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12 **SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

13 **IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA**

RG 21107652

14 TARRANCE RICKS, on behalf of the State
15 of California, as a private attorney
16 general,

17 Plaintiff,

18 vs.

19 AKKAM, INC., a California Coproration;
20 and DOES 1 through 50, inclusive,

21 Defendants.

Case No. _____

REPRESENTATIVE ACTION
COMPLAINT FOR:

1. Civil Penalties Pursuant to Labor Code §
2699, *et seq.* for violations of Labor Code
§§ 201, 202, 203, 204 *et seq.*, 210, 221,
226(a), 226.7, 246, 351, 510, 512,
558(a)(1)(2), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198,
2802, California Code of Regulations,
Title 8, Section 11040, Subdivision 5(A)-
(B)

ENDORSED
FILED
ALAMEDA COUNTY

AUG 04 2021

CLERK OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
By JAMIE THOMAS, Deputy

1 Plaintiff Tarrance Ricks (“PLAINTIFF”) on behalf of the people of the State of
2 California and as an “aggrieved employee” acting as a private attorney general under the Labor
3 Code Private Attorney General Act of 2004, § 2699, *et seq.* (“PAGA”) only, alleges on
4 information and belief, except for his own acts and knowledge which are based on personal
5 knowledge, the following:

6 **INTRODUCTION**

7 1. PLAINTIFF brings this action against Akkam, Inc. (referred to as
8 “DEFENDANT”) seeking only to recover PAGA civil penalties for himself, and on behalf
9 of all current and former aggrieved employees that worked for DEFENDANT. PLAINTIFF
10 does **not seek to recover anything other than penalties as permitted by California**
11 **Labor Code § 2699.** To the extent that statutory violations are mentioned for wage
12 violations, PLAINTIFF does not seek underlying general and/or special damages for those
13 violations, but simply the civil penalties permitted by California Labor Code § 2699.

14 2. California has enacted the PAGA to permit an individual to bring an action on
15 behalf of himself and on behalf of others for PAGA penalties *only*, which is the precise and
16 sole nature of this action.

17 3. Accordingly, PLAINTIFF seeks to obtain all applicable relief for
18 DEFENDANT’s violations under PAGA and solely for the relief as permitted by PAGA –
19 that is, penalties and any other relief the Court deems proper pursuant to the PAGA.
20 Nothing in this complaint should be construed as attempting to obtain any relief that would
21 not be available in a PAGA-only action.

22 **THE PARTIES**

23 4. Defendant Akkam, Inc. (“DEFENDANT”) is a California Corporation that at all
24 relevant times mentioned herein conducted and continues to conduct substantial business in the
25 state of California.

26 5. DEFENDANT is part of the fast food and quick service restaurant industries.

27 6. PLAINTIFF was employed by DEFENDANT from October of 2020 to January
28

1 18, 2021 and was at all times classified by DEFENDANT as a non-exempt employee, paid on
2 an hourly basis, and entitled to the legally required meal and rest periods and payment of
3 minimum and overtime wages due for all time worked.

4 7. PLAINTIFF, and such persons that may be added from time to time who satisfy
5 the requirements and exhaust the administrative procedures under the Private Attorney General
6 Act, brings this Representative Action on behalf of the State of California with respect to
7 himself and all individuals who are or previously were employed by DEFENDANT in
8 California and who were classified as non-exempt employees ("AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES")
9 during the time period of March 18, 2020 until a date as determined by the Court (the "PAGA
10 PERIOD").

11 8. PLAINTIFF, on behalf of himself and all AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES presently
12 or formerly employed by DEFENDANT during the PAGA PERIOD, brings this representative
13 action pursuant to Labor Code § 2699, *et seq.* seeking fixed civil penalties for DEFENDANT's
14 violation of California Labor Code §§ 201, 202, 203, 204 *et seq.*, 210, 221, 226(a), 226.7, 246,
15 351, 510, 512, 558(a)(1)(2), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2802, California Code of Regulations,
16 Title 8, Section 11040, Subdivision 5(A)-(B), and the applicable Wage Order(s). Based upon
17 the foregoing, PLAINTIFF and all AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES are aggrieved employees
18 within the meaning of Labor Code § 2699, *et seq.*

