

Form 5500-SF Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service Department of Labor Employee Benefits Security Administration Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	Short Form Annual Return/Report of Small Employee Benefit Plan This form is required to be filed under sections 104 and 4065 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), and sections 6057(b) and 6058(a) of the Internal Revenue Code (the Code). ▶ Complete all entries in accordance with the instructions to the Form 5500-SF.	OMB Nos. 1210-0110 1210-0089 2025 This Form is Open to Public Inspection
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Part I	Annual Report Identification Information
For calendar plan year 2025 or fiscal plan year beginning 01/01/2025 and ending 12/31/2025	
A	This return/report is for: ☒ a single-employer plan ☐ a multiple-employer plan (not multiemployer) (Pension Plan filers checking this box must attach Schedule MEP. Other plans must attach a list of participating employer information in accordance with the form instructions.)
B	This return/report is ☐ the first return/report ☐ the final return/report ☐ an amended return/report ☐ a short plan year return/report (less than 12 months)
C	Check box if filing under: ☐ Form 5558 ☐ automatic extension ☐ DFVC program ☐ special extension (enter description)
D	If the plan is a collectively-bargained plan, check here ▶ ☐
E	If this is a retroactively adopted plan permitted by SECURE Act section 201, check here ▶ ☐

Part II	Basic Plan Information—enter all requested information	
1a	Name of plan THE MERRILL STRATEGY GROUP DEFINED BENEFIT PLAN & TRUST	1b Three-digit plan number (PN) ▶ 002
		1c Effective date of plan 01/01/2020
2a	Plan sponsor's name (employer, if for a single-employer plan) Mailing address (include room, apt., suite no. and street, or P.O. Box) City or town, state or province, country, and ZIP or foreign postal code (if foreign, see instructions) THE MERRILL STRATEGY GROUP PO BOX 8087 BERKELEY, CA 94707	2b Employer Identification Number (EIN) 83-0449317
		2c Sponsor's telephone number 510-508-0572
		2d Business code (see instructions) 541990
3a	Plan administrator's name and address ☒ Same as Plan Sponsor.	3b Administrator's EIN
		3c Administrator's telephone number
4	If the name and/or EIN of the plan sponsor or the plan name has changed since the last return/report filed for this plan, enter the plan sponsor's name, EIN, the plan name and the plan number from the last return/report. a Sponsor's name c Plan Name	4b EIN
		4d PN
5a	Total number of participants at the beginning of the plan year	5a 8
b	Total number of participants at the end of the plan year	5b 8
c(1)	Number of participants with account balances as of the beginning of the plan year (only defined contribution plans complete this item)	5c(1)
c(2)	Number of participants with account balances as of the end of the plan year (only defined contribution plans complete this item)	5c(2)
d(1)	Total number of active participants at the beginning of the plan year	5d(1) 4
d(2)	Total number of active participants at the end of the plan year	5d(2) 4
e	Number of participants who terminated employment during the plan year with accrued benefits that were less than 100% vested	5e 0

Caution: A penalty for the late or incomplete filing of this return/report will be assessed unless reasonable cause is established.

Under penalties of perjury and other penalties set forth in the instructions, I declare that I have examined this return/report, including, if applicable, a Schedule SB or Schedule MB completed and signed by an enrolled actuary, as well as the electronic version of this return/report, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, it is true, correct, and complete.

SIGN HERE	Filed with authorized/valid electronic signature.	05/04/2026	KATHERINE MERRILL
	Signature of plan administrator	Date	Enter name of individual signing as plan administrator
SIGN HERE			
	Signature of employer/plan sponsor	Date	Enter name of individual signing as employer or plan sponsor

- 6a** Were all of the plan's assets during the plan year invested in eligible assets? (See instructions.) ☒ Yes ☐ No
- b** Are you claiming a waiver of the annual examination and report of an independent qualified public accountant (IQPA) under 29 CFR 2520.104-46? (See instructions on waiver eligibility and conditions.) ☒ Yes ☐ No
- If you answered "No" to either line 6a or line 6b, the plan cannot use Form 5500-SF and must instead use Form 5500.**
- c** If the plan is a defined benefit plan, is it covered under the PBGC insurance program (see ERISA section 4021)? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not determined
- If "Yes" is checked, enter the My PAA confirmation number from the PBGC premium filing for this plan year 573870. (See instructions.)

