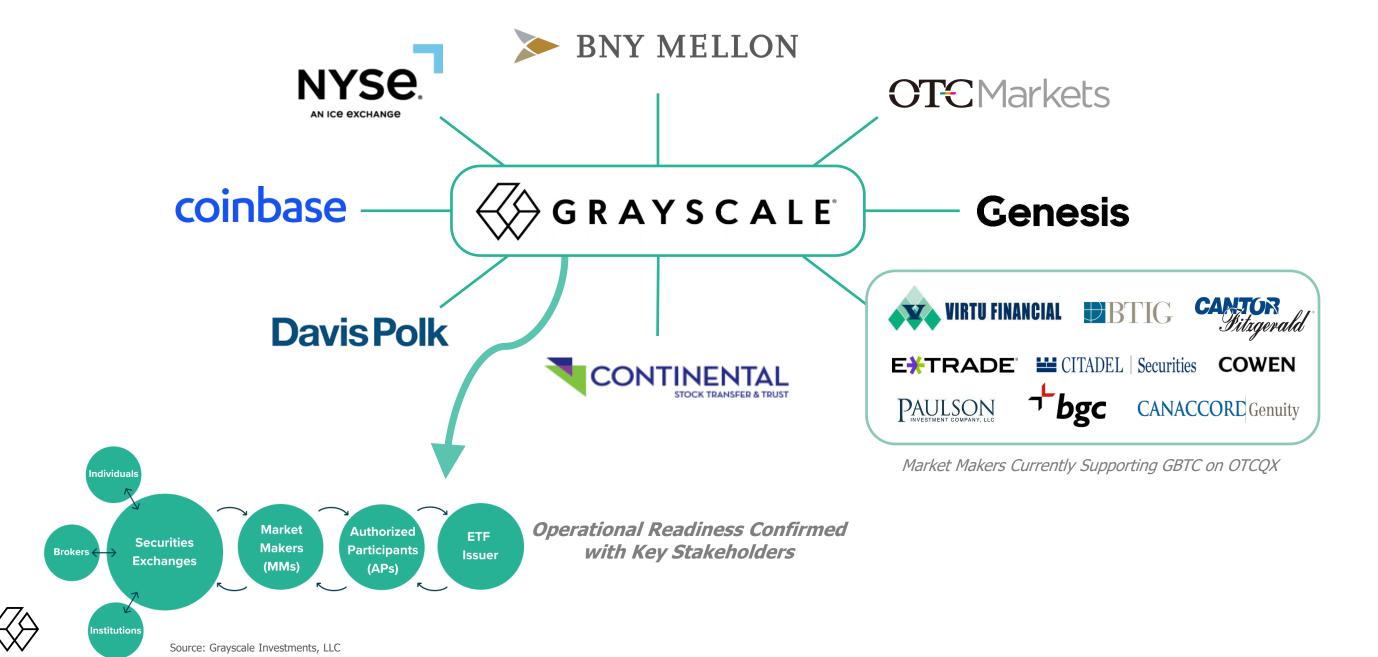
As the SEC has provided feedback on Grayscale's more recent SEC Reporting Company Products, those enhancements have been incorporated into the filings of all Products (inclusive of GBTC)





2021

# Grayscale has a network of partners and well-documented and proven business processes ready to operate GBTC as an ETF today



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(GBTC) presents a
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There are persuasive arguments being sent by the public to the SEC in favor of converting GBTC to an ETF

