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

TENAYA JACKSON individually, and on
behalf of other aggrieved employees pursuant
to the California Private Attorneys General
Act;

Plaintiff,

vs.

CBRE, INC., a Delaware corporation; CBRE
GROUP, INC., A Delaware corporation; and
DOES 1 through 100, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.: 21TRCV00543

Honorable Ronald F. Frank
Department 8

**PLAINTIFF'S NOTICE OF MOTION
AND MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF
PRIVATE ATTORNEYS GENERAL
ACT (CAL. LABOR CODE § 2698,
ET SEQ.) SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT
AND AWARD OF ATTORNEYS' FEES
AND COSTS, ENHANCEMENT
PAYMENT, AND PAGA SETTLEMENT
ADMINISTRATION COSTS;
MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND
AUTHORITIES**

[Declaration of Plaintiff's Counsel
(Tara Zabehi); Declaration of Plaintiff
(Tenaya Jackson); and [Proposed] Order and
Judgment filed concurrently herewith]

Date: November 5, 2024
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Department: 8

Complaint Filed: July 26, 2021
Trial Date: None Set

1 **PLEASE TAKE NOTICE** that on November 5, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. or as soon thereafter
2 as the matter may be heard before the Honorable Ronald F. Frank in Department 8 of the
3 Superior Court of the State of California, for the County of Los Angeles, located at One Regent
4 Street, Inglewood, CA 90301, Plaintiff Tenaya Jackson (“Plaintiff”) will and hereby does move
5 for entry of the following orders:

- 6 1. Granting approval, pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699(l)(2), of the
7 settlement between Plaintiff and Defendants CBRE Inc., and CBRE Group, Inc.
8 (“Defendants”) of the claims brought pursuant to the Private Attorneys General Act
9 of 2004 (“PAGA”), as set forth in the Private Attorneys General Act Settlement
10 Agreement and Release (“Settlement,” “Agreement,” or “Settlement Agreement”),
11 attached as “**EXHIBIT 1**” to the Declaration of Tara Zabehi, including and not limited
12 to, the plan of allocation and distribution of the \$2,190,000.00 for payment of the
13 LWDA Payment to the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency
14 (“LWDA”), Individual Settlement Shares to the Aggrieved Employees, Attorneys’
15 Fees and Costs to Plaintiff’s Counsel, Settlement Administration Costs to the PAGA
16 Settlement Administrator, and Enhancement Payment to Plaintiff;
- 17 2. Approving the Net Settlement Amount, estimated to be no less than \$1,272,011.76
18 which will be distributed to the LWDA and the Aggrieved Employees, pursuant to
19 California Labor Code section 2699(i), of which seventy-five percent (75%) will be
20 paid to the LWDA (“LWDA Payment”) and twenty-five percent (25%) will be paid
21 to the Aggrieved Employees (“Employees’ Portion”);
- 22 3. Appointing Phoenix Settlement Administrators (“Phoenix”) as the PAGA Settlement
23 Administrator, to handle the administration of the Settlement;
- 24 4. Directing Defendants to fund the Total Settlement Amount, and directing the PAGA
25 Settlement Administrator to distribute the payments in accordance with the
26 Agreement;
- 27 5. Directing the mailing of Individual Settlement Share checks to the Aggrieved
28

1 Employees along with the Cover Letter, which is substantially similar in content and
2 form to that attached as “**EXHIBIT A**” to the [Proposed] Order and Judgment
3 Granting Approval of Private Attorneys General Act (Cal. Labor Code § 2698, *Et*
4 *Seq.*) Settlement Agreement and Award of Attorneys’ Fees and Costs, Enhancement
5 Payment, and Settlement Administration Costs (“[Proposed] Order and Judgement”)
6 filed concurrently herewith;

- 7 6. Awarding \$12,500.00 to Plaintiff Tenaya Jackson as an Enhancement Payment;
8 7. Awarding up to \$20,000.00 to Phoenix Settlement Administrators as Settlement
9 Administration Costs; and
10 8. Awarding to Lawyers *for* Justice, PC (“Plaintiff’s Counsel”) the amount of
11 \$876,000.00 as compensation for reasonable attorneys’ fees and the amount of
12 \$9,488.24 for reimbursement of litigation costs and expenses (together, “Attorneys’
13 Fees and Costs”), pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699(g)(1).

14 Unless otherwise specified, all citations and references to the Private Attorneys General Act of
15 2004, California Labor Code sections 2698, *et seq.* are to the version of statute prior to the recent
16 amendment effective July 1, 2024; the amended statute does not apply to the above-captioned action and
17 the Settlement pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699(v)(1), as amended, because the above-
18 captioned action was filed prior to June 19, 2024.

19 The Settlement Agreement and moving and supporting papers for this motion are being
20 concurrently submitted to the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency in
21 conformity with California Labor Code section 2699(l)(2).

22 This motion is made pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699(l)(2), which
23 provides for review and approval by the Court of the settlement of a civil action filed pursuant
24 to PAGA, and Rule 3.1113(e) of the California Rules of Court, which permits the Court to
25 extend the page limit for memoranda.

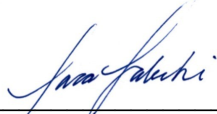
26 This motion will be based upon the following Memorandum of Points and Authorities,
27 the Settlement Agreement, the Declarations of Plaintiff’s Counsel (Tara Zabehi) and Plaintiff
28

Tenaya Jackson in support thereof, as well as the pleadings and other records on file with the Court in this matter, and such evidence and oral argument as may be presented at the hearing on this motion.

