

Edwin Aiwazian (SBN 232943)
Arby Aiwazian (SBN 269827)
Joanna Ghosh (SBN 272479)
LAWYERS for JUSTICE, PC
410 West Arden Avenue, Suite 203
Glendale, California 91203
Tel: (818) 265-1020 / Fax: (818) 265-1021

Attorneys for Plaintiff and the Class

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

KRISTY MINOR, individually, and on behalf
of other members of the general public
similarly situated and on behalf of other
aggrieved employees pursuant to the California
Private Attorneys General Act;

Plaintiff,

vs.

HSNI, LLC, and unknown business entity; and
DOES 1 through 100, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.: CIVDS1910946

Honorable David S. Cohn
Department S26

CLASS ACTION

**PLAINTIFF'S NOTICE OF MOTION
AND MOTION FOR FINAL APPROVAL
OF CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT,
ATTORNEYS' FEES AND COSTS, AND
SERVICE PAYMENT; MEMORANDUM
OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES IN
SUPPORT THEREOF**

[Declaration of Class Counsel
(Edwin Aiwazian); Declaration of Class
Representative (Kristy Minor); Declaration
of Settlement Administrator (Lindsay
Kline); and [Proposed] Final Approval
Order and Judgment filed concurrently
herewith]

Date: December 21, 2020
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Department: S26

Complaint Filed: April 10, 2019
FAC Filed: September 9, 2019
SAC Filed: June 23, 2020
Trial Date: None Set

1 **PLEASE TAKE NOTICE** that on December 21, 2020 at 10:00 a.m., in Department S26
2 of the above-entitled Court, located at San Bernardino Justice Center, 247 West Third Street, San
3 Bernardino, California 92415, Plaintiff Kristy Minor (“Plaintiff”) will and hereby does move for
4 an order granting final approval of:

5 1. The Class Action and PAGA Settlement (“Settlement,” “Agreement,” or
6 “Settlement Agreement”) on the grounds that the Settlement is fair, adequate, and reasonable
7 because:

- 8 • A Net Settlement Fund of approximately **\$632,089.66** will be distributed to the Class
9 Members who did not timely and validly opt out of the Settlement (“Settlement Class
10 Member”);
- 11 • **No objections** to the Settlement were submitted to the settlement administrator,
12 Simpluris, Inc. (“Settlement Administrator”);
- 13 • **No requests for exclusion** from the Settlement were submitted to the Settlement
14 Administrator;

15 2. Payment in the amount of **\$366,666.67** to Lawyers *for* Justice, PC (“Class
16 Counsel”), representing one-third (1/3) of the Gross Fund Value, for attorneys’ fees, which is
17 reasonable and justified on a percentage-basis and also based on a lodestar cross-check with a
18 multiplier of 1.37;

19 3. Payment in the amount of **\$27,803.81** to Class Counsel for reimbursement of
20 litigation costs and expenses;

21 4. Payment in the amount of **\$7,300.00** to the Settlement Administrator, Simpluris,
22 Inc. (“Simpluris”), for Settlement Administration Costs;

23 5. Payment in the amount of **\$10,000.00** to Plaintiff Kristy Minor, as a Service
24 Payment, for her time and effort in representing the Class; and

25 6. Allocation of the penalties under the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004,
26 California Labor Code section 2698, *et seq.*, in the amount of **\$20,000.00**, of which seventy-five
27 percent (75%), or \$15,000.00, will be paid to the California Labor and Workforce Development
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Agency and twenty-five percent (25%), or \$5,000.00, will be part of the Net Settlement Fund for distribution to the Settlement Class Members.

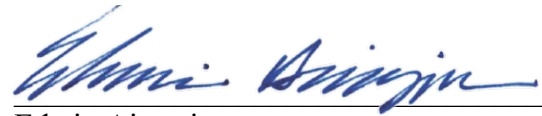
This Motion is made pursuant to Rule 3.769 and Rule 3.1113(e) of the California Rules of Court, which require approval by the Court of a class action settlement and permit the Court to extend the page limit for memoranda.

This motion is based upon the following Memorandum of Points and Authorities; the Declaration of Class Counsel (Edwin Aiwanian), Class Representative (Kristy Minor), and Settlement Administrator (Lindsay Kline of Simpluris) in support thereof; the pleadings and other records on file with the Court in this matter; and such evidence and oral argument as may be presented at the hearing on this Motion.

Dated: November 25, 2020

LAWYERS for JUSTICE, PC

By:



Edwin Aiwanian

Attorneys for Plaintiff and the Class

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MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES

I. SUMMARY OF MOTION

Plaintiff Kristy Minor (“Plaintiff”) seeks final approval of: (1) the Gross Fund Value of \$1,100,000.00; (2) attorneys’ fees in the amount of \$366,666.67, which is one-third (1/3) of the Gross Fund Value, and reimbursement of litigation costs and expenses in the amount of \$27,803.81 (together, “Attorneys’ Fees and Costs”) to Lawyers for Justice, PC (“Class Counsel”); (3) Settlement Administration Costs in the amount of \$7,300.00 to Simpluris, Inc. (“Simpluris” or “Settlement Administrator”); (4) Service Payment in the amount of \$10,000.00 to Plaintiff Kristy Minor; and (5) allocation of \$20,000.00 for penalties under the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, California Labor Code § 2698, *et seq.* (“PAGA Payment”).

Plaintiff seeks relief on behalf of the following Class:

All current and former non-exempt individuals employed by Defendant within the State of California at any time during the period from April 10, 2015 through April 10, 2020 (“Class” or “Class Members”).¹

This matter involved ongoing investigations, formal and informal discovery, review and analysis of a large volume of documents and data prior to and during mediation conducted by David A. Rotman, Esq., and extensive settlement negotiations. This matter has required 416.90 hours of attorney time by Class Counsel. As will be demonstrated herein, the request for attorneys’ fees, which represents one-third (1/3) of the Gross Fund Value, is fully supported by the use of the percentage-fee method. Courts have historically awarded fees of up to fifty percent (50%) of the recovery. The requested attorneys’ fees are also supported under the lodestar cross-check method.²

Plaintiff moves for final approval of the Service Payment in the amount of \$10,000.00, to compensate Plaintiff for the time and effort that she expended spearheading this lawsuit on behalf of the Class. Plaintiff also moves for final approval of the payment to the Settlement Administrator in the amount of \$7,300.00 for Settlement Administration Costs. Plaintiff also moves for final approval of the allocation of \$20,000.00 for the PAGA Payment, of which \$15,000.00 will be paid to the California Labor Workforce and Development Agency (“LWDA”) for its portion of the

¹ Class Action and PAGA Settlement (“Settlement Agreement”), § I.2. “Class Period” is defined as the period of time from April 10, 2015 through April 10, 2020. *See id.*, § I.4.

² Applying a modest multiplier of 1.37, the total enhanced lodestar fees are \$371,249.45, and Class Counsel seeks an attorneys’ fees award of \$366,666.67 (equal to 1/3 of the Gross Fund Value).

PAGA Payment (“LWDA Payment”), and \$5,000.00 will be part of the Net Settlement Fund that will be distributed to Class Members who did not timely and validly opt out of the Settlement (“Settlement Class Members”).

The requests for Attorneys’ Fees and Costs, Service Payment, Settlement Administration Costs, and PAGA Payment were fully disclosed in the Notice of Class Action Settlement (“Class Notice”) that was mailed to the Class Members. Most importantly, as of the date of this Motion, *not a single Class Member has objected to any aspect of the Settlement, including the requested Attorneys’ Fees and Costs, Service Payment, Settlement Administration Costs, or PAGA Payment.*

The Settlement is fair, adequate, and reasonable, and is the product of arm’s-length, good-faith negotiations by experienced counsel presided over by a highly-regarded mediator who is experienced in mediating wage-and-hour class action lawsuits. Accordingly, the Court should grant final approval of the Settlement, and award Attorneys’ Fees and Costs, Service Payment, Settlement Administration Costs, and PAGA Payment in the amounts as fully disclosed to the Class and as requested herein.

In order to efficiently present the Court with adequate information to determine whether to grant final approval of the Settlement and award Attorneys’ Fees and Costs, Service Payment, Settlement Administration Costs, and PAGA Payment, Plaintiff also moves for an order permitting the filing of this single consolidated memorandum, although it exceeds the page limit established by California Rules of Court, Rule 3.1113(d), instead of filing several separate motions.

II. PROCEDURAL HISTORY AND FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Defendant HSNI, LLC (“Defendant”), better known as the Home Shopping Network, specializes in providing multichannel retailing services on television, online, mobile, catalogs, and physical brick and mortar stores. Plaintiff Kristy Minor is a former employee of Defendant.

On April 10, 2019, Plaintiff filed a Class Action Complaint for Damages in the San Bernardino County Superior Court (“Court”), thereby commencing the above-captioned lawsuit (“Action”).

On September 9, 2019, Plaintiff filed a First Amended Class Action Complaint for Damages (“First Amended Complaint”).

1 On October 4, 2019, Defendant filed its Answer to Plaintiff's First Amended Complaint.

2 On June 23, 2020, pursuant to stipulation by the Parties and the Court's order granting
3 leave thereon, Plaintiff filed a Second Amended Class Action Complaint for Damages and
4 Enforcement Under the Private Attorneys General Act, Cal. Labor Code § 2698, Et Seq.
5 ("Operative Complaint").