19 9. The true names and capacities, whether individual, corporate, subsidiary,
20 partnership, associate or otherwise of defendants DOES 1 through 50, inclusive, are presently
21 unknown to PLAINTIFF who therefore sues these Defendants by such fictitious names pursuant
22 to Cal. Civ. Proc. Code § 474. PLAINTIFF will seek leave to amend this Complaint to allege
23 the true names and capacities of Does 1 through 50, inclusive, when they are ascertained.
24 PLAINTIFF is informed and believes, and based upon that information and belief alleges, that
25 the Defendants named in this Complaint, including DOES 1 through 50, inclusive, are
26 responsible in some manner for one or more of the events and happenings that proximately
27 caused the injuries and damages hereinafter alleged.

28 10. The agents, servants and/or employees of the Defendants and each of them acting

1 on behalf of the Defendants acted within the course and scope of his, her or its authority as the
2 agent, servant and/or employee of the Defendants, and personally participated in the conduct
3 alleged herein on behalf of the Defendants with respect to the conduct alleged herein.
4 Consequently, the acts of each Defendant are legally attributable to the other Defendants and
5 all Defendants are jointly and severally liable to PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED
6 EMPLOYEES, for the loss sustained as a proximate result of the conduct of the Defendants'
7 agents, servants and/or employees.

8 9 THE CONDUCT

10 11. Pursuant to the Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Orders, DEFENDANT is
11 required to pay PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES for all their time worked,
12 meaning the time during which an employee is subject to the control of an employer, including
13 all the time the employee is suffered or permitted to work. DEFENDANT required PLAINTIFF
14 and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES to work from time to time while they were clocked out
15 for what was supposed to be their off duty meal break. DEFENDANT required PLAINTIFF
16 and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES to work off the clock without paying them for all the time
17 they performed duties while on their meal break, specifically by failing to provide enough labor
18 hours to accomplish all the job tasks that DEFENDANT expected PLAINTIFF and the
19 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES to complete on a daily and/or weekly basis. PLAINTIFF and the
20 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES also worked off the clock with respect to time spent undergoing
21 mandatory drug testing or any other testing and/or examination required as a condition of
22 employment. Further, PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES from time to time
23 were not paid wages for all time worked, including overtime wages, such that in the aggregate
24 employees were underpaid wages as a result of DEFENDANT's pattern and practice of
25 unevenly rounding time worked by its employees. As a result, PLAINTIFF and the other
26 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES forfeited minimum wage and overtime compensation by from
27 time to time working without their time being accurately recorded and without compensation
28 at the applicable minimum wage and overtime rates. DEFENDANT's policy and practice not

1 to pay PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES for all time worked is evidenced
2 by DEFENDANT's business records.

3 12. As a result of their rigorous work schedules, PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED
4 EMPLOYEES were also from time to time unable to take off duty meal breaks and were not
5 fully relieved of duty for meal periods. PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES
6 were from time to time required to perform work as ordered by DEFENDANT for more than
7 five (5) hours during a shift without receiving an off-duty meal break. Further, DEFENDANT
8 failed to provide PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES with a second off-duty
9 meal period from time to time in which these employees were required by DEFENDANT to
10 work ten (10) hours of work from time to time. PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED
11 EMPLOYEES therefore forfeited meal breaks without additional compensation and in
12 accordance with DEFENDANT's corporate policy and practice.

13 13. During the PAGA PERIOD, PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES
14 were also required from time to time to work in excess of four (4) hours without being provided
15 ten (10) minute rest periods. Further, these employees were denied their first rest periods of at
16 least ten (10) minutes for some shifts worked of at least two (2) to four (4) hours from time to
17 time, a first and second rest period of at least ten (10) minutes for some shifts worked of
18 between six (6) and eight (8) hours from time to time, and a first, second and third rest period
19 of at least ten (10) minutes for some shifts worked of ten (10) hours or more from time to time.
20 PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES were also not provided with one hour
21 wages in lieu thereof. As a result of their rigorous work schedules, PLAINTIFF and other
22 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES were from time to time denied their proper rest periods by
23 DEFENDANT and DEFENDANT's managers. Additionally, the applicable California Wage
24 Order requires employers to provide employees with off-duty rest periods, which the California
25 Supreme Court defined as time during which an employee is relieved from all work related
26 duties and free from employer control. In so doing, the Court held that the requirement under
27 California law that employers authorize and permit all employees to take rest period means that
28 employers must relieve employees of all duties and relinquish control over how employees

