

Electronically FILED by Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles on 06/24/2020 01:33 PM Sherri R. Carter, Executive Officer/Clerk of Court, by E. Chanes, Deputy Clerk

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Attorneys for Plaintiffs

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**

CHRISTOPHER LEMUS and MINH
NGUYEN, individually, and on behalf of
aggrieved employees pursuant to the Private
Attorneys General Act of 2004 ("PAGA");

Plaintiffs,

v.

TRIANGLE DISTRIBUTING CO., a
California corporation; and DOES 1 through
100, inclusive;

Defendants.

Case No.:

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES
FOR VIOLATION OF LABOR CODE
§ 2698 *et seq.* (PRIVATE ATTORNEYS
GENERAL ACT OF 2004)**

Plaintiffs Christopher Lemus and Minh Nguyen (“Plaintiffs”) hereby submit their Complaint against Defendants Triangle Distributing Co., and DOES 1 through 100, inclusive; (collectively, “Defendants”), on behalf of themselves and other current and former aggrieved employees of Defendants for penalties as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. This representative action brought pursuant to Labor Code § 2698 *et seq.* (the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004 (“PAGA”)) for Defendants’ violations of Labor Code §§ 201, 202, 203, 204, 218.5, 221, 226(a), 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512(a), 558, 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2800 and 2802.

2. This Complaint challenges Defendants' systemic illegal employment practices resulting in violations of the stated provisions of the Labor Code against the identified group of employees.

3. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that Defendants jointly and severally acted intentionally and with deliberate indifference and conscious disregard to the rights of all employees in (1) failing to pay all meal period wages and rest break wages, (2) failing to properly calculate and pay all minimum and overtime wages, (3) failing to provide accurate wage statements, (4) failing to pay all wages due and owing during employment and upon termination of employment, and (5) failing to reimburse all necessary business expenses.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

4. This action is brought pursuant to PAGA. The civil penalties sought by Plaintiffs exceed the minimal jurisdiction limits of the Superior Court and will be established according to proof at trial.

5. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to California Constitution, Article VI, Section 10, which grants the Superior Court original jurisdiction in all causes except those given by statute to other courts. The statutes under which this action is brought do not specify any other basis for jurisdiction.

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6. This Court has jurisdiction over the violations of PAGA and Labor Code §§ 201, 202, 203, 204, 218.5, 221, 226(a), 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512(a), 558, 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2800 and 2802.

7. This Court has jurisdiction over all Defendants because, upon information and belief, each party has sufficient minimum contacts in California, or otherwise intentionally avails itself of California law so as to render the exercise of jurisdiction over it by the California courts consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

8. Venue is proper in this Court because, upon information and belief, the named Defendants transact business and/or have offices in this county, and the acts and omissions alleged herein took place in this county. Moreover, this action is brought on behalf of the State of California as a private attorney general and has jurisdiction in this venue.

PARTIES

9. Plaintiff Christopher Lemus is an individual residing in the State of California. Plaintiff was employed by Defendants within the statutory time period.

10. Plaintiff Minh Nguyen is an individual residing in the State of California. Plaintiff was employed by Defendants within the statutory time period¹.

11. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that Defendants are licensed to do business and actually doing business in the State of California, including the County of Los Angeles.

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¹ While the underlying PAGA exhaustion letter for Plaintiff Minh Nguyen indicates that she was currently employed at the time of submission, this was a scrivener's error. Plaintiff Nguyen's employment with Defendant Triangle Distributing Co. ended on or about June 22, 2019.

1 **12.** Plaintiffs do not know the true names or capacities, whether individual,
2 partner or corporate, of Defendants sued herein as DOES 1 through 100, inclusive, and for that
3 reason, said Defendants are sued under such fictitious names, and Plaintiffs pray for leave to
4 amend the complaint when the true names and capacities are known. Plaintiffs are informed and
5 believe and thereon allege that each of Defendants designated as a DOE was responsible in some
6 way for the matters alleged herein and proximately caused Plaintiffs and other current and former
7 aggrieved employees to be subject to the illegal employment practices, wrongs and injuries
8 complained of herein.

9 **13.** At all times herein mentioned, Defendants, and each of them, were agents,
10 partners, joint venturers, representatives, servants, employees, successors-in-interest, co-
11 conspirators and assigns, each of the other, and at all times relevant hereto were acting within
12 the course and scope of their authority as such agents, partners, joint venturers, representatives,
13 servants, employees, successors, co-conspirators and assigns, and that all acts or omissions
14 alleged herein were duly committed with ratification, knowledge, permission, encouragement,
15 authorization and consent of each Defendant designated herein.