6 Plaintiff's core allegation is that Defendant has violated the California Labor Code by
7 engaging in a uniform practice and procedure, with respect to Plaintiff and the Class Members, of,
8 *inter alia*, failing to pay all overtime and minimum wages, failing to provide compliant meal and
9 rest periods and associated premium pay, failing to timely pay wages during employment and upon
10 termination of employment, failing to provide compliant wage statements, failing to maintain
11 requisite payroll records, and failing to reimburse necessary business expenses, and thereby
12 engaged in unfair business practices in violation of California Business and Professions Code
13 section 17200, *et seq.* and conduct giving rise to penalties recoverable under the Private Attorneys
14 General Act, California Labor Code section 2698 *et seq.* ("PAGA"). Plaintiff contends that she,
15 and the Class Members, are entitled to, *inter alia*, unpaid wages, penalties (including and not
16 limited to, penalties pursuant to PAGA), and attorneys' fees.

17 Defendant has denied, and continues to deny, any liability and wrongdoing of any kind
18 associated with any of the allegations in the Action, and further denies that the Action is
19 appropriate for class treatment or representative adjudication for any purpose other than for
20 settlement purposes only.

21 The Parties have actively litigated the Action since it was commenced on April 10, 2019.
22 Plaintiff propounded multiple sets of discovery, including Requests for Production of Documents
23 (Set One), Special Interrogatories (Sets One and Two), and Form Interrogatories – General (Set
24 One), on Defendant, noticed the depositions of Defendant's Person Most Knowledgeable
25 designees regarding job duties and organizational structure of Defendant, and prepared and
26 appeared for deposition on September 27, 2019.

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On December 19, 2019, the Parties participated in a formal, full-day mediation conducted by David A. Rotman, Esq., a well-regarded mediator experienced in mediating complex labor and employment matters. With the aid of the mediator, the Parties ultimately reached the Settlement described herein to resolve the Action in its entirety.

On August 13, 2020, Plaintiff filed a Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Action Settlement and supporting documents. On September 11, 2020, the Court entered an Order Granting Plaintiff's Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Action Settlement ("Preliminary Approval Order"), thereby preliminarily approving the terms of the Settlement, the Class Notice, and the proposed administration procedures and associated deadlines.

Plaintiff now moves for final approval of the Settlement, Attorneys' Fees and Costs, Service Payment, Settlement Administration Costs, and PAGA Payment.

III. SUMMARY OF THE SETTLEMENT TERMS AND PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

Under the terms of the Settlement Agreement, Defendant has agreed to pay a Gross Fund Value of \$1,100,000.00.³ Subject to approval by the Court, the Net Settlement Fund will be calculated by deducting the following amounts from the Gross Fund Value: (1) Attorneys' Fees and Costs, consisting of attorneys' fees in the amount of \$366,666.67 and reimbursement of litigation costs and expenses in the amount of \$27,803.81, to Class Counsel; (2) Service Payment in the amount of \$10,000.00 to Plaintiff; (3) Settlement Administration Costs in the amount of \$7,300.00 to Simpluris; (4) LWDA Payment in the amount of \$15,000.00; and (5) the employer's portion of payroll taxes on the wage portion of Individual Settlement Payments ("Employer Taxes"), currently estimated to be \$41,139.86.⁴ The Net Settlement Fund, which is estimated to be \$632,089.66, will be distributed in accordance with the Settlement Agreement.⁵

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³ Settlement Agreement; § VI.A.1.

⁴ *Id.*, §§ VI.B.2, VI.C.1, VI.D.1, VI.E.1, VI.F & VI.G.

⁵ This amount is higher than the amount stated in Paragraph 17 of the accompanying Declaration of Lindsay Kline Regarding Notice and Settlement Administration ("Simpluris Declaration" or "Simpluris Decl.") because the Settlement Administrator's calculation assumes that Class Counsel will obtain litigation costs and expenses in the maximum amount of \$30,000.00, which is allocated under the Settlement. However, Class Counsel seeks the amount of only \$27,803.81 for reimbursement of litigation costs and expenses, and the difference of \$2,196.19 will remain part of the Net Settlement Fund.

1 The Settlement Administrator will calculate each Settlement Class Member's share of the
2 Net Settlement Fund ("Individual Settlement Payment"), by dividing the Net Settlement Fund by
3 the total number of workweeks during the period from April 10, 2015 through April 10, 2020 in
4 which each Class Member worked at least one (1) day ("Workweeks") for all Settlement Class
5 Members to arrive at a value per Workweek, and then multiplying the number of Workweeks
6 credited to each Settlement Class Member by the value per Workweek.⁶

7 Class Members had forty-five (45) calendar days after the initial mailing of the Class
8 Notice to Class Members to dispute the number of Workweeks credited to each of them, opt out
9 of the Settlement, and/or object to the Settlement ("Response Deadline").⁷ The Response Deadline
10 was December 7, 2020.⁸ The Settlement Administrator has not received any written requests for
11 exclusion from the Settlement or objections to the Settlement from Class Members.⁹

12 Individual Settlement Payments will be allocated as one-third (1/3) wages, to be reported
13 on IRS Form W-2; two-thirds (2/3) as penalties (37.5% of the two-thirds portion), interest (37.5%
14 of the two-thirds portion), and other non-wage restitution (25% of the two-thirds portion) to be
15 reported on IRS Form 1099 (if applicable).¹⁰ Settlement Class Members will be issued payment
16 of their Individual Settlement Payment subject to reduction for the employee's share of taxes and
17 withholdings with respect to the wages portion of each Individual Settlement Payment.¹¹

18 Individual Settlement Payment checks issued to Settlement Class Members will expire
19 after one hundred eighty (180) calendar days of issuance.¹² The funds associated with uncashed
20 or undeliverable payments will be transmitted by the Settlement Administrator within (10)
21 calendar days after the expiration of the 180-day period, and sent to the State Controller's Office,
22 Unclaimed Property Division, in the names of the Settlement Class Members.¹³

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25 ⁶ Settlement Agreement, §§ I.8, I.12, & IX.B.1.

26 ⁷ *Id.*, §§ X.A.1, X.B.1, & X.D.

27 ⁸ Simpluris Decl., ¶ 11, Exh. A.

28 ⁹ *Id.*, ¶¶ 12 & 13.

¹⁰ Settlement Agreement, § IX.C.4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Id.*, § IX.C.2.

¹³ *Ibid.*

1 **IV. THE SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION PROCESS**

2 The Court-appointed Settlement Administrator, Simpluris, has taken all necessary steps to
3 effectuate the notice and settlement administration process, as set forth in the Court's September
4 11, 2020 Preliminary Approval Order.

5 On September 18, 2020, Simpluris received the Court-approved text for the Class Notice.¹⁴

6 On October 2, 2020, Simpluris received a mailing list from Defendant's counsel that
7 contained the names, employee identification numbers, last known addresses, dates of active
8 employment during the Class Period, and Social Security numbers of all Class Members ("Class
9 Data").¹⁵ The Class Data contained information for 219 individuals identified as Class Members.¹⁶
10 Simpluris processed the names and addresses through the National Change of Address Database
11 ("NCOA") and updated the Class Data with any updated addresses located.¹⁷

12 On October 23, 2020, Simpluris mailed the Class Notice via First Class U.S. Mail to 219
13 individuals identified as Class Members in the Class Data.¹⁸

14 As of the date of this Motion, no Class Notices were returned as undeliverable with
15 forwarding addresses, and sixteen (16) Class Notices were returned as undeliverable without
16 forwarding addresses.¹⁹ Simpluris performed a skip-trace search on the sixteen (16) Class Notices
17 that were returned to Simpluris without forwarding addresses, located an updated address for
18 fourteen (14) Class Members, and promptly re-mailed the Class Notice to the updated addresses.²⁰
19 Two (2) Class Notices were returned to Simpluris as undeliverable a second time.²¹ Ultimately,
20 eleven (11) Class Notices remain undeliverable because an updated address was not located
21 through skip-tracing or the Class Notice was returned as undeliverable a second time.²²

22 One Class Member submitted a dispute regarding Workweeks, and it was determined the
23 dispute would be accepted in favor of the Class Member.²³

24 ¹⁴ Simpluris Decl., ¶ 5.

25 ¹⁵ *Id.*, ¶ 6.

26 ¹⁶ *Ibid.*

27 ¹⁷ *Id.*, ¶ 7.

28 ¹⁸ *Id.*, ¶ 8.

¹⁹ *Id.*, ¶ 9

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Id.*, ¶ 14.