Part III Financial Information

7 Plan Assets and Liabilities		(a) Beginning of Year	(b) End of Year
a Total plan assets	7a	942153	998506
b Total plan liabilities	7b	0	0
c Net plan assets (subtract line 7b from line 7a)	7c	942153	998506
8 Income, Expenses, and Transfers for this Plan Year		(a) Amount	(b) Total
a Contributions received or receivable from:			
(1) Employers	8a(1)	0	
(2) Participants	8a(2)	0	
(3) Others (including rollovers)	8a(3)	0	
b Other income (loss)	8b	68319	
c Total income (add lines 8a(1), 8a(2), 8a(3), and 8b)	8c		68319
d Benefits paid (including direct rollovers and insurance premiums to provide benefits)	8d	0	
e Certain deemed and/or corrective distributions (see instructions) ..	8e	0	
f Administrative service providers (salaries, fees, commissions)	8f	11966	
g Other expenses	8g	0	
h Total expenses (add lines 8d, 8e, 8f, and 8g)	8h		11966
i Net income (loss) (subtract line 8h from line 8c)	8i		56353
j Transfers to (from) the plan (see instructions)	8j	0	

Part IV Plan Characteristic Codes

- 9a** If the plan provides pension benefits, enter the applicable pension feature codes from the List of Plan Characteristic Codes in the instructions:
1A 3D 1I 3H
- b** If the plan provides welfare benefits, enter the applicable welfare feature codes from the List of Plan Characteristic Codes in the instructions:

Part V Compliance Questions

10 During the plan year:		Yes	No	Amount
a Was there a failure to transmit to the plan any participant contributions within the time period described in 29 CFR 2510.3-102? Continue to answer "Yes" for any prior year failures until fully corrected. (See instructions and DOL's Voluntary Fiduciary Correction Program)	10a		X	
b Were there any nonexempt transactions with any party-in-interest? (Do not include transactions reported on line 10a.)	10b		X	
c Was the plan covered by a fidelity bond?	10c	X		60000
d Did the plan have a loss, whether or not reimbursed by the plan's fidelity bond, that was caused by fraud or dishonesty?	10d		X	
e Were any fees or commissions paid to any brokers, agents, or other persons by an insurance carrier, insurance service, or other organization that provides some or all of the benefits under the plan? (See instructions.)	10e		X	
f Has the plan failed to provide any benefit when due under the plan?	10f		X	
g Did the plan have any participant loans? (If "Yes," enter amount as of year-end.)	10g		X	
h If this is an individual account plan, was there a blackout period? (See instructions and 29 CFR 2520.101-3.)	10h		X	
i If 10h was answered "Yes," check the box if you either provided the required notice or one of the exceptions to providing the notice applied under 29 CFR 2520.101-3	10i			

Part VI Pension Funding Compliance

11 Is this a defined benefit plan subject to minimum funding requirements? (If "Yes," see instructions and complete Schedule SB (Form 5500) and lines 11a and b below.) If this is a defined contribution pension plan, leave line 11 blank and complete line 12 below.....	☒ Yes ☐ No
a Enter the unpaid minimum required contributions for all years from Schedule SB (Form 5500) line 40.....	11a 0
b PBGC missed contribution reporting requirements. If the plan is covered by PBGC and the amount reported on line 11a is greater than \$0, has PBGC been notified as required by ERISA sections 4043(c)(5) and/or 303(k)(4)? Check the applicable box:	
☐ Yes.	
☐ No. Reporting was waived under 29 CFR 4043.25(c)(2) because contributions equal to or exceeding the unpaid minimum required contribution were made by the 30th day after the due date.	
☐ No. The 30-day period referenced in 29 CFR 4043.25(c)(2) has not yet ended, and the sponsor intends to make a contribution equal to or exceeding the unpaid minimum required contribution by the 30th day after the due date.	
☐ No. Other. Provide explanation _____	

12 Is this a defined contribution plan subject to the minimum funding requirements of section 412 of the Code or section 302 of ERISA? (If "Yes," complete line 12a or lines 12b, 12c, 12d, and 12e below, as applicable.) If this is a defined benefit pension plan, leave line 12 blank and complete line 11 above.	☐ Yes ☐ No
a If a waiver of the minimum funding standard for a prior year is being amortized in this plan year, see instructions, and enter the date of the letter ruling granting the waiver. Month _____ Day _____ Year _____	
If you completed line 12a, complete lines 3, 9, and 10 of Schedule MB (Form 5500), and skip to line 13.	
b Enter the minimum required contribution for this plan year	12b
c Enter the amount contributed by the employer to the plan for this plan year	12c
d Subtract the amount in line 12c from the amount in line 12b. Enter the result (enter a minus sign to the left of a negative amount)	12d
e Will the minimum funding amount reported on line 12d be met by the funding deadline?.....	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Part VII Plan Terminations and Transfers of Assets