1 spend their time which includes control over the locations where employees may take their rest
2 period. Employers cannot impose controls that prohibit an employee from taking a brief walk -
3 five minutes out, five minutes back. Here, DEFENDANT's policy restricted PLAINTIFF and
4 other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES from unconstrained walks and was unlawful based on
5 DEFENDANT's rule which stated PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES could
6 not leave the work premises during their rest period.

7 14. State law provides that employees must be paid overtime and meal and rest break
8 premium pay at one-and-one-half times their "regular rate of pay." PLAINTIFF and other
9 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES were compensated at an hourly rate plus incentive pay that was
10 tied to specific elements of an employee's performance.

11 15. The second component of PLAINTIFF's and other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES'
12 compensation was DEFENDANT's non-discretionary incentive program that paid PLAINTIFF
13 and other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES incentive wages based on their performance for
14 DEFENDANT. The non-discretionary incentive program provided all employees paid on an
15 hourly basis with incentive compensation when the employees met the various performance
16 goals set by DEFENDANT. However, when calculating the regular rate of pay in order to pay
17 overtime and premiums for meal and rest break violations to PLAINTIFF and other
18 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES, DEFENDANT failed to include the incentive compensation as
19 part of the employees' "regular rate of pay" for purposes of calculating overtime pay and
20 premium pay for meal and rest break violations. Management and supervisors described the
21 incentive program to potential and new employees as part of the compensation package. As a
22 matter of law, the incentive compensation received by PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED
23 EMPLOYEES must be included in the "regular rate of pay." The failure to do so has resulted
24 in an underpayment of overtime compensation and meal and rest break premium pay to
25 PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES by DEFENDANT.

26 16. DEFENDANT also failed to provide PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED
27 EMPLOYEES with complete and accurate wage statements which failed to show, among other
28 things, the correct gross and net wages earned. Cal. Lab. Code § 226 provides that every

1 employer shall furnish each of his or her employees with an accurate itemized wage statement
2 in writing showing, among other things, gross wages earned and all applicable hourly rates in
3 effect during the pay period and the corresponding amount of time worked at each hourly rate.
4 PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES were paid on an hourly basis. As such, the
5 wage statements should reflect all applicable hourly rates during the pay period and the total
6 hours worked, and the applicable pay period in which the wages are earned pursuant to
7 California Labor Code Section 226(a). The wage statements DEFENDANT provided to
8 PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES failed to identify such information. More
9 specifically, the wage statements failed to identify the accurate total hours worked each pay
10 period. When the hours shown on the wage statements were added up, they did not equal the
11 actual total hours worked during the pay period. Aside, from the violations listed above,
12 DEFENDANT failed to issue to PLAINTIFF an itemized wage statement that lists all the
13 requirements under California Labor Code 226 *et seq.* As a result, DEFENDANT from time to
14 time provided PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES with wage statements
15 which violated Cal. Lab. Code § 226.

16 17. Cal. Lab. Code § 204 provides that “[a]ll wages. . . earned by any person in any
17 employment are due and payable twice during each calendar month, on days designated in
18 advance by the employer as the regular paydays.” Further, Cal. Lab. Code § 204(a) expressly
19 requires employers to pay employees all wages owed within eleven (11) days of the close of the
20 payroll period. DEFENDANT from time to time failed to pay PLAINTIFF and other
21 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES all wages owed to them within eleven (11) days of the close of
22 the payroll period.

23 18. Pursuant to Cal. Lab. Code Section 221, “It shall be unlawful for any employer
24 to collect or receive from an employee any part of wages theretofore paid by said employer to
25 said employee.” DEFENDANT failed to pay all compensation due to PLAINTIFF and other
26 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES, made unlawful deductions from compensation payable to
27 PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES, failed to disclose all aspects of the
28 deductions from compensation payable to PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED

1 EMPLOYEES, and thereby failed to pay these employees all wages due at each applicable pay
2 period and upon termination. PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES seek
3 recovery of all illegal deductions from wages according to proof, related penalties, interest,
4 attorney fees and costs.

