

**CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT AND PAGA SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT
AND CLASS NOTICE**

Estevan Vargas v. Master Landscape & Maintenance, Inc.
Superior Court of California, County of Orange, Case No. 30-2021-01222960-CU-OE-CXC

This Class Action and PAGA Settlement Agreement (“Agreement”) is made by and between Plaintiff Estevan Vargas (“Plaintiff”), and Defendant Master Landscape & Maintenance, Inc., (“Defendant” or “Master”). The Agreement refers to Plaintiff and Defendant collectively as “Parties,” or individually as “Party.” This Agreement is made subject to approval of the Superior Court of the State of California for the County of Orange (“Court”) and the terms and conditions set forth herein.

1. DEFINITIONS

- 1.1. “Action” means the Plaintiff’s lawsuit alleging wage and hour violations against Defendant, captioned *Estevan Varga v. Master Landscape & Maintenance, Inc.*, Case No. 30-2021-01222960-CU-OE-CXC, initiated on September 22, 2021, and pending in the Superior Court of the State of California, County of Orange.
- 1.2. “Administrator” means ILYM Group, Inc., the neutral entity the Parties have agreed to appoint to administer the Settlement.
- 1.3. “Administrator Expenses Payment” means the amount the Administrator will be paid from the Gross Settlement Amount to reimburse its reasonable fees and expenses in accordance with the Administrator’s “not to exceed” bid submitted to the Court in connection with Preliminary Approval of the Settlement.
- 1.4. “Aggrieved Employee” means all persons employed by Defendant in California as an hourly non-exempt employee at any time during the PAGA Period.
- 1.5. “Class” means all persons employed by Defendant in California as hourly non-exempt employees during the Class Period.
- 1.6. “Class Counsel” means Anna R. Salusky, Esq., of Salusky Law Group, APC.
- 1.7. “Class Counsel Fees Payment” and “Class Counsel Expenses Payment” mean the amounts allocated to Class Counsel for reimbursement of reasonable attorneys’ fees and expenses, respectively, incurred in prosecuting the Action.
- 1.8. “Class Data” means Class Member identifying information in Defendant’s possession, including the Class Member’s name, last-known mailing address, Social Security number, and number of Class Period Workweeks and PAGA Pay Periods.
- 1.9. “Class Member” or “Settlement Class Member” means a member of the Class, as either a Participating Class Member or Non-Participating Class Member (including a Non-Participating Class Member who qualifies as an Aggrieved Employee).
- 1.10. “Class Member Address Search” means the Administrator’s investigation and search for current Class Member mailing addresses using all reasonably available sources, methods and means, including, but not limited to, the National Change of Address database, skip traces, and direct contact by the Administrator with Class Members.

- 1.11. "Class Notice" means the COURT APPROVED NOTICE OF CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT AND HEARING DATE FOR FINAL APPROVAL, to be mailed to Class Members in English and Spanish, in the form, without material variation, attached as Exhibit A and incorporated by reference into this Agreement.
- 1.12. "Class Period" means the period from September 22, 2017, through ninety (90) days from the date of the fully executed Agreement or ninety (90) days after the date of Preliminary Approval, whichever comes first.
- 1.13. "Class Representative" means Estevan Vargas, the named Plaintiff in the operative complaint in the Action seeking Court approval to serve as a Class Representative.
- 1.14. "Class Representative Service Payment" means the payment to the Class Representative for initiating the Action and providing services in support of the Action.
- 1.15. "Court" means the Superior Court of California, County of Orange.
- 1.16. "Defendant" means Master Landscape & Maintenance, Inc., the named Defendant in the Action.
- 1.17. "Defense Counsel" means Randal A. Whitecotton, Esq., of R.A. Whitecotton Law Corporation.
- 1.18. "Effective Date" means the date by when both of the following have occurred: (a) the Court enters a Judgment on its Order Granting Final Approval of the Settlement; and (b) the Judgment is final. The Judgment is final as of the latest of the following occurrences: (a) if no Participating Class Member objects to the Settlement, the day the Court enters Judgment; (b) if one or more Participating Class Members objects to the Settlement, the day after the deadline for filing a notice of appeal from the Judgment or if a timely appeal from the Judgment is filed, the day after the appellate court affirms the Judgment and issues a remittitur.
- 1.19. "Final Approval" means the Court's order granting final approval of the Settlement.
- 1.20. "Final Approval Hearing" means the Court's hearing on the Motion for Final Approval of the Settlement.
- 1.21. "Final Judgment" means the Judgment entered by the Court upon Granting Final Approval of the Settlement.
- 1.22. "Gross Settlement Amount" means \$130,000.00, which is the total amount Defendant agrees to pay under the Settlement except as provided in Paragraph 8 below. The Gross Settlement Amount will be used to pay the Individual Class Payments, Individual PAGA Payments, the LWDA PAGA Payment, the Class Counsel Fees Payment, the Class Counsel Expenses Payment, the Class Representative Service Payment, and the Administrator Expenses Payment.
- 1.23. "Individual Class Payment" means the Participating Class Member's pro rata share of the Net Settlement Amount calculated according to the number of Workweeks worked during the Class Period.
- 1.24. "Individual PAGA Payment" means the Aggrieved Employee's pro rata share of 25% of the PAGA Penalties calculated according to the number of Workweeks worked during the PAGA Period.
- 1.25. "Judgment" means the judgment entered by the Court based upon the Final Approval.

- 1.26. "LWDA" means the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency, the agency entitled, under Labor Code section 2699, subdivision (i).
- 1.27. "LWDA PAGA Payment" means the 75% of the PAGA Penalties paid to the LWDA under Labor Code section 2699, subdivision (i), to receive 75% of civil penalties recovered by aggrieved employees.
- 1.28. "Net Settlement Amount" means the Gross Settlement Amount, less the following payments in the amounts approved by the Court: Individual PAGA Payments, the LWDA PAGA Payment, Class Representative Service Payment, Class Counsel Fees Payment, Class Counsel Expenses Payment, and the Administrator Expenses Payment. The remainder is to be paid to Participating Class Members as Individual Class Payments.
- 1.29. "Non-Participating Class Member" means a Class Member who opts out of the Settlement by sending the Administrator a valid and timely Request for Exclusion.
- 1.30. "PAGA Pay Period" means any pay period during which an Aggrieved Employee worked for Defendant for at least one day during the PAGA Period.
- 1.31. "PAGA Period" means the period from September 22, 2020, through ninety (90) days after the date of the fully executed Agreement, or 90 days after the date of Preliminary Approval, whichever comes first.
- 1.32. "PAGA" means the Private Attorneys General Act (Lab. Code, § 2698 et seq.).
- 1.33. "PAGA Notice" means Plaintiff's May 26, 2021, letter to Defendant and the LWDA, providing notice pursuant to Labor Code section 2699.3, subdivision (a).
- 1.34. "PAGA Penalties" means \$10,000, the total amount of PAGA civil penalties to be paid from the Gross Settlement Amount, allocated 25% to the Aggrieved Employees (\$2,500.00) and 75% to the LWDA (\$7,500.00) in settlement of PAGA claims, in settlement of all PAGA claims during the PAGA Period.
- 1.35. "Participating Class Member" means a Class Member who does not submit a valid and timely Request for Exclusion from the Settlement.
- 1.36. "Plaintiff" means Estevan Vargas, the named plaintiff in the Action.
- 1.37. "Preliminary Approval" means the Court's Order Granting Preliminary Approval of the Settlement.
- 1.38. "Preliminary Approval Order" means the proposed Order Granting Preliminary Approval and Approval of PAGA Settlement.
- 1.39. "Released Class Claims" means the claims being released as described in Paragraph 5.2 below.
- 1.40. "Released PAGA Claims" means the claims being released as described in Paragraph 5.3 below.
- 1.41. "Released Parties" means Defendant Master Landscape & Maintenance, Inc., and each of its past or present divisions, d/b/a's, officers, directors, shareholders, employees, agents, principals, heirs, representatives, accountants, auditors, consultants, insurers and reinsurers, and its respective successors and predecessors in interest, subsidiaries, affiliates, parent companies and attorneys, and/or any individual or entity which could be jointly liable with Defendant for the claims alleged.

- 1.42. “Request for Exclusion” means a Class Member’s submission of a written request to be excluded from the Settlement, signed by the Class Member.
- 1.43. “Response Deadline” means 60 days after the Administrator mails Class Notices to Class Members and Aggrieved Employees and shall be the last date on which Class Members may: (a) fax, email, or mail Requests for Exclusion from the Settlement, or (b) fax, email, or mail his, her, or their Objection to the Settlement. Class Members to whom Class Notices are resent after having been returned undeliverable to the Administrator shall have an additional 14 calendar days beyond the Response Deadline.
- 1.44. “Settlement” means the disposition of the Action effected by this Agreement and the Judgment.
- 1.45. “Workweek” means any week during which a Class Member worked for Defendant for at least one day, during the Class Period.