One individual who was not included in the Class Data contacted Simpluris to request inclusion in the Settlement.²⁴ It was determined that this individual is a Class Member and should be included in the Settlement.²⁵ On November 19, 2020, Simpluris mailed a Class Notice to this individual.²⁶

As of the date of this Motion, the Settlement Administrator has not received any objections to or requests for exclusion from the Settlement from Class Members.²⁷

To date, there are 220 Class Members who did not submit a timely and valid request for exclusion from the Settlement, and are therefore, deemed to be Settlement Class Members.²⁸ Pursuant to the terms of the Settlement, the Net Settlement Fund of approximately \$632,089.66 will be distributed to Settlement Class Members in accordance with the terms of the Settlement.²⁹ The highest Individual Settlement Payment is currently estimated to be at least \$8,449.70 and the average Individual Settlement Payment is currently estimated to be at least \$2,864.89.³⁰

V. THE COURT SHOULD GRANT FINAL APPROVAL OF THE CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT

The trial court has broad discretion to determine whether a class action settlement is fair and reasonable. *Chavez v. Netflix, Inc.* (2008) 162 Cal.App.4th 43, 52. To determine whether the settlement is fair and reasonable, courts consider relevant factors such as:

the strength of plaintiffs' case, the risk, expense, complexity and likely duration of further litigation, the risk of maintaining class action status through trial, the amount offered in settlement, the extent of discovery completed and the stage of the proceedings, the experience and views of counsel, the presence of a governmental participant, and the reaction of the class members to the proposed settlement.

Dunk v. Ford Motor Co. (1996) 48 Cal.App.4th 1794, 1801. "The list of factors is not exclusive and the court is free to engage in a balancing and weighing of the factors depending on the

²⁴ Simpluris Decl., ¶ 10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Id.*, ¶¶ 12 & 13.

²⁸ *Id.*, ¶ 15.

²⁹ *Id.*, ¶ 16; see also, n.5, *supra*.

³⁰ *Id.*, ¶ 17. The actual average and highest Individual Settlement Payments will be larger than the amounts stated in the Simpluris Declaration because the Net Settlement Fund is larger due to Class Counsel's request for reimbursement of litigation costs and expenses in an amount that is less than \$30,000.00 (the difference between the amount sought and the amount authorized under the Settlement, i.e., \$2,196.19, will be part of the Net Settlement Fund). See n.5, *supra*.

1 circumstances of each case.” *Wershba v. Apple Computer, Inc.* (2001) 91 Cal.App.4th 224, 245.
2 “Due regard should be given to what is otherwise a private consensual agreement between the
3 parties.” *Dunk, supra*, 48 Cal.App.4th at 1801.

4 The proponent of the settlement has the burden to show that it is fair and reasonable.
5 *Wershba, supra*, 91 Cal.App.4th at 245. At the final approval stage, a presumption of fairness
6 exists where, as here: “(1) the settlement is reached through arm’s-length bargaining; (2)
7 investigation and discovery are sufficient to allow counsel and the court to act intelligently; (3)
8 counsel is experienced in similar litigation; and (4) the percentage of objectors is small.” *Dunk,*
9 *supra*, 48 Cal.App.4th at 1802. In reviewing a class settlement, the court need not reach any
10 ultimate conclusions on the issues of fact and law that underlie the merits of the dispute.
11 *7-Eleven Owners for Fair Franchising v. Southland Corp.* (2000) 85 Cal.App.4th 1135, 1146. The
12 inquiry is not whether the settlement agreement is the best one that class members could have
13 possibly obtained, but whether the settlement, taken as a whole, is “fair, adequate, and reasonable.”
14 *Chavez v. Netflix, Inc.* (2008) 162 Cal.App.4th 43, 55. A settlement need not obtain 100 percent
15 of the damages sought in order to be fair, reasonable, and ultimately, meaningful. *Wershba, supra*,
16 91 Cal.App.4th at 251. Even if the proposed settlement affords relief that is substantially narrower
17 than it would be if the case were to be successfully litigated, that is no bar to a class settlement
18 because the public interest may indeed be served by a voluntary settlement in which each side
19 gives ground in the interest of avoiding prolonged litigation. *Id.*

20 A. **The Settlement Resulted from Arm’s-Length Negotiations Based Upon**
21 **Extensive Investigation and Discovery.**

22 The parties actively litigated the case since it was commenced on April 10, 2019. Counsel
23 for the parties used the pre-mediation time period to investigate the veracity, strength, and scope
24 of the claims, and also to prepare the matter for class certification, representative adjudication, and
25 trial.³¹ The parties conducted extensive formal and informal discovery and investigation into the
26 facts of the case, and also informally exchanged information and data in preparation for
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³¹ Declaration of Edwin Aiwazian (“Aiwazian Decl.”), ¶ 6.

mediation.³² Class Counsel propounded multiple sets of formal written discovery requests in various forms; noticed the depositions of Defendant's Person Most Knowledgeable designees regarding organizational structure and job duties, and prepared for and defended the deposition of Plaintiff.³³ Class Counsel also interviewed and obtained information from Plaintiff and Class Members, including and not limited to the names of potential witnesses, and reviewed and analyzed a large volume of documents and data produced by Defendant and obtained through other sources.³⁴ The documents and data reviewed and analyzed by Class Counsel included, and were not limited to: Plaintiff's employment records, a detailed sampling of Class Members' time and pay data, agreements, acknowledgments (including, but not limited to, Timekeeping Policy Review and Acknowledgment), and Defendant's operations and employment practices, policies (including, but not limited to, HSN Policies Regarding Meal and Rest Periods, Overtime, Timekeeping, and California Labor Laws, and Fontana Fulfillment Center Personal Electronic Device Policy), and procedures, among other documents and data.³⁵ Class Counsel researched applicable law, developed damages/valuation models in preparation for mediation, and met and conferred with Defendant's counsel on numerous occasions, e.g., to discuss issues relating to the pleadings, discovery, and production of documents and data prior to mediation.³⁶

After conducting significant formal and informal discovery and investigation into the facts of the case, the parties participated in a formal, full-day mediation conducted by David A. Rotman, Esq., a well-regarded mediator experienced in mediating complex labor and employment matters.³⁷ Prior to and during mediation and settlement discussions, the parties exchanged information and data, and discussed various aspects of the case, including and not limited to, the risks and delays of further litigation, the risks and expenses to the parties of proceeding with class certification, representative adjudication, and trial, the law relating to off-the-clock theory, meal and rest periods, representative PAGA claims, and wage-and-hour enforcement, the evidence

³² Aiwazian Decl., ¶ 6.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Id.*, ¶ 8.

1 produced and analyzed, and the possibility of appeals, among other things.³⁸ During all settlement
2 discussions, the parties conducted their negotiations at arm's length in an adversarial position.³⁹
3 Arriving at a settlement that was acceptable to the parties was not easy.⁴⁰ Defendant and its counsel
4 felt very strongly about Defendant's ability to prevail on the merits and to obtain a denial of class
5 certification, while Plaintiff and Class Counsel believed that class certification would be obtained
6 and Plaintiff would prevail at trial.⁴¹ After conducting significant formal and informal discovery
7 and investigations, extensive settlement negotiations, and with the aid of the mediator's evaluation,
8 the parties agreed that the matter was well-suited for settlement given the legal issues relating to
9 Plaintiff's principal claims, as well as the costs and risks to the parties that would attend further
10 litigation.⁴²

11 The Settlement takes into account the strengths and weaknesses of each side's position and
12 the uncertainty of how the case might have concluded at certification, trial, and/or appeals. Class
13 Counsel interviewed, and obtained information from Plaintiff and other Class Members.⁴³ Class
14 Counsel also reviewed and analyzed a large volume of documents produced by Defendant and
15 obtained through other sources, and performed significant research into the law concerning
16 certification, off-the-clock theory, meal and rest periods, representative PAGA claims, wage-and-
17 hour enforcement, Plaintiff's claims, and Defendant's defenses, as well as facts discovered.⁴⁴ The
18 Settlement was based on this large volume of facts, evidence, and investigation.⁴⁵ Additionally,
19 Class Counsel has extensive experience in handling complex wage-and-hour matters, including
20 significant experience in employment class action litigation.⁴⁶

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25 ³⁸ Aiwazian Decl., ¶ 8.

26 ³⁹ *Ibid.*

27 ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

28 ⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Id.*, ¶ 6.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Id.*, ¶¶ 6 & 8.

⁴⁶ *Id.*, ¶¶ 15-18.

1 **B. The Risks Inherent in Continued Litigation Favor Final Approval of the**
2 **Settlement.**

3 The Settlement, which provides for a Gross Fund Value of \$1,100,000.00, represents a fair,
4 adequate, and reasonable resolution of the case, given the risks inherent in litigating class and
5 representative claims through certification proceedings, trial, and/or appeals.⁴⁷ The Settlement
6 was calculated using information and data uncovered through extensive case investigation, formal
7 and informal discovery, and the exchange of information in the context of mediation.⁴⁸ Had the
8 action not settled, Defendant would have vigorously challenged class certification, manageability
9 of representative adjudication, and liability. Defendant contended that individualized questions of
10 fact predominate over any common issues, and these issues would pose challenges to certification
11 and representative adjudication. Defendant would have likely argued again at trial, if any, that
12 Plaintiff's claims were not appropriate for class-wide and/or representative adjudication. On the
13 other hand, Defendant also faced the risk of the Court certifying a class and allowing a jury to
14 decide Plaintiff's claims on a class-wide or representative basis. Additionally, preparation for trial
15 would have been expensive for all parties.