16 **14.** As such, and based upon all the facts and circumstances incident to
17 Defendants' business in California, Defendants are subject to PAGA and Labor Code §§ 201,
18 202, 203, 204, 218.5, 221, 226(a), 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512(a), 558, 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1,
19 1198, 2800 and 2802.

20 **CAUSE OF ACTION**

21 **VIOLATION OF PAGA**

22 **(AGAINST ALL DEFENDANTS BY PLAINTIFFS)**

23 **15.** Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference paragraphs 1 through 14
24 as though fully set forth herein.

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1 **16.** PAGA expressly establishes that any provision of the California Labor
2 Code which provides for a civil penalty to be assessed and collected by the LWDA, or any of its
3 departments, divisions, commissions, boards, agencies or employees for a violation of the
4 California Labor Code, may be recovered through a civil action brought by an aggrieved
5 employee on behalf of himself or herself, and other current or former employees.

6 **17.** On April 7, 2020, Plaintiff Lemus provided written notice to the LWDA
7 and Defendants of the specific provisions of the Labor Code he contends were violated, and the
8 theories supporting his contentions. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 1** and incorporated by reference
9 is a copy of the written notice to the LWDA. Plaintiff Lemus believes that on or about June 11,
10 2020, the sixty-five (65) day notice period expired, and Plaintiff exhausted his administrative
11 remedies. On April 8, 2020, Plaintiff Nguyen provided written notice to the LWDA and
12 Defendants of the specific provisions of the Labor Code she contends were violated, and the
13 theories supporting his contentions. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 2** and incorporated by reference
14 is a copy of the written notice to the LWDA. Plaintiff Nguyen believes that on or about June 12,
15 2020, the sixty-five (65) day notice periods expired, and Plaintiff exhausted his administrative
16 remedies.

17 **18.** Plaintiffs and the other hourly-paid or non-exempt employees are
18 “aggrieved employees” as defined by California Labor Code § 2699(c) in that they are all current
19 or former employees (whether hired directly or through a labor contractor or staffing agency) of
20 Defendants who worked for Defendants at any time during the period from April 7, 2019 to the
21 present, and one or more of the alleged violations was committed against them.

22 **Failure to Pay Minimum and Overtime Wages**

23 **19.** At all times relevant herein, Defendants were required to compensate their
24 non-exempt employees minimum wages for all hours worked and overtime wages for all hours
25 worked in excess of eight (8) hours in a day or forty (40) hours in a workweek, pursuant to the
26 mandate of Labor Code §§ 510, 1194, 1197, and 1198.

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1 **20.** As a pattern and practice, Defendants failed to compensate Plaintiffs and
2 other aggrieved current and former employees for all hours worked, resulting in a failure to pay
3 all minimum wages and overtime wages, where applicable.

4 **Failure to Provide Meal Periods and Rest Breaks**

5 **21.** In accordance with the mandates of Labor Code §§ 226.7 and 512,
6 Defendants were required to authorize and permit their non-exempt employees to take a 10-
7 minute rest break for every four (4) hours worked or major fraction thereof, and were further
8 required to provide their non-exempt employees with a 30-minute meal period for every five (5)
9 hours worked.

10 **22.** As a pattern and practice, Defendants failed to provide Plaintiffs and other
11 aggrieved current and former employees with legally-mandated meal periods and rest breaks and
12 failed to pay proper compensation for this failure.

13 **Failure to Timely Pay Wages During Employment**

14 **23.** At all times relevant herein, Defendants were required to pay their
15 employees within a specified time period pursuant to the mandate of Labor Code § 204.

16 **24.** As a pattern and practice, Defendants failed to pay Plaintiffs and other
17 aggrieved current and former employees all wages due and owing them within the required time
18 period.

19 **Failure to Timely Pay Wages Upon Termination**

20 **25.** At all times relevant herein, Defendants were required to pay their
21 employees all wages owed in a timely fashion at the end of employment pursuant to California
22 Labor Code §§ 201 to 204.

23 **26.** As a result of Defendants' Labor Code violations alleged above,
24 Defendants failed to pay Plaintiffs and the other aggrieved former employees their final wages
25 pursuant to Labor Code §§ 201 to 204 and accordingly owe waiting time penalties pursuant to
26 Labor Code § 203.