2. RECITALS

- 2.1. On September 22, 2021, Plaintiff commenced this Action by filing a Complaint alleging causes of action against Defendant for failure to provide compliant meal and rest periods, failure to pay minimum wage and overtime wages, failure to reimburse for necessary expenditures, failure to keep accurate wage statements and maintain records, failure to pay wages due at separation of employment, unfair business practices, and penalties under Labor Code sections 2698-2699. On May 4, 2023, Plaintiff filed a First Amended Complaint, adding a cause of action for illegal rounding. The First Amended Complaint is the operative complaint in the Action (the “Operative Complaint”). Defendant denies the allegations in the Operative Complaint, denies any failure to comply with the laws identified in the Operative Complaint, and denies any and all liability for the causes of action alleged.
- 2.2. Pursuant to Labor Code section 2699.3, subdivision (a), Plaintiff gave timely written notice to Defendant and the LWDA by sending the PAGA Notice.
- 2.3. On March 4, 2024, the Parties participated in an all-day mediation presided over by Alan Berkowitz, Esq., which led to this Agreement to settle the Action.
- 2.4. The Parties engaged in written discovery and Plaintiff’s counsel took Defendant’s PMQ deposition. Prior to mediation, Plaintiff obtained, through formal and informal discovery, information regarding class size, relevant employment policies and procedures, and a sampling of time and payroll records for Class Members. The Defendants also produced three year’s worth of tax returns, P&L statements and a balance sheet to support its claims regarding the financial viability of the business, which Plaintiff’s counsel and a certified public account both reviewed. Plaintiff’s investigation was sufficient to satisfy the criteria for court approval set forth in *Dunk v. Ford Motor Company* (1996) 48 Cal.App.4th 1794, 1801 and *Kullar v. Foot Locker Retail, Inc.* (2008) 168 Cal.App.4th 116, 129-130 (“*Dunk/Kullar*”).
- 2.5. The Court has not granted class certification.
- 2.6. The Parties, Class Counsel, and Defense Counsel represent that they are not aware of any other pending matter or action asserting claims that will be extinguished or affected by the Settlement.

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3. MONETARY TERMS

- 3.1. Gross Settlement Amount. Except as otherwise provided by Paragraph 8 below, Defendant agrees to pay \$130,000.00 as the Gross Settlement Amount, and to separately pay any and all employer payroll taxes owed on the Wage Portions of the Individual Class Payments. Defendant has no obligation to pay the Gross Settlement Amount (or any payroll taxes) prior to the deadline stated in Paragraph 4.3 of this Agreement. The Administrator will disburse the entire Gross Settlement Amount without asking or requiring Participating Class Members or Aggrieved Employees to submit any claim as a condition of payment. None of the Gross Settlement Amount will revert to Defendant.
- 3.2. Payments from the Gross Settlement Amount. The Administrator will make and deduct the following payments from the Gross Settlement Amount, in the amounts specified by the Court in the Final Approval:
- 3.2.1. To Plaintiff: Class Representative Service Payment to Plaintiff, as Class Representative, of not more than \$7,500.00 (in addition to any Individual Class Payment and any Individual PAGA Payment Plaintiff is entitled to receive under this Agreement) as a service award to Plaintiff for initiating and participating in the Action, and in exchange for Plaintiff's general release of all claims against Defendant, as outlined in Paragraphs 5.1 and 5.1.1 of this Agreement. Defendant will not oppose Plaintiff's request for a Class Representative Service Payment that does not exceed this amount. As part of the motion for Class Counsel Fees Payment and Class Counsel Expenses Payment, Plaintiff will seek Court approval for any Class Representative Service Payment no later than 16 court days prior to the Final Approval Hearing. If the Court approves a Class Representative Service Payment less than the amount requested, the Administrator will retain the remainder in the Net Settlement Amount. The Administrator will pay the Class Representative Service Payment using IRS Form 1099. Plaintiff assumes full responsibility and liability for any employee taxes owed on his Class Representative Service Payment.
- 3.2.2. To Class Counsel: A Class Counsel Fees Payment of not more than one-third of the Gross Settlement Amount, which is currently estimated to be \$43,333.33, and a Class Counsel Expenses Payment of not more than \$15,000.00. Defendant will not oppose requests for these payments provided that they do not exceed these amounts. Plaintiff and/or Class Counsel will file a motion for Class Counsel Fees Payment and Class Counsel Expenses Payment no later than 16 court days prior to the Final Approval Hearing. If the Court approves a Class Counsel Fees Payment and/or a Class Counsel Expenses Payment less than the amounts requested, the Administrator will allocate the remainder to the Net Settlement Amount. Released Parties shall have no liability to Class Counsel or any other Plaintiff's counsel arising from any claim to any portion of the Class Counsel Fees Payment and/or Class Counsel Expenses Payment. The Administrator will pay the Class Counsel Fees Payment and Class Counsel Expenses Payment using one or more IRS 1099 Forms. Class Counsel assumes full responsibility and liability for taxes owed on the Class Counsel Fees Payment and the Class Counsel Expenses Payment.

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- 3.2.3. To the Administrator: An Administrator Expenses Payment not to exceed \$11,050.00, except for a showing of good cause and as approved by the Court. To the extent the Administrator expenses are less, or the Court approves payment less than \$11,050.00, the Administrator will retain the remainder in the Net Settlement Amount.
- 3.2.4. To the LWDA and Aggrieved Employees: PAGA Penalties in the amount of \$5,000.00 to be paid from the Gross Settlement Amount, with 75% (\$3,750.00) allocated to the LWDA PAGA Payment and 25% (\$1,250.00) allocated to the Individual PAGA Payments.
 - 3.2.4.1. The Administrator will calculate each Individual PAGA Payment by (a) dividing the amount of the Aggrieved Employees' 25% share of PAGA Penalties (\$1,250.00) by the total number of PAGA Period Pay Periods worked by all Aggrieved Employees during the PAGA Period and (b) multiplying the result by each Aggrieved Employee's PAGA Period Pay Periods. Aggrieved Employees assume full responsibility and liability for any taxes owed on their Individual PAGA Payment.
 - 3.2.4.2. If the Court approves PAGA penalties of less than the amount requested, the Administrator will allocate the remainder to the Net Settlement Amount. The Administrator will report the Individual PAGA Payments on IRS 1099 Form.
- 3.2.5. To Each Participating Class Member: An Individual Class Payment calculated by (a) dividing the Net Settlement Amount by the total number of Workweeks worked by all Participating Class Members during the Class Period and (b) multiplying the result by each Participating Class Member's Workweeks.
 - 3.2.5.1. Tax Allocation of Individual Class Payments. The Parties agree that 20% of each Participating Class Member's Individual Class Payment will be allocated to settlement of wage claims (the "Wage Portion"). The Wage Portions are subject to tax withholding and will be reported on an IRS W-2 Form. The remaining 80% of each Participating Class Member's Individual Class Payment will be allocated to settlement of claims for interest and penalties (the "Non-Wage Portion"). The Non-Wage Portions are not subject to wage withholdings and will be reported on IRS 1099 Forms. Participating Class Members assume full responsibility and liability for any employee taxes owed on their Individual Class Payment.
 - 3.2.5.2. Effect of Non-Participating Class Members on Calculation of Individual Class Payments. Non-Participating Class Members will not receive any Individual Class Payments. The Administrator will retain amounts equal to their Individual Class Payments in the Net Settlement Amount for distribution to Participating Class Members on a pro rata basis.

4. SETTLEMENT FUNDING AND PAYMENTS.

- 4.1. Class Workweeks and Aggrieved Employee Pay Periods. Based on a review of its records, as of March 4, 2024, Defendant estimates there are 493 Class Members who collectively worked a total of 14,123 Workweeks, and 235 Aggrieved Employees who worked a total of 4,680 PAGA Pay Periods.

- 4.2. Class Data. Not later than 15 calendar days after the Court grants Preliminary Approval of the Settlement, Defendant will simultaneously deliver the Class Data to the Administrator, in the form of a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. To protect Class Members' privacy rights, the Administrator must maintain the Class Data in confidence, use the Class Data only for purposes of this Settlement and for no other purpose, and restrict access to the Class Data to Administrator employees who need access to the Class Data to effect and perform under this Agreement. Defendant has a continuing duty to immediately notify Class Counsel if it discovers that the Class Data omitted class member identifying information and to provide corrected or updated Class Data as soon as reasonably feasible. Without any extension of the deadline by which Defendant must send the Class Data to the Administrator, the Parties and their counsel will expeditiously use best efforts, in good faith, to reconstruct or otherwise resolve any issues related to missing or omitted Class Data.
- 4.3. Funding of Gross Settlement Amount. Defendant shall fully fund the Gross Settlement Amount, and also fund the amounts necessary to fully pay Defendant's share of payroll taxes, by transmitting the funds to the Administrator no later than 10 days after the Effective Date.
- 4.4. Payments from the Gross Settlement Amount. Within 14 days after Defendant funds the Gross Settlement Amount, the Administrator will mail checks for all Individual Class Payments, all Individual PAGA Payments, the LWDA PAGA Payment, the Administrator Expenses Payment, the Class Counsel Fees Payment, the Class Counsel Expenses Payment, and the Class Representative Service Payment.
- 4.4.1. The Administrator will issue checks for the Individual Class Payments and/or Individual PAGA Payments and send them, as described below, via First Class U.S. Mail, postage prepaid. The face of each check shall prominently state the date (not less than 180 days after the date of mailing) when the check will be voided. The Administrator will cancel all checks not cashed by the void date. The Administrator will send checks for Individual Class Payments to all Participating Class Members (including those for whom Class Notice was returned undelivered). The Administrator will send checks for Individual PAGA Payments to all Aggrieved Employees, including Non-Participating Class Members who qualify as Aggrieved Employees (including those for whom Class Notice was returned undelivered). The Administrator may send Participating Class Members a single check combining the Individual Class Payment and the Individual PAGA Payment. Before mailing any checks, the Administrator must update the recipients' mailing addresses using the National Change of Address Database.
- 4.4.2. The Administrator must conduct a Class Member Address Search for all Participating Class Members and Aggrieved Employees whose checks are returned undelivered without a United States Postal Service ("USPS") forwarding address. Within 7 days of receiving a returned check, the Administrator must re-mail the check to the USPS forwarding address provided or to an address ascertained through the Class Member Address Search. The Administrator need not take further steps to deliver checks to Participating Class Members and Aggrieved Employees whose re-mailed checks are returned as undelivered. The Administrator shall promptly send a replacement check to any Participating Class Member or Aggrieved Employee whose original check was lost or misplaced, requested by the Participating Class Member or Aggrieved Employee prior to the

