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Attorneys for Plaintiff NHYELA WASHINGTON individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated.

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

FOR THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

NHYELA WASHINGTON, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

v.

PREDICINE, INC., A Delaware Corporation; and does 1-50, inclusive,

Defendant.

Case No. 21CV003730

Assigned for all Purposes to:
Hon. Michael Markman
Dept. 23

NOTICE OF MOTION AND MOTION FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT; ATTORNEYS' FEES, COSTS, ENHANCEMENT AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION COSTS; MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES; DECLARATIONS OF CLASS COUNSEL; DECLARATION OF PLAINTIFF WASHINGTON

Date: September 19, 2024
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Dept.: 23

Reservation #A-03730-001

TO THE HONORABLE COURT, ALL PARTIES, AND COUNSEL OF RECORD:

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that on September 19, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard in Department 23 before the Honorable Michael Markman of the Alameda County Superior Court, Plaintiff NHYELA WASHINGTON ("Plaintiff"), by and through Plaintiff's counsels of record, will and hereby moves the Court for Final Approval of the Amended Stipulation of Class and PAGA Representative Action Settlement, awarding attorneys' fees, litigation costs, Class Representative Enhancement Award, Settlement Administration Costs, and entering final approval and judgment.

This Motion is made pursuant to Rule 3.769 of the California Rules of Court and Labor Code section 2699(l). This Motion is based on this Notice of Motion and Motion, the attached Memorandum of Points and Authorities, the accompanying Declarations of James R. Hawkins ("Hawkins"), the declaration of Madely Nava of Apex Class Action, LLC, the declaration of Plaintiff NHYELA WASHINGTON, the Amended Stipulation of Class and PAGA Representative Action Settlement (the "Settlement Agreement"), attached to the Hawkins, argument of counsel, all papers and pleadings filed in the action, and upon any further information or evidence requested by the Court at the time of hearing on this Motion.

Dated: August 26, 2024

JAMES HAWKINS APLC

BY: ______________________

James Hawkins
Gregory Mauro
Michael Calvo
Lauren Falk
Ava Issary

Attorneys for Plaintiff and the Proposed Class

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MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES

I. INTRODUCTION

This Court preliminary approved the settlement on or about April 22, 2024. (James Hawkins Decl. "Hawkins", **Exhibit A** - Preliminary Approval Order). Plaintiff Washington ("Plaintiff"), now respectfully request that this Court grant final approval of the settlement agreement attached to the Hawkins Declaration as **Exhibit B**, which seeks to resolve claims against PREDICINE, INC., A Delaware Corporation ("Defendant") in exchange for a non-reversionary Gross Settlement Amount of ("GSA") of One Hundred Forty Four Thousand Six hundred and Eighty Three Dollars and Seventy Seven Cents ($144,683.77).[1]

The Class Members overwhelmingly supported the Settlement, as there is a 98.48% participation rate, with zero objections and only one opt out resulting in 65 out of 66 Participating Class Members. The *highest* Individual Settlement Amount to a Participating Class Member is currently estimated to be approximately $3,525.66, the *average* Individual Settlement Amount is currently estimated to be approximately $1,022.40, and the *lowest* Individual Settlement Amount is currently estimated to be approximately $31.91. These amounts are subject to employee-side tax and withholdings. (Administrator Decl. of Madely Nava-hereinafter "Nava", ¶ 16).

Plaintiff also moves for final approval of attorneys' fees in the amount of $48,227.92 which is one third of GSA. As will be demonstrated herein, Class Counsel's attorney fee request is supported using the percentage fee method and the lodestar method. Second, Plaintiff moves for final approval of payment of the litigation costs in the amount of $15,654.64, all of which was incurred in litigating this matter. Third, Plaintiff moves for final approval of the Class Representative Enhancement Award to Plaintiff in the sum of $5,000.00, to compensate the Class Representative for their service as the Class Representative and providing a general release of his claims against Defendant – a release significantly greater than the Class Members provided – and for the risks absorbed and time spent litigating the case. Plaintiff played a vital

