

MILLS SADAT DOWLAT LLP
Arash Sadat (SBN 279282)
Camron Dowlatsahi (SBN 308618)
Mir Raza (SBN 358311)
333 South Hope Street, 40th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90071
Tel.: (213) 628-3856
Email: arash@msdlawyers.com
Email: camron@msdlawyers.com
Email: mir@msdlawyers.com

Attorneys for Plaintiff Alexandra Therese
and the Putative Class

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Executive Officer/Clerk of Court,
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**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**

ALEXANDREA THERESE, individually,
and on behalf of other members of the general
public similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

v.

POCKET FM CORP., a Delaware
corporation; and DOES 1 through 10,
inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No. **25STCV02583**

**CLASS AND REPRESENTATIVE ACTION
COMPLAINT FOR:**

- (1) Willful Misclassification (Lab. Code §§ 226.8 and 2698, *et seq.*)**
- (2) Failure to Pay Minimum Wage for All Hours Worked (Lab. Code §§ 1182.12, 1194, 1194.2, 1197 and 1197.1)**
- (3) Failure to Pay Overtime Compensation (Lab. Code §§ 1194 and 1198)**
- (4) Failure to Provide Meal Periods (Lab. Code §§ 226.7, 512, and IWC Wage Orders)**
- (5) Failure to Provide Rest Periods (Lab. Code §§ 226.7, 512, and IWC Wage Orders)**
- (6) Failure to Indemnify Necessary Business Expenses (Lab. Code § 2802)**
- (7) Waiting Time Penalties (Lab. Code §§ 201-203)**
- (8) Failure to Provide Accurate Wage Statements (Lab. Code § 226)**
- (9) Violation of Unfair Competition Law (Bus. & Prof. Code § 17200, *et seq.*)**
- (10) Private Attorneys General Act (Lab. Code § 2698, *et seq.*)**

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

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PRAYER FOR RELIEF 23

1 Plaintiff Alexandra Therese, individually, and on behalf of other members of the general
2 public similarly situated, brings this action against Defendant Pocket FM Corp., and Does 1
3 through 10, inclusive, and alleges as follows:

4 **INTRODUCTION AND PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

5 1. Plaintiff brings this action against Defendant Pocket FM Corp., and Does 1 through
6 10 (collectively, “Defendants”) for violations of the California Labor Code and unfair business
7 practices stemming from Defendants’ failure to pay minimum wages, failure to pay overtime
8 compensation, failure to provide meal periods, failure to authorize and permit rest periods, failure
9 to maintain accurate records of hours worked and meal periods, failure to timely pay all wages to
10 employees, failure to indemnify necessary business expenses and failure to furnish accurate wage
11 statements.

12 2. Plaintiff brings the First through Ninth Causes of Action individually and as a class
13 action on behalf of herself and certain current and former employees of Defendants (hereinafter
14 collectively referred to as the “Class” or “Class Members” and defined more fully below). The
15 Class consists of Plaintiff and all other persons who have been employed by any Defendants in
16 California as an hourly-paid, non-exempt employee during the statute of limitations period
17 applicable to the claims pleaded here.

18 3. Plaintiff brings the Tenth Cause of Action as a representative action under the
19 Private Attorneys General Act (“PAGA”) to recover civil penalties that are owed to Plaintiff, the
20 State of California, and past and present employees of Defendants employed at any time within the
21 applicable statutory period (hereinafter referred to as the “Aggrieved Employees”).

22 4. Defendants own and operate an industry, business, and establishment within the
23 State of California, including in Los Angeles County. As such, Defendants are subject to the
24 California Labor Code, Wage Orders issued by the Industrial Welfare Commission (“IWC”), and
25 the California Business and Professions Code.

26 5. Despite these requirements, throughout the statutory period Defendants maintained
27 a systematic, company-wide policy and practice of:
28

- 1 a. Failing to pay employees for all hours worked, including all minimum
2 wages, and overtime wages in compliance with the California Labor Code and IWC Wage Orders;
- 3 b. Failing to provide employees with timely and duty-free meal periods in
4 compliance with the California Labor Code and IWC Wage Orders, failing to maintain accurate
5 records of all meal periods taken or missed, and failing to pay an additional hour's pay for each
6 workday in which a meal period violation occurred;
- 7 c. Failing to authorize and permit employees to take timely and duty-free rest
8 periods in compliance with the California Labor Code and IWC Wage Orders, and failing to pay
9 an additional hour's pay for each workday in which a rest period violation occurred;
- 10 d. Willfully failing to pay employees all minimum wages, meal period
11 premium wages, and rest period premium wages due within the time period specified by California
12 law when employment terminates;
- 13 e. Failing to maintain accurate records of the hours that employees worked;
14 and
- 15 f. Failing to provide employees with accurate, itemized wage statements
16 containing all the information required by the California Labor Code and IWC Wage Orders.