void date.

- 4.4.3. For any Participating Class Member or Aggrieved Employee whose respective Individual Class Payment check or Individual PAGA Payment check is uncashed and cancelled after the void date, the Administrator shall transmit the funds represented by such checks to the California Controller's Unclaimed Property Fund in the name of the respective Participating Class Member or Aggrieved Employee, thereby leaving no "unpaid residue" subject to the requirements of Code of Civil Procedure section 384, subdivision (b).
- 4.4.4. The payment of Individual Class Payments and Individual PAGA Payments shall not obligate Defendant to confer any additional benefits or make any additional payments to Participating Class Members or Aggrieved Employees (such as 401(k) contributions or bonuses) beyond those specified in this Agreement.

5. RELEASE OF CLAIMS. Effective on the date when Defendant fully funds the entire Gross Settlement Amount and funds all employer payroll taxes owed on the Wage Portion of the Individual Class Payments, Plaintiff, Aggrieved Employees, and Participating Class Members will release claims against all Released Parties as follows:

5.1. Plaintiff's Release. Plaintiff releases all Released Parties from any claims during the Class Period that were or that could have been pled in the Operative Complaint based on the facts alleged in the causes of action in the Action, including but not limited to claims under Labor Code sections 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 210, 226, 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512, 516, 1182.12, 1194, 1194.2, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2698-2699, 2800, 2802, the applicable Wage Orders, and Business & Professions Code section 17200, and Plaintiff's PAGA Notice. ("Plaintiff's Release.") Plaintiff's Release does not extend to any claims or actions to enforce this Agreement, or to any claims for vested benefits, unemployment benefits, disability benefits, social security benefits, workers' compensation benefits that arose at any time, or based on occurrences outside the Class Period. Plaintiff acknowledges that Plaintiff may discover facts or law different from, or in addition to, the facts or law that Plaintiff now knows or believes to be true but agrees, nonetheless, that Plaintiff's Release shall be and remain effective in all respects, notwithstanding such different or additional facts or Plaintiff's discovery of them.

5.1.1. Plaintiff's Waiver of Rights Under Civil Code Section 1542. For purposes of Plaintiff's Release, Plaintiff expressly waives and relinquishes the provisions, rights, and benefits, if any, of section 1542 of the Civil Code, which reads:

A general release does not extend to claims that the creditor or releasing party does not know or suspect to exist in his or her favor at the time of executing the release, and that if known by him or her would have materially affected his or her settlement with the debtor or Released Party.

5.2. Release by Participating Class Members: All Participating Class Members release all Released Parties from any claims during the Class Period that were or that could have been pled in the Operative Complaint based on the facts alleged in the causes of action in the Action, including but not limited to claims under Labor Code sections 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 210, 226, 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512, 516, 1182.12, 1194, 1194.2, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2698-2699, 2800, 2802, the applicable Wage Orders, and Business & Professions Code section 17200, and Plaintiff's PAGA Notice (Participating Class Members' Release). Except as set forth in Section 5.3 of this Agreement, Participating Class Members do not release any other claims, including claims for vested benefits, wrongful

termination, violation of the Fair Employment and Housing Act, unemployment insurance, disability, social security, workers' compensation claims, or claims based on facts occurring outside the Class Period.

- 5.3. Release by Aggrieved Employees: All Aggrieved Employees are deemed to release, on behalf of themselves and their successors and assigns, the Released Parties from all claims for PAGA penalties that were alleged, or reasonably could have been alleged, based on the PAGA Period facts stated in the Operative Complaint, and the PAGA Notice (Aggrieved Employees' Release).

6. MOTION FOR PRELIMINARY APPROVAL.

- 6.1. Plaintiff's Responsibilities. Plaintiff will prepare and deliver to Defense Counsel all documents necessary for obtaining Preliminary Approval, including: (i) a draft of the proposed Class Notice; (ii) a draft of the memorandum in support of the Motion for Preliminary Approval, that includes an analysis of the Settlement under *Dunk/Kullar*, and a request for approval of the PAGA portion of the Settlement under Labor Code section 2699, subdivision (f)(2); (iii) a draft proposed Order Granting Preliminary Approval and Approval of Class Action and PAGA Settlement; and (iv) a signed declaration from Class Counsel attesting to its competency to represent the Class Members and its timely transmission to the LWDA of all necessary PAGA documents. Counsel will provide the drafts in (i), (ii), and (iii) to Defense Counsel at least seven days before filing for review and comment.
- 6.2. Duty to Cooperate. If the Parties disagree on any aspect of the proposed Motion for Preliminary Approval, Class Counsel and Defense Counsel will expeditiously work together on behalf of the Parties by meeting in person or by telephone, and in good faith, to resolve the disagreement. If the Court does not grant Preliminary Approval or conditions Preliminary Approval on any material change to this Agreement, Class Counsel and Defense Counsel will expeditiously work together on behalf of the Parties by meeting in person or by telephone, and in good faith, to modify the Agreement and otherwise satisfy the Court's concerns.

7. SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION.

- 7.1. Selection of Administrator. The Parties have jointly selected ILYM Group, Inc., to serve as Administrator and verified that, as condition of appointment, ILYM Group, Inc., agrees to be bound by this Agreement and to perform, as a fiduciary, all duties specified in this Agreement in exchange for payment of the Administrator Expenses Payment. The Parties and their Counsel represent that they have no interest or relationship, financial or otherwise, with the Administrator other than a professional relationship arising out of prior experiences administering settlements.
- 7.2. Employer Identification Number. The Administrator shall have and use its own Employer Identification Number for purposes of calculating payroll tax withholdings and providing reports to state and federal tax authorities.
- 7.3. Qualified Settlement Fund. The Administrator shall establish a settlement fund that meets the requirements of a Qualified Settlement Fund ("QSF") under US Treasury Regulation section 468B-1.

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7.4. Notice to Class Members.

- 7.4.1. No later than (3) business days after receipt of the Class Data, the Administrator shall notify Class Counsel that the list has been received and state the number of Class Members, Aggrieved Employees, Workweeks and PAGA Pay Periods in the Class Data.
- 7.4.2. Using best efforts to perform as soon as possible, and in no event later than 14 days after receiving the Class Data, the Administrator will send to all Class Members identified in the Class Data, via first-class United States Postal Service (“USPS”) mail, the Class Notice, in English and Spanish, substantially in the form attached to this Agreement as Exhibit A. The first page of the Class Notice shall prominently estimate the dollar amounts of any Individual Class Payment and/or Individual PAGA Payment payable to the Class Member, and the number of Workweeks and PAGA Pay Periods used to calculate these amounts. Before mailing Class Notices, the Administrator shall update Class Member addresses using the National Change of Address database.
- 7.4.3. Not later than 3 business days after the Administrator’s receipt of any Class Notice returned by the USPS as undelivered, the Administrator shall re-mail the Class Notice using any forwarding address provided by the USPS. If the USPS does not provide a forwarding address, the Administrator shall conduct a Class Member Address Search, and re-mail the Class Notice to the most current address obtained. The Administrator has no obligation to make further attempts to locate or send Class Notice to Class Members whose Class Notice is returned by the USPS a second time.
- 7.4.4. The deadlines for Class Members’ written objections, challenges to Workweeks and/or PAGA Pay Periods, and Requests for Exclusion will be extended an additional [14] days beyond the [60] days otherwise provided in the Class Notice for all Class Members whose notice is re-mailed. The Administrator will inform the Class Member of the extended deadline with the re-mailed Class Notice.
- 7.4.5. If the Administrator, Defendant, or Class Counsel is contacted by or otherwise discover any persons who believe they should have been included in the Class Data and should have received Class Notice, the Parties will expeditiously meet and confer in person or by telephone, and in good faith, in an effort to agree on whether to include them as Class Members. If the Parties agree, such persons will be Class Members entitled to the same rights as other Class Members, and the Administrator will send a Class Notice requiring them to exercise options under this Agreement not later than 14 days after receipt of Class Notice, or the deadline dates in the Class Notice, whichever are later.