Dated: October 14, 2024

LAWYERS for JUSTICE, PC

By:



Tara Zabehi
Attorneys for Plaintiff

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MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES

I. SUMMARY OF MOTION

Plaintiff Tenaya Jackson (“Plaintiff”) seeks approval of the Private Attorneys General Act Settlement Agreement and Release (“Settlement,” “Agreement,” or “Settlement Agreement”) entered into between Plaintiff, individually and on behalf of the State of California and other aggrieved employees, and Defendants CBRE, Inc., and CBRE Group, Inc. (“Defendants”), pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699(1)(2).¹ Plaintiff and Defendants (together, the “Parties”) have agreed to resolve the above-captioned action, brought pursuant to the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, California Labor Code section 2698, *et seq.* (“PAGA”), for a Total Settlement Amount of \$2,190,000.00.²

The Settlement is fair, adequate, and reasonable, as it represents a reasoned compromise of a disputed claim that has been reached through arm’s-length negotiations, in light of the risks, complexity, and expense of further litigation, and the strengths of the PAGA claim. The Settlement meets the requirements for Court approval based upon the relevant fairness factors, the relative strengths of the PAGA claim, the risk, expense, and complexity of further litigation. The Court is respectfully requested to approve the Settlement, award the Attorneys’ Fees and Costs, Settlement Administration Costs, and Enhancement Payment and approve the LWDA Payment.

The Settlement Agreement and moving and supporting papers for this motion are being concurrently submitted to the LWDA and Plaintiff now moves for an order granting approval of the Settlement, in conformity with California Labor Code section 2699(1)(2).³ In order to efficiently present the Court with adequate information to determine whether to grant approval of the Settlement, Plaintiff also moves for an order permitting the filing of this memorandum, although it exceeds the page limit established by California Rules of Court, Rule 3.1113(d).

¹ The Private Attorneys General Act Settlement Agreement and Release (“Settlement Agreement”) is attached as “**EXHIBIT 1**” to the Declaration of Tara Zabehi.

² Settlement Agreement, § 3(a). The Total Settlement Amount is subject to possible increase pursuant to Section 3(b) of the Settlement Agreement.

³ The Court is referred to the concurrently-filed Proof of Service, which confirms submission of the papers to the LWDA.

1 **II. FACTUAL BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

2 For a discussion of relevant procedural history and facts regarding this case, please see the
3 Declaration of Tara Zabehi at paragraphs 8 to 12.

4 **III. SUMMARY OF THE SETTLEMENT TERMS**

5 **A. Scope of the Settlement**

6 If the Court grants approval of the Settlement, Plaintiff and the State of California with respect
7 to Aggrieved Employees⁴ will release the Released Parties⁵ from the Released Claims⁶.

8 **B. Funding and Distribution of the Total Settlement Amount**

9 Under the terms of the Settlement Agreement, Defendants will pay a Total Settlement
10 Amount of \$2,190,000.00⁷, which is inclusive of the following: (1) Attorneys' Fees and Costs
11 to be paid to Lawyers for Justice, PC ("Plaintiff's Counsel"), (2) Enhancement Payment to
12 Plaintiff, (3) Settlement Administration Costs to be paid to the PAGA Settlement Administrator,
13 and (4) Net Settlement Amount to be paid to the California Labor and Workforce Development
14 Agency ("LWDA") and Aggrieved Employees. The Net Settlement Amount will be the Total
15 Settlement Amount less the Court-approved Attorneys' Fees and Costs, Settlement
16 Administration Costs, and Enhancement Payment, and is currently estimated to be no less than
17 \$1,272,011.76.⁸ The Net Settlement Amount will be distributed as follows: 75% of the Net
18 Settlement Amount (or approximately \$954,008.82) will be distributed to the LWDA ("LWDA
19 Payment") and 25% of the Net Settlement Amount (or approximately \$318,002.94)
20 ("Employees' Portion") will be distributed to the Aggrieved Employees on a *pro rata* basis, based
21 on their Compensable Pay Periods.⁹

22 Subject to Court approval of this Settlement Agreement, Defendants will transmit the
23 Total Settlement Amount to a qualified settlement account established by the PAGA Settlement

24
25 ⁴ Settlement Agreement, § 3(a)(1)-(5), and Zabehi Decl., ¶ 14. "PAGA Period" is defined as the period of May 20,
26 2020 through October 12, 2022. *Id.*, § 3(a)(5).

27 ⁵ The definition of the "Released Parties" is set forth in the Settlement Agreement, § 8(a).

28 ⁶ The definition of the "Released Claims" is set forth in the Settlement Agreement, § 8(a).

⁷ Settlement Agreement, § 3(a), Zabehi Decl., ¶ 15 and see footnote 2.

⁸ *Id.*, § 3(a)(4).

⁹ Settlement Agreement, § 7(b).