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1 **Failure to Provide Complete and Accurate Wage Statements**

2 **27.** At all times relevant herein, Defendants were required to keep *accurate*
3 records regarding their California employees pursuant to the mandate of Labor Code §§ 226 and
4 1174.

5 **28.** As a result of Defendants' various Labor Code violations, Defendants
6 failed to keep accurate records regarding Plaintiffs and other aggrieved current and former
7 employees. For example, Defendants failed in their affirmative obligation to keep accurate
8 records regarding Plaintiffs and other aggrieved current and former employees' gross wages
9 earned, total hours worked, all deductions, net wages earned, and all applicable hourly rates and
10 the number of hours worked at each hourly rate.

11 **Failure to Reimburse Business Expenses**

12 **29.** At all times relevant herein, Defendants were required to reimburse their
13 employees for any and all necessary expenditures or losses incurred by the employees in direct
14 consequences of the discharge or their duties pursuant to the mandate of Labor Code §§ 2800
15 and 2802.

16 **30.** As a pattern and practice, Defendants failed to pay Plaintiffs and other
17 aggrieved current and former employees all business expenses incurred and owing them within
18 the required time period.

19 **Penalties**

20 **31.** Pursuant to California Labor Code § 2699, Plaintiffs, individually, and on
21 behalf of other current and former aggrieved employees, request and are entitled to recover from
22 Defendants, and each of them, civil penalties, interest, attorneys' fees and costs pursuant,
23 including but not limited to:

24 **32.** Penalties under California Labor Code § 2699 in the amount of a hundred
25 dollars (\$100) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for the initial violation, and two
26 hundred dollars (\$200) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for each subsequent
27 violation;

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1 **33.** Penalties under California Code of Regulations Title 8 § 11040 in the
2 amount of fifty dollars (\$50) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for the initial violation,
3 and one hundred dollars (\$100) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for each subsequent
4 violation;

5 **34.** Penalties under California Labor Code § 210 in addition to, and entirely
6 independent and apart from, any other penalty provided in the California Labor Code in the
7 amount of a hundred dollars (\$100) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for the initial
8 violation, and two hundred dollars (\$200) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for each
9 subsequent violation;

10 **35.** Penalties under Labor Code § 1197.1 in the amount of a hundred dollars
11 (\$100) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for the initial violation, and two hundred
12 fifty dollars (\$250) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for each subsequent violation;

13 **36.** Any and all additional penalties as provided by the Labor Code and/or
14 other statutes; and

15 **37.** Attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to Labor Code §§ 210, 1194, and 2699,
16 and any other applicable statute.

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1 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

2 WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs, on their own behalf as individuals, and as
3 representatives of other current and former aggrieved employees pursuant to the PAGA, pray for
4 judgment as follows:

- 5 1. Upon the Cause of Action, for civil penalties pursuant to statute as set forth in
6 Labor Code § 2698 *et seq.*, for Defendants' violations of Labor Code §§ 201, 202,
7 203, 204, 218.5, 221, 226(a), 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512(a), 558, 1174(d), 1194, 1197,
8 1197.1, 1198, 2800 and 2802.
- 9 2. Upon the Cause of Action, for costs and attorneys' fees pursuant to Labor Code
10 §§ 210, 218.5, 1194, and 2699, and any other applicable statute; and
- 11 3. For such other and further relief the court may deem just and proper.
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13 Dated: June 24, 2020

JUSTICE LAW CORPORATION

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16 By: 

Douglas Han
Shunt Tatavos-Gharajeh
Areen Babajanian
Attorneys for Plaintiffs

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EXHIBIT 1

April 7, 2020

BY U.S. EMAIL/ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

PAGAFilings@dir.ca.gov

State of California

Labor & Workforce Development Agency

800 Capitol Mall, MIC-55

Sacramento, California 95814

Re: TRIANGLE DISTRIBUTING CO.

Dear Representative:

We have been retained to represent Christopher Lemus against Triangle Distributing Co. (including any and all affiliates, managers, members, subsidiaries, and parents, and their shareholders, officers, directors, and employees), any individual, owner, officer and managing agent, DOES 1-10 as an "Employer" or person acting on behalf of an "Employer" pursuant to California Labor Code section 558.1, and DOES 11-20¹ for violations of California wage-and-hour laws (hereinafter collectively referred to as "TRIANGLE").