[1] The total number of workweeks worked by Participating Class Members during the Class Period is 1,785.29, which exceeded the escalator clause threshold and thus the Gross Settlement Amount was increased by $49,683.77. As a result, the Gross Settlement Amount is $144,683.77. (Nava Decl., ¶ 14).

role in representing Class Members in this case and spearheading the lawsuit to seek monetary relief on behalf of all Class Members. Fourth, Plaintiff moves for final approval of the payment of $4,000.00 in administrative costs to Apex Class Action, LLC. Fifth, Plaintiff moves for final approval of the $4,000.00 PAGA Payment and the payment to the Labor and Work Development Agency ("LWDA") for its share of the PAGA Payment ($3,000.00, which is 75% of $4,000.00; with the remaining $1,000.00 payable to Aggrieved Employees).

This case required many hours of attorney and Plaintiff time who sought relief on behalf of 66 potential class members within the State of California defined all current and former non-exempt employees who were employed by Defendant PREDICINE, INC. at any time between December 7, 2017, through June 1, 2023. (Settlement Agreement ¶ 1.4).

This litigation involved the review and analysis of documents, policies, and practices, as well as a full day of mediation. Most importantly, the Settlement and all its terms received overwhelming support from Class Members, as there were no objections and only one request for exclusion. Therefore, Plaintiff respectfully request the Court grant final approval of the Settlement, attorneys' fees, litigation costs, Class Representative Enhancement Award, Settlement Administration Costs, and payment to the LWDA in the amounts preliminarily approved by the Court and as fully disclosed to Class Members.

II. BACKGROUND, INVESTIGATION, DISCOVERY

On December 7, 2021 Plaintiff files a putative class action complaint entitled *Nhyela Washington v. Predicine, Inc.*, Alameda County Superior Court No. 22STCV05538 seeking damages for Defendant's alleged failure to pay minimum wages, failure to pay overtime compensation, failure to authorize and provide meal periods or premium pay in lieu thereof, failure to authorize and permit rest breaks of premium pay in lieu thereof, failure to indemnify necessary business expenses, failure to timely pay final wages at termination, and unfair business practices. (Hawkins Decl. ¶¶ 3-6).

On December 7, 2021, Plaintiff provided written notice by certified mail to the Labor and Workforce Development Agency ("LWDA") and Defendant of the specific provisions of the

California Labor Code that Plaintiff alleged Defendant had violated with respect to non-exempt and/or hourly paid employees in California. *Id*.

As a result of the investigations, and subsequent settlement discussions and the resultant settlement and scope of claims, on August 29, 2023, Plaintiff filed a First Amended Class Action Complaint against Defendant, adding a cause of action for civil penalties under the PAGA, combining the class and PAGA actions. (Hawkins Decl. ¶6).

On March 29, 2023, the Parties engaged in private mediation with a well-respected wage and hour class action mediator, Jeffrey Krivis, a respected mediator of complex wage and hour actions, and, with Mr. Krivis's assistance, the Parties agreed to a mediator proposal. (Hawkins Decl. ¶5). The settlement discussions were conducted at arm's-length, and the settlement is the result of an informed and detailed analysis of Defendant's potential liability in relation to the costs and risks associated with continued litigation. Based on the documents produced, as well as Class Counsel's own independent investigation and evaluation, Class Counsel believes that the Settlement with Defendant for the consideration and on the terms set forth in this Agreement is fair, reasonable, and adequate and is in the best interest of the Class Members in light of all known facts and circumstances, including the risk of significant delay and uncertainty associated with litigation and various defenses asserted by Defendant. (Hawkins Decl. ¶ 4-12, Ex. 1.)

In reaching the proposed settlement, Plaintiff counsel's negotiation efforts took into consideration relevant factors such as the size of the class, the information, data, and documents obtained in the litigation and/or otherwise exchanged pursuant to the mediation privilege; the experience of the named Plaintiff; the strengths and weaknesses of the case; the uncertain outcome and risk of litigating complex actions; the time and expense in litigating a case through trial; Defendants' defenses; and the non-reversionary nature of the settlement.