Administrator for administration of the Settlement.¹⁰ No later than seven 7 calendar days after the Settlement Effective Date, Defendants shall provide the PAGA Settlement Administrator with the Aggrieved Employees List, containing the contact information and other information required to calculate payment for each Aggrieved Employee.¹¹

No later than fourteen 14 calendar days after the PAGA Settlement Administrator receives the Aggrieved Employees List and Total Settlement Amount, the PAGA Settlement Administrator shall mail the agreed-upon Cover Letter¹² and Individual Settlement Share¹³ checks (together, the “PAGA Settlement Package”) to all Aggrieved Employees by first-class United States mail.¹⁴ For each PAGA Settlement Package that is returned undeliverable within thirty (30) calendar days of the initial mailing, the PAGA Settlement Administrator shall promptly attempt to locate an alternate, updated address for the Aggrieved Employee at issue, by using a skip-trace search and shall attempt one (1) re-mailing of the PAGA Settlement Package.¹⁵

The Individual Settlement Share checks issued to Aggrieved Employees shall remain valid for ninety 90 calendar days, and thereafter, shall be cancelled.¹⁶ Funds associated with cancelled checks shall be transmitted to the State Controller’s Office Unclaimed Property Division in the name of the Aggrieved Employee(s) at issue and in the amount of his or her respective Individual Settlement Share(s).¹⁷

C. Standards for Approval of PAGA Settlement

The PAGA allows an “aggrieved employee” to bring a civil action on behalf of the State

¹⁰ Settlement Agreement, § 7(a).

¹¹ *Id.*, § 7(c)(1).

¹² The Parties have prepared a simple Cover Letter for transmission to the Aggrieved Employees along with their Individual Settlement Share checks, substantially in the form attached as “**EXHIBIT A**” to the [Proposed] Order and Judgment and as “**EXHIBIT A**” to the Settlement Agreement. The Cover Letter informs the Aggrieved Employees about the Actions and the Settlement.

¹³ Each Aggrieved Employee’s share of the Employees’ Portion (“Individual Settlement Share”), will be calculated by the PAGA Settlement Administrator based on their Compensable Pay Periods. *Id.*, § 7(b). The payments to Aggrieved Employees for their Individual Settlement Share are considered 100% penalties to be reported on IRS Form 1099, if required. *Id.*, §§ 3(b) & 7(b)(1).

¹⁴ Settlement Agreement, § 7(c)(3).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Id.*, § 7(c)(4).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

of California to recover civil penalties that normally the LWDA can pursue on behalf of employees against an employer without employees' involvement or approval. Unnamed employees need not be given notice of the PAGA claim, nor do they have the ability to opt-out of the representative PAGA claim.¹⁸ Before bringing a civil action under PAGA, an employee must comply with California Labor Code section 2699.3. See Cal. Lab. Code § 2699(a). Plaintiff has complied.

The settlement of a PAGA action requires court approval. See Cal. Lab. Code § 2699(l)(2). However, a PAGA claim asserted on a non-class representative basis and is not a class action but a law enforcement action.¹⁹ A court's review of a PAGA settlement involves consideration of unique factors that render the approval process distinct from, and simpler than the two-step court approval process for a class action settlement. A court reviewing a PAGA settlement need only "ensur[e] that a negotiated resolution is fair to those affected." *Williams v. Superior Court* (2017) 3 Cal.5th 531, 549 (citing Cal. Lab. Code § 2699(l)(2)). Although California Labor Code section 2699(l) does not set forth the criteria on which a PAGA settlement is to be judged, courts have approved settlements of PAGA claims.²⁰

In a PAGA case, the court's focus is not the monetary amount which aggrieved employees or the State stand to receive, but instead, whether the total settlement amount achieves the PAGA's objectives. The purpose of the PAGA is "to incentivize private parties to recover civil penalties for the government that otherwise may not have been assessed and

¹⁸ *Robinson v. Southern Counties Oil Co.* (2020) 53 Cal.App.5th 476 (aggrieved employee cannot opt out of a PAGA settlement); *Williams v. Superior Court* (2017) 3 Cal.5th 531, 546-548 ("[A] PAGA action is a statutory action for penalties brought as a proxy for the State," "whatever personal claims the absent employees might have for relief are not at stake[.]" as such, "there is no need to protect absent employees' due process rights" and they "will be bound by the outcome of any PAGA action[.]"); *Ochoa-Hernandez v. CJADERS Foods, Inc.* (N.D. Cal. Apr. 2, 2010), 2010 WL 1340777, at *5 (Unnamed employees need not be given notice); *Arias v. Superior Court* (2009) 46 Cal.4th 969, 984-86 (Same).

¹⁹ *Casida v. Sears Holdings Corp.* (E.D. Cal. Jan. 26, 2012) 2012 WL 253217, at *3; *Thomas v. Aetna Health of Cal., Inc.* (E.D. Cal. June 2, 2011) 2011 WL 2173715, at *11; *Arias, supra*, 46 Cal.4th at 980-88 (affirming lower court's holding that "plaintiff need not satisfy class action requirements" to assert a PAGA claim); *Pedroza v. PetSmart, Inc.* (C.D. Cal. Jan. 28, 2013) 2013 WL 1490667, at *15; *Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 1756, AFL-CIO v. Superior Court* (2009), 46 Cal.4th 993, 1003; see also *Iskanian v. CLS Transportation Los Angeles, LLC* (2014) 58 Cal.4th 348, 381.