13a Has a resolution to terminate the plan been adopted in any plan year?	☒ Yes ☐ No	
a If "Yes," enter the amount of any plan assets that reverted to the employer this year.....	13a 0	
b Were all the plan assets distributed to participants or beneficiaries, transferred to another plan, or brought under the control of the PBGC?	☐ Yes ☒ No	
c If, during this plan year, any assets or liabilities were transferred from this plan to another plan(s), identify the plan(s) to which assets or liabilities were transferred. (See instructions.)		
13c(1) Name of plan(s):	13c(2) EIN(s)	13c(3) PN(s)

Part VIII IRS Compliance Questions

14a Does the plan satisfy the coverage and nondiscrimination tests of Code sections 410(b) and 401(a)(4) by combining this plan with any other plans under the permissive aggregation rules? ☐ Yes ☒ No	
14b If this is a Code section 401(k) plan, check all boxes that apply to indicate how the plan is intended to satisfy the nondiscrimination requirements for employee deferrals and employer matching contributions (as applicable) under Code sections 401(k)(3) and 401(m)(2).	
☐ Design-based safe harbor method	
☐ "Prior year" ADP test	
☐ "Current year" ADP test	
☒ N/A	
15 If the plan sponsor is an adopter of a pre-approved plan that received a favorable IRS Opinion Letter, enter the date of the Opinion Letter <u>02 / 28 / 2023</u> (MM/DD/YYYY) and the Opinion Letter serial number <u>Q705360A</u> .	

SCHEDULE SB (Form 5500) Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service Department of Labor Employee Benefits Security Administration Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	Single-Employer Defined Benefit Plan Actuarial Information This schedule is required to be filed under section 104 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) and section 6059 of the Internal Revenue Code (the Code). ▶ File as an attachment to Form 5500 or 5500-SF.	OMB No. 1210-0110 2025 This Form is Open to Public Inspection
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For calendar plan year 2025 or fiscal plan year beginning 01/01/2025 and ending 12/31/2025	
▶ Round off amounts to nearest dollar.	
▶ Caution: A penalty of \$1,000 will be assessed for late filing of this report unless reasonable cause is established.	
A Name of plan THE MERRILL STRATEGY GROUP DEFINED BENEFIT PLAN & TRUST	B Three-digit plan number (PN) ▶ 002
C Plan sponsor's name as shown on line 2a of Form 5500 or 5500-SF THE MERRILL STRATEGY GROUP	D Employer Identification Number (EIN) 83-0449317
E Type of plan: ☒ Single ☐ Multiple-A ☐ Multiple-B	F Prior year plan size: ☒ 100 or fewer ☐ 101-500 ☐ More than 500

Part I	Basic Information			
1	Enter the valuation date: Month 12 Day 31 Year 2025			
2	Assets:			
a	Market value	2a	988506	
b	Actuarial value	2b	988506	
3	Funding target/participant count breakdown	(1) Number of participants	(2) Vested Funding Target	(3) Total Funding Target
a	For retired participants and beneficiaries receiving payment	0	0	0
b	For terminated vested participants	4	141605	141605
c	For active participants	4	749686	749686
d	Total	8	891291	891291
4	If the plan is in at-risk status, check the box and complete lines (a) and (b): ☐			
a	Funding target disregarding prescribed at-risk assumptions	4a		
b	Funding target reflecting at-risk assumptions, but disregarding transition rule for plans that have been in at-risk status for fewer than five consecutive years and disregarding loading factor	4b		
5	Effective interest rate	5	5.42 %	
6	Target normal cost			
a	Present value of current plan year accruals	6a	45855	
b	Expected plan-related expenses	6b	0	
c	Target normal cost	6c	45855	

Statement by Enrolled Actuary
To the best of my knowledge, the information supplied in this schedule and accompanying schedules, statements and attachments, if any, is complete and accurate. Each prescribed assumption was applied in accordance with applicable law and regulations. In my opinion, each other assumption is reasonable (taking into account the experience of the plan and reasonable expectations) and such other assumptions, in combination, offer my best estimate of anticipated experience under the plan.