16 It is preferable to reach an early resolution of a dispute because such resolutions save time
17 and money that would otherwise go to litigation. If this matter had settled after further litigation,
18 the settlement amount would have taken into account the additional costs incurred, and there might
19 have been less money available for Class Members after all was said and done. This is not just an
20 abstract contention. The risks and expenses of further litigation outweighed any benefit that might
21 have been gained otherwise. These risks of further litigation include a determination that the
22 claims were unsuitable for class treatment and/or representative adjudication, failure to obtain
23 certification, class de-certification after certification of a class, allowing a jury to decide the claims
24 asserted in the case, and the real possibility of no recovery after years of litigation. Additionally,
25 the parties were moving into the phase of the litigation where they would have to conduct a
26 significant amount of additional discovery, including and not limited to, depositions of
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28 ⁴⁷ Aiwazian Decl., ¶¶ 8 & 21.

⁴⁸ *Id.*, ¶¶ 5-8.

Defendant's Person Most Knowledgeable designees, expert witnesses, and percipient witnesses, such as managers, supervisors, and other current and former employees throughout the State of California. Discovery would have certainly arisen, which would have cost the parties additional time and money. In contrast, the Settlement provides real and significant benefits for the Class here and now, while avoiding the further expenses, risks, and delay of prolonged litigation with only the possibility of recovery.

It would be grossly inefficient for such a large class of current and former employees to bring individual actions to recover from Defendant for the alleged violations of wage-and-hour laws. Moreover, the potential individual recovery that could be obtained by a Class Member would not be significant enough to provide him or her with the incentive to sue. By granting final approval of the Settlement, the Court can approve a resolution that provides a certain and substantial recovery for Class Members.

C. The Settlement Is Fair, Reasonable, and Adequate.

The Settlement, which provides for a Gross Fund Value of \$1,100,000.00, represents a fair, reasonable, and adequate resolution of the case. The Settlement was calculated using information and data uncovered through extensive case investigation, formal and informal discovery, and the exchange of information in the context of mediation. The Settlement takes into account the potential risks and rewards inherent in any case and, in particular, in this matter. Moreover, considering all of the facts in the case, the Gross Fund Value represents a considerable recovery.

Even after deducting attorneys' fees in the amount of \$366,666.67, litigation costs and expenses in the amount of \$27,803.81, Service Payment in the amount of \$10,000.00, Settlement Administration Costs in the amount of \$7,300.00, LWDA Payment in the amount of \$15,000.00, and the Employer Taxes currently estimated to be \$41,139.86 from the Gross Fund Value of \$1,100,000.00, the Net Settlement Fund is currently estimated to be \$632,089.66.⁴⁹ Under the Settlement Agreement, the Gross Fund Value will be paid out, in accordance with the terms of the Settlement. As discussed in Section III, *supra*, each Settlement Class Member will be paid a *pro rata* share of the Net Settlement Fund, based on the number of Workweeks credited to him or her.

⁴⁹ Simpluris Decl., ¶ 16; see n.5, *supra*.

To date, there are 220 Settlement Class Members.⁵⁰ The highest Individual Settlement Payment to a Settlement Class Member is currently estimated to be at least \$8,449.70 and the average Individual Settlement Payment is currently estimated to be at least \$2,864.89.⁵¹ These are significant individual recoveries, particularly in light of the risks of litigation.

At the final approval stage, “[a]n allocation formula need only have a reasonable, rational basis [to warrant approval], particularly if recommended by experienced and competent class counsel.” *In re American Bank Note Holographics, Inc., Securities Litigation* (S.D.N.Y. 2001) 127 F.Supp.2d 418, 429-30. The *pro rata* allocation here is a fair and reasonable way to distribute the Net Settlement Fund. In light of the above considerations, Class Counsel believes that the Settlement as a whole is fair, reasonable, and adequate, and in the best interest of the Class Members.⁵² Although the recommendations of Class Counsel are not conclusive, the Court can properly take the recommendations into account, particularly if Class Counsel appears to be competent, has experience with this type of litigation, and significant discovery and investigation have been completed, as is the case here. Conte & Newberg, *Newberg on Class Actions* (4th Ed., 2002) § 11.47. Accordingly, the Court should grant final approval of the Settlement.

D. The Class Was Represented by Competent Counsel.

Class Counsel has extensive experience in employment class action law and complex wage-and-hour litigation.⁵³ Lawyers for Justice, PC has been appointed class counsel in numerous complex wage-and-hour cases, and has recovered millions of dollars for individuals in California.⁵⁴ Both parties’ counsel were capable of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the Class Members’ claims against Defendant and the benefits of the Settlement under the circumstances of the case and in the context of a private, consensual settlement agreement.

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⁵⁰ Simpluris Decl., ¶ 15.

⁵¹ *Id.*, ¶ 17; see n.30, *supra*.

⁵² Aiwazian Decl., ¶ 21.

⁵³ *Id.*, ¶¶ 15-18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

1 **E. There Are No Objections to the Settlement.**

2 The Settlement has been well received by the Class – *not a single Class Member objected*
3 *to or opted out of the Settlement.*⁵⁵ Specifically, no objections have been made as to the Gross
4 Fund Value or requested Attorneys’ Fees and Costs, Service Payment, Settlement Administration
5 Costs, or PAGA Payment. California courts have consistently found that a small number of
6 objectors indicates the class’ support for a settlement and strongly favors final approval. *Wershba,*
7 *supra*, 91 Cal.App.4th at 250-51 (final approval granted despite 20 objectors); *7-Eleven Owners,*
8 *supra*, 85 Cal.App.4th at 1152-53 (final approval granted despite 9 objectors).

9 Here, the lack of any objections speaks volumes about the fairness, reasonableness, and
10 adequacy of this Settlement. Accordingly, the Settlement as a whole is presumed to be fair,
11 reasonable, and adequate, and the Court should grant final approval of the Settlement in its entirety.
12 *Dunk, supra*, 48 Cal.App.4th at 1802.

13 **VI. THE ATTORNEYS’ FEES AWARD REQUESTED BY CLASS COUNSEL IS FAIR**
14 **AND REASONABLE AND SHOULD BE APPROVED**

15 **A. Legal Standard for Attorneys’ Fees in a Class Action Settlement.**

16 Trial courts have “wide latitude” in assessing the value of attorneys’ fees and their
17 decisions will “not be disturbed on appeal absent a manifest abuse of discretion.” *Lealao v.*
18 *Beneficial Cal., Inc.* (2000) 82 Cal.App.4th 19, 41; *Ketchum v. Moses* (2001) 24 Cal.4th 1122,
19 1132 (The “experienced trial judge is the best judge of the value of professional services rendered
20 in his court[.]”); *Cellphone Termination Fee Cases* (2009) 180 Cal.App.4th 1110, 1118. Where
21 the amount of a settlement is a “certain easily calculable sum of money,” California courts may
22 calculate attorneys’ fees as a reasonable percentage of the settlement. Weil and Brown, *California*
23 *Practice Guide, Civil Procedure Before Trial*, Chapter 14, § 14:145; *see also Laffitte v. Robert*
24 *Half Int’l Inc.* (2016) 1 Cal.5th 480, 503; *Dunk, supra*, 48 Cal.App.4th at 1808. The percentage-
25 of-the-benefit approach is preferred in class and representative actions because “it better
26 approximates the workings of the marketplace than the lodestar approach.” *Lealao, supra*, 82
27 Cal.App.4th at 49.

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⁵⁵ Simpluris Decl., ¶¶ 12 & 13.

California law provides that an attorneys' fees award should be equivalent to fees paid in the legal marketplace for the result achieved and risk incurred. *Id.* at 47-50; *Laffitte v. Robert Half Int'l, Inc.* (2016) 1 Cal.5th 480, 503. In *Lealao*, the court held that when an action leads to a recovery that can be "monetized" with a reasonable degree of certainty, the trial court should "ensure that the fee awarded is within the range of fees freely negotiated in the legal marketplace in comparable litigation." *Lealao, supra*, 82 Cal.App.4th at 50. Fee awards that are too small will "chill the private enforcement essential to the vindication of many legal rights and obstruct the representative actions that often relieve the courts of the need to separately adjudicate numerous claims." *Lealao, supra*, 82 Cal.App.4th at 53.

"The ultimate goal . . . is the award of a 'reasonable' fee to compensate counsel for their efforts, irrespective of the method of calculation." *Consumer Privacy Cases* (2009) 175 Cal.App.4th 545, 557-58 (quoting *Apple Computer, Inc. v. Superior Court, supra*, 126 Cal.App.4th at 1270). It is not an abuse of discretion to choose one method over another as long as the method chosen is applied consistently using percentage figures and/or rates that accurately reflect the marketplace. In cases where class members present claims against a settlement amount and the settlement agreement provides that the defendant agrees to paying the attorneys a percentage of the same, use of that percentage method is appropriate. *Lealao, supra*, 82 Cal.App.4th at 32.

Historically, courts have awarded fees as high as fifty percent (50%) of the settlement, depending on the circumstances of the case. Conte & Newberg, *Newberg on Class Actions* (4th Ed., 2002) § 14.03; see also *In re Ampicillin Antitrust Litig.* (D.D.C. 1981) 526 F.Supp. 494 (awarding attorneys' fees in the amount of 45% of the settlement amount of \$7.3 million); *Beech Cinema, Inc. v. Twentieth-Century Fox Film Corp.* (S.D.N.Y. 1979) 480 F.Supp. 1195 (awarding approximately 53% of the settlement amount as attorneys' fees). California courts routinely approve class action attorneys' fees awards "averag[ing] around one-third of the recovery." *Chavez v. Netflix, Inc.* (2008) 162 Cal.App.4th 43, 66 n.11 (lower court found 20 to 40 percent range of contingency fee in marketplace was appropriate in class actions); see also *Laffitte*, 1 Cal.5th at 488 & 506 (approving fee award of 1/3 of common fund of \$19 million).