²⁰ Zabehe Decl., ¶ 7. See, e.g., *Resendez v. Bridgestone Retail Operations, LLC*, Los Angeles Superior Court, Case No. BC596892 (June 2016), *DCH Auto Wage and Hour Cases*, Los Angeles Superior Court, Case No. JCCP4833 (May 2017); *Garcia v. Gordon Trucking* (E.D. Cal. Oct. 31, 2012) 2012 WL 5364575, at *3; *Schiller v. David's Bridal, Inc.* (E.D. Cal. June 11, 2012) 2012 WL 2117001, at *14; *Chu v. Wells Fargo Invs., LLC* (N.D. Cal. Feb. 16, 2011) 2011 WL 672645, at *1; *Franco v. Ruiz Food Prods.* (E.D. Cal. Nov. 27, 2012) 2012 WL 5941801, at *14; *Nordstrom Commissions Case* (2010) 186 Cal.App.4th 576, 589.

collected by overburdened state enforcement agencies.” See *Ochoa-Hernandez, supra*, 2010 WL 1340777, at *4 (citing *Arias, supra*, 46 Cal.4th at 986). Penalties recovered under the PAGA are, in part, to “be distributed to the [LWDA] for enforcement of labor laws . . . and for education of employers and employees about their rights and responsibilities under this code, to be continuously appropriated to supplement and not supplant the funding to the agency for those purposes.” See Cal. Lab. Code § 2699(j).

IV. THE SETTLEMENT IS FAIR AND SHOULD BE APPROVED

The Settlement resulted from hard-fought negotiations, fulfills the objectives of the PAGA statute, is fair, adequate, and reasonable, and meets all of the criteria for approval for the reasons discussed below.

A. The Factors Giving Rise to a Presumption of Fairness Exist

The Parties reached the Settlement after conducting extensive, arm’s-length settlement negotiations and the involvement of a neutral mediator Michelle Yoshida, Esq.²¹ A settlement that is “the product of extensive and hard-fought adversarial negotiations between the parties” is entitled to a presumption of fairness. *Wershba v. Apple Computer, Inc.* (2001) 91 Cal.App.4th 224, 245.

As discussed in the Declaration of Tara Zabehi, the Settlement is presumptively fair because: (1) it is the product of non-collusive, arm’s-length negotiations with the assistance of an independent mediator knowledgeable in complex labor and employment matters; (2) it was negotiated by counsel with significant experience in similar complex labor and employment matters; and (3) it occurred after counsel for the Parties engaged in significant investigation to evaluate the strength and potential value of the PAGA claim, and the risks and expenses of litigating this claim through trial.²²

Based on all of the information available to the Parties, the Parties agree that this matter is well-suited for settlement given the strengths and weaknesses of the PAGA claim and the

²¹ Zabehi Decl., ¶ 17.

²² *Id.*, ¶¶ 2-6, 16-31.

facts and circumstances of the case.²³ Plaintiff's Counsel has extensive experience handling representative and class action wage-and-hour litigation and used that experience to achieve a settlement recovery for Plaintiff, the State of California, and the Aggrieved Employees.²⁴ Therefore, the Court should give considerable weight to the competency, experience, and opinion of counsel and the involvement of a neutral mediator in assuring that the settlement is a product of arm's length bargaining.²⁵

B. The Relative Strength and Weaknesses of the PAGA Claim and the Range of Possible Outcomes Strongly Favor Approval of the Settlement

For a discussion of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the PAGA claim and the range of possible outcomes in the litigation, see the Declaration of Tara Zabehi at paragraphs 21-31.

C. The Settlement Avoids Risky, Complex, and Lengthy Further Litigation

Courts favor the voluntary conciliation and settlement of complex litigation. *Class Plaintiffs v. City of Seattle* (9th Cir. 1992) 955 F.2d 1268, 1276. Generally, "unless the settlement is clearly inadequate, its acceptance and approval are preferable to lengthy and expensive litigation with uncertain results." *Nat'l Rural Telecomms. Coop. v. DIRECTV, Inc.* (C.D. Cal. Jan. 5, 2004) 221 F.R.D. 523, 526 (citation omitted).

Prior to reaching the Settlement, the Parties investigated the veracity, strength, and scope of the PAGA claim and allegations and considered a large volume of information, documents and data relevant to Plaintiff's claim and Defendants' defenses thereto.²⁶ The Parties thoroughly and sufficiently evaluated the PAGA claim and related allegations, including, and not limited to, calculating the potential monetary recovery under PAGA.²⁷ Plaintiff's Counsel performed other work as well, which is discussed in the Declaration of Tara Zabehi.²⁸

²³ Zabehi Decl., ¶ 35.

²⁴ *Id.*, ¶¶ 2-6.

²⁵ See *Kirkorian v. Borelli* (N.D. Cal. 1988) 695 F.Supp. 446, 451 (opinion of experienced counsel is entitled to considerable weight); *Boyd v. Bechtel Corp.* (N.D. Cal. 1979) 485 F.Supp. 610, 616-17, 622 (recommendations of plaintiffs' counsel should be given a presumption of reasonableness); see also *Satchell v. Fed. Express Corp.* (N.D. Cal. Apr. 13, 2007) 2007 WL 1114010, at *4 (stating that the "assistance of an experienced mediator in the settlement process confirms that the settlement is non-collusive").

²⁶ Zabehi Decl., ¶ 18.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Zabehi Decl., ¶ 18.

