

Raleigh

MEET THE DEALMAKERS

The Next Generation

# Sarah Beth Barnes

Sarah Beth Barnes is a Senior Associate in Kilpatrick's Corporate Mergers & Acquisitions and Securities (MASC) team. Based out of Raleigh, she advises public and private companies on mergers, acquisitions, joint ventures, financing transactions, and other complex commercial transactions. Her clients span a wide range of industries, including life sciences, technology and manufacturing among others. In addition, Sarah Beth has in-depth experience representing companies in the healthcare industry. She guides clients through the complex healthcare regulatory environment and advises on general corporate and governance issues.

Sarah Beth was recognized as one of the "Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch" in 2021 for Mergers and Acquisitions Law and again in 2026 and the four years immediately preceding for Corporate Law and Mergers and Acquisitions Law by *The Best Lawyers in America®*. She was named a "Legal Elite" in 2024 by *Business North Carolina* for Corporate Law. Sarah Beth was recognized as a North Carolina "Rising Star" in 2024 and 2025 for Mergers and Acquisitions by *Super Lawyers*.

**How would you describe your practice?**
I am primarily an M&A attorney. I work with both buy-side and sell-side clients, including both strategic acquirers and financial acquirers such as private equity funds. My practice has a broad range of deal sizes and structures, and I advise clients from quite a variety of industries, so there are always new and interesting issues to deal with.

**What aspects of your work do you enjoy most?**
I enjoy learning about the businesses that are behind the deals. There's so much that goes into some of these companies, whether it is a large Fortune 500 company or a closely held company that's family owned and operated. It's very interesting to learn about how the business was built, how it's grown, how it's operated. It's also crucial to understand the reason for doing the transaction and the client's idea for how the transaction should happen. All these details can help shape what's important in the deal and help us provide the best representation. I always remember that our work goes beyond the law because, at the end of the day, we need to ensure that our client is set up for the future that they have envisioned and if they are the buyer, they are equipped to operate the business post-closing.

I also really enjoy having the opportunity to work with the same people on numerous transactions, which allows us to develop both professional relationships and personal friendships. This makes the job so much easier. M&A is a very fast-paced practice, and it can be stressful when you're up against a closing deadline and you're usually working all hours. It's invaluable to have good relationships with the people you're working with, both at the firm and at the client. To me, these relationships are one of the best parts about this job.

**Did you want to be an M&A attorney when you went to law school?**
I didn't! Mostly because I didn't know much about M&A. I thought I wanted to be a litigator. Luckily, I realized that M&A was a much better fit, and the intervening years have proven me right. I get to forcefully advocate for my clients' business needs and their desired outcome, but I do it in the collaborative process of M&A. At the end of the day, both sides are at the table because they want the deal to get done, and it makes me happy to feel that I'm facilitating an outcome everyone wants.

**What are the advantages of working in Kilpatrick's MASC team?**
First, we have the advantage of being in a very large law firm with all the resources you need to do any transaction. I'm continually impressed and surprised by the expertise that our attorneys have. Whenever something comes up in a transaction, we have an attorney who has the specialized knowledge to resolve it. It's so impressive how these attorneys can immediately give our clients such good advice and help us figure out what we need to do to address the issue so that it doesn't derail the transaction, essentially making it a non-issue.

Yet, at the same time, Kilpatrick doesn't feel like a typical BigLaw firm. The culture and the atmosphere – both at the Raleigh office and in the MASC team – are extremely important. I am surrounded by genuinely nice people. This culture directly contributes to the quality and efficiency of my work because I'm always comfortable picking up the phone and calling any of my colleagues, which translates into a much quicker resolution of whatever issue I'm dealing with for the client.

Another aspect of the culture here is that we are truly a team and we help each other out. For example, many of us – including me – like to travel. With our busy practices and tight deadlines, it would be nearly impossible to take substantial time off for a trip if you couldn't rely on your teammates to cover for you. I think I'm very lucky to be working with a group of people who see helping each other as a key element of the job.

**What makes Raleigh a good place to practice M&A?**
Perhaps I'm partial because I'm originally from North Carolina, and I went to school here, but I think Raleigh is such a dynamic and exciting place. North Carolina in general has exploded in recent years, both in population and in economic development across so many industries, and the growth is not slowing down. The Raleigh area, in particular, has the advantage of being part of the Research Triangle, which is renowned for its innovation in life sciences and technology. Many large companies already have a presence here, and many more are deciding to anchor their East Coast presence in this area, too. Our practice benefits from the high concentration of global companies in Raleigh because we can interact with them face-to-face. And Kilpatrick has a longstanding presence in Raleigh, which makes us one of the go-to firms in the area.

**What advice would you give to law students or junior attorneys who are interested in M&A?**
On the technical side, I think it's important to have a base in business, corporate, and organizational law with a high-level understanding of finance and tax. On the soft-skill side, I think it's critical to have an eagerness to learn and a willingness to operate in a very fast-paced environment where you still have to pay very close attention to details. I frequently tell junior associates that you can't learn the practice of M&A in law school. Law school just doesn't have anything for M&A that is the equivalent of a trial advocacy course. If you take a trial advocacy course, you could go to a court hearing and be OK – it'll be very difficult, but it's still doable. M&A is not like that – you only learn by doing one transaction after another. The more deals you do and the more variety you're exposed to, the better off you'll be.

This is why mentoring plays such a huge role in this practice area – it's just the nature of the work. And this is also why I always advise junior associates to just ask questions. If you've tried to figure it out but you're not sure, then asking the question and making sure we're all on the same page is the best course of action. Especially because the answer is often not intuitive.

**Are you working on any pro bono matters or community projects?**
For the last several years, I've been working on asylum matters, primarily for women fleeing persecution. We represent them in adjustment of status proceeding to become permanent residents. Each project is a long-term commitment, but it's very rewarding to be able to help someone in need. It's also an opportunity to exercise a different set of legal muscles, because this work is very different from M&A.

I'm also very interested in the economic development of the Raleigh region and I've been attending a number of different community events, meeting people with expertise in this field, and learning as much as I can about it. There are several organizations that are making a major impact on the Raleigh region and down the road, I'd like to become more deeply involved in their endeavors and potentially join the board of such an organization.

**To learn more about Sarah Beth and the firm's nationally recognized M&A Team, please visit *ktslaw.com***