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1 **B. A Fee Award of a Percentage of the Entire Fund Is Appropriate.**

2 California and federal courts have long recognized that an appropriate method for
3 determining the award of attorneys' fees is based on a percentage of the total value of benefits
4 made available to class members by the settlement. *Laffitte*, 1 Cal.5th at 503; *Boeing Co. v. Van*
5 *Gemert* (1980) 444 U.S. 472, 478; *Paul, Johnson, Alston & Hunt v. Gaulty* (9th Cir. 1989) 886
6 F.2d 268, 272; *Vincent v. Hughes Air West, Inc.* (9th Cir. 1977) 557 F.2d 759, 769; *Serrano v.*
7 *Priest* (1977) 20 Cal.3d 25, 34.⁵⁶ The purpose of this equitable doctrine is to spread litigation costs
8 proportionally among all the beneficiaries so that the active beneficiary does not bear the entire
9 burden alone. See *Vincent, supra*, 557 F.2d at 769.

10 When a litigant's efforts result in a settlement from which others may derive benefits, the
11 litigant may require the passive beneficiaries to compensate those whose efforts brought about the
12 settlement. See, R. Pearle, *California Attorney Fee Awards* (CEB, 1993) § 7A, p. 5-7 (permitting
13 attorneys' fees and costs to be paid out of the settlement or directly on behalf of the other parties
14 enjoying the benefit of the settlement). Both state and federal courts have embraced this doctrine.
15 See *Serrano, supra*, 20 Cal.3d at 35; *Crampton v. Takegoshi* (1993) 17 Cal.App.4th 308, 317;
16 *Vincent, supra*, 557 F.2d at 769.

17 The propriety of calculating and awarding attorneys' fees as a percentage of a monetary
18 settlement that has, by litigation, been preserved or recovered for the benefit of others, has been
19 confirmed by the California Supreme Court. *Laffitte, supra*, 1 Cal.5th 480 at 486 & 506. The
20 California Supreme Court has taken the position that "[t]rial courts have discretion to conduct a
21 lodestar cross-check on a percentage fee," "they also retain the discretion to forgo a lodestar cross-
22 check and use other means to evaluate the reasonableness of a requested percentage fee[.]" and
23 "[t]he percentage [...] method survives in California." *Id.* (internal quotes omitted).

24 Courts have consistently recognized that class and representative action litigation is
25 increasingly necessary to protect the rights of individuals whose injuries and/or damages are too
26 small to economically justify legal action on an individual basis. Accordingly, in determining a
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28 ⁵⁶ The California Supreme Court has urged trial courts to consider class action federal authority. *Green v. Obledo*
(1981) 29 Cal.3d 126, 146; *Vasquez v. Superior Court* (1971) 4 Cal.3d 800, 821.

reasonable fee award, courts award fees to serve as an economic incentive for lawyers to pursue such litigation in order to achieve increased access to the judicial system for meritorious claims and to enhance deterrents to wrongdoing. This is especially true in situations where multiple similar alleged wrongs would not be economically feasible to pursue individually, such as here. See A. Conte, *Attorney Fee Awards* (2d Ed., 1993) 104, at 6.

When the case was originally filed, not only was it inescapably contingent, but the prospect of a long, drawn-out battle with a defendant represented by experienced counsel, was almost a certainty. By taking on this “battle” on a contingency basis, Class Counsel risked substantial economic loss if the results were not successful. This substantial risk is the reason that the courts approve the use of the percentage method when a settlement is obtained by the efforts of class counsel. See *Vizcaino v. Microsoft* (9th Cir. 2002) 290 F.3d 1043, 1048-49 (discussing the risks of engaging in litigation without certainty of compensation).

Under the terms of the Settlement Agreement, Defendant will pay a Gross Fund Value of \$1,100,000.00. The requested attorneys’ fees are one-third (1/3) of the total value of the monetary settlement. In light of Class Counsel’s successful prosecution and resolution of the case, the requested attorneys’ fees are appropriate and reasonable.

Compensating class counsel in class litigation on a percentage basis makes good sense because: (1) it is consistent with the private marketplace where contingent fee attorneys are customarily compensated on such a basis; (2) it aligns the interests of class counsel and absent class members in achieving the maximum possible resolution of the case; and (3) it encourages the most efficient and expeditious resolution of the litigation by providing an incentive for early, yet reasonable, settlement. The requested attorneys’ fees in this matter satisfy all of those factors such and should be approved on a percentage basis.

The percentage method is consistent with, and is intended to mirror, the practice in the private marketplace where contingent-fee attorneys typically negotiate percentage-fee arrangements with their clients. A named plaintiff’s agreement to pay a contingent fee is powerful evidence of a reasonable fee. One of the best ways to demonstrate the value of counsel’s work to the class is to review the consideration agreed to be paid by the named plaintiff. If the named

1 plaintiff has employed counsel on a contingency-fee basis, it would indeed be inequitable for the
2 members of the class, who will enjoy the benefits of the settlement without incurring the risks of
3 bringing the claim, to pay less than the named plaintiff. In this case, Plaintiff has agreed to a
4 contingency fee of at least one-third (1/3) of the recovery.⁵⁷

5 Furthermore, a percentage-fee award is not dependent on a determination of the actual
6 amount claimed by those entitled—it is the creation of the settlement that is the crucial fact. In
7 *Winslow v. Harold G. Ferguson Corp.*, the California Supreme Court expressly held that “it is
8 equitable that [the attorney’s] compensation and expenses should come from the entire fund saved
9 for all classes concerned before it is distributed.” *Winslow v. Harold G. Ferguson Corp.* (1944)
10 25 Cal.2d 274, 284. Likewise, *Lealao* expressly held that a percentage-based fee “may be
11 calculated on the basis of the total fund made available rather than the actual payments made to
12 the class.” *Lealao, supra*, 82 Cal.App.4th at 51; *see also Boeing, supra*, 444 U.S. at 478 (“a litigant
13 or a lawyer who recovers” a settlement “for the benefit of persons other than himself or his client
14 is entitled to a reasonable attorneys’ fee from the fund as a whole”).

15 In *Wershba v. Apple Computer, Inc.* (2001) 91 Cal.App.4th 224, in determining reasonable
16 attorneys’ fees, the Court of Appeal valued a settlement based on the total value of the settlement
17 made available to class members by the efforts of counsel, decided in favor of granting fees as a
18 percentage of the total value of the settlement, and rejected an objection that the fees be awarded
19 based on the exact amount claimed by class members. *Id.* at 247.

20 Class Counsel has obtained a substantial recovery on behalf of Plaintiff and the Class, and
21 the results achieved justify an attorneys’ fees award that is the equivalent of the standard market
22 fee and that is consistent with the contingency-fee agreement entered into by and between Plaintiff
23 and Class Counsel. Thus, the requested attorneys’ fees are appropriate.

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⁵⁷ Aiwazian Decl., ¶ 9.

C. **The Attorneys' Fees Award Requested by Class Counsel Is Reasonable Based on the Factors Considered in Determination of Fee Awards.**

In *Camden I Condominium Association, Inc. v. Dunkel*, the court identified twelve factors to be considered in determining whether fee awards are reasonable: (1) the time and labor required; (2) the novelty and difficulty of the questions involved; (3) the skill required to perform the legal services properly; (4) the preclusion of other employment by the attorney due to the acceptance of the case; (5) the customary fee; (6) whether the fee is fixed or contingent; (7) time limitation imposed by the client or the circumstances; (8) the amount involved and results obtained; (9) the experience, reputation and ability of the attorney; (10) the undesirability of the case; (11) the nature and length of the professional relationship with the client; and (12) awards in similar cases. *Camden I Condominium Association, Inc. v. Dunkel* (11th Cir. 1991) 946 F.2d 768, 772.

Each and every one of these factors favors the attorneys' fees sought here; however, some of the most relevant factors to this Court's fee determination will be addressed herein. The award of attorneys' fees in the amount of \$366,666.67 (which is 1/3 of the Gross Fund Value) is commensurate with the time, effort, and expense dedicated to the case, the contingent nature of Class Counsel's fee and the risks taken in commencing the case, the skill and determination required, the results that Class Counsel has achieved, and the value of the settlement that Class Counsel has obtained for the Class Members.

1. Time & Labor.

Class Counsel used its experience and skills, and dedicated the full extent of resources, to litigate and bring this matter to a successful conclusion on behalf of the Class. Moreover, as demonstrated in the supporting declaration, Class Counsel has extensive experience in the handling of class actions and complex litigation matters.⁵⁸

As outlined in the Declaration of Edwin Aiwazian, Class Counsel has fully and actively participated in litigation of this case.⁵⁹ Prior to commencing the lawsuit, Class Counsel had conducted a significant amount of investigation into the factual and legal issues, Defendant's

⁵⁸ Aiwazian Decl., ¶¶ 15-18.