7.5. Requests for Exclusion (Opt-Outs).

- 7.5.1. Class Members who wish to exclude themselves from the Settlement must send the Administrator, by fax or mail, a signed written Request for Exclusion not later than 60 days after the Administrator mails the Class Notice (plus an additional 14 days for Class Members whose Class Notice is re-mailed). A Request for Exclusion is a letter from a Class Member or his/her/their representative that reasonably communicates the Class Member’s election to be excluded from the Settlement and includes the Class Member’s name and address. To be valid, a Request for Exclusion must be timely faxed or postmarked by the Response

Deadline.

- 7.5.2. The Administrator shall accept any Request for Exclusion as valid if the Administrator can reasonably ascertain the identity of the person as a Class Member and the Class Member's desire to be excluded from the Settlement. The Administrator's determination shall be final and not appealable or otherwise susceptible to challenge. If the Administrator has reason to question the authenticity of a Request for Exclusion, the Administrator may demand additional proof of the Class Member's identity. The Administrator's determination of authenticity shall be final and not appealable or otherwise susceptible to challenge.
- 7.5.3. Every Class Member who does not submit a timely and valid Request for Exclusion is deemed to be a Participating Class Member under this Agreement, entitled to all benefits and bound by all terms and conditions of the Settlement, including the Participating Class Members' Release under Paragraph 5.2 of this Agreement, regardless of whether the Participating Class Member actually receives the Class Notice or objects to the Settlement.
- 7.5.4. Every Class Member who submits a valid and timely Request for Exclusion is a Non-Participating Class Member, shall not be bound by the release in Paragraph 5.2 of this Agreement, and shall not receive an Individual Class Payment or have the right to object to the class action components of the Settlement.
- 7.5.5. Every Aggrieved Employee is bound by the PAGA release identified in Paragraph 5.3 of this Agreement and is eligible for an Individual PAGA Payment.
- 7.6. Challenges to Calculation of Workweeks. Each Class Member shall have 60 days after the Administrator mails the Class Notice (plus an additional 14 days for Class Members whose Class Notice is re-mailed) to challenge the number of Class Period Workweeks and/or PAGA Pay Periods (if any) allocated to the Class Member in the Class Notice. The Class Member may challenge the allocation by communicating with the Administrator via fax or mail. The Administrator must encourage the challenging Class Member to submit supporting documentation. In the absence of any contrary documentation, the Administrator is entitled to presume that the Workweeks contained in the Class Notice are correct so long as they are consistent with the Class Data. The Administrator's determination of each Class Member's allocation of Workweeks and/or PAGA Pay Periods shall be final and not appealable or otherwise susceptible to challenge. The Administrator shall promptly provide copies of all challenges to the calculation of Workweeks and/or PAGA Pay Periods, and the Administrator's determination of the challenges, to Defense Counsel and Class Counsel.
- 7.7. Objections to Settlement.
 - 7.7.1. Only Participating Class Members may object to the class action components of the Settlement, including contesting the fairness of the Settlement, and/or the amounts requested for the Class Counsel Fees Payment, Class Counsel Expenses Payment and/or the Class Representative Payment.
 - 7.7.2. Participating Class Members may send written objections to the Administrator, by fax or mail. In the alternative, Participating Class Members may appear in Court (or retain an attorney to appear in Court) to present oral objections at the Final Approval Hearing. A Participating Class Member who elects to send a written

objection to the Administrator must do so not later than 60 days after the Administrator's mailing of the Class Notice (plus an additional 14 days for Class Members whose Class Notice was re-mailed).

7.7.3. Non-Participating Class Members have no right to object to any of the class action components of the Settlement.

7.8. Administrator Duties. The Administrator has a duty to perform or observe all tasks to be performed or observed by the Administrator contained in this Agreement or otherwise.

7.8.1. Website, Email Address and Toll-Free Number. The Administrator will establish and maintain and use an internet website to post information of interest to Class Members, including the date, time, and location for the Final Approval Hearing and copies of the Agreement, Motion for Preliminary Approval, the Preliminary Approval Order, the Class Notice, the Motion for Final Approval, the Motion for Class Counsel Fees Payment, Class Counsel Expenses Payment and Class Representative Payment, and the Final Approval Order and Judgment. The Administrator will also maintain and monitor a toll-free telephone number to receive Class Member calls and faxes.

7.8.2. Requests for Exclusion and Exclusion Lists. The Administrator will promptly review on a rolling basis Requests for Exclusion to ascertain their validity. Not later than 5 days after the expiration of the deadline for submitting Requests for Exclusion, the Administrator shall email a list to Class Counsel and Defense Counsel containing (a) the names and other identifying information of Class Members who have timely submitted valid Requests for Exclusion ("Exclusion List"); (b) the names and other identifying information of Class Members who have submitted invalid Requests for Exclusion; and (c) copies of all Requests for Exclusion from Settlement submitted (whether valid or invalid).

7.8.3. Weekly Reports. The Administrator must, on a weekly basis, provide written reports to Class Counsel and Defense Counsel that, among other things, tally the number of Class Notices mailed or re-mailed, Class Notices returned undelivered, Requests for Exclusion received, objections received, and challenges to Workweeks and/or PAGA Pay Periods received ("Weekly Report"). The Weekly Reports must include the Administrator's assessment of the validity of Requests for Exclusion and attach copies of all Requests for Exclusion and objections received.

7.8.4. Workweek and/or PAGA Pay Period Challenges. The Administrator has the authority to address and make final decisions consistent with the terms of this Agreement on all Class Member challenges over the calculation of Workweeks and/or PAGA Pay Periods. The Administrator's decision shall be final and not appealable or otherwise susceptible to challenge.

7.8.5. Administrator's Declaration. Not later than 14 days before the date by which Plaintiff is required to file the Motion for Final Approval of the Settlement, the Administrator will provide to Class Counsel and Defense Counsel a signed declaration suitable for filing in Court attesting to its due diligence and compliance with all of its obligations under this Agreement, including, but not limited to, its mailing of Class Notices, the Class Notices returned as undelivered,

the re-mailing of Class Notices, attempts to locate Class Members, the total number of Requests for Exclusion from Settlement it received (both valid and invalid), the number of written objections, and the Exclusion List. The Administrator will supplement its declaration as needed or requested by the Parties and/or the Court. Class Counsel is responsible for filing the Administrator's declaration in Court.

- 7.8.6. Final Report by Administrator. Within 10 days after the Administrator disburses all funds in the Gross Settlement Amount, the Administrator will provide Class Counsel and Defense Counsel with a final report detailing its disbursements, by employee identification number only, of all payments made under this Agreement. At least [15] days before any deadline set by the Court, the Administrator will prepare, and submit to Class Counsel and Defense Counsel, a signed declaration suitable for filing in Court attesting to its disbursement of all payments required under this Agreement. Class Counsel is responsible for filing the Administrator's declaration in Court.

8. **CLASS SIZE ESTIMATES AND ESCALATOR CLAUSE.** Based on its records, Defendant confirms that as of March 4, 2024, there are 493 Class Members who worked a total of 14,123 Workweeks from the beginning of the class period through the date of mediation, March 4, 2024. The Parties agree that if, as of the last day of the Class Period, the total number of Workweeks for all Class members exceeds 16,369 (which is 15% above 14,234), then the Gross Settlement Amount will increase proportionately, on a percentage basis, with any increase in total Class Member Workweeks above 16,369 (i.e., a 1% rise above 16,369 will cause a 1% rise in the Gross Settlement Amount). The final number of Workweeks will be provided to Class Counsel and the Administrator by Defense Counsel no later than February 14, 2025.
9. **DEFENDANT'S RIGHT TO WITHDRAW.** If the number of valid Requests for Exclusion identified in the Exclusion List exceeds 15% of the total of all Class Members, or, regardless of the percentage of valid Requests for Exclusion, the combined Individual Class Payments of all valid Requests for Exclusion identified in the Exclusion List amount to 5% or more of the Net Settlement Amount, Defendant may, but is not obligated, elect to withdraw from the Settlement. Should the percentage of valid Requests for Exclusion exceed 15% of the Class, or should the combined Individual Class Payments of all valid Requests for Exclusion reach 5% of the Net Settlement Amount, the Administrator shall notify counsel for all Parties via email immediately. The Parties agree that, if Defendant withdraws, the Settlement shall be void ab initio, have no force or effect whatsoever, and that the Parties will have no further obligation to perform under this Agreement; provided, however, Defendant will remain responsible for paying all Settlement administration expenses incurred to that point. Defendant must notify Class Counsel and the Court of its election to withdraw not later than seven (7) days after the Administrator sends the final Exclusion List to Defense Counsel; late elections will have no effect.
10. **MOTION FOR FINAL APPROVAL.** Not later than 16 court days before the calendared Final Approval Hearing, Plaintiff will file in Court, a motion for final approval of the Settlement that includes a request for approval of the PAGA settlement under Labor Code section 2699, subdivision (l), a Proposed Final Approval Order and a proposed Judgment (collectively "Motion for Final Approval"). Plaintiff shall provide drafts of these documents to Defense Counsel not later than seven days prior to filing the Motion for Final Approval. Class Counsel and Defense Counsel will expeditiously meet and confer in person or by telephone, and in good faith, to resolve any disagreements concerning the Motion for Final Approval.