Mr. Lemus is pursuing his California Labor Code section 2698, *et seq.*, the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004 ("PAGA") claim on a representative basis. Therefore, Mr. Lemus may seek penalties and wages for violations of the Labor Code on behalf of the State of California and aggrieved employees, which are recoverable under PAGA. This letter is sent in compliance with the reporting requirements of California Labor Code section 2699.3.

Triangle Distributing Co. is a California corporation located at 12065 E. Pike Street, Santa Fe Springs, California 90670.

TRIANGLE currently employs Mr. Lemus as an hourly-paid non-exempt Merchandiser in the State of California. TRIANGLE directly controls the wages, hours and/or working conditions of Mr. Lemus's employment.

The "aggrieved employees" that Mr. Lemus may seek penalties on behalf of are all current and former hourly-paid or non-exempt employees (whether hired directly or through staffing agencies or labor contractors) of TRIANGLE within the State of California.

¹ Mr. Lemus does not know the true names or capacities, whether individual, partner or corporate, of DOES 1 through 20, inclusive, and for that reason, said DOES are designated under such fictitious names. Mr. Lemus will amend this notice when the true names and capacities are known. Mr. Lemus is informed and believes that each DOE was responsible in some way for the matters alleged herein and proximately caused Mr. Lemus and other current and former aggrieved employees to be subject to the illegal employment practices, wrongs and injuries complained of herein.

TRIANGLE failed to properly pay its hourly-paid or non-exempt employees for all hours worked, failed to properly provide or compensate minimum and overtime wages and for meal and rest breaks, failed to issue compliant wage statements and failed to reimburse for all necessary business-related costs and expenses, thus resulting in other Labor Code violations as stated below.

Pursuant to *Huff v. Securitas Security Services*, 23 Cal. App. 5th 745, 751 (2018), an employee who brings a representative action and was affected by at least one of the violations alleged in the complaint has standing to pursue penalties on behalf of the state not only for that violation, but for violations affecting other employees as well. Accordingly, Mr. Lemus has standing to pursue penalties on behalf of the state for violations affecting all the aggrieved employees at TRIANGLE, regardless of their classification, job title, locations, or whether they were hired directly or through a labor contractor or staffing agency.

TRIANGLE has violated and/or continues to violate, among other provisions of the California Labor Code and applicable wage law, California Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 218.5, 221, 226(a), 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512(a), 558, 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2800 and 2802, and the IWC Wage Orders.

California Labor Code sections 510, 1194, and 1198 require employers to pay at least minimum wage for all hours worked, pay time-and-a-half, or double time overtime wages, and make it unlawful to work employees for hours longer than eight hours in one day and/or over forty hours in one week without paying the premium overtime rates. During the relevant time period, Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees routinely worked in excess of 8 hours in a day and 40 hours in a week. TRIANGLE failed to compensate Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees for all hours worked and performing off-the-clock work, including pre- and post-shift and during meal breaks. TRIANGLE also failed to factor non-discretionary bonuses and incentives in Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees' regular rate of pay for purposes of overtime compensation. Therefore, Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees were entitled to receive certain wages for overtime compensation, but they were not paid for all overtime hours worked.

California Labor Code sections 226.7 and 512 require employers to pay an employee one additional hour of pay at the employee's regular rate for each workday that a meal or rest break is not provided. During the relevant time period, TRIANGLE routinely required Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees to work through, interrupt, cut short, and/or delay their meal and rest breaks to comply with TRIANGLE's policies and expectations, and complete their routes in a timely manner. Further, TRIANGLE failed to authorize and permit Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees to take the requisite number of meal and rest breaks, including second meal breaks and third rest breaks, when working shifts exceeding 10 hours in length. Despite these facts, TRIANGLE failed to compensate Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees all the premium wages they were owed.

California Labor Code section 201 requires that if an employer discharges an employee, the wages earned and unpaid at the time of discharge are due and payable immediately. California Labor Code section 202 requires that if an employee not having a written contract for a definite period quits his or her employment, his or her wages shall become due and payable not later than 72 hours thereafter, unless the employee has given 72 hours previous notice of his or her intention to quit, in which case the employee is entitled to his or her wages at the time of quitting. California Labor Code section 203 provides that if an employer willfully fails to pay, without abatement or reduction, in accordance with Labor Code sections 201, 201.3, 201.5, 201.6, 201.8, 201.9, 202, and 205.5, any wages of an employee who is discharged or who quits, the wages of the employee shall continue as a penalty from the due date thereof at the same rate until paid or until an action therefor is commenced; but the wages shall not continue for more than 30 days. During the relevant time period, TRIANGLE failed to pay Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees all wages, including for uncompensated off-the-clock work and premium wages for failing to provide legally mandated meal and rest breaks, due to them within any time period specified by California Labor Code sections 201 and 203 and therefore is liable under California Labor Code section 203.