⁵⁹ *Id.*, Exh. A.

business, and its operations and employment policies, practices, and procedures.⁶⁰ During the litigation of the action, Class Counsel interviewed Plaintiff and other Class Members; propounded formal written discovery requests onto Defendant; noticed the depositions of Defendant's Person Most Knowledgeable witnesses; prepared for and defending the deposition of Plaintiff; reviewed and analyzed a large volume of pages of documents and data produced by Defendant and obtained through other sources; and prepared damages/valuation calculations.⁶¹ Class Counsel also met and conferred with Defendant's counsel over the issues relating to pleadings, discovery, and production of documents and data, among other things; engaged in extensive settlement negotiations with Defendant's counsel; and prepared for and attended court proceedings, mediation, and settlement negotiations.⁶²

Class Counsel has dedicated staffing and monetary resources necessary to prosecute this matter diligently and with maximum efficiency and has fully and actively participated in the litigation process. The Task and Time Chart, which is attached as EXHIBIT A to the accompanying Declaration of Edwin Aiwazian, sets forth in detail the hours that Class Counsel has spent performing tasks on behalf of Plaintiff and the Class.⁶³ The Task and Time Chart is thorough and comprehensive, and was prepared so that the Court can peruse it without having to set forth each and every task in the body of this Motion. The Court is respectfully referred to the chart, which sets forth the history of the work performed by Class Counsel, commencing with the pre-filing analysis and research, and continuing up to settlement and final approval. Class Counsel has spent 416.90 hours performing tasks and to obtain a significant recovery on behalf of Plaintiff and the Class.⁶⁴ These hours were required to bring this matter to its successful conclusion. In light of the value of time expended and the carrying of costs involved in litigating this case, the requested attorneys' fees are fair, adequate, and reasonable.

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⁶⁰ Aiwazian Decl., ¶ 6 & Exh. A.

⁶¹ *Id.*, ¶ 6.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Id.*, Exh. A.

⁶⁴ *Id.*, ¶ 11.

2. *The Skill Required to Perform Legal Services Properly.*

The skill required to properly litigate the case is evident not only in the results achieved, but in the steps necessary to reach the same. Defendant retained well-respected counsel to represent its defenses. More specifically, Defendant and its counsel felt very strongly about Defendant's ability to obtain a denial of certification and to prevail on the merits. Plaintiff and Class Counsel believed that they would have obtained class certification and prevailed at trial.

Class Counsel undertook significant investigation, analysis, and research prior to filing this case, during the litigation, and prior to mediation. Class Counsel took steps to prepare the matter for class certification and representative adjudication and had every intention of taking the case to trial on a class-wide basis if Defendant did not offer an appropriate class-wide settlement. Despite all of the obstacles that had to be overcome, as demonstrated in the Declaration of Edwin Aiwazian, Class Counsel used its extensive experience in the handling of class actions and complex wage-and-hour litigation matters in order to obtain the Settlement with maximum efficiency.⁶⁵

3. *The Value of the Settlement for the Class Members.*

The Settlement represents an excellent resolution of the Action, given the risks inherent in litigating the case through certification proceedings, trial, and/or appeals. Had the case not settled, Defendant would have vigorously challenged certifiability, manageability of representative adjudication, and liability. Defendant, however, faced risks if the Court certified a class and allowed a jury to decide the claims. Additionally, preparing the case for trial would have been expensive for the parties.

The Settlement at this stage is preferred over continued litigation because such resolutions save time and money that would otherwise go to litigation. The risks and expenses of further litigation outweighed any benefit that might have been gained otherwise. The Settlement provides an immediate recovery, as opposed to an uncertain result in the future after prolonged litigation involving expert discovery, trial preparation, class certification proceedings, and appellate review of those proceedings. The Settlement offers present relief and/or recovery to Settlement Class

⁶⁵ Aiwazian Decl., ¶¶ 15-18.

Members while avoiding the further expense, risk, and delay in obtaining possible recovery at an unknown time in the future.

As a result of this litigation and extensive settlement negotiations, Defendant agreed to pay a Gross Fund Value of \$1,100,000.00 to settle the matter. After deducting the attorneys' fees (\$366,666.67), litigation costs and expenses (\$27,803.81), Service Payment (\$10,000.00), Settlement Administration Costs (\$7,300.00), LWDA Payment (\$15,000.00), and Employer Taxes (\$41,139.86) from the Gross Fund Value, it is currently estimated that the Net Settlement Fund is approximately \$632,089.66.⁶⁶ The Net Settlement Fund will be fully distributed in accordance with the terms of the Settlement. The highest Individual Settlement Payment to a Settlement Class Member is currently estimated to be at least \$8,449.70 and the average Individual Settlement Payment is currently estimated to be at least \$2,864.89.⁶⁷ The Settlement offers significant monetary relief to the Settlement Class Members.

4. *Whether the Fee Is Fixed or Contingent.*

Plaintiff entered into a contingency fee agreement with Class Counsel, and the representation of the Class provided by Class Counsel has been wholly contingent. Class Counsel took on the case without knowing whether any recovery would be obtained. Class Counsel has invested 416.90 hours of time to obtain relief on behalf of Plaintiff and the Class.⁶⁸ Class Counsel has also incurred litigation costs and expenses in the amount of \$27,803.81.⁶⁹

Class Counsel has borne all of the risks and costs of litigation and will not receive any compensation until recovery is obtained.⁷⁰ Class Counsel is well-experienced in wage-and-hour class action and complex litigation and used that experience to obtain a great result.⁷¹ The skill and determination that Class Counsel has shown, along with the results obtained, justify the requested Attorneys' Fees and Costs. Considering the amounts requested, the work performed, and the risks incurred, the requested fees and costs are reasonable and should be awarded.

⁶⁶ Simpluris Decl., ¶ 16; see n.5, *supra*.

⁶⁷ *Id.*, ¶ 17; see n.30, *supra*.

⁶⁸ Aiwasian Decl., ¶ 11, Exh. A.

⁶⁹ See Part VII, *infra*.

⁷⁰ Aiwasian Decl., ¶ 19.

⁷¹ See *id.*, ¶¶ 15-18.

In determining the reasonableness of a fee award in a class action settlement, whether or not representation is provided on a contingency basis is an important factor:

A contingent fee must be higher than a fee for the same legal services paid as they are performed. The contingent fee compensates the lawyer not only for the legal services he renders but for the loan of those services. A lawyer who both bears the risk of not being paid and provides legal services is not receiving the fair market value of his work if he is paid only for the second of these functions. If he is paid no more, competent counsel will be reluctant to accept fee award cases.

Cates v. Chiang (2013) 213 Cal.App.4th 791, 823 (internal quotes and citations omitted). Class Counsel litigated the case on a contingent basis with all of the concomitant risk factors inherent in such an uncertain undertaking. Had Class Counsel not been successful, the time that Class Counsel has devoted to litigating the case would have been for naught, and would not have produced any fee or any reimbursement of costs or expenses.

5. *The Amount Involved and the Results Achieved.*

The results achieved, in light of the difficulties inherent in similar cases and the specific difficulties faced in this matter, are considerable. The Settlement has yielded a positive response from the Class Members—no Class Members objected to or opted out of the Settlement.⁷²

The court in *Camden* noted that, “a key element of the common fund case is that fees are [...] taken from the fund [...] and a common fund is itself the measure of success ... [and] represents the benchmark on which a reasonable fee will be awarded.” *Camden*, 946 F. 2d 768, fn. 28 (citing *Court Awarded Attorney Fees, Report of the Third Circuit Task Force* (October 8, 1985) 108 F.R.D. 237 and Newberg, *Attorney Fee Awards* § 2.07 (1986)).

Here, the results achieved and obtained on behalf of Plaintiff and the Class are reasonable in light of the risks inherent in further litigating this matter. Class Counsel’s efforts have resulted in a settlement that provides for a Gross Fund Value of \$1,100,000.00.⁷³ The Gross Fund Value will be paid out, in accordance with the terms of the Settlement Agreement. The highest Individual Settlement Payment to a Settlement Class Member is currently estimated to be at least \$8,449.70 and the average Individual Settlement Payment is currently estimated to be at least \$2,864.89.⁷⁴

⁷² Simpluris Decl., ¶¶ 12 & 13.

⁷³ Aiwazian Decl., ¶¶ 5-8.

⁷⁴ Simpluris Decl., ¶ 17; see n.30, *supra*.

6. *The Reputation and Ability of the Attorneys.*

Lawyers for Justice, PC is a recognized class action law firm that employed its attorneys' knowledge, skills, and experience in bringing this case to a successful conclusion. Class Counsel has years of complex and class action litigation experience, has recovered millions of dollars on behalf of thousands of individuals in California, and has successfully handled numerous significant wage-and-hour class action and complex cases.⁷⁵

D. **The Lodestar Methodology Also Justifies Approval of the Requested Fees, Because Class Counsel Has Performed Work That Is of Significant Value Based On Reasonable Hours and Prevailing Hourly Rates of Compensation.**

While the percentage-of-the-benefit approach is endorsed as the better approximation of the workings of the marketplace than the lodestar approach, courts may also use the lodestar method to "cross-check" the results of the other. See *Laffitte, supra*, 1 Cal.5th at 505 (explaining that "[a] lodestar cross-check is simply a quantitative method for bringing a measure of the time spent by counsel into the trial court's reasonableness determination"); see also, e.g., *Vizcaino*, 290 F.3d at 1050 ("[W]hile the primary basis of the fee award remains the percentage method, the lodestar may provide a useful perspective on the reasonableness of a given percentage award."). Importantly, "the lodestar calculation . . . does not override the trial court's primary determination of the fee as a percentage" of the settlement amount and "does not impose an absolute maximum or minimum on the potential fee award." *Laffitte, supra*, 1 Cal.5th at 505.