1. The Settlement Provides Reasonable Compensation to Class Members

As a result of the mediation, the parties agreed to settle this matter for a Gross Settlement Amount ("GSA") of $144,683.77 (Hawkins Decl., ¶ 5, Nava Decl., ¶ 14). Based on their own respective independent investigations and evaluations, and after taking into account the sharply disputed factual and legal issues involved in this matter, the risks attending further prosecution of the case, and the monetary benefits received under the Settlement despite the questionable nature of the claims, Plaintiff's counsel is of the opinion that Settlement for the consideration and on the terms set forth in the Settlement Agreement remains fair, reasonable and adequate and is in the best interests of the Class Members. (Hawkins Decl., ¶¶ 5-13).

Even without the presumption of fairness and reasonableness, the settlement is clearly within the range of reasonableness as thoroughly discussed in detail in the motion for preliminary approval, and as considered by the Court in granting preliminary approval, (Hawkins Decl., ¶¶ 9-18; Ex. A- Order Granting Preliminary Approval).

Accounting for the risks of continued litigation and impediments to discovery, Plaintiff determined that a settlement amounting to $144,683.77 was fair and reasonable and the court preliminarily agreed. (Hawkins Decl., ¶¶ 11-21). *See, e.g., In re Warfarin Sodium Antitrust Litig.,* 212 F.R.D. 231, 256-58 (D. Del. 2002) (recognizing that a reasonable settlement amount can be 1.6% to 14% of the total estimated damages); *In Re Armored Car Antitrust Litig.,* 472 F. Supp. 1357, 1373 (N.D. Ga. 1979) (settlements with a value of 1% to 8% of the estimated total damages were approved); *In Re Four Seasons Secs. Laws Litig.,* 58 F.R.D. 19, 37 (W.D. Okla.1972) (approving 8% of damages); *Balderas v. Massage Envy Franchising, LLP,* 2014 WL 3610945, at *5 (N.D. Cal. July 21, 2014) (finding that settlement which amounted to 8% of maximum recovery "[fell] within the range of possible initial approval based on the strength of plaintiff's case and the risk and expense of continued litigation."); *In re Omnivision Techs., Inc.,* 559 F. Supp. 2d 1036, 1042 (N.D. Cal. 2008) (approving settlement of 6% to 8% of estimated damages).[2] (*Id.*)

[2] *See also In re Uber FCRA Litig*., No. 14-cv-05200-EMC, 2017 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 101552, at *23- 24 (N.D. Cal. June 29, 2017) (granting preliminary approval to class action settlement where gross settlement fund, prior to deducting attorneys' fees and services awards, was valued at 7.5% or less of total possible verdict); *Viceral v. Mistras Grp., Inc*., No. 15-cv-02198-EMC, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 140759, at *21 (N.D. Cal. Oct. 11, 2016) (granting preliminary approval to class action settlement representing "8.1% of the full verdict value" with net settlement amount representing approximately 5.3% of full verdict value); *Stovall-Gusman v. W.W. Granger, Inc.*, No. 13-cv-02540-HSG, 2015 WL 3776765, at *4 (N.D. Cal. June 17, 2015) (granting final approval to settlement with net recovery to Plaintiff valued at 7.3% of potential maximum recovery); *Cruz v. Sky Chefs, Inc*., No. 12-cv-02705-DMR, 2014 WL 7247065, at *5 (N.D. Cal. Dec. 19, 2014) (granting final approval where gross settlement amount represented 8.6% of the maximum potential recovery from the class claims and estimated amount distributable to class after accounting for attorneys' fees and other deductions represented approximately 6.1% of maximum potential recovery); *In re LDK Solar Sec. Litig.*, No. 07-cv-05182-WHA, 2010 WL 3001384, at *2 (N.D.