California Labor Code section 204 requires that all wages earned by any person in any employment between the 1st and the 15th days, inclusive, of any calendar month, other than those wages due upon termination of an employee, are due and payable between the 16th and the 26th day of the month during which the labor was performed, and that all wages earned by any person in any employment between the 16th and the last day, inclusive, of any calendar month, other than those wages due upon termination of an employee, are due and payable between the 1st and the 10th day of the following month. California Labor Code section 204 also requires that all wages earned for labor in excess of the normal work period shall be paid no later than the payday for the next regular payroll period. During the relevant time period, TRIANGLE failed to pay Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees all wages due to them within any time period specified by California Labor Code section 204.

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California Labor Code section 226 requires employers to make, keep and provide complete and accurate itemized wage statements to their employees. During the relevant time period, TRIANGLE did not provide Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees with complete and accurate itemized wage statements. The wage statements they received from TRIANGLE were in violation of California Labor Code section 226(a). The violations include, but are not limited to, the failure to include (1) gross wages earned by Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees, (2) total hours worked by Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees, (3) the number of piece-rate units earned and any applicable piece rate by Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees (4) all deductions for Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees, (5) net wages earned by Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees, (6) the inclusive dates of the period for which Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees are paid, (7) the name of the aggrieved employee and only the last four digits of his or her social security number or an employee identification number other than a social security number, (8) the name and address of the legal entity that is the employer and (9) all applicable hourly rates in effect during the pay period and the corresponding number of hours worked at each hourly rate by Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees.

California Labor Code section 558 allows recovery of penalties. (a) Any employer or other person acting on behalf of an employer who violates, or causes to be violated, a section of this chapter or any provision regulating hours and days of work in any order of the Industrial Welfare Commission shall be subject to a civil penalty as follows: (1) For any initial violation, fifty dollars (\$50) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which the employee was underpaid in addition to an amount sufficient to recover underpaid wages. (2) For each subsequent violation, one hundred dollars (\$100) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which the employee was underpaid in addition to an amount sufficient to recover underpaid wages. (3) Wages recovered pursuant to this section shall be paid to the affected employee. Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees have been denied their wages and premium wages and, therefore, are entitled to penalties.

California Labor Code sections 1174(d) requires an employer to keep, at a central location in the state or at the plants or establishments at which employees are employed, payroll records showing the hours worked daily by and the wages paid to, and the number of piece-rate units earned by and any applicable piece rate paid to, employees employed at the respective plants or establishments. These records shall be kept with rules established for this purpose by the commission, but in any case, shall be kept on file for not less than two years. During the relevant time period, TRIANGLE failed to keep accurate and complete payroll records showing the hours worked daily and the wages paid, to Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees.

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California Labor Code sections 1194, 1197 and 1197.1 provide the minimum wage to be paid to employees, and the payment of a lesser wage than the minimum so fixed is unlawful. During the relevant time period, TRIANGLE did not provide Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees with the minimum wages to which they were entitled despite constructive and actual knowledge of off-the-clock work, including pre- and post-shift and during meal breaks.

California Labor Code sections 2800 and 2802 require an employer to reimburse its employee for all necessary expenditures incurred by the employee in direct consequence of the discharge of his or her job duties or in direct consequence of his or her obedience to the directions of the employer. During their employment, Mr. Lemus and other aggrieved employees incurred necessary business-related expenses and costs that were not fully reimbursed by TRIANGLE, including for the use of their personal cellular phones and vehicles for work purposes, and for purchasing personal protective equipment they were required to wear while working.

We believe that Mr. Lemus and other current and former California-based hourly-paid or non-exempt employees are entitled to penalties and wages as allowed under California Labor Code section 2698, *et seq.* for violations of Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 218.5, 221, 226(a), 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512(a), 558, 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2800 and 2802, and the IWC Wage Orders.