Had the case not settled, the Parties would have conducted extensive additional formal discovery, including propounding additional written discovery requests as well as multiple depositions of party and percipient witnesses all over the State of California, to prepare the case for trial. From the inception of this litigation, Defendants indicated that they would aggressively litigate this case.²⁹ Even if Defendants failed on their defenses, litigating a complex PAGA action is inherently expensive, and the litigation could continue beyond entry of judgment if either party were to appeal adverse rulings.³⁰ Additionally, there is a real possibility that Plaintiff would recover nothing, either for herself or on behalf of the State of California or other Aggrieved Employees after years of costly and labor-intensive litigation. Avoiding these risks and the likelihood of future contentious litigation, and potential arbitration, which would involve significant costs, favors settlement.

D. The Settlement Is Fair, Adequate, and Reasonable

The Settlement provides significant benefits to the State of California and the Aggrieved Employees and falls well-within the range of acceptable settlements under the circumstances. “[T]he very essence of a settlement is compromise, ‘a yielding of absolutes and an abandoning of highest hopes.’” *Officers for Justice v. Civil Service Comm’n* (9th Cir. 1981) 688 F.2d 615, 624. “The proposed settlement is not to be judged against a hypothetical or speculative measure of what might have been achieved by the negotiators.” *Id.* at 625.

The Settlement is a compromise of highly disputed claims. Plaintiff and her counsel recognize the expense and length of continued proceedings necessary to litigate the matter through trial and any possible appeals.³¹ Plaintiff and her counsel have also taken into account the uncertainty and risk of the outcome of further litigation, and the difficulties and delays inherent in such litigation.³² Plaintiff and her counsel are also aware of the burdens of proof necessary to establish liability, both generally and in response to Defendants’ defenses thereto, and the difficulties in establishing Defendants’ liability for, and the right to recover, penalties

²⁹ *Id.*, ¶ 22-26.

³⁰ *Id.*, ¶¶ 19, 30-31, & 33.

³¹ Zabehi Decl., ¶¶ 19, 30-31, & 33.

³² Zabehi Decl., ¶ 18.

on behalf of Plaintiff, the State of California, and other Aggrieved Employees.³³ Plaintiff and her counsel have also taken into account Defendants' agreement to enter into a settlement that confers significant relief upon the Aggrieved Employees and the State of California.³⁴

Considering all of the facts in this case, Plaintiff and her counsel have determined that the Settlement represents a fair, adequate, and reasonable resolution of the PAGA claims, and that it is in the best interests of the Aggrieved Employees and the State of California.³⁵

The result achieved in this case, and the monetary recovery provided by this settlement, are well-within the range of an acceptable settlement under the circumstances, especially when compared to the settlement of PAGA claims in other cases. Here, the value obtained for settlement of the PAGA claims is significant, and it will be distributed in accordance with and in fulfillment of the objectives of the PAGA statute.

E. The Experience and Views of Plaintiff's Counsel Favor Approval of the Settlement

Plaintiff's Counsel is highly experienced in complex representative and class action wage-and-hour litigation.³⁶ In the view of Plaintiff's Counsel, the benefits conferred by the settlement are eminently fair and reasonable, and in the best interests of the State of California and the Aggrieved Employees in light of the risk, delay, and uncertainty of continued litigation and the substantial monetary benefits provided for by the Settlement.³⁷ Furthermore, courts have acknowledged that "the interests of plaintiff, counsel and other potentially aggrieved employees are largely aligned. All stand to gain from proving as convincingly as possible as many Labor Code violations as the evidence will sustain[.]" *Williams, supra*, 548 (citing Cal. Lab. Code § 2699(g)(1)(i)).

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³³ *Id.*, ¶¶ 21-29.

³⁴ *Id.*, ¶ 15.

³⁵ *Id.*, ¶ 35.

³⁶ *Id.*, ¶¶ 2-6.

³⁷ *Id.*, ¶ 19, 30-31, 33 & 35.

V. **THE REQUESTED ATTORNEYS' FEES AWARD IS FAIR AND REASONABLE, AND SHOULD BE APPROVED**

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

The Settlement provides for attorneys' fees in an amount of 40% of the Total Settlement Amount, which is \$876,000.00 (assuming the Total Settlement Amount remains \$2,190,000.00)³⁸, subject to approval and award by the Court.³⁹ The requested attorneys' fees award is commensurate with: (1) the risk that Plaintiff's Counsel took in bringing and litigating the case, (2) the time, effort, and expense dedicated to the case, (3) the skill and determination that Plaintiff's Counsel has shown, (4) the results that Plaintiff's Counsel has achieved in the case, (5) the value that Plaintiff's Counsel has achieved in the case, and (6) the other cases that Plaintiff's Counsel has turned down in order to devote its time and effort to this case.

Plaintiff's Counsel is entitled to recover reasonable attorneys' fees and costs as a matter of right under PAGA. See Cal. Lab. Code § 2699(g)(1) ("Any employee who prevails in any [PAGA] action shall be entitled to an award of reasonable attorney's fees and costs"). Plaintiff's Counsel is also entitled to fees and costs under California Code of Civil Procedure section 1021.5, as the instant PAGA action is by definition "for the benefit" of others and secures monetary recovery for a large number of Aggrieved Employees, as well as the State of California.⁴⁰ The settlement will also provide significant benefits to the state labor agency, to enhance enforcement of labor laws and education of "employers and employees about their rights and responsibilities under [the California Labor Code]." Cal. Lab. Code § 2699(i).