- 10.1. Response to Objections. Each Party retains the right to respond to any objection raised by a Participating Class Member, including the right to file responsive documents in Court no later than five court days prior to the Final Approval Hearing, or as otherwise ordered or accepted by the Court.
- 10.2. Duty to Cooperate. If the Court does not grant Final Approval or conditions Final Approval on any material change to the Settlement (including, but not limited to, the scope of release to be granted by Class Members), the Parties will expeditiously work together in good faith to address the Court's concerns by revising the Agreement as necessary to obtain Final Approval. The Court's decision to award less than the amounts requested for the Class Representative Service Payment, Class Counsel Fees Payment, Class Counsel Expenses Payment, and/or Administrator Expenses Payment shall not constitute a material modification to the Agreement within the meaning of this paragraph.
- 10.3. Continuing Jurisdiction of the Court. The Parties agree that, after entry of Judgment, the Court will retain jurisdiction over the Parties, Action, and the Settlement solely for purposes of (i) enforcing this Agreement and/or Judgment, (ii) addressing settlement administration matters and (iii) addressing such post-Judgment matters as are permitted by law.
- 10.4. Waiver of Right to Appeal. Provided the Judgment is consistent with the terms and conditions of this Agreement, specifically including the Class Counsel Fees Payment and Class Counsel Expenses Payment set forth in this Settlement, the Parties, their respective counsel, and all Participating Class Members who did not object to the Settlement as provided in this Agreement, waive all rights to appeal from the Judgment, including all rights to post-judgment and appellate proceedings, the right to file motions to vacate judgment, motions for new trial, extraordinary writs, and appeals. The waiver of appeal does not include any waiver of the right to oppose such motions, writs or appeals. If an objector appeals the Judgment, the Parties' obligations to perform under this Agreement will be suspended until such time as the appeal is finally resolved and the Judgment becomes final, except as to matters that do not affect the amount of the Net Settlement Amount.
- 10.5. Appellate Court Orders to Vacate, Reverse or Materially Modify Judgment. If the reviewing Court vacates, reverses, or modifies the Judgment in a manner that requires a material modification of this Agreement (including, but not limited to, the scope of release to be granted by Class Members), this Agreement shall be null and void. The Parties shall nevertheless expeditiously work together in good faith to address the appellate court's concerns and to obtain Final Approval and entry of Judgment, sharing, on a 50-50 basis, any additional Administration Expenses reasonably incurred after remittitur. An appellate decision to vacate, reverse or modify the Court's award of the Class Representative Service Payment or any payments to Class Counsel shall not constitute a material modification of the Judgment within the meaning of this paragraph, as long as the Gross Settlement Amount remains unchanged.
11. **AMENDED JUDGMENT.** If any amended judgment is required under Code of Civil Procedure section 384, the Parties will work together in good faith to jointly submit a proposed amended judgment.
12. **ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS.**
 - 12.1. No Admission of Liability, Class Certification or Representative Manageability for Other Purposes. This Agreement represents a compromise and settlement of highly disputed

claims. Nothing in this Agreement is intended or should be construed as an admission by Defendant that any of the allegations in the Operative Complaint have merit or that Defendant has any liability for any claims asserted; nor should it be intended or construed as an admission by Plaintiff that Defendant's defenses in the Action have merit. The Parties agree that class certification and representative treatment is for purposes of this Settlement only. If, for any reason, the Court does not grant Preliminary Approval, Final Approval or enter Judgment, Defendant reserves the right to contest certification of any class for any reasons, and Defendant reserves all available defenses to the claims in the Action, and Plaintiff reserves the right to move for class certification on any grounds available and to contest Defendant's defenses. The Settlement, this Agreement, and the Parties' willingness to settle the Action will have no bearing on, and will not be admissible in connection with, any litigation (except for proceedings to enforce or effectuate the Settlement and this Agreement).

- 12.2. Confidentiality Prior to Preliminary Approval. Plaintiff, Class Counsel, Defendant, and Defense Counsel separately agree that, until the Motion for Preliminary Approval of Settlement is filed, they and each of them will not disclose, disseminate and/or publicize, or cause or permit another person to disclose, disseminate or publicize, any of the terms of the Agreement directly or indirectly, specifically or generally, to any person, corporation, association, government agency, or other entity except: (1) to the Parties' attorneys, accountants, or spouses, all of whom will be instructed to keep this Agreement confidential; (2) counsel in a related matter; (3) to the extent necessary to report income to appropriate taxing authorities; (4) in response to a court order or subpoena; or (5) in response to an inquiry or subpoena issued by a state or federal government agency. Each Party agrees to immediately notify each other Party of any judicial or agency order, inquiry, or subpoena seeking such information. Plaintiff, Class Counsel, Defendant, and Defense Counsel separately agree not to, directly or indirectly, initiate any conversation or other communication, before the filing of the Motion for Preliminary Approval, with any third party regarding this Agreement or the matters giving rise to this Agreement except to respond only that "the matter was resolved," or words to that effect. This paragraph does not restrict Class Counsel's communications with Class Members in accordance with Class Counsel's ethical obligations owed to Class Members.
- 12.3. No Solicitation. The Parties separately agree that they and their respective counsel and employees will not solicit any Class Member to opt out of or object to the Settlement, or appeal from the Judgment. Nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to restrict Class Counsel's ability to communicate with Class Members in accordance with Class Counsel's ethical obligations owed to Class Members.
- 12.4. Integrated Agreement. Upon execution by all Parties and their counsel, this Agreement together with its attached exhibits shall constitute the entire agreement between the Parties relating to the Settlement, superseding any and all oral representations, warranties, covenants or inducements made to or by any Party.
- 12.5. Attorney Authorization. Class Counsel and Defense Counsel separately warrant and represent that they are authorized by Plaintiff and Defendant, respectively, to take all appropriate action required or permitted to be taken by such Parties pursuant to this Agreement to effectuate its terms, and to execute any other documents reasonably required to effectuate the terms of this Agreement, including any amendments to this Agreement.

- 12.6. Cooperation. The Parties and their counsel will cooperate with each other and use their best efforts, in good faith, to implement the Settlement by, among other things, modifying the Settlement Agreement, submitting supplemental evidence and supplementing points and authorities as requested by the Court. In the event the Parties are unable to agree upon the form or content of any document necessary to implement the Settlement, or on any modification of the Agreement that may become necessary to implement the Settlement, the Parties will seek the assistance of a mediator and/or the Court for resolution.
- 12.7. No Prior Assignments. The Parties separately represent and warrant that they have not directly or indirectly assigned, transferred, encumbered or purported to assign, transfer or encumber to any person or entity any portion of any liability, claim, demand, action, cause of action, or right released and discharged by the Party in this Settlement.
- 12.8. No Tax Advice. Neither Plaintiff, Class Counsel, Defendant, nor Defense Counsel are providing any advice regarding taxes or taxability, nor shall anything in this Settlement be relied upon as such within the meaning of United States Treasury Department Circular 230 (31 C.F.R., Part 10, as amended) or otherwise.
- 12.9. Modification of Agreement. This Agreement, and all parts of it, may be amended, modified, changed, or waived only by an express written instrument signed by all Parties or their representatives, and approved by the Court.
- 12.10. Agreement Binding on Successors. This Agreement will be binding upon, and inure to the benefit of, the successors of each of the Parties.
- 12.11. Applicable Law. All terms and conditions of this Agreement and its exhibits will be governed by and interpreted according to the internal laws of the State of California, without regard to conflict of law principles.
- 12.12. Cooperation in Drafting. The Parties have cooperated in the drafting and preparation of this Agreement. This Agreement will not be construed against any Party on the basis that the Party was the drafter or participated in the drafting.
- 12.13. Confidentiality. To the extent permitted by law, all agreements made, and orders entered during the Action, and in this Agreement, relating to the confidentiality of information, shall survive the execution of this Agreement.
- 12.14. Headings. The descriptive heading of any section or paragraph of this Agreement is inserted for convenience of reference only and does not constitute a part of this Agreement.
- 12.15. Calendar Days. Unless otherwise noted, all reference to “days” in this Agreement shall be to calendar days. In the event any date or deadline set forth in this Agreement falls on a weekend or federal legal holiday, such date or deadline shall be on the first business day thereafter.
- 12.16. Execution in Counterparts: This Agreement may be executed in one or more counterparts by facsimile, electronically (i.e., DocuSign), or email, which for purposes of this Agreement shall be accepted as an original. All executed counterparts and each of them will be deemed to be one and the same instrument if counsel for the Parties will exchange between themselves signed counterparts. Any executed counterpart will be admissible in evidence to prove the existence and contents of this Agreement.
- 12.17. Stay of Litigation: The Parties agree that upon the execution of this Agreement the

litigation shall be stayed, except to effectuate the terms of this Agreement. The Parties further agree that upon the signing of this Agreement, pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure section 583.330, to extend the date to bring a case to trial under Code of Civil Procedure section 583.310 for the entire period of this settlement process.