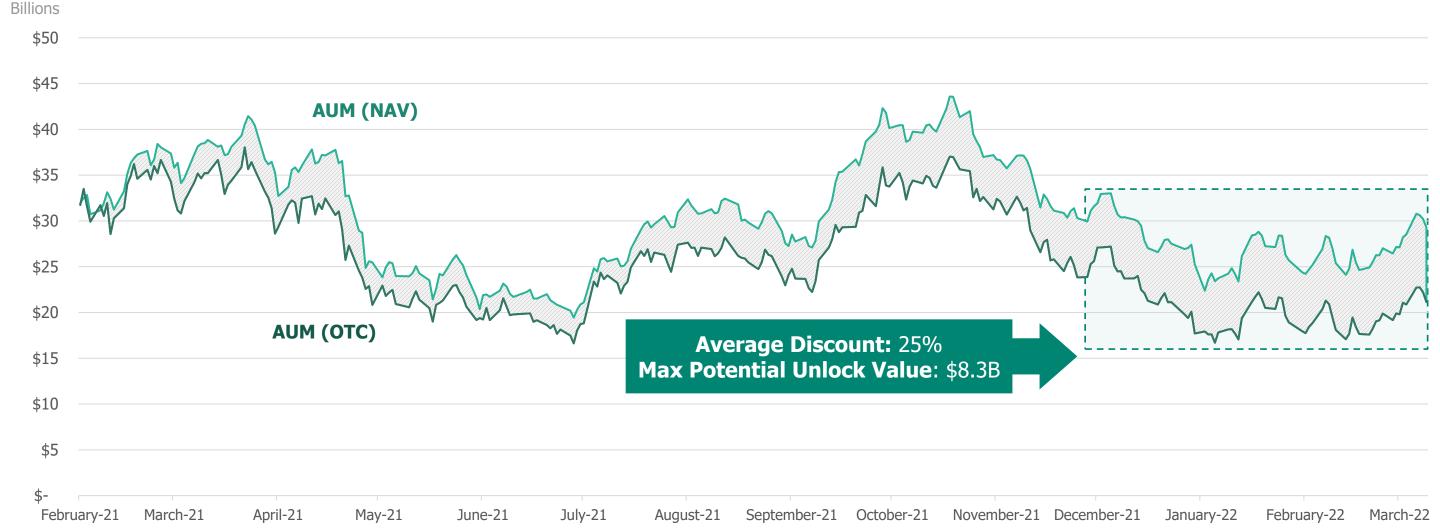
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Finally, there has been extensive commentary on the six topics the SEC has raised in our application



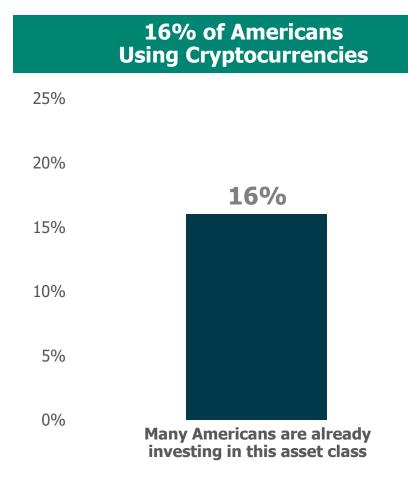
# GBTC ETF conversion will allow better NAV tracking, reduce discounts and premiums, and unlock approximately \$8B for investors



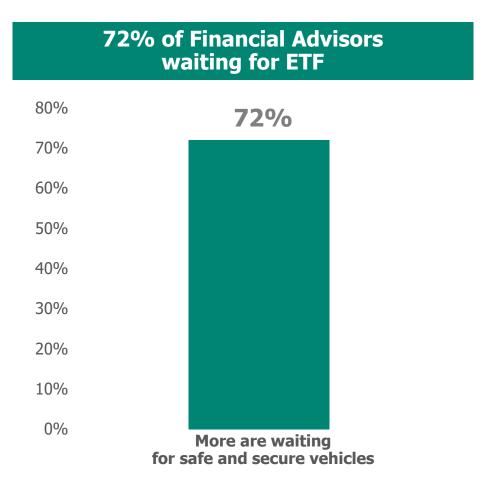




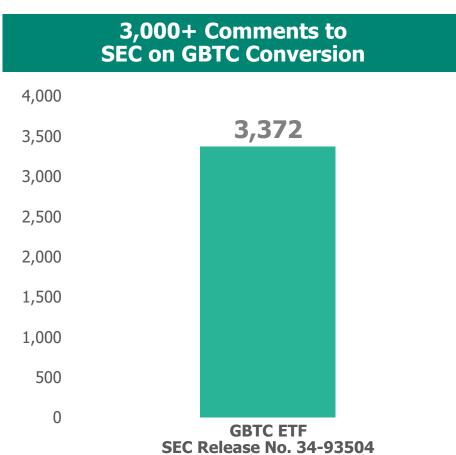
## American investors want and deserve the freedom to invest in Bitcoin through a safe and secure manner



