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Attorneys for Plaintiff
SILVIA SOLER

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF ORANGE

SILVIA SOLER, as an aggrieved employee
and private attorney general,

Plaintiff,

vs.

SMILE BRANDS INC., a Washington
corporation; SMILE BRANDS FINANCE,
INC., a Delaware corporation; SMILE
BRANDS GROUP, INC., a Delaware
corporation; and DOES 1 through 50,
inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.:

**REPRESENTATIVE ACTION
COMPLAINT**

DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY

**(1) VIOLATION OF CALIFORNIA
LABOR CODE § 2699, ET SEQ.
(PRIVATE ATTORNEYS
GENERAL ACT)**

1 Plaintiff SILVIA SOLER (“Plaintiff”), as an aggrieved employee and as a private attorney
2 general, based upon facts that either have evidentiary support or are likely to have evidentiary
3 support after a reasonable opportunity for further investigation and discovery, alleges as follows:

4 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

5 1. Plaintiff brings this action against Defendants SMILE BRANDS INC.; SMILE
6 BRANDS FINANCE, INC.; SMILE BRANDS GROUP, INC.; and DOES 1 THROUGH 50
7 (hereinafter also collectively referred to as “Defendants”) as a representative action on behalf of
8 herself and certain other current and former non-exempt employees of Defendants against whom
9 one or more of the alleged violations was committed (hereinafter collectively referred to as the
10 “Aggrieved Employees”) pursuant to California Labor Code sections 2698, et seq. Plaintiff is an
11 aggrieved employee against whom one or more of the alleged violations was committed. The civil
12 penalties sought by Plaintiff exceed the minimal jurisdiction limits of the Superior Court and will
13 be established according to proof at trial.

14 2. The Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to the California Constitution,
15 Article VI, Section 10, which grants the superior court “original jurisdiction in all other causes”
16 except those given by statute to other courts. The statutes under which this action is brought do
17 not specify any other basis for jurisdiction.

18 3. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendants because, upon information and belief,
19 Defendants are citizens of California, have sufficient minimum contacts in California, or
20 otherwise intentionally avail themselves of the California market so as to render the exercise of
21 jurisdiction over them by the California courts consistent with traditional notions of fair play and
22 substantial justice.

23 4. Venue is proper in this Court because, upon information and belief, Defendants
24 maintain offices, have agents, and/or transact business in the State of California, County of
25 Orange.

26 5. Emergency Rule 9 of the California Emergency Rules Related to COVID-19 tolled
27 the statute of limitations for civil causes of action that exceed 180 days from April 6, 2020, until
28

October 1, 2020.

PARTIES

6. Plaintiff SILVIA SOLER is an individual residing in the State of California.

7. Defendant SMILE BRANDS INC. is and at all times herein mentioned was, a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Washington and registered to do business in the state of California.

8. Defendant SMILE BRANDS FINANCE, INC. is and at all times herein mentioned was a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Delaware and registered to do business in the state of California.

9. Defendant SMILE BRANDS GROUP, INC. is and at all times herein mentioned was a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Delaware and registered to do business in the state of California.

10. Plaintiff is ignorant of the identities of defendants Does 1 through 50, inclusive, and therefore sues these defendants by such fictitious names. The Doe defendants may be individuals, partnerships, or corporations. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges, that, at all times mentioned herein, each of the Doe defendants was the parent, subsidiary, agent, servant, employee, co-venturer, and/or co-conspirator of each of the other defendants, and was at all times mentioned acting within the scope, purpose, consent, knowledge, ratification and authorization of such agency, employment, joint venture and conspiracy. Plaintiff will amend this Complaint to allege their true names and capacities when ascertained. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that each of the fictitiously named Doe defendants is responsible in some manner for the occurrences herein alleged, and that Plaintiff's damages as herein alleged were proximately caused by its conduct.

11. Defendants are and at all times herein mentioned were, (a) conducting business in the County of Orange, State of California, and (b) the employer of Plaintiff consistent with the California Labor Code and Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Orders ("Wage Orders").