ACCEPTED AND AGREED:

PLAINTIFF

Dated: 1/31/2025

By: 
F954A783E2B84CC
Estevan Vargas

DEFENDANT
MASTER LANDSCAPE & MAINTENANCE, INC.

Dated: _____

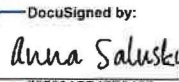
By: _____

Title: _____

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND CONTENT BY COUNSEL:

SALUSKY LAW GROUP, APC

Dated: 2/3/2025

By: 
727931CB47E5407
Anna R. Salusky, Attorney for Plaintiff
Estevan Vargas

R.A. WHITECOTTON LAW CORPORATION

Dated: _____

Randal Whitecotton, Attorney for Defendant Master
Landscape & Maintenance, Inc.

litigation shall be stayed, except to effectuate the terms of this Agreement. The Parties further agree that upon the signing of this Agreement, pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure section 583.330, to extend the date to bring a case to trial under Code of Civil Procedure section 583.310 for the entire period of this settlement process.

ACCEPTED AND AGREED:

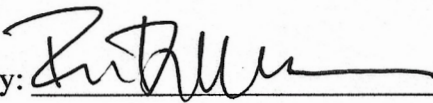
PLAINTIFF

Dated: _____

By: _____
Estevan Vargas

DEFENDANT
MASTER LANDSCAPE & MAINTENANCE, INC.

Dated: 2-3-25

By: 

Title: PRESIDENT

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND CONTENT BY COUNSEL:

SALUSKY LAW GROUP, APC

Dated: _____

By: _____
Anna R. Salusky, Attorney for Plaintiff
Estevan Vargas

R.A. WHITECOTTON LAW CORPORATION

Dated: 2/03/2025


Randal Whitcotton, Attorney for Defendant Master
Landscape & Maintenance, Inc.

EXHIBIT A

COURT APPROVED NOTICE OF CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT AND HEARING DATE FOR FINAL COURT APPROVAL

Estevan Vargas v. Master Landscape & Maintenance, Inc., Superior Court of California, County of Orange; Case No. 30-2021-01222960-CU-OE-CXC

***The Superior Court for the State of California authorized this Notice. Read it carefully!
It's not junk mail, spam, an advertisement or solicitation by a lawyer. You are not being sued.***

You may be eligible to receive money from an employee class action lawsuit (“Action”) against Master Landscape & Maintenance, Inc., (“Master”) for alleged wage and hour violations. The Action was filed by a former Master employee, Estevan Vargas (“Plaintiff”), and seeks payment of (1) unpaid wages and other relief for a class of hourly, nonexempt employees (“Class Members”) who worked for Master during the Class Period (September 22, 2017, to [DATE]); and (2) penalties under the California Private Attorneys General Act (“PAGA”) for all hourly, non-exempt employees who worked for Master during the PAGA Period (September 22, 2020, to [DATE]) (“Aggrieved Employees”).

The proposed Settlement has two main parts: (1) a Class Settlement requiring Master to fund Individual Class Payments, and (2) a PAGA Settlement requiring Master to fund Individual PAGA Payments and pay penalties to the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”).

Based on Master’s records, and the Parties’ current assumptions, **your Individual Class Payment is estimated to be \$[AMOUNT] (less withholding), and your Individual PAGA Payment is estimated to be \$[AMOUNT]**. The actual amount you may receive may be different and will depend on a number of factors. If no amount is stated for your Individual PAGA Payment, then according to Master’s records you are not eligible for an Individual PAGA Payment under the Settlement because you didn’t work during the PAGA Period.

The above estimates are based on Master’s records showing that **you worked [NUMBER] workweeks** during the Class Period, and **you worked [NUMBER] pay periods** during the PAGA Period. If you believe that you worked more workweeks **or pay periods** during either **respective** period, you can submit a challenge by the deadline date. See Section 4 of this Notice.

The Court has already preliminarily approved the proposed Settlement and approved this Notice. The Court has not yet decided whether to grant final approval. Your legal rights are affected whether you act or do not act. Read this Notice carefully. You will be deemed to have carefully read and understood it. At the Final Approval Hearing, the Court will decide whether to finally approve the Settlement and how much of the Settlement will be paid to Plaintiff and Plaintiff’s attorneys (“Class Counsel”). The Court will also decide whether to enter a judgment that requires Master to make payments under the Settlement and requires Class Members and Aggrieved Employees to give up their rights to assert certain claims against Master.

If you worked for Master during the Class Period and/or the PAGA Period, you have two basic options under the Settlement:

- (1) **Do Nothing.** You don't have to do anything to participate in the proposed Settlement and be eligible for an Individual Class Payment and/or an Individual PAGA Payment. As a Participating Class Member, though, you will give up your right to assert Class Period wage claims and PAGA Period penalty claims against Master.
- (2) **Opt-Out of the Class Settlement.** You can exclude yourself from the Class Settlement (opt-out) by submitting the written Request for Exclusion or otherwise notifying the Administrator in writing. If you opt-out of the Settlement, you will not receive an Individual Class Payment. You will, however, preserve your right to personally pursue Class Period wage claims against Master (**subject to applicable time limitations**), and, if you are an Aggrieved Employee, remain eligible for an Individual PAGA Payment. You cannot opt-out of the PAGA portion of the proposed Settlement.

Master will not retaliate against you for any actions you take with respect to the proposed Settlement.

SUMMARY OF YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS AND OPTIONS IN THIS SETTLEMENT

You Don't Have to Do Anything to Participate in the Settlement	If you do nothing, you will be a Participating Class Member, eligible for an Individual Class Payment and an Individual PAGA Payment (if any). In exchange, you will give up your right to assert the claims against Master that are covered by this Settlement ("Released Claims," as defined below).
You Can Opt-out of the Class Settlement but not the PAGA Settlement The Opt-out Deadline is [DATE]	If you don't want to participate in the proposed Settlement, you can opt-out of the Class Settlement by completing the included Opt-Out Form and mailing or faxing it to the Administrator by the Opt-out Deadline. Once excluded, you will be a Non-Participating Class Member and no longer eligible for an Individual Class Payment. Non-Participating Class Members cannot object to any portion of the proposed Settlement. See Section 6 of this Notice. You cannot opt-out of the PAGA portion of the proposed Settlement. Master must pay Individual PAGA Payments to all Aggrieved Employees and the Aggrieved Employees must give up their rights to pursue Released PAGA Claims (defined below).
Participating Class Members Can Object to the Class Settlement but not the PAGA Settlement Written Objections Must be Submitted by [DATE]	All Class Members who do not opt-out ("Participating Class Members") can object to any aspect of the proposed Settlement. The Court's decision whether to finally approve the Settlement will include a determination of how much will be paid to Class Counsel and Plaintiff who pursued the Action on behalf of the Class. You are not personally responsible for any payments to Class Counsel or Plaintiff, but every dollar paid to Class Counsel and Plaintiff reduces the overall amount paid to Participating Class Members. You can object to the amounts requested by Class Counsel or Plaintiff if you think they are unreasonable. See Section 7 of this Notice.

You Can Participate in the [DATE] Final Approval Hearing	The Court's Final Approval Hearing is scheduled to take place on [DATE]. You don't have to attend but you do have the right to appear (or hire an attorney to appear on your behalf at your own cost), in person, by telephone, or by using the Court's virtual appearance platform. Participating Class Members can verbally object to the Settlement at the Final Approval Hearing. See Section 8 of this Notice.
You Can Challenge the Calculation of Your Workweeks/Pay Periods Written Challenges Must be Submitted by [DATE]	The amount of your Individual Class Payment and PAGA Payment (if any) depends on how many workweeks you worked at least one day during the Class Period and how many pay periods you worked at least one day during the PAGA Period, respectively. The number of Class Period Workweeks and number of PAGA Period Pay Periods you worked according to Master's records is stated on the first page of this Notice. If you disagree with either of these numbers, you must challenge it by [DATE]. See Section 4 of this Notice.

1. WHAT IS THE ACTION ABOUT?

Plaintiff is a former Master employee. The Action alleges Master violated California labor laws by: (1) failing to provide compliant meal periods; (2) failing to provide compliant rest periods; (3) failing to pay minimum wage and overtime wages, including the use of unlawful rounding of time records; (4) failing to reimburse for necessary business expenses; (5) failing to keep accurate wage statements and maintain records; (6) failing to pay wages due at separation of employment; and (7) committing acts of unfair competition. Based on these same claims, Plaintiff has also asserted a claim for civil penalties under the California Private Attorneys General Act, or "PAGA" (Labor Code sections 2698 through 2699.8). Plaintiff is represented by the following attorneys in the Action: Anna Salusky of Salusky Law Group, APC ("Class Counsel.")

Master strongly denies the allegations in the Action and contends that it complied with all applicable laws.

2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT THE ACTION HAS SETTLED?