5 19. DEFENDANT underpaid sick pay wages to PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED
6 EMPLOYEES by failing to pay such wages at the regular rate of pay. Specifically, PLAINTIFF
7 and other non-exempt employees earn non-discretionary remuneration. Rather than pay sick
8 pay at the regular rate of pay, DEFENDANT underpaid sick pay to PLAINTIFF and other
9 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES at their base rates of pay.

10 20. DEFENDANT intentionally and knowingly failed to reimburse and indemnify
11 PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES for required business expenses
12 incurred by PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES in direct consequence of
13 discharging their duties on behalf of DEFENDANT. Under California Labor Code Section
14 2802, employers are required to indemnify employees for all expenses incurred in the course
15 and scope of their employment. Cal. Lab. Code § 2802 expressly states that "an employer shall
16 indemnify his or her employee for all necessary expenditures or losses incurred by the employee
17 in direct consequence of the discharge of his or her duties, or of his or her obedience to the
18 directions of the employer, even though unlawful, unless the employee, at the time of obeying
19 the directions, believed them to be unlawful."

20 21. In the course of their employment PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED
21 EMPLOYEES as a business expense, were required by DEFENDANT to use their own personal
22 cellular phones and personal vehicles as a result of and in furtherance of their job duties as
23 employees for DEFENDANT but were not reimbursed or indemnified by DEFENDANT for the
24 cost associated with the use of their personal cellular phones for DEFENDANT's benefit.
25 Specifically, PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES were required by
26 DEFENDANT to use their personal cellular phones to respond to managers while off the clock
27 (which also results in minimum wage and overtime violations). As a result, in the course of
28 their employment with DEFENDANT, PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES

1 incurred unreimbursed business expenses which included, but were not limited to, costs related
2 to the use of their personal cellular phones all on behalf of and for the benefit of DEFENDANT.

3 22. In violation of the applicable sections of the California Labor Code and the
4 requirements of the Industrial Welfare Commission ("IWC") Wage Order, DEFENDANT as
5 a matter of company policy, practice and procedure, intentionally and knowingly failed to
6 compensate PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES for missed meal and rest
7 periods. This policy and practice of DEFENDANT is intended to purposefully avoid the
8 payment for all time worked as required by California law which allows DEFENDANT to
9 illegally profit and gain an unfair advantage over competitors who complied with the law. To
10 the extent equitable tolling operates to toll claims by the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES against
11 DEFENDANT, the PAGA PERIOD should be adjusted accordingly.

12 23. By reason of this conduct applicable to PLAINTIFF and all AGGRIEVED
13 EMPLOYEES, DEFENDANT engaged in a company-wide policy and procedure which fails
14 to accurately calculate and record all missed meal and rest periods and failed to pay all
15 minimum and overtime wages due to PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES. The
16 proper recording of these employees' missed meal and rest breaks is the DEFENDANT's
17 burden. As a result of DEFENDANT's intentional disregard of the obligation to meet this
18 burden, DEFENDANT fails to properly calculate and/or pay all required compensation for work
19 performed by the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES and violated the California Labor Code and
20 regulations promulgated thereunder as herein alleged.

21 24. All of the conduct and violations alleged herein occurred during the PAGA
22 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES. To the extent that any of the conduct and violations alleged
23 herein did not affect PLAINTIFF during the PAGA PERIOD, PLAINTIFF seeks penalties for
24 those violations that affected other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES pursuant to *Carrington v.*
25 *Starbucks Corp.* 2018 AJDAR 12157 (Certified for Publication 12/19/18).

26
27 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

28 25. This Court has jurisdiction over this Action pursuant to California Code of Civil

1 Procedure, Section 410.10.

2 26. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure,
3 Sections 395 and 395.5, because DEFENDANT, resides in this County, and DEFENDANT (i)
4 currently maintains and at all relevant times maintained offices and facilities in this County
5 and/or conducts substantial business in this County, and (ii) committed the wrongful conduct
6 herein alleged in this County against PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES.