SIGN HERE	Signature of actuary ROBERT M. HANESS Type or print name of actuary HANESS & ASSOCIATED, LLC Firm name P.O. BOX 836 ROCKLIN, CA 95677 Address of the firm	02/26/2026 Date 23-04945 Most recent enrollment number 916-276-1256 Telephone number (including area code)
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Part II Beginning of Year Carryover and Prefunding Balances

	(a) Carryover balance	(b) Prefunding balance
7 Balance at beginning of prior year after applicable adjustments (line 13 from prior year)	5	0
8 Portion elected for use to offset prior year's funding requirement (line 35 from prior year)	0	0
9 Amount remaining (line 7 minus line 8)	5	0
10 Interest on line 9 using prior year's actual return of _____ %		
11 Prior year's excess contributions to be added to prefunding balance:		
a Present value of excess contributions (line 38a from prior year)		11757
b(1) Interest on the excess, if any, of line 38a over line 38b from prior year Schedule SB, using prior year's effective interest rate of <u>5.42</u> %		0
b(2) Interest on line 38b from prior year Schedule SB, using prior year's actual return		0
c Total available at beginning of current plan year to add to prefunding balance		11757
d Portion of (c) to be added to prefunding balance		0
12 Other reductions in balances due to elections or deemed elections	0	0
13 Balance at beginning of current year (line 9 + line 10 + line 11d – line 12)	5	0

Part III Funding Percentages

14 Funding target attainment percentage	14	112.02 %
15 Adjusted funding target attainment percentage	15	106.28 %
16 Prior year's funding percentage for purposes of determining whether carryover/prefunding balances may be used to reduce current year's funding requirement	16	108.69 %
17 If the current value of the assets of the plan is less than 70 percent of the funding target, enter such percentage	17	%

Part IV Contributions and Liquidity Shortfalls**18** Contributions made to the plan for the plan year by employer(s) and employees:

(a) Date (MM-DD-YYYY)	(b) Amount paid by employer(s)	(c) Amount paid by employees	(a) Date (MM-DD-YYYY)	(b) Amount paid by employer(s)	(c) Amount paid by employees
Totals ►			18(b)	0	18(c) 0

19 Discounted employer contributions – see instructions for small plan with a valuation date after the beginning of the year:

a Contributions allocated toward unpaid minimum required contributions from prior years	19a	0
b Contributions made to avoid restrictions adjusted to valuation date	19b	0
c Contributions allocated toward minimum required contribution for current year adjusted to valuation date	19c	0

20 Quarterly contributions and liquidity shortfalls:

- a** Did the plan have a "funding shortfall" for the prior year? ☐ Yes ☒ No
- b** If line 20a is "Yes," were required quarterly installments for the current year made in a timely manner? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- c** If line 20a is "Yes," see instructions and complete the following table as applicable:

Liquidity shortfall as of end of quarter of this plan year			
(1) 1st	(2) 2nd	(3) 3rd	(4) 4th

Part V	Assumptions Used to Determine Funding Target and Target Normal Cost
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21 Discount rate:			
a Segment rates:	1st segment: 4.86 %	2nd segment: 5.31 %	3rd segment: 5.67 %
	☐ N/A, full yield curve used		
b Applicable month (enter code)	21b	4	
22 Weighted average retirement age	22	65	
23 Mortality table(s) (see instructions)	☒ Prescribed - combined	☐ Prescribed - separate	☐ Substitute

Part VI	Miscellaneous Items
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24 Has a change been made in the non-prescribed actuarial assumptions for the current plan year? If "Yes," see instructions regarding required attachment.....	☐ Yes	☒ No
25 Has a method change been made for the current plan year? If "Yes," see instructions regarding required attachment.....	☐ Yes	☒ No
26 Demographic and benefit information		
a Is the plan required to provide a Schedule of Active Participants? If "Yes," see instructions regarding required attachment.	☒ Yes	☐ No
b Is the plan required to provide a projection of expected benefit payments? If "Yes," see instructions regarding required attachment...	☐ Yes	☒ No
27 If the plan is subject to alternative funding rules, enter applicable code and see instructions regarding attachment.....	27	

