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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

FOR THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

LORENA BELLAMY, individually, and on behalf of other members of the general public similarly situated; and ORISHIA BLACKSHER and HAROLD BRISSETT, individually, and on behalf of other aggrieved employees pursuant to the California Private Attorneys General Act, Plaintiffs, vs. LIFELONG MEDICAL CARE, a California corporation; and DOES 1 through 100, inclusiv Defendants.	Case Nos.: HG19024178 (Lead Case) Consolidated Case Nos.: 21CV004212 & 22CV012004 Honorable Somnath Raj Chatterjee Department 21 **<u>CLASS ACTION</u>** **PLAINTIFFS' NOTICE OF MOTION AND MOTION FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF CLASS ACTION AND PAGA SETTLEMENT, CLASS COUNSEL FEES AND CLASS COUNSEL LITIGATION EXPENSES, AND CLASS REPRESENTATIVE SERVICE PAYMENTS; MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES** Reservation ID: 126656572735 Date: March 24, 2025 Time: 1:30 p.m. Department: 21 Complaint Filed: June 24, 2019 FAC Filed: January 12, 2022 Trial Date: None Set

DEANNA LYNETTE DAVIS, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated;

Plaintiff,

v.

LIFELONG MEDICAL CARE, a California Corporation; and DOES 1-50, inclusive,

Defendants

DEANNA LYNETTE DAVIS, individually and on behalf of other aggrieved employees pursuant to the California Private Attorney's General Act;

Plaintiff,

v.

LIFELONG MEDICAL CARE, a California Corporation; and DOES 1-50, inclusive,

Defendants

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PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on March 24, 2025, at 1:30 p.m., in Department 21 of the above-entitled Court, located at Rene C. Davidson Courthouse, 1225 Fallon Street, Oakland, California 94612, Plaintiffs Lorena Bellamy, Orishia Blacksher, Harold Brissett, and Deanna Lynette Davis (collectively, the "Plaintiffs" or "Class Representatives") will and hereby do move for an order granting final approval of:

1. Making final the Court's previous preliminary certification of the class for settlement purposes, and approving the First Amended Class Action and Private Attorneys General Act Settlement Agreement ("Settlement," "Agreement," or "Settlement Agreement"), on the grounds that the Settlement is fair, adequate, and reasonable because, *inter alia*:

- A Net Settlement Amount of approximately **$836,553.96** will be fully distributed to the Class Members who do not submit a timely and valid Request for Exclusion ("Participating Class Member"); and
- **No Objections** and **Three Request for Exclusions** were submitted to the settlement administrator, ILYM Group, Inc. ("ILYM Group, Inc." or "Settlement Administrator");

2. Awarding payment in the amount of **$612,500.00** to Lawyers *for* Justice, PC and James Hawkins, APLC (together, the "Class Counsel"), representing thirty-five percent (35%) of the Gross Settlement Amount, for attorneys' fees, which is reasonable and justified on a percentage-basis and also based on a lodestar cross-check;

3. Awarding payment in the amount of **$30,946.04** to Class Counsel for reimbursement of litigation costs and expenses;

4. Awarding payment in the amount of **$30,000.00** to the Settlement Administrator for Settlement Administration Expenses;

5. Awarding payment in the amount of **$10,000.00** each, to Plaintiffs Lorena Bellamy, Orishia Blacksher, Harold Brissett, and Deanna Lynette Davis, as Class Representative Service Payments; and

6. Approving the allocation of the penalties under the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, California Labor Code § 2698, *et seq*. ("PAGA"), in the amount of **$200,000.00** ("PAGA Payment"), of which 75%, or **$150,000.00**, will be paid to the California Labor and

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Workforce Development Agency ("LWDA") ("LWDA Payment") and 25%, or **$50,000.00** will be distributed to Aggrieved Employees on a *pro rata* basis, based on Pay Periods during the PAGA Period ("PAGA Share(s)").

This motion is made pursuant to Rules 3.764, 3.769, and 3.1113(e) of the California Rules of Court, which, respectively, require that a memorandum in support of class certification not exceed 20 pages, require approval by the Court of a class action settlement, and permit the Court to extend the page limit for memoranda, and California Labor Code section 2699(l)(2), which requires approval by the Court of a PAGA settlement. Unless otherwise specified, all citations and references to the PAGA statute that are contained within this motion and supporting papers are to the former version of the PAGA statute prior to the recent amendment effective July 1, 2024; the amended PAGA statute does not apply to the above-captioned action and the Settlement pursuant to California Labor Code § 2699, subd. (v), as amended, because the above-captioned action was filed prior to June 19, 2024.

This motion is based upon the following Memorandum of Points and Authorities; the Declaration of Class Counsel (Vartan Madoyan and James Hawkins), Class Representatives (Lorena Bellamy, Orishia Blacksher, Harold Brissett, and Deanna Lynette Davis), and Settlement Administrator (Cassandra Polites of ILYM Group, Inc.) in support thereof; the pleadings and other records on file with the Court; and such evidence and oral argument as may be presented at the hearing on this motion.

Dated: February 28, 2025

LAWYERS *for* JUSTICE, PC

By: Vartan S. Madoyan

Vartan Madoyan
Matthew Richard Soto
Attorneys for Plaintiffs Lorena Bellamy, Orishia Blacksher, Harold Brissett and the Class

Dated: February 28, 2025

JAMES HAWKINS, APLC

By: */s/* Greg Mauro

James Hawkins
Greg Mauro
Attorneys for Plaintiff Deanna Lynette Davis and the Class

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MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES

I. SUMMARY OF MOTION

Plaintiffs Lorena Bellamy, Orishia Blacksher, Harold Brissett, and Deanna Lynette Davis ("Plaintiffs" or "Class Representatives") seek final approval of: (1) the settlement reached between Plaintiffs and Defendant Lifelong Medical Care, Inc. ("Defendant") (together with Plaintiffs, the "Parties") which provides for Defendant's payment of a Gross Settlement Amount of $1,750,000.00[1]; (2) attorneys' fees in the amount of $612,500.00,[2] which is thirty-five percent (35%) of the Gross Settlement Amount, and reimbursement of litigation costs and expenses in the amount of $30,946.04 (together, referred to as the "Class Counsel Fees" and "Class Counsel Litigation Expenses") to Lawyers *for* Justice PC and James Hawkins, APLC (together, the "Class Counsel"); (3) payment in the amount of $30,000.00 to ILYM Group, Inc. ("Settlement Administration Expenses"); (4) payment in the amount of $10,000.00 each, to Plaintiffs Lorena Bellamy, Orishia Blacksher, Harold Brissett, and Deanna Lynette Davis ("Class Representative Service Payments"); and (5) allocation of $200,000.00 for penalties under the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, California Labor Code § 2698, *et seq*. ("PAGA Payment").