III. THE PROPOSED SETTLEMENT AND THE CLASS MEMBERS' RESPONSE

A. Terms of the Settlement

The GSA is ($144,683.77). This amount includes, the Settlement Administration Costs of $4,000.00; the Class Representative Enhancement Award of up to $5,000.00 to Plaintiff; Court-approved attorneys' fees up to $48,227.92, litigation costs to Class Counsel in the amount of $15,654.64; and PAGA penalties of $4,000.00 with 75% of that amount paid to the LWDA and the remaining 25% paid to the Aggrieved Employees. The Net Settlement Amount ("NSA") is approximately $67,801.20. (Nava Decl., ¶ 15).

The Settlement is a common fund settlement with no reversion to Defendant. Thus, each of the participating Settlement Class Members will be paid his or her pro-rata share of the NSA.

B. Released Claims

Subject to approval by this Court, and in exchange for the consideration recited in the Settlement Agreement, the Released Claims are all claims that have been or could have been reasonably alleged or asserted in the PAGA Notices and as defined in the Settlement. (Hawkins Decl., Ex. B- Settlement Agreement ¶¶ 24-30).

C. The Class Members Support the Settlement – Zero (0) Objections and One (1) Opt-Out

On April 22, 2024, the Court granted Preliminary Approval of the Settlement, conditionally certified the class for settlement purposes, appointed Apex Class Action, LLC to act as the administrator, approved the Notice to be sent to the Class, and directed that the Notice be mailed to the Class via U.S. First Class Mail. (Hawkins Decl., Ex. A- Order Granting Preliminary Approval). On or about June 12, 2024, Apex mailed the Notices to 66 Class Members. (Nava Decl., ¶7). Out of the 66 Notices, only 1 was deemed undeliverable after attempts to ascertain the addresses. (Nava Decl., ¶¶ 7-11). As a result of the mailing, there is a 98.48% participation rate and 65 Class Members will be mailed a settlement check. (*Id.* ¶ 13).

Cal. July 29, 2010) (granting final approving where "[t]he proposed settlement amount is [. . .] only about five percent of the estimated damages before fee and costs—even before any reduction thereof for attorney's fees and costs.").

All settlement checks to Class Members and/or Aggrieved Employees that remain uncashed after one hundred eighty (180) days of the mailing by the Claims Administrator, or for those Class Members and/or Aggrieved Employees whose Notice Packets were deemed undeliverable, shall be distributed to a cy pres recipient Child Advocates of Silicon Valley, a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization that is a child advocacy program for the benefit of children, consistent with the requirements set forth in California Code of Civil Procedure § 384(a). (Settlement Agreement ¶ 4.10).

IV. THE SETTLEMENT IS FAIR, REASONABLE, AND ADEQUATE

D. The Settlement Satisfies the Standard for Final Approval

California Rule of Court, Rule 3.769, requires court approval for class action settlements. Cal. R. Ct. 3.769(g). California courts favor settlement. *Stambaugh v. Superior Court* (1976) 62 Cal. App. 3d 231, 236, *Potter v. Pacific Coast Lumber Co. of Cal.* (1951) 37 Cal. 2d 592, 602 ("[T]he law wisely favors settlements"). Accordingly, the Court must give "[due] regard to what is otherwise a private consensual agreement between the parties." *Wershba v. Apple Computer, Inc.* (2001) 91 Cal. App. 4th 224, 245.

In deciding whether to approve a class settlement, a court evaluates whether the proposed settlement is "fair, adequate, and reasonable." *Dunk v. Ford Motor Co.* (1996) 48 Cal. App. 4th 1794, 1801 (citing *Officers for Justice v. Civil Serv. Comm'n of City & Cnty. Of S.F.* (9th Cir. 1982) 688 F.2d 615, 625). A court enjoys broad discretion to make its fairness determination. *Dunk*, 48 Cal. App. 4th at 1801. However, "a presumption of fairness exists where: (1) the settlement is reached through arms-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; *accord Wershba*, 91 Cal. App. 4th at 245. In addition, a court should consider additional relevant factors, including the strength of the Plaintiff's case compared to the settlement amount; the risk, expenses, complexity, and likely duration of further litigation; and the fair treatment of class members in relation to each other. *Dunk*, 48 Cal. App. 4th at 1802.