According to The White House, approximately 16% of adult Americans – more than 40 million people – have invested-in, traded, or used cryptocurrencies<sup>1</sup>



Nasdaq recently conducted a study finding that 72% of financial advisors who are either investing client assets in crypto or considering it would be more likely to do so through a spot ETF<sup>2</sup>



### **Grayscale investors and market participants are in support of GBTC's conversion to an ETF**

Over 3,000 letters have been submitted to the SEC on behalf of our investors expressing their desire to invest in spot Bitcoin through an ETF<sup>3</sup>



### The SEC is uniquely positioned...

The SEC is uniquely positioned to support the White House Executive Order to ensure America leads in digital asset innovation by further bringing Bitcoin into the regulatory perimeter

"The United States has an interest in responsible financial innovation, expanding access to safe and affordable financial services...'

"The United States also has an interest in ensuring that the **benefits of** financial innovation are enjoyed equitably by all Americans and that any disparate impacts of financial innovation are mitigated."



#### **Executive Order on Ensuring** Responsible Development of Digital Assets

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United State of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

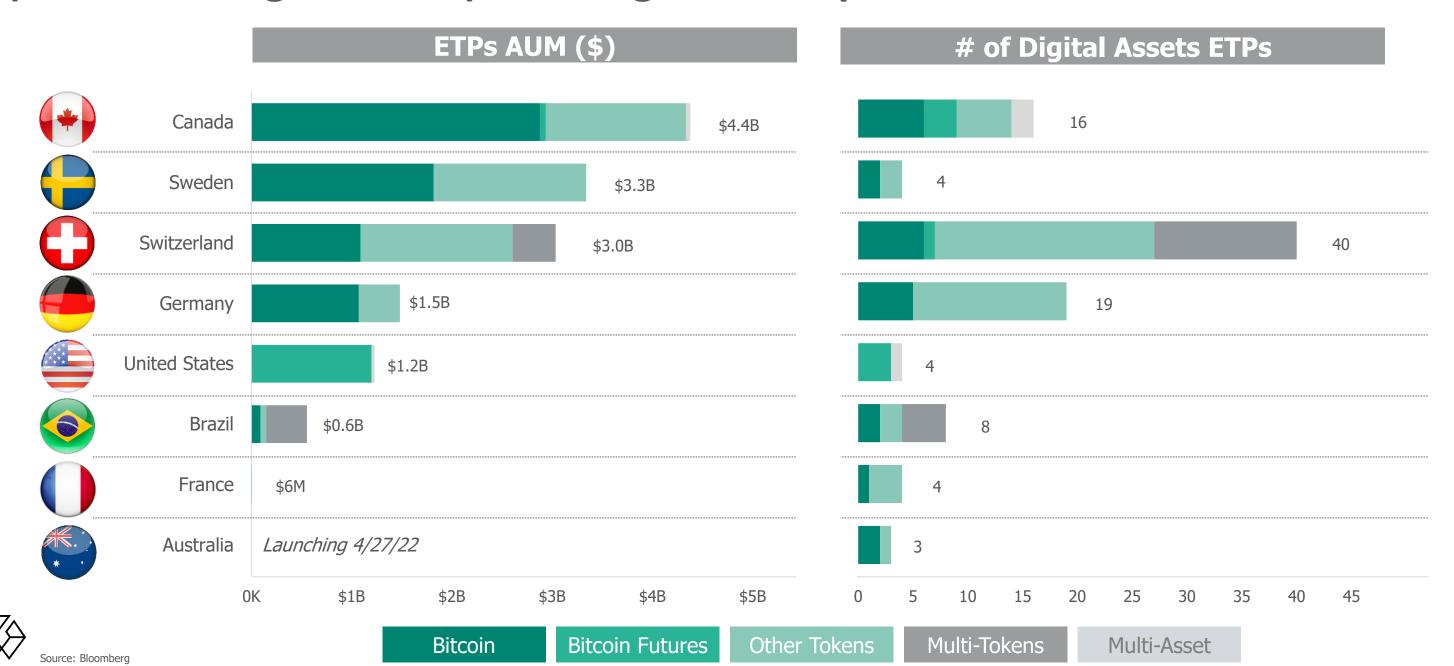
Section 1. Policy. Advances in digital and distributed ledger technology for financial services have led to dramatic growth in markets for digital assets, with profound implications for the protection of consumers, investors, and businesses, including data privacy and security; financia non-state issued digital assets reached a combined market capitalization of \$3 trillion, up from approximately \$14 billion in early November 2016. Monetary authorities globally are also While many activities involving digital assets are within the scope of existing domestic laws and regulations, an area where the United States has been a global leader, growing development and

