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

13 **IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF CONTRA COSTA**

14 CHRISTIAN CENTENO, on behalf of the
15 State of California, as a private attorney
16 general,

17 Plaintiff,

18 vs.

19 SDH EDUCATION WEST, LLC, a Limited
20 Liability Company; and DOES 1 through 50,
21 inclusive,

22 Defendants.

Case No. _____

REPRESENTATIVE ACTION
COMPLAINT FOR:

1. Civil Penalties Pursuant to Labor Code
§ 2699, *et seq.* for violations of Labor
Code §§ 201, 202, 203, 204 *et seq.*, 210,
221, 226(a), 226.7, 227.3, 510, 512,
558(a)(1)(2), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198,
2802, California Code of Regulations,
Title 8, Section 11040, Subdivision 5(A)-
(B), and the applicable Wage Order(s).

FILED
MAR 21 2022

BY JKK CLERK OF THE COURT
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF CONTRA COSTA

PER LOCAL RULE, THIS
CASE IS ASSIGNED TO
DEPT 39, FOR ALL
PURPOSES

SUMMONS ISSUED

C22 - 00770

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

6 7 **INTRODUCTION**

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

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

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

23 24 **THE PARTIES**

25 4. Defendant SDH Education West, LLC (“DEFENDANT”) is a limited liability
26 company that at all relevant times mentioned herein conducted and continues to conduct
27 substantial business in the state of California.

28 5. DEFENDANT provides facilities management and food services to schools, and

1 universities.

2 6. PLAINTIFF was employed by DEFENDANT in California from February of
3 2020 to November of 2021 and was at all times classified by DEFENDANT as a non-exempt
4 employee, paid on an hourly basis, and entitled to the legally required meal and rest periods and
5 payment of minimum and overtime wages due for all time worked.

6 7. PLAINTIFF, and such persons that may be added from time to time who satisfy
7 the requirements and exhaust the administrative procedures under the Private Attorney General
8 Act, brings this Representative Action on behalf of the State of California with respect to
9 himself and all individuals who are or previously were employed by DEFENDANT in
10 California and who were classified as non-exempt employees ("AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES")
11 during the time period of November 17, 2020 until a date as determined by the Court (the
12 "PAGA PERIOD").

13 8. PLAINTIFF, on behalf of himself and all AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES presently
14 or formerly employed by DEFENDANT during the PAGA PERIOD, brings this representative
15 action pursuant to Labor Code § 2699, *et seq.* seeking fixed civil penalties for DEFENDANT's
16 violation of California Labor Code §§ 201, 202, 203, 204 *et seq.*, 210, 221, 226(a), 226.7, 227.3,
17 510, 512, 558(a)(1)(2), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2802, California Code of Regulations, Title
18 8, Section 11040, Subdivision 5(A)-(B), and the applicable Wage Order(s). Based upon the
19 foregoing, PLAINTIFF and all AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES are aggrieved employees within
20 the meaning of Labor Code § 2699, *et seq.*

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

1 caused the injuries and damages hereinafter alleged.

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

10 THE CONDUCT

11
12 11. Pursuant to the Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Orders, DEFENDANT was
13 required to pay PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES for all their time worked,
14 meaning the time during which an employee is subject to the control of an employer, including
15 all the time the employee is suffered or permitted to work. DEFENDANT requires PLAINTIFF
16 and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES to work without paying them for all the time they are
17 under DEFENDANT's control. Among other things, DEFENDANT requires PLAINTIFF to
18 work while clocked out during what is supposed to be PLAINTIFF's off-duty meal break.
19 PLAINTIFF is from time to time interrupted by work assignments while clocked out for what
20 should be PLAINTIFF's off-duty meal break. PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED
21 EMPLOYEES also worked off the clock with respect to time spent undergoing mandatory drug
22 testing or any other testing and/or examination required as a condition of employment.
23 DEFENDANT, as a matter of established company policy and procedure, administers a uniform
24 practice of rounding the actual time worked and recorded by PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED
25 EMPLOYEES, always to the benefit of DEFENDANT, so that during the course of their
26 employment, PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES are paid less than they would
27 have been paid had they been paid for actual recorded time rather than "rounded" time.
28 Additionally, DEFENDANT engages in the practice of requiring PLAINTIFF and the