Part VII	Reconciliation of Unpaid Minimum Required Contributions For Prior Years
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28 Unpaid minimum required contributions for all prior years	28	0
29 Discounted employer contributions allocated toward unpaid minimum required contributions from prior years (line 19a).....	29	0
30 Remaining amount of unpaid minimum required contributions (line 28 minus line 29)	30	0

Part VIII	Minimum Required Contribution For Current Year
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31 Target normal cost and excess assets (see instructions):			
a Target normal cost (line 6c)	31a	45855	
b Excess assets, if applicable, but not greater than line 31a	31b	45855	
32 Amortization installments:	Outstanding Balance	Installment	
a Net shortfall amortization installment	0	0	
b Waiver amortization installment	0	0	
33 If a waiver has been approved for this plan year, enter the date of the ruling letter granting the approval (Month _____ Day _____ Year _____) and the waived amount	33		
34 Total funding requirement before reflecting carryover/prefunding balances (lines 31a - 31b + 32a + 32b - 33).....	34	0	
	Carryover balance	Prefunding balance	Total balance
35 Balances elected for use to offset funding requirement	0	0	0
36 Additional cash requirement (line 34 minus line 35)	36	0	
37 Contributions allocated toward minimum required contribution for current year adjusted to valuation date (line 19c)	37	0	
38 Present value of excess contributions for current year (see instructions)			
a Total (excess, if any, of line 37 over line 36)	38a	0	
b Portion included in line 38a attributable to use of prefunding and funding standard carryover balances	38b		
39 Unpaid minimum required contribution for current year (excess, if any, of line 36 over line 37)	39	0	
40 Unpaid minimum required contributions for all years	40	0	

Part IX	Pension Funding Relief Under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (See Instructions)
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41 If an election was made to use the extended amortization rule for a plan year beginning on or before December 31, 2021, check the box to indicate the first plan year for which the rule applies. ☐ 2019 ☐ 2020 ☐ 2021

[illegible]

Schedule SB, Part V

Statement of Actuarial Assumptions/Methods

The Merrill Strategy Group Defined Benefit Plan & Trust

83-0449317 / 002

For the plan year 01/01/2025 through 12/31/2025

Valuation Date: 12/31/2025

Funding Method: As prescribed in IRC Section 430
Age - Eligibility age at last birthday and other ages at nearest birthday

Retrospective Compensation - Highest 3 consecutive years of participation

Form of Payment - Assumed form of payment for funding is lump sum equivalent of normal form. Funding Target for lump sum is the greater of the present value of accrued benefit computed using funding segment rates and 417(e) Applicable Mortality Table or lump sum at the assumed retirement date of accrued benefit using plan actuarial equivalence discounted using appropriate segment rate. Lump sum on plan actuarial equivalence rates will not exceed 415 maximum allowable distribution, which is the lesser amount computed using a) 5.5% interest and the Applicable Mortality Table or b) the greater of plan actuarial equivalence interest and mortality or 417(e) Minimum

Interest Rates -

Segment rates for the Fourth Month Prior to Val Date as permitted under IRC 430(h)(2)(C)

Segment #	Year	Rate %
Segment 1	0 - 5	4.86
Segment 2	6 - 20	5.36
Segment 3	> 20	5.67

Segment rates as of September 30, 2024 As permitted under IRC 430(h)(2)(C)(iv)(II) - ARP

Segment #	Year	Rate %
Segment 1	0 - 5	4.86
Segment 2	6 - 20	5.31
Segment 3	> 20	5.67

Pre-Retirement - Mortality Table - None
Improvement Scale - None
Early Retirement Table - None
Turnover Table - None
Disability Table - None
Salary Scale - 3%
Expense Load - None
Ancillary Ben Load - None

Post-Retirement - Mortality Table - 25C - 2025 Combined
Improvement Scale - None
Cost of Living - None
Lump Sum - G94 - 1994 Group Annuity Reserving Proj 2002, Scale AA (unisex) at 5%
or
25E - 2025 Applicable Mortality Table for 417(e) (unisex)

Asset Valuation Method: Fair market value of assets adjusted for contributions under IRC 430(g)(4)

Discrimination Test Assumptions:

HCE Determination - Based on all employees

Otherwise Excludable - Otherwise Excludable HCEs are included with the Not Otherwise Excludable employees