The Court has made no determination whether Master or Plaintiff is correct on the merits. In the meantime, Plaintiff and Master retained an experienced, neutral mediator (Alan Berkowitz, Esq.) in an effort to resolve the Action by negotiating a mutually agreeable settlement, rather than continuing the expensive and time-consuming process of litigation. The negotiations were successful. By signing a lengthy written settlement agreement ("Agreement") and agreeing to jointly ask the Court to enter a judgment ending the Action and enforcing the Agreement, Plaintiff and Master have negotiated a proposed Settlement that is subject to the Court's Final Approval. Both sides agree the proposed Settlement is a compromise of disputed claims. By agreeing to settle, Master does not admit any violations or concede the merit of any claims.

Plaintiff and Class Counsel strongly believe the Settlement is a good deal for you because they believe that: (1) Master has agreed to pay a fair, reasonable and adequate amount considering the strength of

the claims and the risks and uncertainties of continued litigation; and (2) Settlement is in the best interests of the Class Members and Aggrieved Employees. The Court preliminarily approved the proposed Settlement as fair, reasonable and adequate, authorized this Notice, and scheduled a hearing to determine Final Approval.

3. WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT TERMS OF THE PROPOSED SETTLEMENT?

1. Master Will Pay \$130,000.00 as the Gross Settlement Amount (Gross Settlement). Master has agreed to deposit the Gross Settlement into an account controlled by the Administrator of the Settlement. The Administrator will use the Gross Settlement to pay the Individual Class Payments, Individual PAGA Payments, Class Representative Payment, Class Counsel's attorney's fees and expenses, the Administrator's expenses, and penalties to be paid to the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency ("LWDA"). Assuming the Court grants Final Approval, Master will fund the Gross Settlement not more than 10 days after Judgment entered by the Court becomes final. The Judgment will be final on the date the Court enters Judgment, or a later date if Participating Class Members object to the proposed Settlement or the Judgment is appealed.
2. Court Approved Deductions from Gross Settlement. At the Final Approval Hearing, Plaintiff and/or Class Counsel will ask the Court to approve the following deductions from the Gross Settlement, the amounts of which will be decided by the Court at the Final Approval Hearing:
 - A. Up to \$36,400 (28% of the Gross Settlement) to Class Counsel for attorney's fees and up to \$15,000.00 for their litigation expenses. To date, Class Counsel worked and incurred expenses on the Action without payment.
 - B. Up to \$7,500.00 as a Class Representative Payment to Plaintiff for filing the Action, working with Class Counsel, and representing the Class. A Class Representative Payment will be the only monies Plaintiff will receive other than his Individual Class Payment and any Individual PAGA Payment.
 - C. Up to \$11,050.00 to the Administrator for services administering the Settlement.
 - D. Up to \$10,000.00 for PAGA Penalties, allocated 75% to the LWDA PAGA Payment and 25% in Individual PAGA Payments to the Aggrieved Employees based on their PAGA Period Pay Periods.

Participating Class Members have the right to object to any of these deductions. The Court will consider all objections.

3. Net Settlement Distributed to Class Members. After making the above deductions in amounts approved by the Court, the Administrator will distribute the rest of the Gross Settlement (the "Net Settlement") by making Individual Class Payments to Participating Class Members based on their Class Period Workweeks.

4. Taxes Owed on Payments to Class Members. Plaintiff and Master are asking the Court to approve an allocation of 20% of each Individual Class Payment to taxable wages (“Wage Portion”) and 80% to penalties and interest (“Non-Wage Portion”). The Wage Portion is subject to withholdings and will be reported on IRS W-2 Forms. Master will separately pay employer payroll taxes it owes on the Wage Portion. The Individual PAGA Payments are counted as penalties rather than wages for tax purposes. The Administrator will report the Individual PAGA Payments and the Non-Wage Portions of the Individual Class Payments on IRS 1099 Forms.

Although Plaintiff and Master have agreed to these allocations, neither side is giving you any advice on whether your Payments are taxable or how much you might owe in taxes. You are responsible for paying all taxes on any Payments received from the proposed Settlement. You should consult a tax advisor if you have any questions about the tax consequences of the proposed Settlement.

5. Need to Promptly Cash Payment Checks. The front of every check issued for Individual Class Payments and Individual PAGA Payments will show the date when the check expires (the void date). If you don’t cash it by the void date, your check will be automatically cancelled, and the monies will be deposited with the California Controller’s Unclaimed Property Fund in your name.
6. Requests for Exclusion from the Class Settlement (Opt-Outs). You will be treated as a Participating Class Member, participating fully in the Class Settlement, unless you notify the Administrator in writing, not later than [DATE], that you wish to opt-out. The easiest way to notify the Administrator is to complete, sign, and send the enclosed Opt-Out Form by the [DATE] Response Deadline. Excluded Class Members (i.e., Non-Participating Class Members) will not receive Individual Class Payments, but will preserve their rights (subject to applicable time limitations) to personally pursue wage and hour claims against Master.

You cannot opt-out of the PAGA portion of the Settlement. All Aggrieved Employees under the Settlement will remain eligible for Individual PAGA Payments and will be bound by the release of the PAGA Period PAGA claims in the Settlement.

7. The Proposed Settlement Will be Void if the Court Denies Final Approval. It is possible the Court will decline to grant Final Approval of the Settlement or decline to enter a Judgment. It is also possible the Court will enter a Judgment that is reversed on appeal. Plaintiff and Master have agreed that, in either case, the Settlement will be void: Master will not pay any money and Class Members will not release any claims against Master.
8. Administrator. The Court has appointed a neutral company, ILYM Group, Inc., (the “Administrator”) to send this Notice, calculate and make payments, and process Class Members’ Requests for Exclusion. The Administrator will also decide any Class Member Challenges over Workweeks and pay periods, mail and re-mail settlement checks and tax forms, and perform other tasks necessary to administer the Settlement. The Administrator’s contact information is contained in Section 9 of this Notice.

9. Participating Class Members' Release. After the Judgment is final and Master has fully funded the Gross Settlement and separately paid all employer payroll taxes, Participating Class Members will be legally barred from asserting any of the claims released under the Settlement. This means that unless you opted out by validly excluding yourself from the Class Settlement, you cannot sue, continue to sue, or be part of any other lawsuit against Master or related entities for wages based on the Class Period facts, and PAGA penalties based on PAGA Period facts, as alleged in the Action and resolved by this Settlement.

The Participating Class Members will be bound by the following release:

All Participating Class Members release all Released Parties from any claims during the Class Period that were or that could have been pled in the Operative Complaint based on the facts alleged in the causes of action in the Action, including but not limited to claims under Labor Code sections 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 210, 226, 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512, 516, 1182.12, 1194, 1194.2, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2698-2699, 2800, 2802, the applicable Wage Orders, and Business & Professions Code section 17200, and Plaintiff's PAGA Notice (Participating Class Members' Release). Except as set forth in Section 5.3 of this Agreement, Participating Class Members do not release any other claims, including claims for vested benefits, wrongful termination, violation of the Fair Employment and Housing Act, unemployment insurance, disability, social security, workers' compensation claims, or claims based on facts occurring outside the Class Period.

10. Aggrieved Employees' PAGA Release. After the Court's judgment is final, and Master has paid the Gross Settlement and separately paid the employer-side payroll taxes, all Aggrieved Employees will be barred from asserting PAGA claims against Master, whether or not they exclude themselves from the Settlement. This means that all Aggrieved Employees, including those who are Participating Class Members and those who opt-out of the Class Settlement, cannot sue, continue to sue, or participate in any other PAGA claim against Master or its related entities based on the PAGA Period facts alleged in the Action and resolved by this Settlement.

The Aggrieved Employees' Release (including both Participating and Non-Participating Class Members) is as follows:

All Aggrieved Employees are deemed to release, on behalf of themselves and their successors and assigns, the Released Parties from all claims for PAGA penalties that were alleged, or reasonably could have been alleged, based on the PAGA Period facts stated in the Operative Complaint, and the PAGA Notice (Aggrieved Employees' Release).

4. HOW WILL THE ADMINISTRATOR CALCULATE MY PAYMENT?

1. Individual Class Payments. The Administrator will calculate Individual Class Payments by (a) dividing the Net Settlement Amount by the total number of Workweeks worked by all Participating Class Members, and (b) multiplying the result by the number of Workweeks worked by each individual Participating Class Member.
2. Individual PAGA Payments. The Administrator will calculate Individual PAGA Payments by (a) dividing \$2,500.00 (25% of the PAGA Penalties) by the total number of PAGA Pay Periods worked by all Aggrieved Employees and (b) multiplying the result by the number of PAGA Period Pay Periods worked by each individual Aggrieved Employee.
3. Workweek/Pay Period Challenges. The number of Class Workweeks you worked during the Class Period and the number of PAGA Pay Periods you worked during the PAGA Period, as recorded in Master's records, are stated in the first page of this Notice. You have until [DATE] to challenge the number of Workweeks and/or PAGA Pay Periods credited to you. You can submit your challenge by signing and sending the enclosed Worksheet Challenge Form to the Administrator via mail or fax. Section 9 of this Notice has the Administrator's contact information.

