

BARINGTON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BARINGTON CAPITAL GROUP RELEASES LETTER SENT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF DARDEN RESTAURANTS, INC.

Letter Summarizes Recommendations Made by Barington to Improve Shareholder Value

NEW YORK, NY, October 17, 2013 – Barington Capital Group, L.P., which represents a group of shareholders that owns over 2% of the outstanding common stock of Darden Restaurants, Inc. (NYSE: DRI), today released a copy of the letter it sent to the Board of Directors of the Company on September 23, 2013. The letter summarizes the recommendations that Barington has presented to the senior management team of Darden to improve the financial and share price performance of the Company. Barington believes that if its suggestions are fully implemented, Darden's common stock would trade between \$69 and \$76 per share.

Barington's recommendations include:

- forming two independently managed restaurant operating companies – one for Darden's mature brands (Olive Garden and Red Lobster) and one for its higher-growth brands (LongHorn Steakhouse, The Capital Grille, Yard House, Bahama Breeze, Seasons 52 and Eddie V's Prime Seafood) – to enable each restaurant operating company to benefit from a greater focus on the unique requirements of its brands;
- exploring all alternatives to monetize the value of the Company's real estate assets, including the creation of a publicly traded real estate investment trust (REIT); and
- reducing operating expenses by bringing Darden's cost structure in line with the Company's better performing peers.

Barington has been discussing these suggestions with members of Darden's senior management team since June 2013 and sent the letter to the Darden Board to share its recommendations with the Company's directors. Barington has elected to make the letter public in response to requests for more details regarding its recommendations.

A copy of the letter can be found at <http://www.barington.com/darden.html>

About Barington Capital Group, L.P.

Barington Capital Group, L.P. is an investment firm that, through its affiliates, manages a value-oriented, activist investment fund that was established by James A. Mitarotonda in January 2000. The Fund invests in undervalued publicly traded companies that Barington believes could appreciate significantly in value as a result of a change in corporate strategy or from various operational, financial or corporate governance improvements. Barington's investment team, senior advisors and industry contacts are seasoned operating specialists, experienced in working with companies to design and implement initiatives to improve their financial and share price performance. Barington is a frequent investor in branded consumer focused companies, with prior investments in companies such as Lone Star Steakhouse, Dillard's, Warnaco, The Jones Group, Pep Boys, Steven Madden and Nautica.

PLEASE SEE <http://www.barington.com/darden.html> FOR IMPORTANT DISCLOSURES CONCERNING THE LETTER.

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