Schedule SB, Part V

Statement of Actuarial Assumptions/Methods

The Merrill Strategy Group Defined Benefit Plan & Trust

83-0449317 / 002

For the plan year 01/01/2025 through 12/31/2025

410(b)/401(a)(4) Testing:

Pre-Retirement - Interest - 8.5%

Post-Retirement - Interest - 8.5%

Mortality Table - U84 - 1984 Unisex

Permissively Aggregated Plans - Tested as a Single Plan

Compensation - Use current compensation to calculate the benefit accrual rate (annual method)

Testing Age - Normal retirement age or attained age, if older

Normal Form for MVAR - Joint with 50% Survivor Benefits

401(a)(26) Testing:

Compensation - Use current compensation to calculate the benefit accrual rate for 401(a)(26)

Testing Age - Normal retirement age or attained age, if older

SCHEDULE SB (Form 5500) Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service Department of Labor Employee Benefits Security Administration Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	Single-Employer Defined Benefit Plan Actuarial Information This schedule is required to be filed under section 104 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) and section 6059 of the Internal Revenue Code (the Code). ► File as an attachment to Form 5500 or 5500-SF.	OMB No. 1210-0110 2025 This Form is Open to Public Inspection
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For calendar plan year 2025 or fiscal plan year beginning 01/01/2025 and ending 12/31/2025

► Round off amounts to nearest dollar.
► Caution: A penalty of \$1,000 will be assessed for late filing of this report unless reasonable cause is established.

A Name of plan The Merrill Strategy Group Defined Benefit Plan & Trust	B Three-digit plan number (PN) ► 002
C Plan sponsor's name as shown on line 2a of Form 5500 or 5500-SF The Merrill Strategy Group	D Employer Identification Number (EIN) 83-0449317
E Type of plan: ☒ Single ☐ Multiple-A ☐ Multiple-B	F Prior year plan size: ☒ 100 or fewer ☐ 101-500 ☐ More than 500

Part I Basic Information			
1 Enter the valuation date: Month <u>12</u> Day <u>31</u> Year <u>2025</u>			
2 Assets:			
a Market value	2a	998,506	
b Actuarial value	2b	998,506	
3 Funding target/participant count breakdown:	(1) Number of participants	(2) Vested Funding Target	(3) Total Funding Target
a For retired participants and beneficiaries receiving payment	0	0	0
b For terminated vested participants	4	141,605	141,605
c For active participants	4	749,686	749,686
d Total	8	891,291	891,291
4 If the plan is in at-risk status, check the box and complete lines (a) and (b)		☐	
a Funding target disregarding prescribed at-risk assumptions	4a		
b Funding target reflecting at-risk assumptions, but disregarding transition rule for plans that have been in at-risk status for fewer than five consecutive years and disregarding loading factor	4b		
5 Effective interest rate	5	5.42 %	
6 Target normal cost			
a Present value of current plan year accruals	6a	45,855	
b Expected plan-related expenses	6b	0	
c Target normal cost	6c	45,855	

Statement by Enrolled Actuary To the best of my knowledge, the information supplied in this schedule and accompanying schedules, statements and attachments, if any, is complete and accurate. Each prescribed assumption was applied in accordance with applicable law and regulations. In my opinion, each other assumption is reasonable (taking into account the experience of the plan and reasonable expectations) and such other assumptions, in combination, offer my best estimate of anticipated experience under the plan.	
SIGN HERE  Signature of actuary Robert M. Haness Type or print name of actuary Haness & Associates, LLC Firm name P.O. Box 836 US Rocklin CA 95677 Address of the firm	02/26/2026 Date 23-04945 Most recent enrollment number (916) 276-1256 Telephone number (including area code)

Part II Beginning of Year Carryover and Prefunding Balances

	(a) Carryover balance	(b) Prefunding balance
7 Balance at beginning of prior year after applicable adjustments (line 13 from prior year)	5	0
8 Portion elected for use to offset prior year's funding requirement (line 35 from prior year)	0	0
9 Amount remaining (line 7 minus line 8)	5	0
10 Interest on line 9 using prior year's actual return of <u>9.87</u> %	0	0
11 Prior year's excess contributions to be added to prefunding balance:		
a Present value of excess contributions (line 38a from prior year)		11,757
b(1) Interest on the excess, if any, of line 38a over line 38b from prior year Schedule SB, using prior year's effective interest rate of <u>5.42</u> % ...		0
b(2) Interest on line 38b from prior year Schedule SB, using prior year's actual return		0
c Total available at beginning of current plan year to add to prefunding balance		11,757
d Portion of (c) to be added to prefunding balance		0
12 Other reductions in balances due to elections or deemed elections	0	0
13 Balance at beginning of current year (line 9 + line 10 + line 11d - line 12)	5	0