'The United States has a strong interest in promoting responsible innovation that expands equitable access to financial **services**, particularly for those Americans underserved by the traditional banking system, including by making investments...by promoting greater and more cost-efficient access to financial products and services."

"We must reinforce United States **leadership** in the global financial system and in technological and economic competitiveness"



# The US lags global markets, with other jurisdictions providing Bitcoin (and other digital asset) exchange-traded products

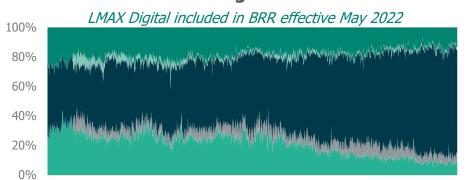


### A Bitcoin Spot ETF is no riskier than a Bitcoin Futures ETF...

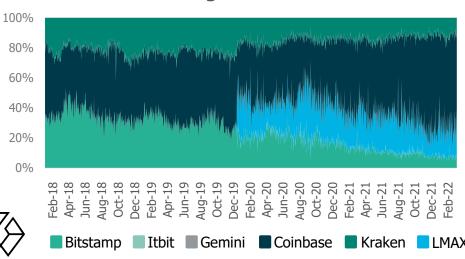
## ... with prices for both markets influenced by the same inputs

## Futures benchmark & spot index price have significant overlap in constituents

#### **BRR Exchange Volumes**<sup>1</sup>



**XBX Exchange Volume Share**<sup>2</sup>



### ...resulting in prices that track each other closely





—XBX —BRR

# The SEC is discriminating against issuers by approving Bitcoin Futures ETFs and denying Bitcoin Spot ETFs

- SEC historically concerned with potential fraud and manipulation in underlying Bitcoin markets
- Underlying Bitcoin markets affect both Bitcoin Futures ETFs and potential Bitcoin Spot ETFs
- Regulation under Securities Act of 1933 ('33 Act) and Securities Act of 1934 ('34 Act) or Investment Company Act of 1940 ('40 Act) does not mitigate risk

Arguments regarding
Futures v. Bitcoin and
'40 Act v. '33 Act and
'34 Act are distinctions
without a difference for
Bitcoin ETFs

### **CME Bitcoin Futures vs Bitcoin Spot Markets**

- SEC stated CME Bitcoin Futures market is **not** a "significant" Bitcoin market
- This implies market participants could manipulate Bitcoin on a spot exchange and impact the regulated CME Bitcoin Futures and, therefore, the Bitcoin Futures ETF
- **By approving Teucrium**, SEC has conceded that it is not concerned with fraud or manipulation in the underlying Bitcoin markets (or at least not enough to deny a Bitcoin ETF)



- Investor protections of '40 Act do not address fraud or manipulation in the assets or markets of assets that ETFs hold
- Rather, '40 Act seeks "to remedy certain abusive practices in the
   \*management\* of investment companies" (i.e., ETFs)
- The '40 Act **lists the types of abuses it seeks to prevent** (e.g., accounting, borrowing, custody, fees, and independent boards)
- None of these restrictions address an ETF's underlying asset or exchanges on which its pricing is derived (e.g., Coinbase, Kraken, Bitstamp, LMAX, Gemini, itBit)
- By approving Teucrium, SEC can no longer use '40 Act arguments