12. Plaintiff further alleges that Defendants, directly or indirectly controlled or

1 affected the working conditions, wages, working hours, and conditions of employment of Plaintiff
2 and Aggrieved Employees so as to make each of said Defendants employers and employers jointly
3 liable under the statutory provisions set forth herein.

4 **GENERAL ALLEGATIONS**

5 13. Defendants employed Plaintiff to work as a patient collection specialist from
6 approximately November 15, 2014.

7 14. At all relevant times set forth herein, Defendants employed Plaintiff and
8 Aggrieved Employees as hourly-paid or non-exempt employees.

9 15. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants had the authority to
10 hire and terminate Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees; to directly or indirectly control work rules,
11 working conditions, wages, working hours, and conditions of employment of Plaintiff and
12 Aggrieved Employees; and to hire and terminate the employment of Plaintiff and Aggrieved
13 Employees.

14 16. At all times herein mentioned, Defendants were subject to the Labor Code of the
15 State of California and the applicable Industrial Welfare Commission Orders.

16 17. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges that Defendants engaged in
17 an ongoing and systematic scheme of wage abuse against their hourly-paid or non-exempt
18 employees. As set forth in more detail below, this scheme involved, *inter alia*, regularly requiring
19 Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees to work off the clock without compensation, thereby failing
20 to pay them for all hours worked, including minimum and overtime wages. Defendants also
21 implemented time rounding practices that resulted in the systematic underpayment of wages to
22 Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees, including minimum and overtime wages. Defendants also
23 implemented policies that prohibited Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees from accurately
24 recording the actual time worked, resulting in a failure to pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved
25 Employees all wages owed. In addition, Defendants routinely failed to permit Plaintiff and the
26 Aggrieved Employees to take timely and duty-free meal periods and rest periods in violation of
27 California law. Defendants also failed to reimburse Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees for all
28 necessary business-related expenses.

1 18. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants have implemented
2 policies and practices which failed to provide Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees with timely and
3 duty-free meal periods. Defendants routinely failed to relieve Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees
4 of all duties during their meal periods, regularly failed to relinquish control over Plaintiff and
5 Aggrieved Employees during their meal periods, regularly failed to permit Plaintiff and
6 Aggrieved Employees a reasonable opportunity to take their meal periods, and regularly impeded
7 or discouraged Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees from taking thirty (30) minute uninterrupted
8 meal breaks no later than the end of their fifth hour of work and/or from taking a second thirty
9 (30) minute uninterrupted meal break no later than their tenth hour of work for shifts lasting more
10 than ten (10) hours. Defendants also failed to maintain accurate records of meal periods taken by
11 Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees.

12 19. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants did not adequately
13 inform Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees of their right to take meal periods under California
14 law. Moreover, Defendants systematically disregarded their own written policies regarding the
15 provision and timing of meal periods for Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees. Instead,
16 Defendants' actual policy and practice was to schedule Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees in a
17 way the prohibited them from taking timely and duty-free meal periods, and to require Plaintiff
18 and Aggrieved Employees to work through their meal periods, for which they were not
19 compensated.

20 20. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants failed to pay Plaintiff
21 and Aggrieved Employees premium wages for meal periods that were missed, late, interrupted,
22 or shortened in violation of California law. Defendants knew or should have known that Plaintiff
23 and Aggrieved Employees were entitled to receive all meal periods or payment of one additional
24 hour of pay at their regular rate of pay when a meal period was missed, short, late, and/or
25 interrupted. Notwithstanding this knowledge, Defendants routinely failed to provide legally
26 compliant meal periods to Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees, and routinely failed pay one
27 additional hour of pay to Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees at their regular rate of pay when a
28 meal period was missed, short, late, and/or interrupted.

1 21. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants have implemented
2 policies and practices which prohibited Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees from taking timely
3 and duty-free rest periods. Defendants regularly failed to provide, authorize, and permit Plaintiff
4 and Aggrieved Employees to take full, uninterrupted, off-duty rest periods for every shift lasting
5 three and one-half (3.5) to six (6) hours and/or two full, uninterrupted, off-duty rest periods for
6 every shift lasting six (6) to ten (10) hours, and failed to make a good faith effort to authorize,
7 permit, and provide such rest breaks in the middle of each work period.