At the time of preliminary approval, the Court was provided with sufficient information to satisfy three of the four *Dunk* factors, leaving the fourth factor, the number of objectors, unknown until after the Class had an opportunity to respond to the Settlement as explained in the Notice. Subject only to the Class's reaction to the Settlement, the Court preliminarily presumed the Settlement was fair, adequate, and reasonable. Following dissemination of the Notice, and adequate time provided to the Class to object to the Settlement, no class member submitted objections and only one Class Member excluded themselves from the settlement, ***resulting in a 98.48% participation rate from the Class***. (Nava Decl., ¶ 13). Thus, the proposed Settlement is entitled to the presumption that it is fair and in all other respects proper and should be finally approved.

V. THE COURT SHOULD APPROVE THE REQUESTED FEES AND COSTS

E. The Requested Fee Award is Fair and Reasonable, Calculated as a Percentage of a Common Fund

Class Counsel applies for an award of attorneys' fees in the sum of $48,227.92 of the GSA, and litigation costs of $15,654.64 (Hawkins Decl., ¶¶ 25-28, Ex. C). When a settlement results in a common fund for the benefit of a class, class counsel may be awarded fees as a percentage of the common fund. *See Wershba*, *supra*, 91 Cal.App.4th at 254 (recognizing the "percentage of recovery" method). The California Supreme Court confirmed in *Laffitte v. Robert Half Int'l, Inc.* that "[t]he percentage of fund method survives in California class action cases." 1 Cal.5th 480, 506 (2016), in stating:

> The recognized advantages of the percentage method—including relative ease of calculation, alignment of incentives between counsel and the class, a better approximation of market conditions in a contingency case, and the encouragement it provides counsel to seek an early settlement and avoid unnecessarily prolonging the litigation—convince us the percentage method is a valuable tool that should not be denied our trial courts.

Id. at 503 (internal citation omitted); *see also e.g., Serrano v. Priest,* 20 Cal.3d 25, 34 (1977) ("when a number of persons are entitled in common to a specific fund, and an action brought by a plaintiff or Plaintiff for the benefit of all results in the creation or preservation of that fund, such plaintiff or Plaintiff may be awarded attorney's fees out of the fund."); *Serrano v. Unruh*, 32 Cal.3d 621, 627 (1982) (in awarding a fee from the common fund obtained for the benefit of all parties, the trial court acts within its equitable power to prevent the other parties' unjust enrichment.); *Rawlings v. Prudential-Bache Properties, Inc.*, 9 F.3d 513, 516 (6th Cir. 1993) (the percentage of the fund method for calculating attorney's fees more accurately reflects the results achieved for the putative class than the lodestar method and "establishes reasonable expectations on the part of Plaintiff's attorneys as to their expected recovery; and it encourages early settlement, which avoids protracted litigation."); *In re Rite Aid Corp. Securities Litigation*, 396 F.3d 294, 300 (3d Cir. 2005) ("The percentage-of-recovery method is generally favored in common fund cases because it allows courts to award fees from the fund 'in a manner that rewards counsel for success and penalizes it for failure.").[3]

The purpose of the common fund/percentage approach is to "spread litigation costs proportionally among all the beneficiaries so that the active beneficiary does not bear the entire burden alone." *Vincent*, *supra*, 557 F.2d at 769. In *Quinn v. State of California* (1995) 15 Cal.3d 162, 167, the Court stated: "[O]ne who expends attorneys' fees in winning a suit which creates a fund from which others derive benefits may require those passive beneficiaries to bear a fair share of the litigation costs." Similarly, in *City and County of San Francisco v. Sweet* (1995) 12 Cal.4th 105, 110, the California Supreme Court recognized that the common fund doctrine has been applied "consistently in California when an action brought by one party creates a fund in which other persons are entitled to share." The reasons for applying the common fund doctrine include: "…fairness to the successful litigant, who might otherwise receive no benefit because his recovery might be consumed by the expenses; correlative prevention of an unfair advantage to the others who are entitled to share in the fund and who should bear their share of the burden of its recovery; encouragement of the attorney for the successful litigant, who will be more willing to undertake and diligently prosecute proper litigation for the protection or recovery of the fund if he is assured that he will be properly and directly compensated should his efforts be successful." *Id*. Because