The lodestar is calculated based on reasonable hours at reasonable prevailing hourly rates for the attorneys. *Ketchum, supra*, 24 Cal.4th at 1131-32. Under California law, counsel is entitled to compensation for every hour reasonably spent on the matter. *Id.* at 1133.

1. *The Number of Hours Spent on the Litigation was Reasonable.*

The reasonableness of hours is assessed by "the entire course of the litigation, including pretrial matters, settlement negotiations, discovery, litigation tactics, and the trial itself[.]" *Vo v. Las Virgenes Municipal Water Dist.* (2000) 79 Cal.App.4th 440, 447.

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⁷⁵ Aiwazian Decl., ¶¶ 15-18.

As discussed above, the case was highly contested and required a significant amount of time and labor. Defendant made it clear very early on that it disputed all of the allegations of the case and disputed that the matter was appropriate for class or representative treatment. Defendant raised affirmative defenses and denied liability, and the pursuit of this matter involved gathering and analyzing data not only from Defendant but also from the Class Members. The handling of the case involved a great amount of effort, and also required and involved the exercise of a high level of skill, which Class Counsel has as a result of its extensive experience in employment class actions and complex wage-and-hour litigation. Long and difficult battles would have followed as the case moved toward certification and trial, including taking and defending depositions of Defendant's Person Most Knowledgeable designees, percipient witnesses, and experts, propounding additional discovery requests and conducting additional document production, and engaging in extensive motion practice. As Class Counsel geared up for these battles, Class Counsel undertook intense preparation in an attempt to resolve the entire matter through mediation.

Class Counsel had to bring together a large volume of data and documents that were produced by Defendant and obtained from Plaintiff and Class Members and through other sources. Class Counsel conducted extensive review and analysis of these documents and data to strategize the action and to prepare for and attend mediation and engage in settlement discussions.

As discussed above in Part VI.C.1, *infra*, attached to the Declaration of Edwin Aiwazian is a task and time chart that sets forth in detail the numerous tasks that Class Counsel performed on behalf of Plaintiff and the Class, and the time required for completing those tasks.⁷⁶ The chart demonstrates that Class Counsel has spent a total of 416.90 hours litigating the case and finalizing the Settlement.⁷⁷ In light of the facts and circumstances of the case, as well as the results that Class Counsel has achieved on behalf of Plaintiff and the Class Members, Class Counsel has spent a reasonable number of hours on this matter. In addition, Class Counsel will continue to perform work on this matter through the date of final approval and in connection with the implementation of the Settlement.

⁷⁶ See Aiwazian Decl., Exh. A.

⁷⁷ Aiwazian Decl., ¶ 11.

2. *The Fees Requested Represent a Reasonable Hourly Rate of Compensation in Light of Class Counsel's Efforts and Experience.*

Both California and federal courts recognize that attorneys should be compensated for providing representation on a contingency basis and for taking on the risks associated with said representation, as well as being provided with financial incentives to enforce important rights and protections like those at issue in this action. See *Ketchum*, *supra*, 24 Cal.4th at 1132-33. In awarding attorneys' fees, the aim is to mirror "the established practice in the private legal market of rewarding attorneys for taking the risk of nonpayment by paying them a premium over their normal hourly rates for winning contingency cases." See *id.*

Class Counsel has been actively involved in this case, prior to its commencement and all the way up to the present, and Class Counsel's dedication to providing representation in this matter has precluded other employment. Here, Class Counsel bore the risk that, despite all of its efforts and skills employed, there may be no recovery. Ultimately, Class Counsel was successful in reaching a settlement of \$1,100,000.00.

As set forth in the Declaration of Edwin Aiwasian, the professional backgrounds and experience of Class Counsel support a reasonable hourly rate of compensation of at least \$650 per hour for services provided by Class Counsel.⁷⁸ Lawyers for Justice, PC has been awarded attorneys' fees, compensating the firm at the rate of at least \$650 for legal service performed, by courts of this state.⁷⁹ While the circumstances of every case is unique, the fact remains that the

⁷⁸ Aiwasian Decl., ¶ 12.

⁷⁹ For example, final approval of the class action settlement in *Thereasa Carrozzella v. Basalite Concrete Products, LLC* (Sacramento County Superior Court Case No. 34-2017-00220214-CU-OE-GDS) was granted on February 21, 2020, and the award of attorneys' fees involved an hourly rate of \$766.05; final approval of the class and representative action settlement in *Alice Rutledge, et al. v. Healthport Technologies, LLC* (Alameda County Superior Court Case No. RG16835813) was granted on June 11, 2019, and the award of attorneys' fees involved an hourly rate of \$764.82; final approval of the class and representative action settlement in *Seth Swan v. Pace Supply* (Sonoma County Superior Court Case No. SCV258764) was granted on February 6, 2019, and the award of attorneys' fees involved a higher hourly rate of \$855.96; final approval of the class and representative action settlement in *Stanley Bland, et al. v. Telecare Corporation* (Alameda County Superior Court Case No. RG16811450) was granted on November 21, 2018, and the award of attorneys' fees involved a higher hourly rate of \$831.38; final approval of the class and representative action settlement in *Maryjo Ungerbuhler Anderson v. Boyett Petroleum* (Stanislaus County Superior Court Case No. 2020582) was granted on May 15, 2018, and the award of attorney's fees involved a higher hourly rate of \$780.77; final approval of the class and representative action settlement in *Rebekah Perez, et al. v. Nestlé USA, Inc., et al.* (Alameda County Superior Court Case No. RG15773654) was granted on August 18, 2017; final approval of the class and representative action settlement in *Elizabeth Ortiz, et al. v. Ghirardelli Chocolate Company* (Alameda County Superior Court Case No. RG15764300) was granted on July 19, 2017; final approval of the class and representative action settlement in *Demetrius Camarillo v. Blue Diamond Growers* (Sacramento County Superior Court Case No.

work performed and efforts undertaken by Class Counsel on behalf of the Class Members justify the requested attorneys' fees.

3. The Risks Involved, Skill Required, Complexity of the Matter, and Results Obtained Warrant Upward Enhancement of the Lodestar.

Even when courts have opted to award fees in settlement fund cases based on time reasonably expended on the action, courts have generally awarded these fees based on the actual time expended (the lodestar) in conjunction with a multiplier of between 2 and 4. *Kerr v. Screen Extras Guild, Inc.* (9th Cir. 1975) 526 F.2d 67. Such a multiplier is warranted in this case.

Courts frequently apply multipliers to enhance the lodestar to reflect the risks involved, the complexity of the litigation, and the other relevant facts. *Vizcaino*, 290 F.3d at 1051; *Graham v. DaimlerChrysler Corp.* (2004) 34 Cal.4th 553, 579 ("One of the most common fee enhancers [...] is for contingency risk."). Such an enhancement "mirrors the established practice in the private legal market of rewarding attorneys for taking the risk of nonpayment by paying them a premium over their normal hourly rates for winning contingency cases." *Vizcaino*, 290 F.3d at 1051; *accord Ketchum*, 24 Cal.4th at 1132-33. A risk multiplier also serves to bring the financial incentives for enforcing important rights "into line with incentives [attorneys] have to undertake claims for which they are paid on a fee-for-services basis." *Ketchum*, 24 Cal. 4th at 1132.

In determining whether or not to enhance the lodestar, California courts take into account multiple factors, many of which were specifically addressed above in §§ VI.B-C, *infra*. See, *Cates* at 822-23. Multiple factors warrant enhancement in this case, including the following:

- The time and labor required
- The skill requisite to perform the legal services properly
- The preclusion of other employment by the attorney due to the acceptance of the case
- The contingent nature of the fee

34-2015-00175871) was granted on June 30, 2017, and the award of attorneys' fees involved a higher hourly rate of \$845.64; final approval of the class and representative action settlement in *Mark Aceves v. Cambro Manufacturing Company* (Orange County Superior Court Case No. 30-2015-00810013-CU-OE-CXC) was granted on April 14, 2017; final approval of the class and representative action settlement in *East West Bank Wage and Hour Cases* (San Francisco County Superior Court Case No. CJC-13-004839) was granted on November 18, 2016; and approval of the Private Attorneys General Act settlement in *Tatiana Kemp v. The Irvine Company Apartment Communities, Inc.* (Orange County Superior Court Case No. 30-2015-00775439) was granted on November 4, 2016. Aiwazian Decl., ¶ 12.

- The amount involved and results obtained
- The experience, reputation, and ability of the attorney
- Awards in similar cases

Ketchum at 1134.