1 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES to perform work off the clocking that DEFENDANT, as a
2 condition of employment, required these employees to submit to mandatory temperature checks
3 and symptom questionnaires for COVID-19 screening prior to clocking into DEFENDANT's
4 timekeeping system for the workday. As a result, PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED
5 EMPLOYEES forfeit minimum wage, overtime wage compensation, and off-duty meal breaks
6 by working without their time being correctly recorded and without compensation at the
7 applicable rates. DEFENDANT's policy and practice not to pay PLAINTIFF and the other
8 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES for all time worked, is evidenced by DEFENDANT's business
9 records.

10 12. State law provides that employees must be paid overtime and meal and rest break
11 premiums at one-and-one-half times their "regular rate of pay." PLAINTIFF and the other
12 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES are compensated at an hourly rate plus incentive pay that is tied
13 to specific elements of an employee's performance.

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

1 14. As a result of their rigorous work schedules, PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED
2 EMPLOYEES were from time to time unable to take thirty (30) minute off duty meal breaks
3 and were not fully relieved of duty for their meal periods. PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED
4 EMPLOYEES were required from time to time to perform work as ordered by DEFENDANT
5 for more than five (5) hours during some shifts without receiving a meal break. Further,
6 DEFENDANT from time to time failed to provide PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED
7 EMPLOYEES with a second off-duty meal period for some workdays in which these employees
8 were required by DEFENDANT to work ten (10) hours of work. DEFENDANT also engaged
9 in the practice of rounding the meal period times to avoid paying penalties to PLAINTIFF and
10 the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES. PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES therefore
11 forfeit meal breaks without additional compensation and in accordance with DEFENDANT's
12 corporate policy and practice.

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

1 five minutes out, five minutes back. Here, DEFENDANT's policy restricted PLAINTIFF and
2 the other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES from unconstrained walks and is unlawful based on
3 DEFENDANT's rule which states PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES
4 cannot leave the work premises during their rest period.

5 16. During the PAGA PERIOD, DEFENDANT failed to accurately record and pay
6 PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES for the actual amount of time these
7 employees worked. Pursuant to the Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Orders,
8 DEFENDANT was required to pay PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES for all
9 time worked, meaning the time during which an employee was subject to the control of an
10 employer, including all the time the employee was permitted or suffered to permit this work.
11 DEFENDANT required these employees to work off the clock without paying them for all the
12 time they were under DEFENDANT's control. As such, DEFENDANT knew or should have
13 known that PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES were under compensated
14 for all time worked. As a result, PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES
15 forfeited time worked by working without their time being accurately recorded and without
16 compensation at the applicable minimum wage and overtime wage rates. To the extent that the
17 time worked off the clock does not qualify for overtime premium payment, DEFENDANT fails
18 to pay minimum wages for the time worked off-the-clock in violation of Cal. Lab. Code §§
19 1194, 1197, and 1197.1.

20 17. From time to time, DEFENDANT also failed to provide PLAINTIFF and the
21 other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES with complete and accurate wage statements which failed
22 to show, among other things, the correct gross and net wages earned. Cal. Lab. Code § 226
23 provides that every employer shall furnish each of his or her employees with an accurate
24 itemized wage statement in writing showing, among other things, gross wages earned and all
25 applicable hourly rates in effect during the pay period and the corresponding amount of time
26 worked at each hourly rate. PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES were paid on
27 an hourly basis. As such, the wage statements should reflect all applicable hourly rates during
28 the pay period and the total hours worked, and the applicable pay period in which the wages

1 were earned pursuant to California Labor Code Section 226(a). The wage statements
2 DEFENDANT provided to PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES failed to
3 identify such information. More specifically, the wage statements failed to identify the accurate
4 total hours worked each pay period. When the hours shown on the wage statements were added
5 up, they did not equal the actual total hours worked during the pay period in violation of Cal.
6 Lab. Code 226(a)(2). Aside, from the violations listed above in this paragraph, DEFENDANT
7 failed to issue to PLAINTIFF an itemized wage statement that lists all the requirements under
8 California Labor Code 226 *et seq.* As a result, DEFENDANT from time to time provided
9 PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES with wage statements which violated
10 Cal. Lab. Code § 226.