Plaintiffs request that the Court make final its preliminary certification of the class for settlement purposes. The Settlement resolves the Released Class Claims and provides relief to a class consisting of the following individuals: all current and former hourly-paid or non-exempt employees who are or were employed by and performed work for Defendant in California at any time during the Class Period (i.e., the time period June 24, 2015 to March 1, 2023) ("Class" or "Class Members").[3]

The Settlement also resolves the Released PAGA Claims pertaining to the employment of the following alleged aggrieved employees: all current and former hourly-paid or non-exempt employees who are or were employed by and performed work for Defendant in California at any time during the PAGA Period (i.e., the time period July 1, 2018 to March 1, 2023) ("Aggrieved Employees").[4]

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[1] First Amended Class Action and Private Attorneys General Act Settlement Agreement ("Settlement," "Agreement," "Settlement Agreement"), §§ I.17.
[2] Settlement Agreement, § III.52.b
[3] *Id.*, § I.3 & I.9.
[4] *Id.*, § I.2 & I.24.

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This matter involved, and the settlement is the product of, meaningful and extensive investigation, formal written discovery, depositions, and mediation-related discovery, and review and analysis of tens of thousands of pages of information, documents, and data exchanged by the Parties in the course of litigation and mediation and settlement negotiations (which involved one full day mediation conducted by Paul Grossman).[5]

This case has required 816.30 hours of attorney time by Class Counsel. As will be demonstrated herein, the request for attorneys' fees, which represents thirty-five percent (35%) of the Gross Settlement Amount, is fully supported by the use of the percentage-fee method. Courts have historically awarded fees of up to fifty percent (50%) of the recovery. The requested attorneys' fees are also supported under the lodestar cross-check method.

The requests for Class Counsel Fees and Class Counsel Litigation Expenses, Class Representative Service Payments, Settlement Administration Expenses, and allocation for the PAGA Payment were fully disclosed in the Notice of Proposed Settlement of Class Action and Hearing Date for Final Court Approval (the "Class Notice") that was mailed to the Class Members. Most importantly, as of the date of this Motion, *no Class Member has objected to the Settlement or to the contemplated Class Counsel Fees and Class Counsel Litigation Expenses, Class Representative Service Payments, Settlement Administration Expenses, or allocation for PAGA Payment.*

The Settlement is fair, adequate, and reasonable, and is the product of arm's-length, good-faith negotiations by experienced counsel presided over by a highly-regarded mediator who is experienced in mediating wage-and-hour class action lawsuits. Accordingly, the Court should grant final approval of the Settlement, and award the Class Counsel Fees and Class Counsel Litigation Expenses, Class Representative Service Payments, Settlement Administration Expenses, and allocation for the PAGA Payment in the full amounts requested herein.

In order to efficiently present the Court with adequate information to determine whether to grant final approval of the Settlement, and award Class Counsel Fees and Class Counsel Litigation Expenses, Class Representative Service Payments, Settlement Administration Expenses, and allocation for the PAGA Payment , Plaintiffs also move for an order permitting the filing of this single

[5] Declaration of Vartan Madoyan ("Madoyan Decl.") ¶ 9.

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consolidated memorandum, although it exceeds the page limit established by California Rules of Court, Rule 3.764, instead of filing several separate motions.

II. RELEVANT PROCEDURAL HISTORY AND FACTUAL BACKGROUND

For a discussion of relevant procedural history and facts regarding this case, please see the Declaration of Vartan Madoyan at paragraphs 2 to 5.

III. THE CLASS SHOULD BE CERTIFIED FOR SETTLEMENT PURPOSES

For the reasons previously addressed by way of Plaintiffs' moving and supporting papers for the Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Action Settlement (namely, that the relevant class certification factors are satisfied, i.e., ascertainability, numerosity, community of interest, typicality, adequacy of representation, superiority, and manageability), as well as the reasons discussed herein regarding the completion of the due process notice procedure, the Court is requested to now make final its preliminary certification of the class for settlement purposes.

IV. SUMMARY OF THE SETTLEMENT TERMS, NOTICE PROCESS, AND PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

Under the terms of the Settlement Agreement, Defendant has agreed to pay a Gross Settlement Amount of $1,750,000.00 on a non-reversionary basis,[6] and separately the amounts necessary to pay its Defendant's share of payroll taxes, via two (2) installment payments – an initial payment of one-half of the Gross Settlement Amount (i.e., $875,000.00) ("First Installment") plus Defendant's share of payroll taxes, and a second payment of the remaining one-half of the Gross Settlement Amount (i.e., $875,000.00) ("Second Installment").[7] Within thirty (30) calendar days of the Effective Date, Defendant shall provide the Settlement Administrator with the First Installment and the Defendant's share of payroll taxes.[8] No later than twelve (12) months after the Effective Date, Defendant shall provide the Settlement Administrator with the Second Installment.[9] Subject to approval by the Court, the Net Settlement Amount will be calculated by deducting the Class Counsel Fees and Class Counsel Litigation Expenses, Class Representative Service Payments, Settlement Administration Expenses,

[6] Settlement Agreement, § I.17.
[7] *Id.*, § III.55.j.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*

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and PAGA Payment.[10] The Net Settlement Amount, which is estimated to be $836,553.96, will be fully distributed to Participating Class Members in accordance with the Settlement Agreement.[11] The PAGA Payment of $200,000.00 will be distributed to the Labor and Workforce Development Agency ("LWDA") (in the amount of 150,000.00) and to the Aggrieved Employees (in the amount of $50,000.00) in accordance with the Settlement Agreement.[12]

ILYM Group, Inc. ("Settlement Administrator" or "ILYM Group, Inc.") will determine each Participating Class Member's (i.e., Class Members who did not timely opt out of the Class Settlement) *pro rata* share of the Net Settlement Amount ("Settlement Share(s)")[13], according to the following methodology: the Settlement Administrator will divide the final Net Settlement Amount by the Workweeks of all Participating Class Member during the Class Period to yield the "Weekly Rate" and multiply each Participating Class Member's individual Workweeks during the Class Period by the Weekly Rate to yield his or her Individual Settlement Share.[14]

The Settlement Administrator will calculate each Aggrieved Employee's *pro rata* share of the PAGA Employee Amount ("PAGA Share") as follows: the Settlement Administrator will divide the PAGA Employee Amount by the Pay Periods of all Aggrieved Employees during the PAGA Period to yield the "PAGA Weekly Rate," and multiply each Aggrieved Employee's individual Pay Periods during the PAGA Period by the PAGA Weekly Rate to yield their PAGA Share that they are eligible to receive under the PAGA Settlement.[15]

Class Members had forty-five (45) calendar days from the initial mailing of the Class Notice ("Response Deadline") to dispute the number of Workweeks and/or the Pay Periods credited to each of them, opt out of the Class Settlement, and/or object to the Settlement.[16] The Response Deadline was January 31, 2025, and the extended Response Deadline was February 15, 2025, for Class Members who

[10] Settlement Agreement, § I.19.
[11] This amount is higher than the amount stated in Paragraph 14 of the accompanying Declaration of Cassandra Polites of ILYM Group, Inc. Regarding Notice and Settlement Administration ("ILYM Group Declaration" or "ILYM Group Decl.") because the Settlement Administrator's calculation assumes that Class Counsel will obtain litigation costs and expenses in the maximum amount of $40,000.00, which is allocated under the Settlement. However, Class Counsel seek the amount of only $30,946.04 for reimbursement of litigation costs and expenses, and the difference of $9,053.96 will remain part of the Net Settlement Amount.
[12] Settlement Agreement, § I.28.
[13] *Id.*, § III.53.a.
[14] *Id.*, § III.53.a.i.
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Id.*, § III.55.c.i.