[3] *Laffitte* also held trial courts have discretion to assess reasonableness of fee awards with tools such as the lodestar cross-check, although they need not do so. *Laffitte*, 1 Cal.5th at 506 ("We hold further that trial courts have discretion to conduct a lodestar cross-check on a percentage fee . . . they also retain the discretion to forgo a lodestar cross-check and use other means to evaluate the reasonableness of a requested percentage fee").

there is a defined and clearly traceable benefit to the Class, the Court can base an award of attorneys' fees using a 'common fund' approach to compensate Class Counsel.

1. The Requested Attorneys' Fee is Within the Range of Fees Approved in Comparable Common Fund Cases

Assessing an appropriate fee based on a percentage of the fund involves considering "all of the circumstances of the case." Appellate cases addressing fees arise almost exclusively where awards were challenged by Defendants or objectors – the only parties with standing to appeal. *Wershba*, 91 Cal.App.4th at 236.

The requested fee falls in the mid-range of percentage class fee awards, which generally range from 20% to 50% of a common fund, and it constitutes fair compensation for undertaking complex, risky, expensive, and time-consuming litigation on a contingent basis and compensates Class Counsel for their efforts, as well as the result achieved for the benefit of the Class. Numerous courts in California routinely approve fee requests equal to or greater than 35% of the common fund. *See Martin v. Ameripride Servs.*, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 61796, *22-23 (S.D. Cal. 2011) (collecting cases); *Birch v. Office Depot, Inc.*, USDC Southern District, Case No. 06cv1690 DMS (WMC) (awarding 40% fee on a $16 million wage and hour class action settlement); *Rippee v. Boston Mkt. Corp.*, USDC Southern District, Case No. 05cv1359 BTM (JMA) (awarding a 40% fee on a $3.75 million wage and hour class action settlement). In fact, the Sacramento County Superior Court has awarded fees of 35% of the common fund in wage and hour class actions. (*McMahon v. Airco Mechanical, Inc.*, Case No. 34-2019-00259269; *Uribe v. EcoGuard Pest Management, Inc.*, Case No. 34-2021-00300650; *Arroyo v. Epic Home Solar,* Case No. 34-2021-00310634; *Blair v. Clark Wagaman Designs*, Case No. 34-2021-00313156).

In short, Class Counsels' fee request of $48,227.92 (33.33% of the common fund) is in line with awards in similar cases in California and demonstrates that Class Counsels' fee request is consistent with market rates and is reasonable.

2. A Lodestar Cross-Check Confirms the Reasonableness of the Requested Fee

Class Counsels' fee request is reasonable when calculated using the lodestar method.

Under the lodestar method, a base fee amount is calculated from a compilation of time reasonably spent on the case and the reasonable hourly compensation of the attorney. *Serrano*, 20 Cal. 3d at 48. The court then may enhance this lodestar figure by a "multiplier" to account for a range of factors, such as the novelty and difficulty of the case, its contingent nature, and the degree of success achieved. *Id*. at 49; *see also Ketchum v. Moses*, 24 Cal.4th 1122, 1132-36 (2001); *Thayer v. Wells Fargo Bank*, 92 Cal.App.4th 819, 834 (2001), ["[t]here is no…rule limiting the factors that may justify an exercise of judicial discretion to [adjust the] lodestar"].

As of the date of filing, Class Counsel worked approximately 90.20 combined documented hours on this case. All of the work and tasks performed by Class Counsel were reasonable and necessary for the prosecution of this case. (*Id*.).

3. Class Counsel's Hourly Rates are Reasonable

Class Counsels' hourly rates are between $200 and $950 and are in line with rates typically approved in wage and hour class action litigation and which rates have been approved by Courts in California in the Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Francisco, Alameda, Orange and San Diego County Superior Courts. (Hawkins Decl., ¶24); *Children's Hosp. and Med. Ctr. v. Bonta*, 97 Cal.App.4th 740, 746 (2002) (noting rates were reasonable where they were "within the range of reasonable rates charged by and judicially awarded comparable attorneys for comparable work").