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SEC Topic	Example of Public Feedback and Commentary; See also GBTC 19b-14 generally
Potential for fraud and manipulation in underlying Bitcoin markets	See e.g., Letter from Paul Agrawal, CLO Coinbase, Inc. (Mar. 3, 2022) ("Coinbase Letter"): https://www.sec.gov/comments/sr-nysearca-2021-90/srnysearca202190-20118548-271429.pdf
Coindesk XBX Index mitigating the impact of instances of fraud and manipulation on a reference price for Bitcoin	<u>See e.g.</u> , Coinbase Letter <u>See e.g.</u> , Campbell R. Harvey, Professor of Finance, Fuqua School of Business, Duke University (Mar. 26, 2022) ("Harvey Letter"): <a href="https://www.sec.gov/comments/sr-nysearca-2021-90/srnysearca202190-20121464-273430.pdf">https://www.sec.gov/comments/sr-nysearca-2021-90/srnysearca202190-20121464-273430.pdf</a>
Coindesk XBX Index design to protect investors and the public interest, consistent with applicable requirements of Section 6(b)(5) of the Act	See e.g., Coinbase Letter and Harvey Letter
Lead/lag analysis comparing CME Bitcoin futures to spot Bitcoin markets	<u>See e.g.</u> , Letter from Bitwise Asset Management, Inc. ("Bitwise Letter") <u>also Fidelity Memorandum with Lead/Lag referenced therein (Sep. 8, 2021) ("Fidelity Memo"): <a href="https://www.sec.gov/comments/sr-nysearca-2021-89/srnysearca-202189-20117902-270822.pdf">https://www.sec.gov/comments/sr-nysearca-2021-89/srnysearca-202189-20117902-270822.pdf</a>; <a href="https://www.sec.gov/comments/sr-cboebzx-2021-039/srcboebzx-2021039-250110.pdf">https://www.sec.gov/comments/sr-cboebzx-2021-039/srcboebzx-2021039-250110.pdf</a></u>
CME Bitcoin futures market as a regulated market of significant size	<u>See e.g.</u> , Coinbase Letter, Bitwise Letter, <u>also</u> Fidelity Memo. <u>See</u> Bitcoin Trading Volume (CME represents >50% of all Bitcoin trading volume): <a href="https://www.bitcointradevolume.com/">https://www.bitcointradevolume.com/</a>
ETFs registered under the '40 Act versus the '33 Act	See e.g., Letters from Davis Polk and Wardwell LLP (Nov. 29, 2021): <a href="https://www.sec.gov/comments/sr-nysearca-2021-90/srnysearca202190-9410842-262990.pdf">https://www.sec.gov/comments/sr-nysearca-2021-90/srnysearca202190-9410842-262990.pdf</a> and the Letter from Davis Polk and Wardell LLP (Apr. 18, 2022) (collectively, the "Davis Polk Letters"):

### Summary



Grayscale and the SEC have collaborated for years resulting in transparent and appropriate disclosures for investors in the world's largest digital asset investment vehicle: GBTC

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We look forward to continuing our engagement as the SEC reviews and responds to the public's comment letters in the context of the 19b-4 filing for GBTC