7
8 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

9 **For Violation of the Private Attorneys General Act**

10 **[Cal. Lab. Code §§ 2698, *et seq.*]**

11 **(By PLAINTIFF and Against All Defendants)**

12 27. PLAINTIFF realleges and incorporates by this reference, as though fully set forth
13 herein, the prior paragraphs of this Complaint.

14 28. PAGA is a mechanism by which the State of California itself can enforce state
15 labor laws through the employee suing under the PAGA who do so as the proxy or agent of the
16 state's labor law enforcement agencies. An action to recover civil penalties under PAGA is
17 fundamentally a law enforcement action designed to protect the public and not to benefit private
18 parties. The purpose of the PAGA is not to recover damages or restitution, but to create a
19 means of "deputizing" citizens as private attorneys general to enforce the Labor Code. In
20 enacting PAGA, the California Legislature specified that "it was ... in the public interest to
21 allow aggrieved employees, acting as private attorneys general to recover civil penalties for
22 Labor Code violations ..." Stats. 2003, ch. 906, § 1. Accordingly, PAGA claims cannot be
23 subject to arbitration.

24 29. PLAINTIFF, and such persons that may be added from time to time who satisfy
25 the requirements and exhaust the administrative procedures under the Private Attorney General
26 Act, brings this Representative Action on behalf of the State of California with respect to
27 himself and all individuals who are or previously were employed by DEFENDANT in
28 California and who were classified as non-exempt employees ("AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES")

1 during the time period of March 18, 2020 until a date as determined by the Court (the "PAGA
2 PERIOD").

3 30. On March 18, 2021, PLAINTIFF gave written notice by electronic mail to the
4 Labor and Workforce Development Agency (the "Agency") and by certified mail to the
5 employer of the specific provisions of this code alleged to have been violated as required by
6 Labor Code § 2699.3. The statutory waiting period for PLAINTIFF to add these allegations to
7 the Complaint has expired. As a result, pursuant to Section 2699.3, PLAINTIFF may now
8 commence a representative civil action under PAGA pursuant to Section 2699 as the proxy of
9 the State of California with respect to all AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES as herein defined.

10 31. The policies, acts and practices heretofore described were and are an unlawful
11 business act or practice because DEFENDANT (a) failed to provide PLAINTIFF and the other
12 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES accurate itemized wage statements, (b) failed to properly record
13 and provide legally required meal and rest periods, (c) failed to pay minimum wages, (d) failed
14 to pay overtime and sick pay wages, (e) failed to reimburse employees for required expenses,
15 and (f) failed to provide wages when due, all in violation of the applicable Labor Code sections
16 listed in Labor Code §§ 201, 202, 203, 204 *et seq.*, 210, 221, 226(a), 226.7, 246, 351, 510, 512,
17 558(a)(1)(2), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2802, California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Section
18 11040, Subdivision 5(A)-(B), and the applicable Wage Order(s), and thereby gives rise to civil
19 penalties as a result of such conduct.¹ PLAINTIFF hereby seeks recovery of only civil penalties
20 as prescribed by the Labor Code Private Attorney General Act of 2004 as the representative of
21 the State of California for the illegal conduct perpetrated on PLAINTIFF and the other
22 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES.

23 24 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

25 WHEREFORE, PLAINTIFF prays for judgment against each Defendant, jointly and
26 severally, as follows:

27 _____
28 ¹Plaintiff specifically excludes and/or does not allege any claims under California Labor
Code §558(a)(3).

1 1. On behalf of the State of California and with respect to all AGGRIEVED
2 EMPLOYEES:

3 A) Recovery of civil penalties as prescribed by the Labor Code Private
4 Attorneys General Act of 2004; and,

5 B) An award of attorneys' fees and cost of suit, as allowable under the
6 law, including, but not limited to, pursuant to Labor Code §2699.

7 Dated: August 3, 2021 BLUMENTHAL NORDREHAUG BHOWMIK DE BLOUW LLP
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11 By: 

 Norman B. Blumenthal
 Attorneys for Plaintiff
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