California Labor Code section 2699.3 requires that a claimant send a certified letter to the employer in questions and the California Labor & Workforce Development Agency setting forth the claims, and the basis for the claims, thereby giving the California Labor & Workforce Development Agency an opportunity to investigate the claims and/or take any action it deems appropriate.

The purpose of this letter is to satisfy the requirement created by California Labor code section 2699 prior to seeking penalties allowed by law for the aforementioned statutory violations. We look forward to determining whether California Labor & Workforce Development Agency intends to take any action in reference to these claims. We kindly request that you respond to this notice according to the time frame contemplated by the California Labor Code.

Mr. Lemus will seek these penalties and wages on his own behalf and on behalf of other similarly situated California-based hourly-paid or non-exempt employees of TRIANGLE within one year of the date of this letter, as allowed by law.

LWDA

April 7, 2020

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If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you for your attention to this matter and the noble cause you advance each and every day.

Very truly yours,

JUSTICE LAW CORPORATION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Han", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Douglas Han, Esq.

CC: (By Certified U.S. Mail Only)

Peter H. Heimark

c/o Triangle Distributing Co.

12065 E. Pike Street

Santa Fe Springs, California 90670

Agent for Service of Process for Triangle Distributing Co.

EXHIBIT 2

April 8, 2020

BY U.S. EMAIL/ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

PAGAfilings@dir.ca.gov

State of California

Labor & Workforce Development Agency

800 Capitol Mall, MIC-55

Sacramento, California 95814

Re: TRIANGLE DISTRIBUTING CO.

Dear Representative:

We have been retained to represent Minh Nguyen against Triangle Distributing Co. (including any and all affiliates, managers, members, subsidiaries, and parents, and their shareholders, officers, directors, and employees), any individual, owner, officer and managing agent, DOES 1-10 as an "Employer" or person acting on behalf of an "Employer" pursuant to California Labor Code section 558.1, and DOES 11-20¹ for violations of California wage-and-hour laws (hereinafter collectively referred to as "TRIANGLE").

Mr. Nguyen is pursuing his California Labor Code section 2698, *et seq.*, the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004 ("PAGA") claim on a representative basis. Therefore, Mr. Nguyen may seek penalties and wages for violations of the Labor Code on behalf of the State of California and aggrieved employees, which are recoverable under PAGA. This letter is sent in compliance with the reporting requirements of California Labor Code section 2699.3.

Triangle Distributing Co. is a California corporation located at 12065 E. Pike Street, Santa Fe Springs, California 90670.

TRIANGLE currently employs Mr. Nguyen as an hourly-paid non-exempt Merchandiser in the State of California. TRIANGLE directly controls the wages, hours and/or working conditions of Mr. Nguyen's employment.

The "aggrieved employees" that Mr. Nguyen may seek penalties on behalf of are all current and former hourly-paid or non-exempt employees (whether hired directly or through staffing agencies or labor contractors) of TRIANGLE within the State of California.

¹ Mr. Nguyen does not know the true names or capacities, whether individual, partner or corporate, of DOES 1 through 20, inclusive, and for that reason, said DOES are designated under such fictitious names. Mr. Nguyen will amend this notice when the true names and capacities are known. Mr. Nguyen is informed and believes that each DOE was responsible in some way for the matters alleged herein and proximately caused Mr. Nguyen and other current and former aggrieved employees to be subject to the illegal employment practices, wrongs and injuries complained of herein.

TRIANGLE failed to properly pay its hourly-paid or non-exempt employees for all hours worked, failed to properly provide or compensate minimum and overtime wages and for meal and rest breaks, failed to issue compliant wage statements and failed to reimburse for all necessary business-related costs and expenses, thus resulting in other Labor Code violations as stated below.

Pursuant to *Huff v. Securitas Security Services*, 23 Cal. App. 5th 745, 751 (2018), an employee who brings a representative action and was affected by at least one of the violations alleged in the complaint has standing to pursue penalties on behalf of the state not only for that violation, but for violations affecting other employees as well. Accordingly, Mr. Nguyen has standing to pursue penalties on behalf of the state for violations affecting all the aggrieved employees at TRIANGLE, regardless of their classification, job title, locations, or whether they were hired directly or through a labor contractor or staffing agency.

TRIANGLE has violated and/or continues to violate, among other provisions of the California Labor Code and applicable wage law, California Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 218.5, 221, 226(a), 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512(a), 558, 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2800 and 2802, and the IWC Wage Orders.