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were re-mailed the Class Notice.[17] ***As of the date of this motion, the Settlement Administrator has received three (3) written requests for exclusion from the Class Settlement ("Request for Exclusion") and zero (0) written objections to the Class Settlement ("Objection") from Class Members***.[18]

Each Settlement Share will be allocated as follows: one-third (1/3rd) as wages which will be reported on an IRS Form W-2; and the remaining two-thirds (2/3rd) as interest, penalties, and non-wage damages, which will be reported on an IRS Form 1099.[19] The Settlement Administrator will withhold the employee's share of taxes and withholdings with respect to the wages portion of the Settlement Share, and issue checks to Participating Class Members for their Settlement Shares (i.e., payment of their Settlement Share net of these taxes and withholdings).[20] Defendant will pay the employer's share of payroll taxes and contributions with respect to the wage portion of Settlement Shares ("Defendant's share of payroll taxes") in addition to the Gross Settlement Amount.[21] The PAGA Shares will be allocated as one hundred percent (100%) penalties, and will be reported on an IRS Form-1099, (if applicable) by the Settlement Administrator.[22]

The Settlement Administrator shall distribute the following payments: Within fifteen (15) calendar days of the funding of the Gross Settlement Amount: Settlement Share to Participating Class Member, Class Counsel Fees and Class Counsel Litigation Expenses to Class Counsel, Class Representative Service Payments to Plaintiffs, PAGA Share checks to Aggrieved Employees, the LWDA Payment to the LWDA, and Settlement Administration Expenses to itself.[23]

Settlement Share and PAGA Share checks will be valid and negotiable for one hundred eighty (180) calendar days from the date the checks are mailed, and thereafter, shall be canceled.[24] The funds associated with such canceled checks will be distributed by the Settlement Administrator to Legal Aid at Work as a *cy pres* recipient pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure 384.[25] All Participating

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17 ILYM Group Decl., ¶ 11
18 *Id.*, ¶¶ 12-14
19 Settlement Agreement, §§ III.53.b.i & III.53.b.ii.
20 *Ibid.*
21 *Id.*, § III.53.b.i.
22 *Id.*, § III.52.c.
23 *Id.*, § III.55.j.
24 *Id.*, § III.55.k.
25 *Ibid.*

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Class Members and Aggrieved Employees shall be bound by the terms and conditions of this Settlement Agreement regardless of whether or not they cash or otherwise negotiate their Settlement Share and/or PAGA Share checks.[26]

V. THE SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION PROCESS

The Court directed ILYM Group, Inc. to administer and effectuate the notice and settlement administration process, as set forth in the Court's October 21, 2024 Preliminary Approval Order. On November 26, 2024, ILYM Group, Inc. received a mailing list from Defendant's counsel that contained each Class Members' and Aggrieved Employees' full name; last-known mailing address; Social Security number; his or her employee identification number; his or her email address (if known and available to Defendant); his or her start and end dates of employment during the Class Period as a Class Member; his or her Workweeks during the Class Period; his or her Workweeks during the PAGA Period; and Workweeks during the period of time from June 24, 2015 to November 30, 2022 (collectively, "Class Data").[27]

The Class Data contained information for 1,785 individuals identified as Class Members.[28] The mailing addresses contained in the Class Data were processed and updated utilizing the U.S. Postal Service's National Change of Address Database ("NCOA").[29]

On December 17, 2024, ILYM Group, Inc. mailed the Class Notice via U.S. first class mail to all 1,785 individuals identified as Class Members in the Class Data.[30]

A total of 117 Class Notices were returned to ILYM Group, none of which with a forwarding address.[31] ILYM Group, Inc. performed a skip-trace search on the Class Notices that were returned and located an updated address for 94 Class Members, and promptly re-mailed the Class Notice to the updated addresses.[32] There are 23 mailed Class Notices that remain undeliverable notwithstanding the skip tracing.[33]

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[26] Settlement Agreement, § III.55.k.
[27] ILYM Group, Inc. Decl., ¶ 5.
[28] *Id.*, ¶ 5.
[29] *Id.*, ¶ 6.
[30] *Id.*, ¶ 7.
[31] *Id.*, ¶ 8.
[32] *Id.*, ¶ 8
[34] *Id.*, ¶¶ 11-12.

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The Settlement Administrator has received zero (0) Objections and three (3) Requests for Exclusion from Class Members by the Response Deadline of January 31, 2025 or the extended Response Deadline of February 15, 2025 for those Class Notices that were re-mailed.[34]

To date, there are 1,782 Class Members who did not submit a timely and valid Request for Exclusion ("Participating Class Members"), and who will be paid their portion of the Net Settlement Amount. The Net Settlement Amount of approximately $836,553.96 and the PAGA Payment of $200,000.00 will be distributed in accordance with the terms of the Settlement.[35]

VI. <u>THE COURT SHOULD GRANT FINAL APPROVAL OF THE CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT.</u>

In reviewing a class settlement, the court need not reach any ultimate conclusions on the issues of fact and law that underlie the merits of the dispute. *7-Eleven Owners for Fair Franchising v. Southland Corp.* (2000) 85 Cal.App.4th 1135, 1146. The inquiry is not whether the settlement agreement is the best one that class members could have possibly obtained, but whether the settlement, taken as a whole, is "fair, adequate, and reasonable"—and the trial court has broad discretion to determine this. *Chavez v. Netflix, Inc.* (2008) 162 Cal.App.4th 43, 52-55. A settlement need not obtain 100 percent of the damages sought in order to be fair, reasonable, and ultimately, meaningful. *Wershba v. Apple Computer, Inc.* (2001) 91 Cal.App.4th 224, 251. Even if the proposed settlement affords relief that is substantially narrower than it would be if the case were to be successfully litigated, that is no bar to a class settlement because the public interest may indeed be served by a voluntary settlement in which each side gives ground in the interest of avoiding prolonged litigation. *Id.*

To determine whether the settlement is fair and reasonable, relevant factors to consider are:

> the strength of plaintiffs' case, the risk, expense, complexity and likely duration of further litigation, the risk of maintaining class action status through trial, the amount offered in settlement, the extent of discovery completed and the stage of the proceedings, the experience and views of counsel, the presence of a governmental participant, and the reaction of the class members to the proposed settlement.

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[34] *Id.*, ¶¶ 11-12.
[35] *Id.*, ¶¶ 14-15.