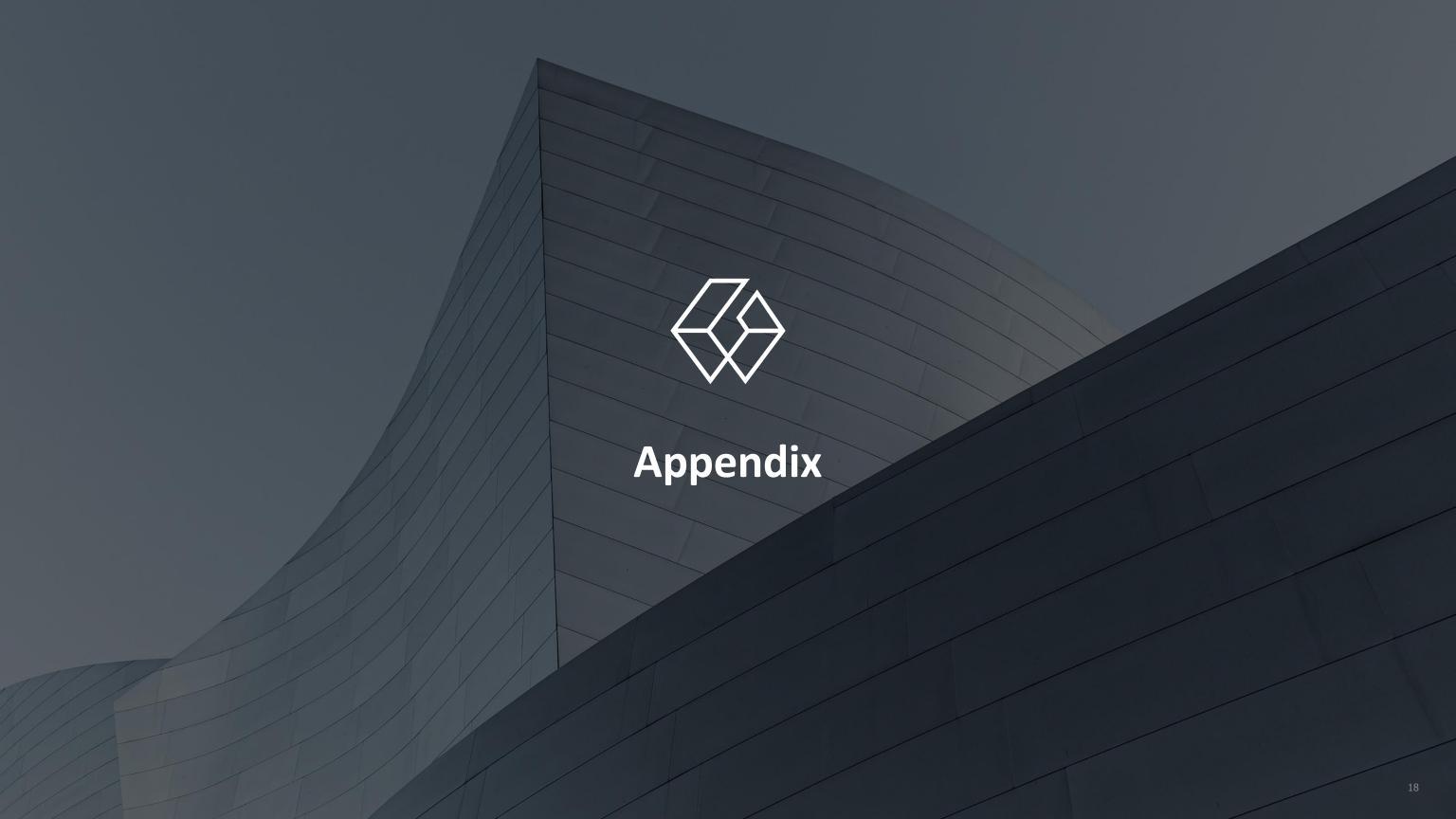
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Approving GBTC to operate as an ETF on a National Securities Exchange will provide investors with the additional protections of the SEC and NYSE while unlocking billions of value for investors



U.S. capital market
participants and
investors are ready to
support a spot-based
Bitcoin ETF and should
not be limited to a
futures-based ETF
that carries the same
risks





SEC Topic	Example of Public Feedback and Commentary
Potential for fraud and manipulation in underlying Bitcoin markets	See e.g., Coinbase Letter.

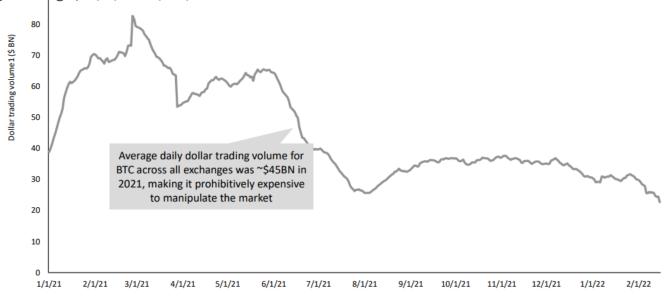
### 1.Market Depth, Liquidity, and Transparency