California Labor Code sections 510, 1194, and 1198 require employers to pay at least minimum wage for all hours worked, pay time-and-a-half, or double time overtime wages, and make it unlawful to work employees for hours longer than eight hours in one day and/or over forty hours in one week without paying the premium overtime rates. During the relevant time period, Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees routinely worked in excess of 8 hours in a day and 40 hours in a week. TRIANGLE failed to compensate Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees for all hours worked and performing off-the-clock work, including pre- and post-shift and during meal breaks. TRIANGLE also failed to factor non-discretionary bonuses and incentives in Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees' regular rate of pay for purposes of overtime compensation. Therefore, Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees were entitled to receive certain wages for overtime compensation, but they were not paid for all overtime hours worked.

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California Labor Code sections 226.7 and 512 require employers to pay an employee one additional hour of pay at the employee's regular rate for each workday that a meal or rest break is not provided. During the relevant time period, TRIANGLE routinely required Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees to work through, interrupt, cut short, and/or delay their meal and rest breaks to comply with TRIANGLE's policies and expectations, and complete their routes in a timely manner. Further, TRIANGLE failed to authorize and permit Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees to take the requisite number of meal and rest breaks, including second meal breaks and third rest breaks, when working shifts exceeding 10 hours in length. Despite these facts, TRIANGLE failed to compensate Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees all the premium wages they were owed.

California Labor Code section 201 requires that if an employer discharges an employee, the wages earned and unpaid at the time of discharge are due and payable immediately. California Labor Code section 202 requires that if an employee not having a written contract for a definite period quits his or her employment, his or her wages shall become due and payable not later than 72 hours thereafter, unless the employee has given 72 hours previous notice of his or her intention to quit, in which case the employee is entitled to his or her wages at the time of quitting. California Labor Code section 203 provides that if an employer willfully fails to pay, without abatement or reduction, in accordance with Labor Code sections 201, 201.3, 201.5, 201.6, 201.8, 201.9, 202, and 205.5, any wages of an employee who is discharged or who quits, the wages of the employee shall continue as a penalty from the due date thereof at the same rate until paid or until an action therefor is commenced; but the wages shall not continue for more than 30 days. During the relevant time period, TRIANGLE failed to pay Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees all wages, including for uncompensated off-the-clock work and premium wages for failing to provide legally mandated meal and rest breaks, due to them within any time period specified by California Labor Code sections 201 and 203 and therefore is liable under California Labor Code section 203.

California Labor Code section 204 requires that all wages earned by any person in any employment between the 1st and the 15th days, inclusive, of any calendar month, other than those wages due upon termination of an employee, are due and payable between the 16th and the 26th day of the month during which the labor was performed, and that all wages earned by any person in any employment between the 16th and the last day, inclusive, of any calendar month, other than those wages due upon termination of an employee, are due and payable between the 1st and the 10th day of the following month. California Labor Code section 204 also requires that all wages earned for labor in excess of the normal work period shall be paid no later than the payday for the next regular payroll period. During the relevant time period, TRIANGLE failed to pay Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees all wages due to them within any time period specified by California Labor Code section 204.

California Labor Code section 226 requires employers to make, keep and provide complete and accurate itemized wage statements to their employees. During the relevant time period, TRIANGLE did not provide Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees with complete and accurate itemized wage statements. The wage statements they received from TRIANGLE were in violation of California Labor Code section 226(a). The violations include, but are not limited to, the failure to include (1) gross wages earned by Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees, (2) total hours worked by Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees, (3) the number of piece-rate units earned and any applicable piece rate by Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees (4) all deductions for Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees, (5) net wages earned by Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees, (6) the inclusive dates of the period for which Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees are paid, (7) the name of the aggrieved employee and only the last four digits of his or her social security number or an employee identification number other than a social security number, (8) the name and address of the legal entity that is the employer and (9) all applicable hourly rates in effect during the pay period and the corresponding number of hours worked at each hourly rate by Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees.

California Labor Code section 558 allows recovery of penalties. (a) Any employer or other person acting on behalf of an employer who violates, or causes to be violated, a section of this chapter or any provision regulating hours and days of work in any order of the Industrial Welfare Commission shall be subject to a civil penalty as follows: (1) For any initial violation, fifty dollars (\$50) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which the employee was underpaid in addition to an amount sufficient to recover underpaid wages. (2) For each subsequent violation, one hundred dollars (\$100) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which the employee was underpaid in addition to an amount sufficient to recover underpaid wages. (3) Wages recovered pursuant to this section shall be paid to the affected employee. Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees have been denied their wages and premium wages and, therefore, are entitled to penalties.