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Dunk v. Ford Motor Co. (1996) 48 Cal.App.4th 1794, 1801. The list of factors is not exclusive and the court can consider different factors based on the circumstances of each case." *Wershba* at 245. At the final approval stage, a presumption of fairness exists where, as here:

> "(1) the settlement is reached through arm's-length bargaining; (2) investigation and discovery are sufficient to allow counsel and the court to act intelligently; (3) counsel is experienced in similar litigation; and (4) the percentage of objectors is small."

Id. at 1802. "Due regard should be given to what is otherwise a private consensual agreement between the parties." *Dunk* at 1801.

A. <u>The Settlement Resulted from Arm's-Length Negotiations Based Upon Extensive Investigation and Formal and Informal Discovery.</u>

The Parties actively litigated the cases since the initial complaint was filed on June 24, 2019. Class Counsel conducted significant investigation, and extensive formal and informal discovery into the facts of the case, to assess the veracity, strength, and scope of the claims, and was preparing for class certification and trial prior to reaching the Settlement.[36]

Lawyers *for* Justice, PC served multiple sets of formal written discovery requests on Defendant (specifically, Plaintiff Lorena Bellamy's Requests for Production of Documents (Set One), Special Interrogatories (Sets One, Two, and Three), and Form Interrogatories – General (Set One); and Plaintiff Orishia Blacksher's Requests for Production of Documents (Set One), Special Interrogatories (Sets One and Two), and Form Interrogatories – General (Set One)), and noticed the depositions of Defendant's Person Most Knowledgeable designees, along with accompanying requests for production of documents. Lawyers *for* Justice, PC also prepared responses to Defendant's formal written discovery and defended the depositions of Plaintiff Bellamy and Plaintiff Blacksher. The Parties also engaged in the *Belaire-West* notice process, and through the extensive formal and informal discovery, exchanged tens of thousands of pages of information, documents, and data throughout the course of the litigation and in connection with the mediation and settlement negotiations.[37] Class Counsel informally exchanged tens of thousands of pages of information, documents, and data obtained from Plaintiffs, Defendant, and other

[36] Madoyan Decl., ¶ 7.
[37] *Ibid.*

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sources, including: Plaintiffs' employment records, a detailed sampling of Plaintiffs' and other Class Members' time data and pay records, Defendant's Employee Handbook, internal memoranda, job descriptions, offer letters employment termination process checklists, company policy acknowledgments (including but not limited to Employee Confidentiality Acknowledgement), forms (including but not limited to Arbitration Agreements, Employee Performance Reviews, Meal Break Waiver Form, and Paid Sick Leave Form), procedures, and policies (including but not limited to Work Attendance Policies, Time Record Policies, Overtime Policies, Employee Conduct Policies, Work-Related Driving Policies), among other information and documents.[38] Class Counsel had the opportunity to interview Plaintiffs, Class Members, and other percipient witnesses.[39] Class Counsel developed liability, damages, and penalties valuation models in the course of litigation and in connection with the mediation and settlement negotiations, and met and conferred with Defendant's counsel on numerous occasions, e.g., to discuss issues relating to the pleadings, case management, motion practice, formal and informal discovery and depositions, and the production of information, documents, and data in the course of litigation and in connection with mediation and settlement negotiations, and settlement, especially in light of Defendant's financial condition.[40] Other work performed by Class Counsel included, and was not limited to, case strategy and analysis; researching, drafting, reviewing, and/or revising the pleadings, motion-related papers (in connection with, briefing on Plaintiff Lorena Bellamy's Demurrer and Motion to Strike Defendant's Answer and *ex parte* applications), the mediation briefing and supporting materials, and settlement documents; drafting and propounding multiple sets of formal written discovery requests on Defendant and notices of depositions of Defendant's persons most knowledgeable designees; reviewing Defendant's responses and objections to written discovery requests and deposition notices; and preparing for and attending depositions, court proceedings, mediation, and settlement negotiations, among other tasks.[41]

The Parties participated in a formal, full-day mediation conducted by Paul Grossman, who is well-regarded mediator experienced in mediating complex labor and employment matters.[42] In the

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[38] Madoyan Decl., ¶ 7.
[39] *Ibid.*
[40] Madoyan Decl., ¶ 7.
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] Madoyan Decl., ¶ 9.

course of mediation and settlement negotiations, the Parties exchanged extensive information, documents, and data and discussed all aspects of the case, including and not limited to, the risks and delays of further litigation, the risks and expenses to the Parties of proceeding with class certification, representative adjudication, and trial; the law relating to class certification, manageability, off-the-clock theory, arbitration agreements, rounding, regular rates of pay, meal and rest periods (including *inter alia*, on premises breaks), expense reimbursements, recordkeeping and wage statement requirements, representative PAGA claims and penalties, and wage-and-hour law and enforcement; Plaintiffs' claims and allegations, and Defendant's defenses thereto; Defendant's financial condition; as well as the evidence produced and analyzed; and the possibility of appeals, among other things.[43] During all settlement discussions, the Parties conducted their negotiations at arm's length in an adversarial position.[44] Arriving at a settlement that was acceptable to the Parties was not easy.[45] Defendant and its counsel felt very strongly about Defendant's ability to prevail on the merits and to avoid class certification and representative adjudication and prevail on the merits, while, Plaintiffs and Class Counsel believed that they would be able to obtain class certification and prevail at trial.[46] After conducting initial disclosures, significant formal and informal discovery and investigations, extensive settlement negotiations, and with the aid of the mediator's evaluation, the Parties agreed that this matter was well-suited for settlement given the legal issues relating to Plaintiffs' principal claims, as well as the costs and risks to the Parties that would attend further litigation.[47]

The Settlement takes into account the strengths and weaknesses of each side's position and the uncertainty of how this matter might have concluded at certification, trial, and/or appeals. The Settlement was based on thousands of pages of facts, evidence, and investigation.[48] Additionally, Class Counsel have extensive experience in handling complex wage-and-hour actions, including significant experience in employment class action litigation.[49]

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[43] Madoyan Decl., ¶ 9.
[44] *Ibid.*
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] Madoyan Decl., ¶ 9.
[47] *Ibid.*
[48] *Id.*, ¶ 7.
[49] *Id.*, ¶¶ 14-18.

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B. <u>The Risks Inherent in Continued Litigation Favor Final Approval of the Settlement.</u>

The risks inherent in litigating the claims through certification proceedings, trial, and/or appeals, favor resolving this matter for a Gross Settlement Amount of $1,750,000.00.[50] The Settlement was calculated using information and data uncovered through extensive case investigation, formal and informal written discovery and depositions, and the exchange of information in the context of litigation, mediation, and ongoing settlement negotiations.[51] Had the action not settled, Defendant would have vigorously challenged class certification, manageability, and liability. Defendant contended that individualized questions of fact predominated over any common issues, and these issues would pose challenges to certification and representative adjudication. Defendant would have likely argued again at trial, if any, that Plaintiffs' claims were not appropriate for class-wide and/or representative adjudication. On the other hand, Defendant also faced the risk of the Court certifying a class and allowing a jury to decide Plaintiffs' claims on a class-wide or representative basis. Also, preparation for trial would have been expensive for all Parties.