Part III Funding Percentages

14 Funding target attainment percentage	14	112.02	%
15 Adjusted funding target attainment percentage	15	106.28	%
16 Prior year's funding percentage for purposes of determining whether carryover/prefunding balances may be used to reduce current year's funding requirement	16	108.69	%
17 If the current value of the assets of the plan is less than 70 percent of the funding target, enter such percentage	17		%

Part IV Contributions and Liquidity Shortfalls**18** Contributions made to the plan for the plan year by employer(s) and employees:

(a) Date (MM-DD-YYYY)	(b) Amount paid by employer(s)	(c) Amount paid by employees	(a) Date (MM-DD-YYYY)	(b) Amount paid by employer(s)	(c) Amount paid by employees
Totals ▶			18(b)	0	18(c) 0

19 Discounted employer contributions -- see instructions for small plan with a valuation date after the beginning of the year:

a Contributions allocated toward unpaid minimum required contributions from prior years	19a	0
b Contributions made to avoid restrictions adjusted to valuation date	19b	0
c Contributions allocated toward minimum required contribution for current year adjusted to valuation date	19c	0

20 Quarterly contributions and liquidity shortfalls:

a Did the plan have a "funding shortfall" for the prior year?	☐ Yes ☒ No	
b If line 20a is "Yes," were required quarterly installments for the current year made in a timely manner?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
c If line 20a is "Yes," see instructions and complete the following table as applicable:		
Liquidity shortfall as of end of quarter of this plan year		
(1) 1st	(2) 2nd	(3) 3rd

Part V Assumptions Used To Determine Funding Target and Target Normal Cost**21** Discount rate:**a** Segment rates:

1st segment: 4.86 %	2nd segment: 5.31 %	3rd segment: 5.67 %	☐ N/A, full yield curve used
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b Applicable month (enter code)**21b**

4

22 Weighted average retirement age**22**

65

23 Mortality table(s) (see instructions)☒ Prescribed - combined☐ Prescribed - separate☐ Substitute**Part VI Miscellaneous items****24** Has a change been made in the non-prescribed actuarial assumptions for the current plan year? If "Yes," see instructions regarding required

attachment

☐ Yes ☒ No**25** Has a method change been made for the current plan year? If "Yes," see instructions regarding required attachment☐ Yes ☒ No**26** Demographic and benefit information**a** Is the plan required to provide a Schedule of Active Participants? If "Yes," see instructions regarding required attachment☒ Yes ☐ No**b** Is the plan required to provide a projection of expected benefit payments? If "Yes," see instructions regarding required attachment☐ Yes ☒ No**27** If the plan is subject to alternative funding rules, enter applicable code and see instructions regarding

attachment

27**Part VII Reconciliation of Unpaid Minimum Required Contributions For Prior Years****28** Unpaid minimum required contributions for all prior years**28**

0

29 Discounted employer contributions allocated toward unpaid minimum required contributions from prior years (line 19a)**29**

0

30 Remaining amount of unpaid minimum required contributions (line 28 minus line 29)**30**

0

Part VIII Minimum Required Contribution For Current Year**31** Target normal cost and excess assets (see instructions):**a** Target normal cost (line 6c)**31a**

45,855

b Excess assets, if applicable, but not greater than line 31a**31b**

45,855

32 Amortization installments:**a** Net shortfall amortization installment

Outstanding Balance

Installment

0

0

b Waiver amortization installment

0

0

33 If a waiver has been approved for this plan year, enter the date of the ruling letter granting the approval (Month _____ Day _____ Year _____) and the waived amount**33****34** Total funding requirement before reflecting carryover/prefunding balances (lines 31a - 31b + 32a + 32b - 33)**34**

0

	Carryover balance	Prefunding Balance	Total balance
35 Balances elected for use to offset funding requirement	0	0	0

36 Additional cash requirement (line 34 minus line 35)**36**

0

37 Contributions allocated toward minimum required contribution for current year adjusted to valuation date (line 19c)**37**

0

38 Present value of excess contributions for current year (see instructions)**a** Total (excess, if any, of line 37 over line 36)**38a**