California Labor Code sections 1174(d) requires an employer to keep, at a central location in the state or at the plants or establishments at which employees are employed, payroll records showing the hours worked daily by and the wages paid to, and the number of piece-rate units earned by and any applicable piece rate paid to, employees employed at the respective plants or establishments. These records shall be kept with rules established for this purpose by the commission, but in any case, shall be kept on file for not less than two years. During the relevant time period, TRIANGLE failed to keep accurate and complete payroll records showing the hours worked daily and the wages paid, to Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees.

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California Labor Code sections 1194, 1197 and 1197.1 provide the minimum wage to be paid to employees, and the payment of a lesser wage than the minimum so fixed is unlawful. During the relevant time period, TRIANGLE did not provide Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees with the minimum wages to which they were entitled despite constructive and actual knowledge of off-the-clock work, including pre- and post-shift and during meal breaks.

California Labor Code sections 2800 and 2802 require an employer to reimburse its employee for all necessary expenditures incurred by the employee in direct consequence of the discharge of his or her job duties or in direct consequence of his or her obedience to the directions of the employer. During their employment, Mr. Nguyen and other aggrieved employees incurred necessary business-related expenses and costs that were not fully reimbursed by TRIANGLE, including for the use of their personal cellular phones and vehicles for work purposes, and for purchasing personal protective equipment they were required to wear while working.

We believe that Mr. Nguyen and other current and former California-based hourly-paid or non-exempt employees are entitled to penalties and wages as allowed under California Labor Code section 2698, *et seq.* for violations of Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 218.5, 221, 226(a), 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512(a), 558, 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2800 and 2802, and the IWC Wage Orders.

California Labor Code section 2699.3 requires that a claimant send a certified letter to the employer in questions and the California Labor & Workforce Development Agency setting forth the claims, and the basis for the claims, thereby giving the California Labor & Workforce Development Agency an opportunity to investigate the claims and/or take any action it deems appropriate.

The purpose of this letter is to satisfy the requirement created by California Labor code section 2699 prior to seeking penalties allowed by law for the aforementioned statutory violations. We look forward to determining whether California Labor & Workforce Development Agency intends to take any action in reference to these claims. We kindly request that you respond to this notice according to the time frame contemplated by the California Labor Code.

Mr. Nguyen will seek these penalties and wages on his own behalf and on behalf of other similarly situated California-based hourly-paid or non-exempt employees of TRIANGLE within one year of the date of this letter, as allowed by law.

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LWDA
April 8, 2020
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If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you for your attention to this matter and the noble cause you advance each and every day.

Very truly yours,

JUSTICE LAW CORPORATION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Han', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Douglas Han, Esq.

CC: (By Certified U.S. Mail Only)

Peter H. Heimark
c/o Triangle Distributing Co.
12065 E. Pike Street
Santa Fe Springs, California 90670
Agent for Service of Process for Triangle Distributing Co.

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PROOF OF SERVICE
1013A(3) CCP

STATE OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

I am employed in the County of Los Angeles, State of California. I am over the age of 18 and not a party to the within action. My business address is 751 N. Fair Oaks Avenue, Suite 101, Pasadena, CA 91103 and my electronic service address is ting@justicelawcorp.com

On July 9, 2020, I served the foregoing document described as

COMPLAINT FOR PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION OF LABOR CODE § 2698 et seq.
(PRIVATE ATTORNEYS GENERAL ACT OF 2004)

for the following case: **Lemus v. Triangle Distributing Co.**
LWDA/Court Case No.: **LWDA Case No.: LWDA-CM-782172-20**
LWDA-CM-782330-20
Court Case No.: 20NWCV00355
Los Angeles County Superior Court

on interested parties in this action by electronically submitting as follows:

State of California
Labor & Workforce Development Agency
800 Capitol Mall, MIC-55
Sacramento, California 95814

[X] BY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

Pursuant to California Senate Bill No. 836, I caused the documents described above to be electronically submitted by and through the procedure stated on the website of the State of California Labor and Workforce Development Agency.

[X] STATE

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the above is true and correct.

Executed on July 9, 2020, at Pasadena, California.


Ying Ting Xu