You need to support your challenge by sending copies of pay stubs or other records. The Administrator will accept Master's calculation of Workweeks and/or PAGA Pay Periods based on Master's records as accurate unless you send copies of records containing contrary information. You should send copies rather than originals because the documents will not be returned to you. The Administrator will resolve Workweek and/or PAGA Pay Period challenges based on your submission and on input from Class Counsel (who will advocate on behalf of Participating Class Members) and Master's Counsel. The Administrator's decision is final. You cannot appeal or otherwise challenge its final decision.

5. WHO WILL I GET PAID?

1. Participating Class Members. The Administrator will send, by U.S. mail, a single check to every Participating Class Member (i.e., every Class Member who doesn't opt-out), including those who also qualify as Aggrieved Employees. The single check will combine the Individual Class Payment and, if the Participating Class Member is also an Aggrieved Employee, the Individual PAGA Payment.
2. Non-Participating Class Members. The Administrator will send, by U.S. mail, a single Individual PAGA Payment check to every Aggrieved Employee who opts out of the Class Settlement (i.e., every Non-Participating Class Member).

Your check will be sent to the same address as this Notice. If you change your address, be sure to notify the Administrator as soon as possible. Section 9 of this Notice has the Administrator's contact information.

6. HOW DO I OPT-OUT OF THE CLASS SETTLEMENT?

Submit the enclosed Opt-Out Form or a written and signed letter with your name, present address, telephone number, and a simple statement that you do not want to participate in the Settlement. The Administrator will exclude you based on any writing communicating your request be excluded. Be sure to personally sign the Opt-Out Form and include your identifying information (full name, address, telephone number, and the last four digits of your Social Security number for verification purposes). You must make the request yourself. If someone else makes the request for you, it will not be valid. **You must send your request to the Administrator by [DATE], or it will be invalid.** Section 9 of the Notice has the Administrator's contact information.

7. HOW DO I OBJECT TO THE SETTLEMENT?

Only Participating Class Members have the right to object to the Settlement. Before deciding whether to object, you may wish to see what Plaintiff and Master are asking the Court to approve. At least 16 court days before the [DATE] Final Approval Hearing, Plaintiff will file in Court (1) a Motion for Final Approval that includes, among other things, the reasons why the proposed Settlement is fair, and (2) a Motion for Attorney's Fees, Litigation Costs, and Class Representative Payment, stating (i) the amount Class Counsel is requesting for attorneys' fees and litigation expenses; and (ii) the amount Plaintiff is requesting as a Class Representative Payment. Upon reasonable request, Class Counsel (whose contact information is in Section 9 of this Notice) will send you electronic copies of these documents at no cost to you.

A Participating Class Member who disagrees with any aspect of the Agreement, the Motion for Final Approval and/or Motion for Attorney's Fees, Litigation Expenses and Class Representative Payment may wish to object, for example, that the proposed Settlement is unfair, or that the amounts requested by Class Counsel or Plaintiff are too high or too low. **The deadline for sending written objections to the Administrator is [DATE].** Be sure to tell the Administrator what you object to, why you object, and any facts that support your objection. Make sure you identify the Action as *Estevan Vargas v. Master Landscape & Maintenance, Inc.*, and include your name, current address, telephone number and approximate dates of employment for Master, and sign the objection. Section 9 of this Notice has the Administrator's contact information.

Alternatively, a Participating Class Member can object (or personally retain a lawyer to object at your own cost) by attending the Final Approval Hearing. You (or your attorney) should be ready to tell the Court what you object to, why you object, and any facts that support your objection. See Section 8 of this Notice for specifics regarding the Final Approval Hearing.

8. CAN I ATTEND THE FINAL APPROVAL HEARING?

You can, but don't have to, attend the Final Approval Hearing on [DATE] at [TIME] in Department CX101 of the Orange County Superior Court, located at 751 West Santa Ana Blvd., Santa Ana, CA 92701. At the Hearing, the judge will decide whether to grant Final Approval of the Settlement and how much of the Gross Settlement will be paid to Class Counsel, Plaintiff, and the Administrator. The Court will invite comment from objectors, Class Counsel, and Defense Counsel before making a

decision. You can attend (or hire a lawyer to attend) either personally or remotely via Zoom. Check the Court's website for the most current information regarding remote appearances: (<https://www.occourts.org/general-information/covid-19-response/civil-covid-19-response/civil-remote-hearings>).

It's possible the Court will reschedule the Final Approval Hearing. You should check the Administrator's website beforehand or contact Class Counsel to verify the date and time of the Final Approval Hearing.

9. HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

The Agreement sets forth everything Master and Plaintiff have promised to do under the proposed Settlement. The easiest way to read the Agreement, the Judgment, or any other Settlement documents is to go to ILYM Group, Inc.'s website at [\[ADMINISTRATOR URL\]](#). You can also contact Class Counsel using the contact information listed below, or consult the Orange County Superior Court website at: (<https://www.occourts.org/online-services/case-access/civil-case-access>), and entering the Case Number for the Action, Case No. 30-2021-01222960-CU-OE-CXC. **Do not telephone the court to obtain information about the settlement.**

Class Counsel contact information is as follows:

Name of Attorney: Anna Salusky

Email of Attorney: asalusky@saluskylaw.com

Name of Firm: Salusky Law Group, APC

Mailing Address: 3738 Bayer Ave., Suite 104, Long Beach, CA 90808

Telephone Number: (568) 855-0004

Administrator contact information is as follows:

Name of Administrator:

Address of Administrator:

Fax Number:

Telephone Number:

10. WHAT IF I LOSE MY SETTLEMENT CHECK?

If you lose or misplace your settlement check before cashing it, the Administrator will replace it as long as you request a replacement before the void date on the face of the original check. If your check is already void you should consult the California Controller's Unclaimed Property Fund for instructions on how to retrieve the funds.

11. WHAT IF I CHANGE MY ADDRESS?

To receive your check, you should immediately notify the Administrator if you move or otherwise change your mailing address.

OPT-OUT FORM

Estevan Vargas v. Master Landscape & Maintenance, Inc.
Orange County Superior Court, Case No. 30-2021-01222960-CU-OE-CXC

YOU MUST COMPLETE THIS FORM IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO BE PART OF THE CLASS
ACTION SETTLEMENT.

By signing and returning this form, I confirm that I do not want to be included in the Settlement of the class action lawsuit referenced above.

I understand that by opting out, I am giving up my right to receive any payments under the settlement.

By opting out, I understand that I retain the right to file my own individual lawsuit against Master Landscape & Maintenance, Inc.

I also understand that various time limitations apply the filing of civil actions, including but not limited to, civil actions for wage and hour claims such as those alleged in this Class Action.

By providing the following information, I affirm that I want to opt-out of the above class action:

First Name

Last Name

Current Mailing Address

City

State

Zip Code

Telephone Number

Last four digits of Social Security Number

Signature

Date

MAIL TO: Vargas v. Master Landscape & Maintenance, Inc. Class Action Settlement
[ADDRESS]

IF YOU WISH TO OPT-OUT OF THIS SETTLEMENT, YOU MUST SIGN, POSTMARK, AND
RETURN THIS FORM TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ON OR BEFORE [DATE]

WORKWEEK CHALLENGE FORM

Estevan Vargas v. Master Landscape & Maintenance, Inc.
Orange County Superior Court, Case No. 30-2021-01222960-CU-OE-CXC

YOU MUST COMPLETE THIS FORM IF YOU WISH TO CHALLENGE THE NUMBER OF
WORKWEEKS OR PAGA PAY PERIODS LISTED IN THE CLASS NOTICE.

By signing and returning this form, I confirm that I challenge the number of Workweeks or PAGA Pay Periods allocated to me in the Class Notice I received pertaining to the lawsuit referenced above.

I am disputing the number of ☐ Workweeks ☐ PAGA Pay Periods.

The number of Workweeks allocated to me in the Class Notice is _____. I believe the correct number of Workweeks for me is _____.

The number of PAGA Pay Periods allocated to me in the Class Notice is _____. I believe the correct number of PAGA Pay Periods for me is _____.

Enclosed with this Workweek Challenge Form is documentation that supports my challenge to the allocated Workweeks and/or PAGA Pay Periods. I understand that the Settlement Administrator will not return copies of this documentation to me upon review.

I understand that the Settlement Administrator will provide copies of my challenge to Class Counsel and Defense Counsel and that the Settlement Administrator's determination of this challenge is final and not appealable or otherwise susceptible to challenge.

First Name

Last Name

Current Mailing Address

City

State

Zip Code

Telephone Number

Last four digits of Social Security Number

Signature

Date

MAIL TO: Vargas v. Master Landscape & Maintenance, Inc. Class Action Settlement
[ADDRESS]

IF YOU ARE CHALLENGING THE NUMBER OF YOUR ELIGIBLE WORKWEEKS OR PAGA
PAY PERIODS, YOU MUST SIGN, POSTMARK, AND MAIL OR FAX THIS FORM TO THE
SETTEMENT ADMINISTRATOR ON OR BEFORE [DATE]