8 22. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants did not adequately
9 inform Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees of their right to take rest periods under California law.
10 Moreover, Defendants systematically disregarded their own written policies regarding the
11 provision and timing of rest periods for Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees. Instead, Defendants'
12 actual policy and practice was to schedule Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees in a way that
13 regularly prohibited them from taking timely and duty free rest periods, and to regularly require
14 Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees to work through their rest periods.

15 23. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants failed to pay Plaintiff
16 and Aggrieved Employees premium wages for rest periods that were missed, late, interrupted, or
17 shortened in violation of California law. Defendants knew or should have known that Plaintiff
18 and Aggrieved Employees were entitled to receive all rest periods or payment of one additional
19 hour of pay at their regular rate of pay when a rest period was missed, short, late, and/or
20 interrupted. Notwithstanding this knowledge, Defendants routinely failed to authorize and permit
21 Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees to take duty-free rest periods and failed to pay one additional
22 hour of pay to Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees at their regular rate of pay when a rest period
23 was missed, short, late and/or interrupted.

24 24. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendant regularly required
25 Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees to perform work off-the-clock. Although Defendants
26 prohibited overtime, Defendants still regularly required Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees
27 complete all of their assigned duties. To do so, Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees were regularly
28 required to perform work off-the-clock for which they were not compensated.

1 25. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants employed a time
2 rounding policy that was not neutral and designed to consistently round time in Defendants' favor,
3 ensuring that Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees were oftentimes not paid for all time worked.

4 26. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants implemented policies
5 that prohibited Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees from accurately recording the actual time
6 worked, at times resulting in a failure to pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees all wages
7 owed.

8 27. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Plaintiff and Aggrieved
9 Employees worked more than eight (8) hours in a day, and/or forty (40) hours in a week.

10 28. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to
11 pay overtime compensation to Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees when they worked in excess
12 of eight (8) hours in a single work day and/or forty (40) hours in a single work week, or in excess
13 of twelve (12) hours in a single work day and/or eighty (80) hours in a single work week.
14 Defendants knew or should have known that Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees were entitled to
15 receive certain wages for overtime or double overtime compensation and that they were not
16 receiving wages for overtime or double overtime compensation.

17 29. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants failed to pay
18 overtime to Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees for all overtime hours worked based on regular
19 rates of pay correctly calculated to include all applicable remuneration.

20 30. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to
21 pay Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees at least minimum wages for all hours worked. Defendants
22 knew or should have known that Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees were entitled to receive at
23 least minimum wages for all hours worked and that they were not receiving at least minimum
24 wages for all hours worked. Defendants' failure to pay minimum wages included, *inter alia*,
25 failing to pay Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees at the required minimum wage pursuant to
26 California law, and requiring Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees to perform work off the clock.

27 31. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to
28 pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees at least minimum wages for all hours worked.

1 Defendants knew or should have known that Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees were entitled
2 to receive at least minimum wages for all hours worked and that they were not receiving at least
3 minimum wages for all hours worked. Defendants' failure to pay minimum wages included, *inter*
4 *alia*, failing to pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees at the required minimum wage pursuant
5 to California law, requiring Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees to perform work off the clock,
6 and implementing time rounding policies that resulted in the systematic underpayment of wages
7 to Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees.

8 32. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to
9 pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees all wages owed to them upon discharge or resignation.
10 Defendant knew or should have known that Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees were entitled
11 to receive all wages owed to them upon termination within the time permissible under California
12 Labor Code section 202. Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees did not receive payment of all
13 final wages owed to them upon discharge or resignation, including overtime compensation and
14 minimum wages within any time permissible under California Labor Code section 202.

15 33. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to
16 pay Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees all wages within any time permissible under California
17 law, including, *inter alia*, California Labor Code section 204. Defendants knew or should have
18 known that Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees were entitled to receive all wages owed to them
19 during their employment. Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees did not receive payment of all
20 wages, including overtime compensation, minimum wages, and meal and rest period premiums,
21 within any time permissible under California Labor Code section 204.