Bitcoin's average daily trading volume in 2021 was approximately \$45 billion [Figure 1], demonstrating the Bitcoin market's depth and liquidity. As a point of comparison, this trading volume is significantly higher than that of the largest national market system stocks [Figure 2], including Apple, Microsoft, and Amazon, which are some of the most liquid trading instruments available. Several institutional investors including asset managers, hedge funds, and public companies participate in the Bitcoin market, and surveys indicate interest from institutional investors continues to increase for Bitcoin and a potential ETP on the Bitcoin spot market.<sup>7</sup>

### Figure 1: Bitcoin spot market depth mitigates ability to manipulate large exchanges

Daily dollar trading volume on BTC spot exchanges<sup>1</sup>

30-day rolling average, 1/1/21-2/14/22

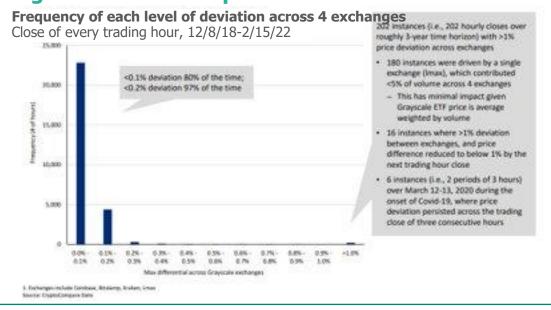


1. Daily volume is in dollars and represents the total spot trading volume reported by all exchanges over the last 24 hours for that cryptoasset Source: Data pulled from Yahoo Finance, originally sourced from Coinmarketcap.com



SEC Topic	Example of Public Feedback and Commentary
Coindesk XBX Index mitigating the impact of instances of fraud and manipulation on a reference price for Bitcoin	See e.g., Coinbase Letter and Harvey Letter.
Coindesk XBX Index design to protect investors and the public interest, consistent with applicable requirements of Section 6(b)(5) of the Act	See e.g., Coinbase Letter and Harvey Letter.

#### Figure 3: Historical price differential across exchanges



### Maintain Fair, Orderly, and Efficient Markets

In addition to my view that an ETP structure is a superior way for investors to efficiently gain exposure to the price movements of bitcoins versus the mechanisms currently available to them, the sponsor of GBTC employs further measures designed to protect investors from manipulation and ensure a fair, orderly, and efficient market.

The Sponsor utilizes the Coindesk XBX Index (the "Index"), which is a U.S. dollar-denominated composite reference rate for the price of bitcoin. The Index is designed to (i) mitigate the effects of fraud, manipulation and other anomalous trading activity from impacting the bitcoin reference rate, (ii) provide a real-time, volume-weighted fair value of bitcoin and (iii) appropriately handle and adjust for non-market related events.



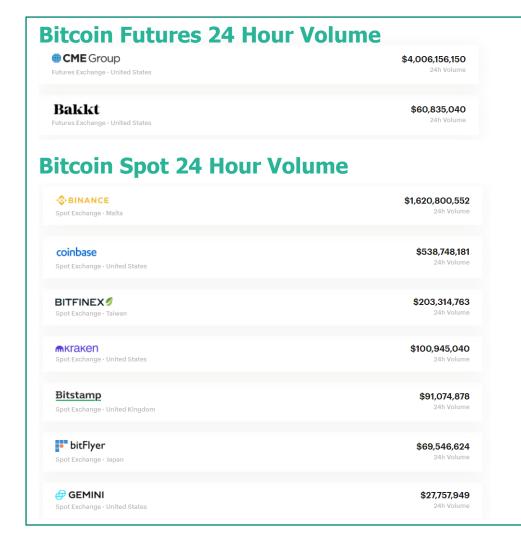
SEC Topic	Example of Public Feedback and Commentary
Lead/lag analysis comparing CME Bitcoin futures to spot Bitcoin markets	See e.g., Bitwise Letter also Fidelity Memo