Courts may calculate and award attorneys' fees as a percentage of a monetary fund that has, by litigation, been preserved or recovered for the benefit of others. *Laffitte v. Robert Half Int'l, Inc.* (2016) 1 Cal.5th 480 at 486 & 506. Trial courts "retain the discretion to forgo a lodestar cross-check and use other means to evaluate the reasonableness of a requested percentage fee" and

³⁸ See note 2.

³⁹ Settlement Agreement, § 3(a)(1).

⁴⁰ See *Estrada v. FedEx Ground Package Sys. Inc.* (2007) 154 Cal.App.4th 1, 16-17 (recognizing that recovery obtained on behalf of 209 individuals satisfies the "significant benefit," "public interest," and "large class of persons" requirements of Code of Civil Procedure section 1021.5, regardless of plaintiff's personal motivation).

1 “[t]he percentage of fund method survives in California.” *Id.* (internal quotes omitted); see also
2 *Wershba, supra*, 91 Cal.App. 4th at 253.

3 Courts award fees to serve as an economic incentive for lawyers to pursue litigation that
4 will enhance and facilitate access to the judicial system for meritorious claims, deter
5 wrongdoing, and address multiple similar alleged wrongs that would not be economically
6 feasible to pursue individually, such as here. See A. Conte, *Attorney Fee Awards* (2d ed. 1993)
7 104, at 6.

8 The percentage method is particularly appropriate where a monetary settlement has been
9 recovered and “the benefit [recovered can be] easily quantified.” *In re Bluetooth Headset Prods.*
10 *Liab. Litig.* (9th Cir. 2011) 654 F.3d 935, 942. Where the amount of a settlement is a “certain
11 easily calculable sum of money,” California courts may calculate attorneys’ fees as a reasonable
12 percentage of the settlement created. Weil and Brown, California Practice Guide, *Civil*
13 *Procedure Before Trial*, Chapter 14, section 14:145; *Dunk, supra*, 48 Cal. App. 4th at 1808.

14 The percentage fee method is preferred in representative actions because “it better
15 approximates the workings of the marketplace than the lodestar approach.” *Lealao, supra*, 82
16 Cal.App.4th at 49. California law provides that the award for attorneys’ fees should be
17 equivalent to fees freely negotiated in the legal marketplace and paid in comparable litigation
18 based on the result achieved and risk incurred. See *Lealao, supra*, 82 Cal.App.4th at 47-50;
19 *Laffitte, supra*, 1 Cal.5th 480 at 503. In cases where the settlement agreement provides that the
20 defendants will pay the plaintiff’s attorneys a percentage of the fund created by the settlement,
21 use of that percentage method is appropriate. *Lealao, supra*, 82 Cal.App.4th at 32. Fee awards
22 that are too small will “chill the private enforcement essential to the vindication of many legal
23 rights and obstruct the representative actions that often relieve the courts of the need to
24 separately adjudicate numerous claims.” *Id.* at 53. Therefore, fees in representative actions
25 should approximate the probable terms of a contingent fee contract negotiated by a sophisticated
26 attorney and client in comparable litigation. *Id.* at 48. “The ultimate goal . . . is the award of a
27 ‘reasonable’ fee to compensate counsel for their efforts, irrespective of the method of
28 calculation.” *Consumer Privacy Cases* (2009) 175 Cal.App.4th 545, 557-58 (quoting *Apple*

1 *Computer, Inc. v. Superior Court* (2005) 126 Cal.App.4th, 1253, 1270).

2 Plaintiff's Counsel's application for attorneys' fees in light of the facts and
3 circumstances surrounding the case is well-within the range of reasonableness. Courts have
4 awarded fees as high as 50% of the settlement in complex actions, depending on the
5 circumstances of the case.⁴¹

6 Plaintiff's Counsel has performed significant work in this matter, as discussed in the
7 Declaration of Tara Zabehi, with the very real possibility of an unsuccessful outcome and no fee
8 recovery of any kind.⁴² In the present case, Plaintiff's Counsel has borne all of the risks and
9 costs of litigation and will not receive any compensation until recovery is obtained.⁴³ Plaintiff's
10 Counsel is experienced in complex wage-and-hour litigation and used that experience to obtain
11 a significant settlement recovery for Plaintiff, the Aggrieved Employees and the State of
12 California.⁴⁴ Considering the amount of fees requested, work performed, risks incurred, results
13 obtained, and experience of Plaintiff's Counsel in handling similar matters, Plaintiff maintains
14 that the requested attorneys' fees are reasonable and should be awarded.

15 **B. The Requested Fee Award Is Reasonable Based on the Factors Considered in**
16 **Determination of Fee Awards**

17 The factors which courts consider in determining whether fee awards are reasonable, all
18 of which support the fee award requested by Plaintiff's Counsel, are: the time and labor required;
19 the novelty and difficulty of the questions involved; the skill requisite to perform the legal
20 services properly; the preclusion of other employment by the attorney due to the acceptance of
21 the case; the customary fee; whether the fee is fixed or contingent; the time limitation imposed
22 by the client or the circumstances; the amount involved and results obtained; the experience,

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24 ⁴¹ See *In re Ampicillin Antitrust Litig.* (D.D.C. 1981) 526 F.Supp. 494 (awarding attorneys' fees in the amount of
25 45% of the \$7.3 million total settlement amount); *Beech Cinema, Inc. v. Twentieth-Century Fox Film Corp.*
26 (S.D.N.Y. 1979) 480 F.Supp. 1195 (awarding approximately 53% of the settlement as attorneys' fees). California
27 courts routinely approve attorneys' fees awards "average[ing] around one-third of the recovery." *Chavez v. Netflix,*
28 *Inc.* (2008) 162 Cal.App.4th 43, 66 n.11 (lower court found the range of contingency fees in marketplace to be
20%-40% and determined such a percentage fee was appropriate).