22 34. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to
23 provide complete or accurate wage statements to Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees. Defendants
24 knew or should have known that Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees were entitled to receive
25 complete and accurate wage statements in accordance with California law, but, in fact, they did
26 not receive complete and accurate wage statements from Defendants. The deficiencies included,
27 *inter alia*, the failure to include the total number of hours worked, the actual gross wages earned,
28 the correct rates of pay, the inclusive pay period dates, net wages earned, all applicable hourly

1 rates, and the name and address of the legal entity of the employer.

2 35. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to
3 keep complete or accurate payroll records for Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees. Defendants
4 knew or should have known that Defendants were required keep complete and accurate payroll
5 records for Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees in accordance with California law, but, in fact, did
6 not keep complete and accurate payroll records.

7 36. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants regularly failed to
8 maintain accurate records relating to Plaintiff's and the Aggrieved Employees' work periods,
9 meal periods, total daily hours, hours per pay period, and applicable pay rates.

10 37. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants failed to reimburse
11 Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees for all necessary business-related expenses, including but
12 not limited to use of personal cell phones and purchase of necessary equipment, such as wrist
13 braces. Defendants knew or should have known that Defendants were required to reimburse
14 Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees for all necessary business-related expenses and costs, but,
15 in fact, failed to do so in violation of California law.

16 38. Throughout the time period involved in this case, Defendants knew or should have
17 known that they had a duty to compensate Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees pursuant to
18 California law. Defendants had the financial ability to pay such compensation, but willfully,
19 knowingly, and intentionally failed to do so, and falsely represented to Plaintiff and Aggrieved
20 Employees that they paid all wages owed to them, all in order to increase Defendants' profits.

21 39. On or about July 30, 2021, Plaintiff notified Defendants via certified mail and filed
22 an online PAGA claim notice with the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency
23 ("LWDA") identifying Defendants' violations of the California Labor Code identified in this
24 Complaint and Plaintiff's intent to bring a claim for civil penalties under California Labor Code
25 section 2698 *et seq.* in accord with Cal. Lab. Code section 2699.3. As of the filing of this
26 Complaint, the LWDA has not responded to Plaintiff's PAGA claim notice.

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1 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

2 **(Violation of California Labor Code § 2699, Et Seq.)**

3 **(Against All Defendants)**

4 40. Plaintiff incorporates by reference and re-alleges as if fully stated herein each and
5 every allegation set forth above.

6 41. Plaintiff brings her first and only cause of action as a representative action on
7 behalf of herself and similarly Aggrieved Employees in the capacity as a private attorney general
8 pursuant to the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, California Labor Code section 2698, et
9 seq. ("PAGA").

10 42. PAGA specifically provides for a private right of action to recover civil penalties
11 for violations of the Labor Code as follows: "Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any
12 provision of this code that provides for a civil penalty to be assessed and collected by the Labor
13 and Workforce Development Agency or any of its departments, divisions, commissions, boards,
14 agencies, or employees, for a violation of this code, may, as an alternative, be recovered through
15 a civil action brought by an aggrieved employee on behalf of himself or herself and other current
16 or former employees pursuant to the procedures specified in Section 2699.3." Cal. Lab. Code §
2699(a).

17 43. Plaintiff was employed by Defendants and the Labor Code violations alleged above
18 were committed against her during her time of employment. Plaintiff and the other non-exempt
19 employees of Defendants are therefore "aggrieved employees" as defined by California Labor
20 Code section 2699(c) in that they are all current or former employees of Defendants, and one or
21 more of the alleged violations were committed against them.

22 44. As set forth in detail above, during all times relevant to this Action, Defendant
23 has routinely subjected Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees to violations of California Labor
24 Codes by:

25 a. Failing to pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees all earned minimum wage
26 compensation in violation of Labor Code §§ 1194 and 1198 *et seq.*

27 b. Failing to pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees all earned overtime
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1 compensation in violation of Labor Code §§ 204, 510, 1194, and 1198 *et seq.*