It is preferable to reach an early resolution of a dispute because such resolutions save time and money that would otherwise go to litigation. If this matter had settled after further litigation, the settlement amount would have taken into account the additional costs incurred, and there might have been less money available for Class Members, Aggrieved Employees, and the State of California after all was said and done. This is not just an abstract contention. The risks and expenses of further litigation outweighed any benefit that might have been gained otherwise. These risks of further litigation include a determination that the claims were unsuitable for class treatment and/or representative adjudication, failure to obtain certification, class de-certification after certification of a class, allowing a jury to decide the claims asserted in this matter, and the real possibility of no recovery after years of litigation, especially in light of Defendant's financial condition. Additionally, the Parties were moving into the phase of the litigation where they would have to conduct a significant amount of additional discovery, including and not limited to, additional depositions of Defendant's Person Most

[50] ILYM Group Decl., ¶ 14
[51] Madoyan Decl., ¶ 7.

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Knowledgeable designees, expert witnesses, and percipient witnesses, such as managers, supervisors, and other current and former employees throughout the State of California. Additional discovery would have certainly arisen, which would have cost the Parties additional time and money. In contrast, the Settlement provides real and significant benefits for the Class, Aggrieved Employees, and the State of California here and now, while avoiding the further expenses, risks, and delay of prolonged litigation with only the possibility of recovery.

It would be grossly inefficient for such a large class of current and former employees to bring individual actions to recover from Defendant for the alleged violations of wage-and-hour laws. Moreover, the potential individual recovery that could be obtained by a Class Member would not be significant enough to provide him or her with the incentive to sue. By granting final approval of the Settlement, the Court can approve a resolution that provides a certain and substantial recovery for Class Members, Aggrieved Employees, and the State of California.

C. <u>The Settlement Is Fair, Reasonable, and Adequate.</u>

The Settlement, which provides for a Gross Settlement Amount of $1,750,000.00, represents a fair, reasonable, and adequate resolution of this matter. The Settlement was calculated using information and data uncovered through extensive case investigation, initial disclosures, formal and informal discovery, and the exchange of information in the context of litigation, mediation, and extensive settlement negotiations. The Settlement takes into account the potential risks and rewards inherent in any case and, in particular, in this matter. Moreover, considering the facts in this matter, the Gross Settlement Amount represents a considerable recovery.

The Gross Settlement Amount will be fully paid out, in accordance with the terms of the Settlement. As discussed in Section IV, *supra*, each Participating Class Member will be paid a *pro rata* share of the Net Settlement Amount (which is currently estimated to be $836,553.96), based on the number of Workweeks credited to them and each Aggrieved Employee will be paid a *pro rata* share of the 25% share of the PAGA Payment, based on the number of Pay Periods during the PAGA Period credited to them.[52] The highest Settlement Share to a Participating Class Member is currently estimated

[52] Settlement Agreement, ¶ I.17. The *pro rata* allocation here is a fair and reasonable way to distribute the Net Settlement Amount that is payable to the Settlement Class Members and 25% of the PAGA Payment that is payable to the PAGA Employees. At the final approval stage, "[a]n allocation formula need only have a reasonable, rational basis [to warrant

(Footnote continued)

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to be $1,919.34 and the average Settlement Share is currently estimated to be $464.37.[53] The highest PAGA Share to a Aggrieved Employee is current estimated to be $104.86 and the average PAGA Share is currently estimated to be $35.21.[54] These are significant individual recoveries, particularly in light of the risks of litigation.

Class Counsel believe that the Settlement as a whole is fair, reasonable, and adequate.[55] Although Class Counsels' recommendations are not conclusive, the Court can properly take the recommendations into account, particularly if Class Counsel appear to be competent, have experience with this type of litigation, and significant discovery and investigation have been completed, as is the case here. Conte & Newberg, *Newberg on Class Actions* (4th Ed., 2002) § 11.47. Accordingly, the Court should grant final approval of the Settlement.

D. <u>The Class Was Represented by Competent Counsel.</u>

Class Counsel have extensive experience in employment class action law and complex wage-and-hour litigation.[56] Lawyers *for* Justice, PC and James Hawkins, APLC have been appointed class counsel in numerous complex wage-and-hour cases, and have recovered millions of dollars for individuals in California.[57] Both Parties' counsel were capable of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the Class Members' claims against Defendant and the benefits of the Settlement under the circumstances of the lawsuits and in the context of a private, consensual settlement agreement.

E. <u>There Are No Written Objections to the Class Settlement.</u>

The Settlement has been well received by the Class – ***not a single Class Member objected to or opted out of the Settlement.***[58] Specifically, no objections have been made as to the Gross Settlement Amount or contemplated Class Counsel Fees and Class Counsel Litigation Expenses, Class Representative Service Payments, Settlement Administration Expenses, and allocation for the

approval], particularly if recommended by experienced and competent class counsel." *In re American Bank Note Holographics, Inc., Securities Litigation* (S.D.N.Y. 2001) 127 F.Supp.2d 418, 429-30.

[53] ILYM Group Decl., ¶ 16.

[54] *Id*., ¶ 18.

[55] Madoyan Decl., ¶ 21.

[56] *Id*., ¶¶ 14-18.

[57] Madoyan Decl., ¶¶ 14-18.

[58] ILYM Group Decl., ¶ 12.

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PAGA Payment. California courts have consistently found that a small number of objectors indicates support for a settlement and strongly favors final approval.[59]

Here, the lack of any objections speaks volumes about the fairness, reasonableness, and adequacy of this Settlement. Accordingly, the Settlement as a whole is presumed to be fair, reasonable, and adequate, and the Court should grant final approval of the Settlement in its entirety. *Dunk*, 48 Cal.App.4th at 1802.

VII. <u>THE ATTORNEYS' FEES REQUESTED SHOULD BE APPROVED.</u>

A. <u>A Fee Award of a Percentage of the Entire Fund Is Appropriate.</u>

Under the terms of the Settlement Agreement, Defendant will pay a Gross Settlement Amount of $1,750,000.00. The requested attorneys' fees are thirty-five percent (35%) of the total value of the monetary settlement. In light of Class Counsels' successful prosecution and resolution of this matter, the requested attorneys' fees are appropriate and reasonable.

Where the amount of a settlement is a "certain easily calculable sum of money," California courts may calculate attorneys' fees as a reasonable percentage of the settlement. Weil and Brown, <u>California Practice Guide</u>, *Civil Procedure Before Trial*, Chapter 14, § 14:145; *In re Bluetooth Headset Prods. Liab. Litig.* (9th Cir. 2011) 654 F.3d 935, 942 (The percentage method is particularly appropriate where a monetary settlement has been recovered and "the benefit [recovered can be] easily quantified."); *see also Laffitte v. Robert Half Int'l Inc.* (2016) 1 Cal.5th 480, 503; *Dunk* at 1808. 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, supra*, 1 Cal.5th 480 at 486 & 506. Trial courts "retain the discretion to forgo a lodestar cross-check and [may] use other means to evaluate the reasonableness of a requested percentage fee." *Id.* (internal quotes omitted); see also *Wershba*, *supra*, 91 Cal.App.4th at 253.