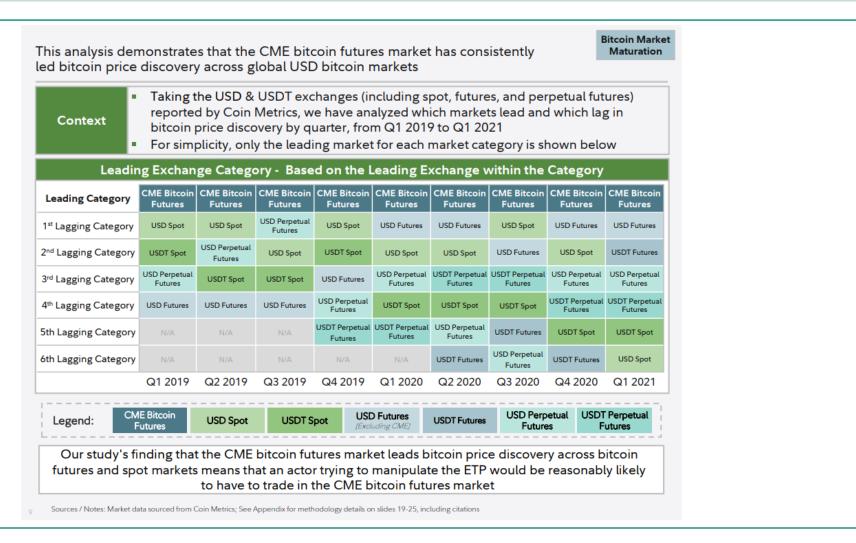
This new paper is titled "Suitable Price Discovery Measurement of Bitcoin Spot and Futures Markets." It was written by Kevin Robertson and Jiani Zhang and published to the Social Science Research Network (SSRN) on January 12, 2022. Robertson and Zhang are members of the Department of Quantitative Research and Investments at Fidelity Investments, Inc., and are not affiliated with Bitwise. The paper is available to the public for free download.

Robertson and Zhang examine 20 bitcoin spot markets and 26 bitcoin futures markets and evaluate where price discovery occurred between those markets using tick-level trade data over a period ranging from January 1, 2019, through March 31, 2021. The paper concludes that "CME bitcoin futures have consistently led price formation" compared to all other markets.<sup>4</sup> This finding aligns with our research, which examined a similar time period.



SEC Topic	Example of Public Feedback and Commentary
CME Bitcoin futures market as a regulated market of significant size	<u>See e.g., Coinbase Letter, Bitwise Letter, Fidelity Letter</u> <u>See e.g., Bitcoin Trading Volume</u> (CME represents >50% of all Bitcoin trading volume):





SEC Topic	Example of Public Feedback and Commentary
ETFs registered under the '40 Act versus the '33 Act	See e.g., Davis Polk Letters and Virtu Letter

It is of course foundational that the Commission—like any other federal regulatory agency—must treat like situations alike absent reasoned justification;<sup>25</sup> indeed, this principle is reflected in the text of Section 6(b)(5) itself, which forbids exchanges from maintaining rules that unfairly discriminate between issuers. Bitcoin futures ETPs registered under the 1940 Act and spot Bitcoin ETPs that are not required or eligible to be so registered are the same in all relevant respects, but based on the analysis in the November 12, 2021 disapproval order, the Commission is treating them differently. Although the Commission cited investor protections afforded by the 1940 Act as justification for disparate treatment,<sup>26</sup> the 1940 Act's protections do not address and thus are not relevant to the concern the Commission has repeatedly invoked to deny Rule 19b-4 applications for spot Bitcoin ETPs like BTC: market manipulation and fraud in the underlying Bitcoin market.

In view of the Commission's new approach to Bitcoin futures ETPs, we believe that rejecting NYSE Arca's Rule 19b-4 application on grounds similar to those articulated in the November 12, 2021 disapproval order would unfairly discriminate against BTC and its shareholders in violation of Section 6(b)(5) of the Exchange Act and would constitute arbitrary and capricious action within the meaning of Section 706(2)(a) of the Administrative Procedure Act (as amended, the "APA").

We therefore respectfully urge the Commission to approve NYSE Arca's proposal to list and trade BTC.