0

b Portion included in line 38a attributable to use of prefunding and funding standard carryover balances**38b**

0

39 Unpaid minimum required contribution for current year (excess, if any, of line 36 over line 37)**39**

0

40 Unpaid minimum required contributions for all years**40**

0

Part IX Pension Funding Relief Under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (See Instructions)**41** If an election was made to use the extended amortization rule for a plan year beginning on or before December 31, 2021, check the box to indicate the first plan year for which the rule applies.☐ 2019☐ 2020☐ 2021

Schedule SB, line 22 -
Description of Weighted Average Retirement Age

The Merrill Strategy Group Defined Benefit Plan & Trust

83-0449317 / 002

For the plan year 01/01/2025 through 12/31/2025

The age reported is the weighted average of the assumed retirement ages for all active participants as of the valuation date based on their funding target or target normal cost should the funding target of the plan be zero rounded to the nearest whole age. For an active late retiree, the assumed retirement age may be later than the Plan's normal retirement age. Each participant's rate of retirement is assumed to be 100% of his/her assumed retirement age.

Schedule SB, Part V

Summary of Plan Provisions

The Merrill Strategy Group Defined Benefit Plan & Trust

83-0449317 / 002

For the plan year 01/01/2025 through 12/31/2025

<u>Employer:</u>	The Merrill Strategy Group			
	Type of Entity -	S Corporation		
	EIN: 83-0449317	TIN:	Plan #: 002	Plan Type: Defined Benefit
<u>Dates:</u>	Effective - 01/01/2020		Valuation - 12/31/2025	
	Top Heavy Years - 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025			
<u>Eligibility:</u>	All employees excluding non-resident aliens, union, and excluding members of Cls - "ACQUIRED"			
	Minimum age - N/A Months of service - N/A			
	Hours Required for -	Eligibility - 0	Benefit accrual - 1	Vesting - 1000
	Plan Entry - Date on which eligibility satisfied			
<u>Retirement:</u>	Normal -	First of month coincident with or next following attainment of age 65 and completion of the 5th anniversary of the 1st day of the initial plan year of participation		
	Early -	Not provided		
<u>Average Compensation:</u>	Highest 3 consecutive years of participation			
	Top Heavy Minimum Benefit -	Highest 5 consecutive top heavy years of participation		
<u>Plan Benefits:</u>	Retirement -	Frozen benefit formula		
	Accrued Benefit -	Frozen accrued benefit as of 06/30/2024		
		Maximum allowable distribution is lump sum equivalent of normal form not to exceed 415 maximum allowable distribution, which is the lesser amount computed using a) 5.5% interest and the Applicable Mortality Table or b) the greater of plan actuarial equivalence interest and mortality or 417(e) Minimum		
	Early Retirement -	None		
	Death Benefit -	Present Value of Accrued Benefit		
	Disability Benefit -	None		
<u>Top Heavy Minimum:</u>	Frozen Top-Heavy benefit			
<u>IRS Limitations:</u>	415 Limits -	Percent: 100	Dollar: \$275,000	
	Maximum 401(a)(17) compensation - \$350,000			
<u>PBGC:</u>	Plan is covered by Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation			
<u>Normal Form:</u>	Life Annuity			
<u>Optional Forms:</u>	Lump Sum Joint with 50%, 75% or 100% Survivor Benefit			
<u>Vesting Schedule:</u>	100% Vested immediately Service is calculated using all years of service			
<u>Present Value of Accrued Benefit:</u>	Based on the greater of 417(e) or Actuarial Equivalence			

417(e):

Interest Rates -

Fifth Month Prior to Plan Yr Beg		
Segment #	Years	Rate %
Segment 1	0 - 5	4.50
Segment 2	6 - 20	4.96
Segment 3	> 20	5.40

Mortality Table - 25E - 2025 Applicable Mortality Table for 417(e) (unisex)

Schedule SB, Part V

Summary of Plan Provisions

The Merrill Strategy Group Defined Benefit Plan & Trust

83-0449317 / 002

For the plan year 01/01/2025 through 12/31/2025

Actuarial Equivalence:

Pre-Retirement -	Interest -	5%
	Mortality Table -	None
Post-Retirement -	Interest -	5%
	Mortality Table -	G94 - 1994 Group Annuity Reserving Proj 2002, Scale AA (unisex)