17 6. Plaintiff is informed and believes and on that basis alleges that Defendants were on
18 actual and constructive notice of the improprieties alleged herein and intentionally refused to
19 rectify their unlawful policies. Defendants' violations, as alleged above, during all relevant times
20 herein were willful and deliberate.

21 7. At all relevant times, Defendants were legally responsible for all of the unlawful
22 conduct, policies, practices, acts and omissions as described in each and all of the foregoing
23 paragraphs as the employer of Plaintiff and the Class. Further, Defendants are responsible for each
24 of the unlawful acts or omissions complained of herein under the doctrine of "respondeat
25 superior."

26 //

27 //

28 //

1 **THE PARTIES**

2 **A. Plaintiff**

3 8. Plaintiff Alexandra Therese (“Plaintiff”) is an individual residing in the County of
4 Los Angeles, California and worked as in-house writer from on or about August 21, 2023 to
5 September 20, 2024 but was misclassified as an independent contractor, despite the fact that at no
6 point during her tenure did she set her own schedule, perform work outside the scope of normal
7 business, or work an part of an independently established trade.

8 9. Plaintiff reserves the right to seek leave to amend this complaint to add new
9 plaintiffs, if necessary, in order to establish suitable representative(s) pursuant to *La Sala v.*
10 *American Savings and Loan Association* (1971) 5 Cal.3d 864, 872, and other applicable law.

11 **B. Defendants**

12 10. Plaintiff is informed and believes and on that basis alleges that Defendant Pocket
13 FM Corp. (“Pocket FM”) is:

14 a. a Delaware corporation with its principal place of business in the County of
15 Los Angeles, California.

16 b. a business entity conducting business in numerous counties throughout the
17 State of California, including in Los Angeles County; and

18 c. the current or former employer of Plaintiff and of the putative Class.

19 Defendants suffered and permitted Plaintiff and the Class to work, and/or controlled their wages,
20 hours, or working conditions.

21 11. Plaintiff is unaware of the true names and capacities of the defendants sued as Does
22 1 through 10, inclusive, and therefore sues these defendants by fictitious names. Plaintiff will
23 amend this complaint to allege their true names and capacities when the same have been
24 ascertained. Plaintiff is informed and believes that each of the fictitiously named defendants is
25 responsible in some manner for the occurrences herein alleged and that Plaintiff’s damages were
26 proximately caused by said defendants’ conduct.

27 12. At all times mentioned herein, the Defendants named as Does 1 through 10,
28 inclusive, and each of them, were residents of, doing business in, availed themselves of the

jurisdiction of, and/or injured Plaintiff and a significant number of the Class in the State of California.

13. Plaintiff is informed and believes and on that basis alleges that at all relevant times each Defendant, directly or indirectly, or through agents or other persons, employed Plaintiff and the other employees described in the class definitions below, and exercised control over their wages, hours, and working conditions. Plaintiff is informed and believes and on that basis alleges that, at all relevant times, each Defendant was the principal, agent, partner, joint venturer, officer, director, controlling shareholder, subsidiary, affiliate, parent corporation, successor in interest and/or predecessor in interest of some or all of the other Defendants, and was engaged with some or all of the other Defendants in a joint enterprise for profit, and bore such other relationships to some or all of the other Defendants so as to be liable for their conduct with respect to the matters alleged below. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that each Defendant acted pursuant to and within the scope of the relationships alleged above, that each Defendant knew or should have known about, and authorized, ratified, adopted, approved, controlled, aided and abetted the conduct of all other Defendants.

VENUE AND JURISDICTION

14. The wrongful conduct alleged against the Defendants occurred in the County of Los Angeles, California. At all relevant times, the conduct at issue was part of a continuous and ongoing pattern of behavior.

15. This Court is the proper forum to adjudicate this action because the wrongful acts that are the subject of this action occurred here and because the Defendant now resides in its jurisdictional area.

ALLEGATIONS COMMON TO ALL CAUSES OF ACTION

16. During the statutory period, Plaintiff was a non-exempt employee, but Defendants misclassified Plaintiff as an independent contractor.

17. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants failed to pay Plaintiff for all hours worked (including minimum wages), failed to provide Plaintiff with uninterrupted meal periods, failed to authorize and permit Plaintiff to take uninterrupted rest periods, failed to timely pay all

1 final wages to Plaintiff when Defendants terminated Plaintiff's employment, and failed to furnish
2 accurate wage statements to Plaintiff. As discussed below, Plaintiff's experience working for
3 Defendants was typical and illustrative.

4 18. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants maintained a policy and practice of not
5 paying Plaintiff and the Class for all hours worked. Defendants failed to incorporate all
6 remuneration when calculating the correct rate of pay and meal and rest break premium rate of
7 pay, leading to underpayment to Plaintiff and the Class.

8 19. In maintaining a practice of not paying all wages owed, Defendants failed to
9 maintain accurate records of the hours Plaintiff and the Class worked.

10 20. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants wrongfully failed to provide Plaintiff
11 and the Class with legally compliant meal periods. Defendants sometimes, but not always,
12 required Plaintiff and the Class to work in excess of five consecutive hours a day without
13 providing timely 30-minute, continuous and uninterrupted, duty-free meal period for every five
14 hours of work, or without compensating Plaintiff and the Class for meal periods that were not
15 provided by the end of the fifth hour of work or tenth hour of work. Defendants also did not
16 adequately inform Plaintiff and the Class of their right to take a meal period by the end of the fifth
17 hour of work, or, for shifts greater than 10 hours, by the end of the tenth hour of work.
18 Accordingly, Defendants' policy and practice was to not provide meal periods to Plaintiff and the
19 Class in compliance with California law.

20 21. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants have wrongfully failed to authorize
21 and permit Plaintiff and the Class to take timely and duty-free rest periods. Defendants
22 sometimes, but not always, required Plaintiff and the Class to work in excess of four consecutive
23 hours a day without Defendants authorizing and permitting them to take a 10-minute, continuous
24 and uninterrupted, rest period for every four hours of work (or major fraction of four hours), or
25 without compensating Plaintiff and the Class for rest periods that were not authorized or permitted.
26 Defendants also did not adequately inform Plaintiff and the Class of their right to take a rest
27 period. Moreover, Defendants did not have adequate policies or practices permitting or
28 authorizing rest periods for Plaintiff and the Class, nor did Defendants have adequate policies or

1 practices regarding the timing of rest periods. Defendants also did not have adequate policies or
2 practices to verify whether Plaintiff and the Class were taking their required rest periods.

3 22. Further, Defendants did not maintain accurate records of employee work periods,
4 and therefore Defendants cannot demonstrate that Plaintiff and the Class took rest periods during
5 the middle of each work period. Accordingly, Defendants' policy and practice was to not
6 authorize and permit Plaintiff and the Class to take rest periods in compliance with California law.

7 23. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants willfully failed and refused to timely
8 pay Plaintiff and the Class during and at the conclusion of their employment all wages for all
9 minimum wages, meal period premium wages, and rest period premium wages.

10 24. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants failed to furnish Plaintiff and the Class
11 with accurate, itemized wage statements showing all applicable hourly rates, and all gross and net
12 wages earned (including correct hours worked, correct wages earned for hours worked, correct
13 wages for meal periods that were not provided in accordance with California law, and correct
14 wages for rest periods that were not authorized and permitted to take in accordance with California
15 law). As a result of these violations of California Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a), the
16 Plaintiff and the Class suffered injury because, among other things:

17 a. the violations led them to believe that they were not entitled to be paid
18 minimum wages, overtime wages, meal period premium wages, and rest period premium wages to
19 which they were entitled, even though they were entitled to such wages;

20 b. the violations led them to believe that they had been paid minimum wages,
21 meal period premium wages, and rest period premium wages, even though they had not been;

22 c. the violations led them to believe they were not entitled to be paid minimum
23 wages, meal period premium wages, and rest period premium wages at the correct California rate
24 even though they were;

25 d. the violations led them to believe they had been paid minimum wages,
26 overtime, meal period premium wages, and rest period premium wages at the correct California
27 rate even though they had not been;

1 e. the violations hindered them from determining the amounts of minimum,
2 meal period premium, and rest period premium owed to them;