11 18. Cal. Lab. Code § 204(d) provides, the requirements of this section shall be
12 deemed satisfied by the payment of wages for weekly, biweekly, or semimonthly payroll if the
13 wages are paid not more than seven (7) calendar days following the close of the payroll period.
14 Cal. Lab. Code § 210 provides:

15 [I]n addition to, and entirely independent and apart from, any other penalty provided in
16 this article, every person who fails to pay the wages of each employee as provided in
17 Sections. . . 204. . . shall be subject to a civil penalty as follows: (1) For any initial
18 violation, one hundred dollars (\$100) for each failure to pay each employee; (2) For each
19 subsequent violation, or any willful or intentional violation, two hundred dollars (\$200)
20 for each failure to pay each employee, plus 25 percent of the amount unlawfully
21 withheld.

19 19. DEFENDANT from time to time failed to pay PLAINTIFF and the other
20 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES within seven (7) days of the close of the payroll period in
21 accordance with Cal. Lab. Code § 204(d).

22 20. DEFENDANT underpaid sick pay wages to PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED
23 EMPLOYEES by failing to pay such wages at the regular rate of pay in violation of Cal. Lab.
24 Code Section 246. Specifically, PLAINTIFF and other non-exempt employees earn non-
25 discretionary remuneration. Rather than pay sick pay at the regular rate of pay, DEFENDANT
26 underpaid sick pay to PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES at their base rates of
27 pay.

28 21. Cal. Lab. Code Section 246(1)(2) requires that paid sick time for nonexempt

1 employees be calculated by dividing the employee's total wages, not including overtime
2 premium pay, by the employee's total hours worked in the full pay periods of the prior 90 days
3 of employment.

4 22. DEFENDANT violated Cal. Lab. Code Section 246 by failing to pay sick pay at
5 the regular rate of pay. PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES routinely earned non-
6 discretionary incentive wages which increased their regular rate of pay. However, when sick pay
7 was paid, it was paid at the base rate of pay for PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED
8 EMPLOYEES, as opposed to the correct, higher regular rate of pay, as required under Cal. Lab.
9 Code Section 246.

10 23. As a pattern and practice, DEFENDANT regularly failed to pay PLAINTIFF and
11 the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES their correct wages and accordingly owe waiting time
12 penalties pursuant to Cal. Lab. Code Section 203. Further, PLAINTIFF is informed and believes
13 and based thereon alleges that such failure to pay sick pay at regular rate was willful, such that
14 PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES whose employment has separated are
15 entitled to waiting time penalties pursuant to Cal. Lab. Code Sections 201-203.

16 24. Pursuant to Cal. Lab. Code Section 221, "It shall be unlawful for any employer
17 to collect or receive from an employee any part of wages theretofore paid by said employer to
18 said employee." DEFENDANT failed to pay all compensation due to PLAINTIFF and the other
19 AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES, made unlawful deductions from compensation payable to
20 PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES, failed to disclose all aspects of the
21 deductions from compensation payable to PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES,
22 and thereby failed to pay these employees all wages due at each applicable pay period and upon
23 termination.

24 25. DEFENDANT intentionally and knowingly failed to reimburse and indemnify
25 PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES for required business expenses incurred by
26 the PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES in direct consequence of discharging
27 their duties on behalf of DEFENDANT. Under California Labor Code Section 2802, employers
28 are required to indemnify employees for all expenses incurred in the course and scope of their

1 employment. Cal. Lab. Code § 2802 expressly states that "an employer shall indemnify his or
2 her employee for all necessary expenditures or losses incurred by the employee in direct
3 consequence of the discharge of his or her duties, or of his or her obedience to the directions of
4 the employer, even though unlawful, unless the employee, at the time of obeying the directions,
5 believed them to be unlawful."