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

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[59] *Wershba*, *supra*, 91 Cal.App.4th at 250-51 (final approval granted despite 20 objectors); *7-Eleven Owners*, *supra*, 85 Cal.App.4th at 1152-53 (final approval granted despite 9 objectors).

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The percentage fee method is preferred in representative actions because "it better approximates the workings of the marketplace than the lodestar approach." *Lealao v. Beneficial Cal., Inc.* (2000) 82 Cal.App.4th 19, 49. California law provides that the award for attorneys' fees should be equivalent to fees freely negotiated in the legal marketplace and paid in comparable litigation based on the result achieved and risk incurred. *Id.* at 47-50; *Laffitte* at 503. In cases where the settlement agreement provides that the defendant will pay the plaintiff's attorneys a percentage of the fund created by the settlement, use of that percentage method is appropriate. *Lealao* at 32. Fee awards that are too small will "chill the private enforcement essential to the vindication of many legal rights and obstruct the representative actions that often relieve the courts of the need to separately adjudicate numerous claims." *Id.* at 53. Therefore, fees in representative actions should approximate the probable terms of a contingent fee contract negotiated by a sophisticated attorney and client in comparable litigation. *Id.* at 48. "The ultimate goal . . . is the award of a 'reasonable' fee to compensate counsel for their efforts, irrespective of the method of calculation." *Consumer Privacy Cases* (2009) 175 Cal.App.4th 545, 557-58 (quoting *Apple Computer, Inc. v. Superior Court* (2005) 126 Cal.App.4th, 1253, 1270).

Class Counsels' application for attorneys' fees in light of the facts and circumstances surrounding the case is well-within the range of reasonableness. Courts have awarded fees as high as 50% of the settlement in complex actions, depending on the circumstances of the case.[60]

Class Counsel have performed significant work in this matter, as discussed in the Declarations of Vartan Madoyan and James Hawkins with the very real possibility of an unsuccessful outcome and no fee recovery of any kind.[61] In the present matter, Class Counsel have borne all of the risks and costs of litigation and will not receive any compensation until recovery is obtained.[62] Class Counsel are experienced in complex wage-and-hour litigation and used that experience to obtain a significant settlement recovery for Plaintiffs, the Class, and the State of California.[63] Considering the amount of fees requested, work performed, risks incurred, results obtained, and experience of Class Counsel in

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[60] *See In re Ampicillin Antitrust Litig.* (D.D.C. 1981) 526 F.Supp. 494 (awarding attorneys' fees in the amount of 45% of the $7.3 million total settlement amount); *Beech Cinema, Inc. v. Twentieth-Century Fox Film Corp.* (S.D.N.Y. 1979) 480 F.Supp. 1195 (awarding approximately 53% of the settlement as attorneys' fees). California courts routinely approve attorneys' fees awards "average[ing] around one-third of the recovery." *Chavez v. Netflix, 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).

[61] Madoyan Decl., ¶¶ 5-13.

[62] *Id.*, ¶ 19.

[63] *Id.*, ¶¶ 14-18.

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handling similar matters, Plaintiffs maintain that the requested attorneys' fees are reasonable and should be awarded.

Compensating class counsel in class litigation on a percentage basis, as requested herein, makes good sense because: (1) it is consistent with the private marketplace where contingent fee attorneys are customarily compensated on such a basis; (2) it aligns the interests of class counsel and absent class members in achieving the maximum possible resolution of the case; and (3) it encourages the most efficient and expeditious resolution of the litigation by providing an incentive for early, yet reasonable, settlement. The attorney fee request here satisfies all of these factors and should be approved on a percentage basis.

The percentage method is consistent with, and is intended to mirror, the practice in the private marketplace where contingent-fee attorneys typically negotiate percentage-fee arrangements with their clients. The named plaintiff's agreement to pay a contingent fee is powerful evidence of a reasonable fee. One of the best ways to demonstrate the value of counsels' work to the class is to review the consideration agreed to be paid by the named plaintiff. If the named plaintiff has employed counsel on a contingency-fee basis, it would indeed be inequitable for the members of the class, who will enjoy the benefits of the settlement without incurring the risks of bringing the claim, to pay less than the named plaintiff. In this case, Plaintiffs have agreed to contingency fee agreements of at least thirty-five percent (35%) of the recovery.[64]

Class Counsel has obtained a substantial recovery on behalf of Plaintiffs, the Class, and the State of California and the results achieved justify an attorneys' fees award that is the equivalent of the standard market fee and that is consistent with the contingency-fee agreements entered into by and between Plaintiffs and Class Counsel. Thus, the requested attorneys' fees are appropriate.

B. <u>The Attorneys' Fees Requested Are Reasonable Based on the Factors Considered in Determination of Fee Awards.</u>

The factors which courts consider in determining whether fee awards are reasonable, all of which support the fee award requested by Class Counsel, are: the time and labor required; the novelty and difficulty of the questions involved; the skill requisite to perform the legal services properly; the

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[64] *Id.*, ¶ 10.

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preclusion of other employment by the attorney due to the acceptance of the case; the customary fee; whether the fee is fixed or contingent; the time limitation imposed by the client or the circumstances; the amount involved and results obtained; the experience, 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.

The award of attorneys' fees in the amount of $612,500.00 (which is 35% of the Gross Settlement Amount) is commensurate with the time, effort, and expense dedicated to this matter, the contingent nature of Class Counsel's fee recovery and the risks taken, the skill and determination required, the results that Class Counsel has achieved, and the value of the settlement that Class Counsel has obtained in this matter.

1. Time & Labor.

Class Counsel used its experience and skills, and dedicated the full extent of resources, to litigate and bring this matter to a successful conclusion.[65]

As outlined in the Declarations of Vartan Madoyan and James Hawkins, Class Counsel have fully and actively participated in litigation of this matter.[66] Prior to commencing the lawsuits, Class Counsel had conducted a significant amount of investigation into the factual and legal issues, Defendant's business and its operations, and employment policies, practices, and procedures. During the litigation of this matter, Class Counsel had the opportunity to interview Plaintiffs, Class Members, and other percipient witnesses; engaged in extensive formal and informal written discovery and depositions; reviewed and analyzed tens of thousands of pages of information, documents and data obtained from Defendant, Plaintiffs, and other sources; and prepared liability, damages, penalties, and valuation calculations.[67] Class Counsel also met and conferred with Defendant's counsel on numerous occasions e.g., to discuss issues relating to the pleadings, case management, motion practice, informal discovery, and the production of information, documents and data among other things, and prepared for and attended court proceedings, mediation, and settlement negotiations.[68]

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[65] Madoyan Decl., ¶¶ 14-18.
[66] Madoyan Decl., Exh. 1.
[67] *Ibid.*
[68] Madoyan Decl., Exh. 1.