⁴² Zabehi Decl., ¶ 30-31.

⁴³ *Id.*, ¶ 33.

⁴⁴ *Id.*, ¶¶ 2-6.

reputation, and ability of the attorney; the undesirability of the case; the nature and length of the professional relationship with the client; and awards in similar cases. *Camden I Condominium Association, Inc. v. Dunkel* (11th Cir. 1991) 946 F. 2d 768, 772. Some of the most relevant factors to this Court's fee determination will be addressed below.

It should be highlighted that the percentage award sought is commensurate with the time, effort, and expense dedicated to the case, the contingent nature of Plaintiff's Counsel's representation and the risks taken in commencing the Action, the skill and determination required, the results that Plaintiff's Counsel has achieved, and the value of the settlement that Plaintiff's Counsel has obtained on behalf of Plaintiff, the Aggrieved Employees, and the State of California. For the reasons discussed herein, an award of attorneys' fees in the amount of 40% of the Total Settlement Amount is reasonable.

1. Time & Labor

Plaintiff's Counsel has used its experience and skills in litigating complex wage-and-hour actions to bring this matter to a successful conclusion. Prior to commencing this lawsuit, Plaintiff's Counsel conducted a significant amount of investigation into the factual and legal issues, Defendants' business, and their operations and employment policies, practices, and procedures.⁴⁵ During the litigation of the case, Plaintiff's Counsel interviewed and obtained information from Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees, conducted legal research, reviewed and analyzed a large amount of documents and data, prepared for and participated in mediation and robust settlement discussions, evaluated the PAGA claim, and calculated the potential monetary recovery under PAGA.⁴⁶ Plaintiff's Counsel also met and conferred with Defendants' counsel regarding the pleadings, case management, discovery, arbitration, mediation, and settlement negotiations, among other issues.⁴⁷ Plaintiff's Counsel performed other work including, *inter alia*, case strategy and analysis; and engaging in extensive settlement negotiations.⁴⁸

Plaintiff's Counsel dedicated the full extent of staffing and monetary resources necessary

⁴⁵ Zabehi Decl., 18.

⁴⁶ *Id.*, ¶ 18.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Zabehi Decl., ¶ 18.

1 to prosecute the case with maximum efficiency and has fully and actively participated in the
2 litigation process.

3 In light of the value of time expended and the carrying of costs involved in this litigation,
4 the requested attorneys' fees award is fair, adequate, and reasonable.

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

6 The skill required to properly litigate this case is evident not only in the results achieved,
7 but in the steps necessary to reach the same. Defendants retained highly-respected counsel to
8 represent their defenses. Plaintiff's Counsel's effort and skill were used to, among other things,
9 investigate the allegations and gather facts, research the legal issues, analyze data, documents,
10 and information obtained from Defendants, Plaintiff, and through other sources, evaluate the
11 PAGA claims, and negotiate the settlement. Despite all of the obstacles that had to be overcome,
12 Plaintiff's Counsel used its extensive experience and skill in the handling of complex wage-and-
13 hour matters to advocate for and obtain a recovery now, with maximum efficiency, as opposed
14 to the possibility of recovery in the future, after significant expense and time.⁴⁹

15 **3. Whether the Fee Is Fixed or Contingent**

16 Plaintiff's Counsel has provided representation on a contingency basis, has borne all of the risks
17 and costs of litigation, and will not receive any compensation until recovery is obtained.⁵⁰ If Plaintiff's
18 Counsel had not been successful, the time that they have devoted to litigating the case would
19 have been for naught and would not have produced any fee or any reimbursement of costs or
20 expenses. Plaintiff's Counsel is well-experienced in complex wage-and-hour litigation and used
21 that experience to obtain a great result in this matter.⁵¹ The skill and determination that
22 Plaintiff's Counsel has shown throughout the prosecution of the case justifies the requested
23 attorneys' fees and costs. Considering the amounts requested, work performed, and risks
24 incurred, the requested fees and costs are reasonable and should be awarded.

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27 ⁴⁹ *Id.*, ¶¶ 16-31.

28 ⁵⁰ *Id.*, ¶¶ 32 & 33.

⁵¹ See *id.*, ¶¶ 2-6.

4. The Amount Involved and the Results Achieved

The Settlement represents an excellent resolution of this lawsuit, given the uncertainty and risks of further litigation.⁵² Had the case not settled, Defendants would have vigorously defended the case, and would have challenged manageability and liability, and also sought a reduction in the amount assessed as civil penalties. Defendants, however, faced risks too, including and not limited to, the risk of trial and the risk of having the Court assess civil penalties. Additionally, preparing for trial would have been extraordinarily expensive for the Parties. At this stage, the settlement is preferred over continued litigation because such resolution saves time and money that would otherwise go to litigation. The risks and expenses of further litigation outweighed any benefit that might have been gained otherwise. The Settlement provides an immediate recovery and avoids an uncertain result in the future and additional risk, expense, and delay (e.g., prolonged expert discovery, trial preparation, and appellate review of those proceedings).