A reasonable hourly rate is the prevailing rate charged by attorneys of similar skill and experience in the relevant community. *PLCM Group, Inc v. Drexler* (2000) 22 Cal. 4th 1084, 1095. When determining a reasonable hourly rate, courts may consider factors such as skill and experience, the nature of the work performed, the relevant area of expertise and the attorney's customary billing rates. *Flannery v. California Highway Patrol* (1998) 61 Cal. App. 4th 629, 632. Class Counsels' skill and experience support their hourly rates. Our practices are limited exclusively to litigation, focusing on the representation of employees in wage and hour and consumer class action matters. (Hawkins Decl., ¶ 24). As prominent attorneys in the field of wage and hour class action litigation, Class Counsel continually monitors the prevailing market rates charged by both defense and plaintiff law firms and set the billing rates of their attorneys and paralegals to be consistent with the prevailing market rates in the private sector for attorneys and staff of comparable skill, qualifications and experience. Other wage and hour attorneys working as class counsel before California courts charge comparable if not higher rates. Therefore, as they are in line with those of the relevant community, Class Counsels' hourly rates are reasonable.

4. Class Counsel's Total Hours are Reasonable

In determining a lodestar fee, reasonable hours include, in addition to time spent during litigation, the time spent before the action was filed, including time spent interviewing clients, investigating the facts and the law, and preparing the initial pleadings. *See New York Gaslight Club, Inc. v. Carey* (1980) 447 U.S. 54, 62. The fee award should include fees incurred to establish and defend the attorneys' fee claim. *Serrano v. Priest* (1982) 32 Cal.3d 621, 639.

Class Counsel expended a combined total of approximately 92.20 hours on this case. The work performed to achieve a settlement that will provide valuable consideration to the Class is summarized by Class Counsel in the declaration submitted herewith. (Hawkins Decl., ¶¶ 25-28;); *Syers Props. III, Inc. v. Rankin*, 226 Cal.App.4th 691, 699 (2014) ("Because time records are not required under California law …, there is no required level of detail that counsel must achieve.") (internal quotations omitted). All tasks and work performed were reasonable and necessary for the prosecution of this case. The work performed was justified considering the result achieved.

5. Costs of Litigation are Reasonable

Class Counsel seeks reimbursement of the litigation costs and expenses of $15,654.64. These costs were reasonable and necessary to prosecute this case, and the results achieved are fair, and reasonable. (Hawkins Decl., ¶¶ 25-28, Ex. C).

VI. THE CLASS REPRESENTATIVE ENHANCEMENT AWARD IS REASONABLE

Class Counsel seeks approval of a $5,000.00 Class Representative Enhancement Award to the named Plaintiff/Class Representative. The requested enhancement award is reasonable in light of the general release of all claims Plaintiff agreed to, greater than the release given by Class Members, the benefits Plaintiff conferred upon the entire Class resulting in payments to all Class Members, the time spent assisting counsel with the investigation and prosecution of these claims and consenting to the proposed Settlement. Furthermore, in pursuing this action on behalf of the

Class, Plaintiff risked a judgment for attorneys' fees and costs in the event this matter had been lost. (Hawkins Decl., ¶¶ 29-30; *See also* declaration of Plaintiff Washington filed concurrently herewith)

Courts routinely approve service payments, or incentive awards, to compensate named Plaintiff for the services they provide and the risks they incur during class litigation. *See In re Cellphone Fee Termination Cases* (2010) 186 Cal. App. 4th 1380, 1393; *see also Bell v. Farmers Ins. Exch*. (2004) 115 Cal. App. 4th 715, 725-26 (upholding service payments to class representatives); Manual § 21.62 n.971 (noting that service payments are warranted). Based on the foregoing, the $5,000.00 Class Representative Enhancement Award is fair, appropriate, and justified as part of the overall settlement.