6 26. In the course of their employment PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED
7 EMPLOYEES as a business expense, were required by DEFENDANT to use their own personal
8 cellular phones as a result of and in furtherance of their job duties as employees for
9 DEFENDANT but are not reimbursed or indemnified by DEFENDANT for the cost associated
10 with the use of their personal cellular phones for DEFENDANT's benefit. Specifically,
11 PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES were required by DEFENDANT to use
12 their personal cellular phones. As a result, in the course of their employment with
13 DEFENDANT, PLAINTIFF and the AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES incurred unreimbursed
14 business expenses which included, but were not limited to, costs related to the use of their
15 personal cellular phones all on behalf of and for the benefit of DEFENDANT.

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

21 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

22 28. This Court has jurisdiction over this Action pursuant to California Code of Civil
23 Procedure, Section 410.10.

24 29. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure,
25 Sections 395 and 395.5, because PLAINTIFF worked in this County for DEFENDANT and
26 DEFENDANT (i) currently maintains and at all relevant times maintained offices and facilities
27 in this County and/or conducts substantial business in this County, and (ii) committed the
28 wrongful conduct herein alleged in this County against PLAINTIFF and other AGGRIEVED

1 EMPLOYEES.

2 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

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

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

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

6 30. PLAINTIFF realleges and incorporates by this reference, as though fully set
7 forth herein, the prior paragraphs of this Complaint.

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

18 32. PLAINTIFF, and such persons that may be added from time to time who
19 satisfy the requirements and exhaust the administrative procedures under the Private
20 Attorney General Act, brings this Representative Action on behalf of the State of California
21 with respect to himself and all individuals who are or previously were employed by
22 DEFENDANT in California and who were classified as non-exempt employees
23 ("AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES") during the time period of November 17, 2020 until a date
24 as determined by the Court (the "PAGA PERIOD").

25 33. On November 17, 2021, PLAINTIFF gave written notice by electronic mail to
26 the Labor and Workforce Development Agency (the "Agency") and by certified mail to the
27 employer of the specific provisions of this code alleged to have been violated as required by
28 Labor Code § 2699.3. The statutory waiting period for PLAINTIFF to add these allegations

1 to the Complaint has expired. As a result, pursuant to Section 2699.3, PLAINTIFF may now
2 commence a representative civil action under PAGA pursuant to Section 2699 as the proxy
3 of the State of California with respect to all AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES as herein defined.

4 34. The policies, acts and practices heretofore described were and are an unlawful
5 business act or practice because DEFENDANT (a) failed to provide PLAINTIFF and the
6 other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES accurate itemized wage statements, (b) failed to properly
7 record and provide legally required meal and rest periods, (c) failed to pay minimum wages,
8 (d) failed to pay overtime and sick pay wages, (e) failed to reimburse employees for required
9 expenses, and (f) failed to pay wages when due, all in violation of the applicable Labor Code
10 sections listed in Labor Code §§ 201, 202, 203, 204 *et seq.*, 210, 221, 226(a), 226.7, 227.3,
11 510, 512, 558(a)(1)(2), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2802, California Code of Regulations,
12 Title 8, Section 11040, Subdivision 5(A)-(B), and the applicable Wage Order(s), and thereby
13 gives rise to civil penalties as a result of such conduct.¹ PLAINTIFF hereby seeks recovery
14 of only civil penalties as prescribed by the Labor Code Private Attorney General Act of 2004
15 as the representative of the State of California for the illegal conduct perpetrated on
16 PLAINTIFF and the other AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES.

17
18 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

19 WHEREFORE, PLAINTIFF prays for judgment against each Defendant, jointly and
20 severally, as follows:

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

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

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

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

1 Dated: March 18, 2022

2 BLUMENTHAL NORDREHAUG BHOWMIK DE BLOUW
3 LLP

4 By: 
5 Norman B. Blumenthal
6 Nicholas J. De Blouw
7 Attorneys for Plaintiff
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