Adjustment of the base lodestar figure to compute an award of attorneys’ fees for a claim under the California Labor Code is appropriate. See *Id.*, at 1135-36; *Serrano v. Priest* (1977) 20 Cal.3d 25, 48-49. “The lodestar is calculated by multiplying the reasonable hours expended by a reasonable hourly rate. The court may then enhance the lodestar with a multiplier, if appropriate.” *Wershba, supra*, 91 Cal.App.4th at 254. In the first stage of the lodestar adjustment method, the trial court determines the reasonable hourly rate of compensation for counsel, which it then multiplies by the number of hours the court finds were reasonably spent preparing the case, to obtain the lodestar figure. *Ketchum, supra*, 24 Cal.4th at 1131-32. The lodestar figure is the “basic fee for comparable legal services in the community” based upon the “hourly amount to which attorneys of like skill in the area would typically be entitled.” *Id.*, at 1132-33 (quotation marks and citation omitted).

As discussed above, this was a highly-contested matter which required an extensive amount of time and labor. Defendant raised defenses and denied liability, and the case involved gathering and analyzing documents and data not only from Defendant but also from the Class Members. The handling of this matter involved a great amount of effort, and required the exercise of high-level of skill, which Class Counsel has as a result of extensive experience in employment class actions and wage-and-hour litigation. Class Counsel has been actively involved in the prosecution of this matter, prior to its commencement and Class Counsel’s work has continued all the way up to the present. Class Counsel’s dedication to the representation of the Class Members has precluded other employment.

Most importantly, all services were performed by Class Counsel on a contingent basis. Both California and federal courts recognize that attorneys should be compensated for taking on such contingent risks and provided with financial incentives to enforce important rights and protections like those at issue in the matter at hand. See, e.g., *Vizcaino*, 290 F.3d at 1051; *Ketchum*,

24 Cal. 4th at 1132-33. Here, Class Counsel bore the risk that, despite all of its efforts and the skill employed, there may be no recovery. Therefore, at a minimum, Class Counsel is entitled to a risk multiplier. The results obtained by way of Class Counsel's efforts are significant here. Class Counsel was successful in achieving substantial results in the form of a settlement of \$1,100,000.00. Also, Class Counsel's efforts throughout the case demonstrate dedication to the interests of the Class Members.

Class Counsel's application for attorneys' fees in light of the facts and circumstances surrounding the matter is well within the range of reasonableness. While handling this matter, Class Counsel devoted the hours in legal time summarized above and detailed in the Task and Time Chart, which is attached as EXHIBIT A to the Declaration of Edwin Aiwazian.⁸⁰ As the chart indicates, Class Counsel has worked 416.90 hours in the pursuit of this matter. The attorney task and time chart presents the entire picture. Applying a reasonable rate of \$650 per hour to 416.90 hours of work performed by Lawyers for Justice, PC would place a base lodestar value of \$270,985 on Class Counsel's services, and applying a modest multiplier of 1.37, the total enhanced lodestar fees \$371,249.45.⁸¹ Class Counsel seeks an attorneys' fee award of \$366,666.67 (equal to 1/3 of the Gross Fund Value based on the Settlement Agreement). Far greater multipliers have been awarded in similar cases, and the total amount of fees sought by Class Counsel is also reasonable compared to fees awarded in similar cases. Courts routinely enhance lodestar amounts based on multipliers that "range from **2 to 4 or even higher.**" *Wershba, supra*, 91 Cal.App.4th at 255 (emphasis added); *see also, e.g., Chavez v. Netflix, Inc.* (2008) 162 Cal.App.4th 43, 66 (approving **multiplier of 2.5**); *Vizcaino*, 290 F.3d at 1051 (approving **multiplier of 3.65**); *Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. v. Visa U.S.A., Inc.* (2d Cir. 2005) 396 F.3d 96, 123 (approving **multiplier of 3.5**); *Craft v. County of San Bernardino* (C.D. Cal. 2006) 624 F.Supp.2d 1113, 1125 (awarding **multiplier of 5.2** and referring to other cases with cross-check **multipliers ranging from 4.5 to 19.6**).

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⁸⁰ Aiwazian Decl., Exh. B.

⁸¹ *Id.*, ¶ 11; *see n.2, supra*.

Therefore, application of a modest multiplier of 1.37 is warranted, and the lodestar as a cross-check to the percentage figure sought herein, strongly supports the reasonableness of the requested attorneys' fees award. Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court grant final approval of, and award, attorneys' fees in the amount of \$366,666.67 to Class Counsel.

VII. COSTS TO BE REIMBURSED TO CLASS COUNSEL ARE FAIR AND REASONABLE, AND SHOULD BE APPROVED

The Settlement provides for reimbursement of litigation costs and expenses of up to \$30,000.00. As set forth in the Declaration of Edwin Aiwazian, Class Counsel has incurred a total of \$27,803.81 in litigation costs and expenses.⁸² This amount was reasonable and necessary in the prosecution of the case and to obtain the Settlement, and is less than the maximum amount allocated under the Settlement Agreement.⁸³ The cost savings of \$2,196.19 will be part of the Net Settlement Fund, which will be distributed to the Settlement Class Members in accordance with the Settlement.⁸⁴ Accordingly, Plaintiff requests that the Court award litigation costs and expenses in the amount of \$27,803.81 to Class Counsel.

VIII. THE SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION COSTS ARE FAIR AND REASONABLE AND SHOULD BE APPROVED

As set forth in the accompanying Simpluris Declaration, the total costs incurred and to be incurred by Simpluris for the notice and settlement administration process are \$7,300.00.⁸⁵ The costs incurred and to be incurred include, but are not limited to, expenses for formatting, printing, translating, and mailing the Class Notice to the Class Members in both English and Spanish; performing skip-trace searches on Class Notices returned as undeliverable; re-mailing the Class Notices to any updated addresses located by skip-trace search; receiving, reviewing, and processing requests for exclusion from the Settlement, objections to the Settlement, and Workweeks disputes; handling inquiries from Class Members regarding the Settlement;

⁸² Aiwazian Decl., ¶ 19.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Simpluris Decl., ¶ 15.

calculating Individual Settlement Payments and preparing the associated tax forms; and transmitting payments, among other things.⁸⁶

Accordingly, the Court should grant final approval of payment to Simpluris, a necessary third-party for handling of the notice and settlement process, in the amount of \$7,300.00.

IX. THE REQUESTED SERVICE PAYMENT IS FAIR AND REASONABLE, AND SHOULD BE APPROVED

The Settlement provides for a Service Payment in the amount of \$10,000.00 to Plaintiff Kristy Minor to compensate Plaintiff for the time and effort that she expended on behalf of the Class. The requested Service Payment is both common and reasonable and should be awarded.

In determining whether to make service payments, courts consider the following factors: (1) the risk to the class representative in commencing suit, both financial and otherwise; (2) the notoriety and personal difficulties encountered by the class representatives; (3) the amount of time and efforts spent by the class representatives; (4) the duration of the litigation; and (5) the personal benefit (or lack thereof) enjoyed by the class representatives as a result of the litigation. *Vranken v. Atlantic Richfield Co.* (N.D. Cal. 1995) 901 F.Supp. 294, 299 (approving \$50,000 participation award to a single class representative).

The requested Service Payment is fair and appropriate because Plaintiff spent a substantial amount of time and effort producing relevant documents and past employment records, as well as providing the facts and evidence necessary to attempt to prove the allegations, including and not limited to, by way of preparing for and attending deposition, and reviewing her deposition transcript.⁸⁷ Plaintiff was available whenever Class Counsel needed her and actively tried to obtain, and gave, information that would benefit the Class.⁸⁸ Plaintiff spent numerous hours speaking with Class Counsel about her claims, describing her work experiences with Defendant, and gathering and reviewing documents.⁸⁹ These services merit the requested Service Payment to Plaintiff, who has not received any compensation for her efforts on behalf of the Class Members

⁸⁶ Simpluris Decl., ¶ 3.

⁸⁷ Aiwasian Decl., ¶ 20; Declaration of Kristy Minor (“Minor Decl.”), ¶¶ 3-5.

⁸⁸ Aiwasian Decl., ¶ 20; Minor Decl., ¶¶ 3-5.

⁸⁹ Aiwasian Decl., ¶ 20; Minor Decl., ¶¶ 2-6.

1 to date.⁹⁰

2 The requested Service Payment was fully disclosed in the Class Notice that was mailed to
3 the Class Members. No objections were made with regards to the requested Service Payment.
4 Accordingly, it is appropriate and just for Plaintiff Kristy Minor to receive \$10,000.00 as a
5 reasonable Service Payment, in addition to her Individual Settlement Payment, for her services on
6 behalf of the Class.

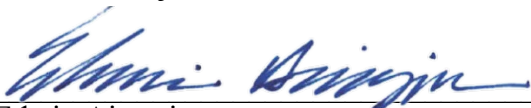
7 **X. CONCLUSION**

8 For the foregoing reasons, Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court grant final approval
9 of the Settlement, and award Attorneys' Fees and Costs, Service Payment, Settlement
10 Administration Costs, and PAGA Payment, in their entirety, as sought herein; and permit the filing
11 of a memorandum that exceeds the page limit.

12 Dated: November 25, 2020

LAWYERS for JUSTICE, PC

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14 By:


Edwin Aiwanian
Attorneys for Plaintiff and the Class

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90 Minor Decl., ¶ 9.