3 f. in connection with their employment before and during this action, and in
4 connection with prosecuting this action, the violations caused them to have to perform
5 mathematical computations to determine the amounts of wages owed to them, computations they
6 would not have to make if the wage statements contained the required accurate information; and

7 g. by understating the wages truly due them, the violations caused them to lose
8 entitlement and/or accrual of the full amount of Social Security, disability, unemployment, and
9 other governmental benefits;

10 h. the wage statements inaccurately understated the wages, hours, and wage
11 rates to which Plaintiff and the Class were entitled, and Plaintiff and the Class were paid less than
12 the wages and wage rates to which they were entitled. As a result, Plaintiff and the Class are owed
13 the amounts provided for in California Labor Code section 226, subdivision (e), including actual
14 damages.

15 **CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS**

16 25. Plaintiff brings certain claims individually, as well as on behalf of each and all
17 other persons similarly situated, and thus, seek class certification under California Code of Civil
18 Procedure section 382.

19 26. All claims alleged herein arise under California law for which Plaintiff seek relief
20 authorized by California law. The proposed Class consists of and is defined as:

21 All persons who worked for any Defendant in California as a
22 independent contractor at any time during the period beginning four
23 years before the filing of the initial complaint in this action and
24 ending when notice to the Class is sent.

25 27. Plaintiff is a member of the Class.

26 28. Plaintiff undertakes this concerted activity to improve the wages and working
27 conditions of all Class Members.
28

29. There is a well-defined community of interest in the litigation and the Class is readily ascertainable:

a. Numerosity: The members of the Class (and each subclass, if any) are so that joinder of all members would be unfeasible and impractical. The membership of the entire Class is unknown to Plaintiff at this time, however, the Class is estimated to be greater than 100 individuals and the identity of such membership is readily ascertainable by inspection of Defendants' records.

b. Typicality: Plaintiff is qualified to, and will, fairly and adequately protect the interests of each Class Member with whom there is a shared, well-defined community of interest, and Plaintiff's claims (or defenses, if any) are typical of all Class Members' claims as demonstrated herein.

c. Adequacy: Plaintiff is qualified to, and will, fairly and adequately protect the interests of each Class Member with whom there is a shared, well-defined community of interest and typicality of claims, as demonstrated herein. Plaintiff has no conflicts with or interests antagonistic to any Class Member. Plaintiff's attorneys, the proposed class counsel, are versed in the rules governing class action discovery, certification, and settlement. Plaintiff has incurred, and throughout the duration of this action, will continue to incur costs and attorneys' fees that have been, are, and will be necessarily expended for the prosecution of this action for the substantial benefit of each class member.

d. Superiority: A Class Action is superior to other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the controversy, including consideration of:

1. The interests of the members of the Class in individually controlling the prosecution or defense of separate actions;
2. The extent and nature of any litigation concerning the controversy already commenced by or against members of the Class;
3. The desirability or undesirability of concentrating the litigation of the claims in the particular forum; and

1 4. The difficulties likely to be encountered in the management of a
2 class action.

3 e. Public Policy Considerations: The public policy of the State of California is
4 to resolve the California Labor Code claims of many employees through a class action. Indeed,
5 current employees are often afraid to assert their rights out of fear of direct or indirect retaliation.
6 Former employees are also fearful of bringing actions because they believe their former employers
7 might damage their future endeavors through negative references and/or other means. Class
8 actions provide the class members who are not named in the complaint with a type of anonymity
9 that allows for the vindication of their rights at the same time as their privacy is protected.

10 30. There are common questions of law and fact as to the Class (and each subclass, if
11 any) that predominate over questions affecting only individual members, including without
12 limitation, whether, as alleged herein, Defendants have:

- 13 a. failed to pay Class Members for all hours worked, including minimum
14 wages, and overtime wages;
- 15 b. failed to provide meal periods and pay meal period premium wages to Class
16 Members;
- 17 c. failed to authorize and permit rest periods and pay rest period premium
18 wages to Class Members;
- 19 d. failed to promptly pay all wages due to Class Members upon their discharge
20 or resignation;
- 21 e. failed to maintain accurate records of all hours Class Members worked, and
22 all meal periods Class Members took or missed;
- 23 f. failed to reimburse Class Members for all necessary business expenses; and
24 g. violated California Business & Professions Code §§ 17200 et. seq. as a
25 result of their illegal conduct as described above.