- 2 c. Failing to provide legally required meal periods to Plaintiff and the Aggrieved
3 Employees and failing to pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees an additional
4 hour of premium pay for meal period violations in violation of Labor Code §§
5 226.7 and 512.
- 6 d. Failing to provide authorize and permit Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees to
7 take duty-free rest periods and failing to pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved
8 Employees an additional hour of premium pay for rest period violations in
9 violation of Labor Code §§ 226.7 and 512.
- 10 e. Failing to timely pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees all wages at end of
11 their employment in violation of Labor Code § 203.
- 12 f. Failing to timely pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees all wages owed
13 during employment in violation of Labor Code § 204.
- 14 g. Failing to furnish Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees with complete, accurate,
15 itemized wage statements in violation of Labor Code § 226.
- 16 h. Failing to maintain accurate records relating to Plaintiff and the Aggrieved
17 Employees' work periods, meal periods, total daily hours, hours per pay period,
18 total wages and compensation, and applicable pay rates in violation of Labor Code
19 § 1174(d) and the applicable IWC Wage Order.
- 20 i. Failing to reimburse Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees for necessary
21 business-related expenses in violation of Labor Code §§ 2800 and 2802.

22 45. Pursuant to California Labor Code sections 2699 and 2699.5, Plaintiff,
23 individually and on behalf of the Aggrieved Employees and the State of California, requests and
24 is entitled to recover penalties against Defendants for the Labor Code violations described above,
25 including but not limited to penalties under California Code of Regulations Title section 11040,
26 penalties under California Labor Code sections 2699, 558, 210, 1197.1, 226, 226.3, 1174.5, and
27 1197.1, and any and all additional penalties and sums as provided by the California Labor Code
28 and/or other statutes. The exact amount of the applicable penalties, in all, is in an amount to be

1 shown according to proof at trial.

2 46. Plaintiff has exhausted her administrative remedies pursuant to Labor Code §
3 2699.3. On July 30, 2021, Plaintiff, through her counsel of record, by online filing with the Labor
4 and Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”) and by certified mail to the Defendants, notified
5 Defendants and the LWDA of the specific provisions of the Labor Code and IWC Wage Orders
6 that Defendants have violated, including the facts and theories to support the violations, and of
7 Plaintiff’s intent to bring a claim for civil penalties under PAGA. Plaintiff also paid the filing fee
8 required under Labor Code § 2699.3. As of the filing of this Complaint, more than 65 days have
9 elapsed since the mailing of Plaintiff’s July 30, 2021, notice, and the Labor and Workforce
10 Development Agency has not indicated that it intends to investigate the violations discussed in the
11 notice. Accordingly, Plaintiff may commence a civil action to recover penalties for herself and
12 other Aggrieved Employees pursuant to Labor Code § 2699.3.

13 47. Plaintiff was compelled to retain the services of counsel to file this court action to
14 protect her interests and the Aggrieved Employees, and to assess and collect the civil penalties
15 owed by Defendants. Plaintiff therefore seeks an award of reasonable attorney’s fees and costs
16 pursuant to Labor Code § 2699(g)(1), and any other applicable statute.

17 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

18 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, individually and on behalf of all other aggrieved employees, and
19 as a private attorney general, prays for relief and judgment against Defendants, jointly and
20 severally, as follows:

21 **As to the First Cause of Action**

22 1. For statutory attorneys’ fees and costs pursuant to 2699(g)(1) of California Labor
23 Code;

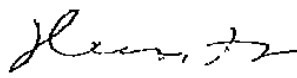
24 2. For the imposition of civil penalties pursuant to California Labor Code §§ 2699,
25 210, 558, 226, 226.3, 1174.5, 1197.1 and all other penalties allowed by the California Labor Code
26 and/or other applicable statutes; and

27 3. For such other relief as the Court deems just and proper.

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1 Dated: November 2, 2021

PROTECTION LAW GROUP, LLP

2
3 By: 

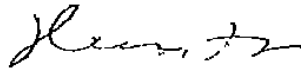
4 Heather Davis
5 *Attorney for Plaintiff*
6 SILVIA SOLER
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DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY

Plaintiff demands a trial by jury as to all causes of action triable by a jury.

Dated: November 2, 2021

PROTECTION LAW GROUP, LLP

By: 

Heather Davis
Attorney for Plaintiff
SILVIA SOLER