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Counsel have devoted a considerable number of hours to this matter over the course of the litigation process. The Attorney Task and Time Chart, which is attached as "**EXHIBIT 1**" to the accompanying Declaration of Vartan Madoyan and the information provided in the Declaration of James Hawkins, set forth in detail the hours that attorneys at Lawyers *for* Justice, PC and James Hawkins, APLC have spent performing tasks in this matter.[69] Class Counsel have spent a total of **816.30** hours with 559.70 hours spent by Lawyers *for* Justice, PC and 256.60 hours spent by James Hawkins APLC, performing tasks and to obtain a significant recovery in this matter.[70] These hours were required to bring this matter to its successful conclusion. In light of the value of Class Counsels' work and the carrying of costs involved in litigating this matter, the requested attorneys' fees are fair, adequate, and reasonable.

2. The Skill Required to Perform Legal Services Properly.

The skill required to properly litigate this matter is evident from the results achieved, the steps necessary to reach those results, and that Defendant retained well-respected counsel to represent it.

Class Counsel exercised its skill to perform significant investigation, analysis, and research prior to filing the cases, during the litigation, and prior to and during the mediation and settlement negotiations. Class Counsel took steps to prepare the matter for class certification and representative adjudication and had every intention of taking this matter to trial on a class-wide basis if Defendant did not offer an appropriate class-wide settlement. Despite all of the obstacles that had to be overcome, as demonstrated in the Declaration of Vartan Madoyan and James Hawkins, Class Counsel used their extensive experience in the handling of class actions and complex wage-and-hour matters in order to obtain the Settlement with maximum efficiency.[71]

3. Whether the Fee Is Fixed or Contingent.

Plaintiffs entered into contingency fee agreements with Class Counsel, and the representation of the Class provided by Class Counsel have been wholly contingent. Class Counsel have invested a total of **816.30** hours of time to obtain relief on behalf of Plaintiffs, the Class, and the State of California.[72] Class Counsel have also incurred litigation costs and expenses in the amount of $30,946.04.[73] Thus, Class

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[69] *Ibid.*
[70] *Ibid.*
[71] Madoyan Decl.,¶¶ 14-18.
[72] *Id.*, ¶ 12, Exh. 1.
[73] *Id.*., ¶ 19

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Counsel have borne all of the risks and costs of litigation and will not receive any compensation until recovery is obtained.[74]

In determining the reasonableness of a fee award in a class action settlement, whether or not representation is provided on a contingency basis is an important factor:

> A contingent fee must be higher than a fee for the same legal services paid as they are performed. The contingent fee compensates the lawyer not only for the legal services he renders but for the loan of those services. A lawyer who both bears the risk of not being paid and provides legal services is not receiving the fair market value of his work if he is paid only for the second of these functions. If he is paid no more, competent counsel will be reluctant to accept fee award cases.

Cates v. Chiang (2013) 213 Cal.App.4th 791, 823 (internal quotes and citations omitted). Class Counsel litigated this matter on a contingent basis with all of the concomitant risk factors inherent in such an uncertain undertaking. Had Class Counsel not been successful, the time that Class Counsel has devoted to litigating this matter would have been for naught, and would not have produced any fee or any reimbursement of costs or expenses. *See Vizcaino v. Microsoft* (9th Cir. 2002) 290 F.3d 1043, 1048-49 (discussing the risks of engaging in litigation without certainty of compensation).

4. The Amount Involved and the Results Achieved.

The Settlement represents an excellent resolution of this matter, given the risks inherent in litigating the matter through class certification proceedings, trial, and/or appeals. Had this matter not settled, Defendant would have vigorously challenged certifiability, manageability, and liability. Defendant, however, faced risks if the Court certified a class and allowed a jury to decide the claims. Additionally, preparing this matter for trial would have been expensive for the Parties. The Settlement at this stage is preferred over continued litigation because such resolutions save 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, as opposed to an uncertain result in the future after costly, risk, and prolonged litigation involving expert discovery, trial preparation, class certification proceedings, 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 matter, are considerable. Class Counsel obtained a settlement of

[74] *Ibid.*

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$1,750,000.00.[75] The Settlement has yielded a positive response from the Class Members—no Class Members objected to the Class Settlement.

5. The Reputation and Ability of the Attorneys.

Lawyers *for* Justice, PC and James Hawkins, APLC are recognized class action law firms that employed its attorneys' knowledge, skills, and experience in bringing this case to a successful conclusion. Class Counsel have years of complex and class action 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 complex cases.[76]

C. <u>The Lodestar Methodology Also Justifies Approval of the Requested Fees.</u>

While the percentage-of-the-benefit approach is endorsed as the better approximation of the workings of the marketplace than the lodestar approach, courts may also use the lodestar method to "cross-check" the results of the other.[77] The lodestar is calculated based on reasonable hours at reasonable prevailing hourly rates for the attorneys, and counsel is entitled to compensation for every hour reasonably spent on the matter. *Ketchum v. Moses* (2001) 24 Cal.4th 1122, 1131-33. The reasonableness of hours is assessed by "the entire course of the litigation, including pretrial matters, settlement negotiations, discovery, litigation tactics, and the trial itself[.]" *Vo v. Las Virgenes Municipal Water Dist.* (2000) 79 Cal.App.4th 440, 447.

As discussed above in Part VII.B.1, *infra*, and also discussed in the Declaration of Vartan Madoyan and James Hawkins, Class Counsel expended significant time and labor in this highly contested matter.[78] Class Counsel have been actively involved in the prosecution of the cases, and the work performed in said cases has precluded other employment. Class Counsel bore the risk that, despite all of its efforts and skills employed, there may be no recovery. Ultimately, Class Counsel was successful in reaching a settlement of $1,750,000.00. The Attorney Task and Time Chart attached to the Declaration of Vartan Madoyan, and the information provided in the Declaration of James Hawkins, sets

[75] Madoyan Decl., ¶¶ 10-11.
[76] *Id.*, ¶¶ 14-18.
[77] *Laffitte*, *supra*, 1 Cal.5th at 505 (explaining that "[a] lodestar cross-check is simply a quantitative method for bringing a measure of the time spent by counsel into the trial court's reasonableness determination" and "the lodestar calculation . . . does not override the trial court's primary determination of the fee as a percentage" and "does not impose an absolute maximum or minimum on the potential fee award."); *see also, e.g., Vizcaino*, 290 F.3d at 1050 ("[W]hile the primary basis of the fee award remains the percentage method, the lodestar may provide a useful perspective on the reasonableness of a given percentage award.").
[78] Madoyan Decl., ¶¶ 14-18

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forth in detail the numerous tasks that Class Counsel performed in this matter, and the time required for completing those tasks.[79] The information demonstrates that Class Counsel have spent a total of **816.30** hours litigating this matter and finalizing the Settlement.[80] In light of the facts and circumstances of this matter, as well as the results that Class Counsel have achieved, Class Counsel have spent a reasonable number of hours performing work on this matter. In addition, Class Counsel will continue to perform work on this matter through the date of final approval and in connection with the implementation of the Settlement.