The results achieved, in light of the difficulties inherent in similar cases and the specific difficulties faced in this case, are considerable. Plaintiff's Counsel's obtained a result that provides for a Total Settlement Amount of \$2,190,000.00, and it is currently estimated that the Net Settlement Amount available for distribution to the Aggrieved Employees and the State of California is approximately \$1,272,011.76.⁵³

5. The Reputation and Ability of the Attorneys

Plaintiff's Counsel is a recognized class action and complex litigation law firm, and its attorneys employed their knowledge, skill, and experience to bring the case to a successful conclusion. Plaintiff's Counsel has years of wage-and-hour class action and complex litigation experience, has recovered millions of dollars on behalf of thousands of individuals in California, and has successfully handled numerous significant wage-and-hour class action and representative action cases.⁵⁴

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⁵² Zabehi Decl., ¶¶ 15, 18, 19, 31 & 35.

⁵³ Settlement Agreement, § 3(a) and see footnote 2.

⁵⁴ Zabehi Decl., ¶¶ 2-6.

1 **VI. REIMBURSEMENT OF PLAINTIFF'S COUNSEL LITIGATION COSTS**
2 **AND EXPENSES SHOULD BE APPROVED**

3 The Settlement provides for reimbursement of litigation costs and expenses of up to
4 \$50,000.00. As set forth in the Declaration of Tara Zabehi, Plaintiff's Counsel has incurred a
5 total of \$9,488.24 in litigation costs and expenses.⁵⁵ These expenses were reasonable and
6 necessary in the prosecution of this matter and to obtain the Settlement, and is less than the
7 maximum amount allocated under the Settlement Agreement.⁵⁶ The cost savings of \$40,511.76 will
8 be part of the Net Settlement Amount. Accordingly, the Court is requested to award
9 reimbursement of litigation costs and expenses to Plaintiff's Counsel in the amount of
10 \$9,488.24.

11 **VII. THE SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION COSTS SHOULD BE APPROVED**

12 As set forth in the Settlement Agreement, the Parties have agreed to retain, subject to
13 approval by the Court, Phoenix Settlement Administrators to handle the administration of the
14 Settlement. The fees and expenses of the PAGA Settlement Administrator are estimated not to
15 exceed \$20,000.00. These costs include, but are not limited to, expenses for preparing,
16 translating, printing, and mailing the Cover Letter and Individual Settlement Shares checks to
17 the Aggrieved Employees (i.e., PAGA Settlement Package); performing skip-trace searches; re-
18 mailing the returned PAGA Settlement Packages to any updated addresses located; and handling
19 inquiries from Aggrieved Employees regarding the Settlement, among other things.
20 Accordingly, the Court should grant approval of the Settlement Administration Costs in the
21 amount of up to \$20,000.00 to Phoenix Settlement Administrators, a necessary third-party for
22 handling the settlement process.

23 **VIII. THE ENHANCEMENT PAYMENT SHOULD BE APPROVED**

24 The Settlement provides for an Enhancement Payment to be paid to Plaintiff in the
25 amount of \$12,500.00 for her broader individual waiver and release of claims with a California
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27 ⁵⁵ *Id.*, ¶ 33.

28 ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Civil Code Section 1542 waiver (set forth in Section 8(b) of the Settlement Agreement).⁵⁷ It is reasonable and just for Plaintiff to receive this payment. Plaintiff contributed considerable time and effort to the litigation of this case in order to enforce the California Labor Code on behalf of the State of California and for the benefit of other Aggrieved Employees. Plaintiff discussed her employment with her counsel, gathered and produced relevant documents and information, and provided the facts and evidence necessary to attempt to prove the allegations.⁵⁸ For example, Plaintiff propounded discovery requests on Defendants, and Plaintiff spent time reviewing the documents in response thereto. Additionally, Defendant CBRE, Inc. propounded discovery requests on Plaintiff, and Plaintiff spent time reviewing said discovery requests and providing information and documents in response thereto.⁵⁹ Plaintiff was available whenever her counsel needed her and tried to obtain and provide documents and information that would aid in the litigation of the PAGA claims and pursuit of recovery on behalf of the State of California and Aggrieved Employees.⁶⁰

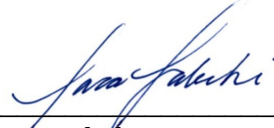
IX. CONCLUSION

For the reasons discussed above and in the accompanying declarations, the Court is respectfully requested to approve the Settlement, including the plan of allocation and distribution of the Total Settlement Amount, and permit the filing of a memorandum that exceeds the page limit.

Dated: October 14, 2024

LAWYERS for JUSTICE, PC

By: _____


Tara Zabehi
Attorneys for Plaintiff

⁵⁷ Settlement Agreement, §§ 3(a)(2) & 8(a). The PAGA statute recognizes that a plaintiff employee may pursue or recover other remedies and relief available to the plaintiff employee under state or federal law through an action under PAGA. See, Cal. Lab. Code § 2699(k)(1) (formerly Cal. Lab. Code § 2699(g)(1)). As such, it is appropriate for Plaintiff to receive a payment for her broader individual release of claims.

⁵⁸ Zabehi Decl., ¶ 34; Declaration of Tenaya Jackson (“Jackson Decl.”), ¶¶ 3 & 4.

⁵⁹ Zabehi Decl., ¶ 34; Jackson Decl., ¶¶ 3 & 4.

⁶⁰ Zabehi Decl., ¶ 34; Jackson Decl., ¶¶ 3 & 4.