VII. THE SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION COSTS ARE REASONABLE

The Parties agreed to hire Apex Class Action, LLC as the administrator, and the Court approved this choice. The Administrator was responsible for formatting, printing and mailing the Notice. It was also responsible for updating addresses and re-mailing Notices returned as undeliverable, responding to Class Member inquiries, answering questions from Counsel for the Parties, and providing a declaration to document its duties and responsibilities under the settlement. Plaintiff now requests that the Court approve the $4,000.00 fee to Apex Class Action, LLC for services rendered and to be rendered. (Nava Decl., ¶ 19). Following the grant of final approval, the Administrator's duties will continue in order to calculate and mail the Individual Settlement Payment checks to Class Members, perform tax reporting obligations, disburse other payments as ordered by the Court, and perform such other duties as set forth in the Settlement Agreement. The fee of $4,000.00 for services rendered and to be rendered is fair and reasonable and should be granted.

VIII. THE SETTLEMENT PENALTIES UNDER PAGA ARE REASONABLE

The PAGA payment of $4,000.00 with 75% of to the LWDA and 25% to the aggrieved employees is reasonable under the circumstances. The Parties negotiated a good faith amount for PAGA penalties. The PAGA penalties allocation is not the result of self-interest at the expense of other Class Members. The LWDA was also provided notice of the Settlement with the concurrent filing of the preliminary approval motion and the instant motion. Plaintiff did not receive a response or objection to the Settlement from the LWDA. Thus, Plaintiff requests the Court finally approve the PAGA allocation in the amount of $4,000.00 with 75% being paid to the LWDA and 25% being distributed to the aggrieved employees.

IX. CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing, Class Counsel respectfully requests the Court grant final approval of the Class Action Settlement, award (1) Class Counsels' fees in the sum of $48,227.92 and litigation costs of $15,654.64; (2) award the named Plaintiff an Class Representative Enhancement Award in the sum of $5,000.00; (3) award $4,000.00 to Apex Class Action, LLC, for settlement administration services, and (4) approve the PAGA Payment of $4,000.00 with a $3,000.00 of that sum paid to the LWDA and the remaining $1,000.00 paid to the Aggrieved Employees.

Dated: August 22, 2024

JAMES HAWKINS APLC

BY: ______________________________

James Hawkins
Gregory Mauro
Michael Calvo
Lauren Falk
Ava Issary

Attorneys for Plaintiff and the Proposed Class

PROOF OF SERVICE, COUNTY OF ORANGE

I am a resident of the State of California, County of Orange. I am over the age of eighteen years and not a party to the within action. My business address is 9880 Research Drive., Suite 200, Irvine, California 92618.

On August 26, 2024, I served on the interested parties in this action the following document(s) entitled:

NOTICE OF MOTION AND MOTION FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT; ATTORNEYS' FEES, COSTS, ENHANCEMENT AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION COSTS; MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES; DECLARATIONS OF CLASS COUNSEL; DECLARATION OF PLAINTIFF WASHINGTON

DECLARATION OF JAMES HAWKINS IN SUPPORT OF MOTION FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF CLASS AND PAGA SETTLEMENT

DECLARATION OF MADELY NAVA OF APEX CLASS ACTION, LLC, IN SUPPORT OF MOTION FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT

[PROPOSED] ORDER GRANTING FINAL APPROVAL OF CLASS AND PAGA SETTLEMENT; JUDGMENT

[XX] BY ELECTRONIC SERVICE: Based on a court Order or an agreement by the parties to accept service by e-mail or electronic transmission, I caused the document(s) to be sent from the email address Eddie@jameshawkinsaplc.com to the persons at the e-mail addresses listed in the Service List below. I did not receive, within a reasonable time after the transmission, any electronic message or other indication that the transmission was unsuccessful.

SERVICE LIST
(See attached service list)

[XX] **STATE:** I declare under penalty of perjury, under the laws of the State of California, that the above is true and correct.

Executed on August 26, 2024, at Irvine, California

Eddie Magana

Via LWDA Website Only
Labor and Workforce Development Agency
Attn: PAGA Administrator
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