As set forth in the Declaration of Vartan Madoyan, the professional background and experience of Class Counsel support a reasonable rate of compensation of at least $850 per hour for services provided by Lawyers *for* Justice, PC.[81] Lawyers *for* Justice, PC has been awarded attorneys' fees, compensating the firm at the blended rate of at least $850 per hour for legal service performed, by courts of this state.[82] While the circumstances of every case are unique, the fact remains that the work performed by Class Counsel in this matter justify the requested attorneys' fees.

Applying the rate of $850 per hour to 559.70 hours worked by Lawyers *for* Justice, PC, would place a base lodestar value of $475,745.00 on the services provided by Lawyers *for* Justice, PC, and, as set forth in the Declaration of James Hawkins, the lodestar value for James Hawkins, APLC's services is $203,060.00, for a combined lodestar value of $678,805.00. However, Class Counsel only seeks an attorneys' fee award of $612,500.00 (equal to 35% of the Gross Settlement Amount).

The lodestar method as a cross-check to the percentage award sought herein, strongly supports the reasonableness of the requested attorneys' fees. The nature of the work performed, skill exercised, and the outcome in this matter—which involves an outstanding monetary recovery involving a Gross Settlement Amount of $1,750,000.00 (with a Net Settlement Amount of approximately at least $836,553.96 to be paid to Participating Class Members (with gross Settlement Shares averaging approximately more than $464.37), payment of $50,000.00 to Aggrieved Employees, and payment of $150,000.00 to the State of California)—support the percentage fee sought. Accordingly, the Court is respectfully requested to award attorneys' fees in the amount of $612,500.00 to Class Counsel.

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[79] Madoyan Decl., Exh. 1.
[80] *Id.*, ¶ 12.
[81] *Id.*, ¶ 13.
[82] *Ibid.*

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VIII. REIMBURSMENT OF CLASS COUNSELS' LITIGATION COSTS AND EXPENSES SHOULD BE APPROVED.

The Settlement provides for reimbursement of litigation costs and expenses of up to $40,000.00. As set forth in the Declaration of Vartan Madoyan and James Hawkins, Class Counsel only seek reimbursement of $30,946.04 in litigation costs and expenses incurred in this matter.[83] This amount was reasonable and necessary in the prosecution of this matter and to obtain the Settlement, and is less than the maximum amount allocated under the Settlement Agreement.[84] The cost savings of $9,053.96 will be part of the Net Settlement Amount, which will be distributed to Participating Class Members in accordance with the Settlement.[85] Accordingly, Plaintiffs request that the Court award litigation costs and expenses in the amount of $30,946.04 to Class Counsel.

IX. THE SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION EXPENSES SHOULD BE APPROVED.

As set forth in the accompanying ILYM Group, Inc. Declaration, the total costs incurred and to be incurred by ILYM Group, Inc. for the notice and settlement administration process are $30,000.00.[86] The costs incurred and to be incurred include, but are not limited to, establishing and maintaining a settlement fund account; establishing and maintaining a calendar of administrative deadlines and responsibilities; processing, issuing, and transmitting settlement payments; distributing notice of the Settlement to the Class; receiving and validating Request for Exclusions, Objections, or Workweek Disputes submitted by Class Members; calculating Defendant's share of payroll taxes and providing appropriate forms and calculations to Defendant; providing counsel with weekly reports; and other tasks as the Parties mutually agree or the Court orders ILYM Group, Inc. to perform.[87]

Accordingly, the Court should grant final approval of payment to ILYM Group, Inc., a necessary third-party for its handling of the notice and settlement process, in the amount of $30,000.00.

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[83] Madoyan Decl., ¶ 19.
[84] *Ibid.*
[85] *Ibid.*
[86] ILYM Group Decl., ¶ 18.
[87] ILYM Group Decl., ¶ 3.

X. THE CLASS REPRESENTATIVE SERVICE PAYMENTS SHOULD BE APPROVED.

Plaintiffs request Service Payments in the amount of $10,000.00 each, for a combined total of $40,000.00 to themselves for their efforts and work spearheading the prosecution of this matter and serving as the Class Representatives, as well as their broader individual waiver and release of claims with a California Civil Code Section 1542 waiver. Such enhancement awards are common, and the one requested here is reasonable.[88]

Plaintiffs spent a substantial amount of time and effort providing the facts and evidence necessary to support the prosecution of the claims.[89] Plaintiffs were available whenever Class Counsel needed them and actively tried to obtain, and gave, information to support the pursuit of this matter.[90] In addition, Defendant propounded discovery requests on Plaintiff Lorena Bellamy, and Plaintiff Lorena Bellamy spent time reviewing said discovery requests and providing information and documents in response thereto.[91] Plaintiffs Lorena Bellamy and Orishia Blacksher also both prepared and appeared for their depositions to provide testimony, under oath, in furtherance of the prosecution of the class and PAGA claims, and spent time reviewing their deposition transcripts.[92]

Accordingly, it is appropriate and just for Plaintiffs Lorena Bellamy, Orishia Blacksher, Harold Brissett, and Deanna Lynette Davis to receive $10,000.00 each, as reasonable Class Representative Service Payments, in addition to their Settlement Shares.

XI. CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, the Court is respectfully requested to grant final approval of the Settlement, approve and award Class Counsel Fees and Class Counsel Litigation Expenses to Class Counsel, the Class Representative Service Payments to Plaintiffs, Settlement Administration

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[88] *Vranken v. Atlantic Richfield Co.* (N.D. Cal. 1995) 901 F.Supp. 294, 299 (Relevant factors considered by courts are the financial and other risk to, the notoriety and personal difficulties encountered by, and the amount of time and efforts spent by the class representative, as well as the duration of the litigation and the personal benefit (or lack thereof) enjoyed by the class representatives as a result of the litigation; approving $50,000 participation award to a single class representative based on such factors).

[89] Madoyan Decl., ¶ 21; Declaration of Lorena Bellamy ("Bellamy Decl."), ¶¶ 3-6; Declaration of Orishia Blacksher ("Blacksher Decl."), ¶¶ 3-5; Declaration of Harold Brissett ("Brissett Decl."), ¶¶ 3-5; Declaration of Denna Lynette Davis ¶¶ 5 & 7.

[90] *Ibid.*

[91] Bellamy Decl., ¶ 5.

[92] Bellamy Decl., ¶ 6; Blacksher Decl., ¶ 5.

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Expenses to the Settlement Administrator, and the PAGA Payment, in their entirety, as sought herein; and permit the filing of a memorandum that exceeds the page limit.

Dated: February 28, 2025

LAWYERS *for* JUSTICE, PC

By: Vartan S. Madoyan

Vartan Madoyan
Matthew Richard Soto
Attorneys for Plaintiffs Lorena Bellamy, Orishia Blacksher, and Harold Brissett and the Class

Dated: February 28, 2025

JAMES HAWKINS, APLC

By: /s/ Greg Mauro

James Hawkins
Greg Mauro
Attorneys for Plaintiff Deanna Lynette Davis and the Class

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