26 31. This Court should permit this action to be maintained as a class action pursuant to
27 California Code of Civil Procedure section 382 because:
28

- a. The questions of law and fact common to the Class predominate over any question affecting only individual members;
 - b. A class action is superior to any other available method for the fair and efficient adjudication of the claims of the members of the Class;
 - c. The members of the Class are so numerous that it is impractical to bring all members of the class before the Court;
 - d. Plaintiff, and the other members of the Class, will not be able to obtain effective and economic legal redress unless the action is maintained as a class action;
 - e. There is a community of interest in obtaining appropriate legal and equitable relief for the statutory violations, and in obtaining adequate compensation for the damages and injuries for which Defendants are responsible in an amount sufficient to adequately compensate the members of the Class for the injuries sustained;
 - f. Without class certification, the prosecution of separate actions by individual members of the class would create a risk of:
 1. inconsistent or varying adjudications with respect to individual members of the Class which would establish incompatible standards of conduct for Defendants; and/or
 2. adjudications with respect to the individual members which would, as a practical matter, be dispositive of the interests of other members not parties to the adjudications, or would substantially impair or impede their ability to protect their interests, including but not limited to the potential for exhausting the funds available from those parties who are, or may be, responsible Defendants; and
 - g. Defendants have acted or refused to act on grounds generally applicable to the Class, thereby making final injunctive relief appropriate with respect to the class as a whole.
32. Plaintiff contemplates the eventual issuance of notice to the proposed members of the Class that would set forth the subject and nature of the instant action. Defendants' own business records may be utilized for assistance in the preparation and issuance of the contemplated

1 notices. To the extent that any further notices may be required, Plaintiff would contemplate the
2 use of additional techniques and forms commonly used in class actions, such as published notice,
3 e-mail notice, website notice, first-class mail, or combinations thereof, or by other methods
4 suitable to the Class and deemed necessary and/or appropriate by the Court.

5 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

6 **Willful Misclassification (Lab. Code §§ 226.8 and 2698, *et seq.*)**

7 (Against All Defendants)

8 33. Plaintiff incorporates all preceding paragraphs of this Complaint as though set forth
9 fully herein.

10 34. California law makes it unlawful for an employer to knowingly and voluntarily
11 misclassify employees as independent contractors. Lab. Code § 226.8(a)(1). “‘Willful
12 misclassification’ means avoiding employee status for an individual by voluntarily and knowingly
13 misclassifying that individual as an independent contractor.” Id. § 226.8(i)(4).

14 35. Defendants knowingly and voluntarily misclassified Plaintiff and the Class in order
15 to make them ineligible to receive overtime and other employee benefits. Defendants were
16 required to pay wages for each hour worked, and overtime wages when non-exempt employees
17 work over eight (8) hours in a day or forty (40) hours in a week by calculating the hourly rate and
18 then computing the overtime premium amount owed.

19 36. At all times relevant to this Complaint, Plaintiff and the Class worked for
20 Defendants without being paid for all hours worked, regular and overtime.

21 37. Defendants have engaged in a pattern and practice of misclassifying their
22 employees, such as writers like Plaintiff, as independent contractors to avoid the taxes, insurance
23 and other costs that accompany employees.

24 38. As a result of Defendants’ violation of statutory mandates to correctly classify
25 employees as more fully set forth above, Plaintiff and the Class were damaged in an amount to be
26 determined at trial, but which exceeds the minimum jurisdictional thresholds of this Court.

27 39. Plaintiff and the Class seek as damage all wages owed by Defendants. Plaintiff and
28 the Class further seek an award of prejudgment interest on the unpaid wages herein.

40. As a result of Defendants' conduct, Plaintiff and the Class suffered, and will continue to suffer, damages in amounts which are presently unknown to Plaintiff and the Class, but which exceed the jurisdictional minimum of this Court, and which will be ascertained according to proof at trial.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

Failure to Pay Minimum Wage for All Hours Worked

(Lab. Code §§ 1182.12, 1194, 1194.2, 1197 and 1197.1)

(Against All Defendants)

41. Plaintiff incorporates all preceding paragraphs of this Complaint as though set forth fully herein.

42. “Hours worked” is the time during which an employee is subject to the control of an employer, and includes all the time the employee is suffered or permitted to work, whether or not required to do so.

43. At all relevant times herein mentioned, Defendants knowingly failed to pay to Plaintiff and the Class compensation for all hours they worked. By their failure to pay compensation for each hour worked as alleged above, Defendants willfully violated the provisions of Section 1194 of the California Labor Code, and any additional applicable Wage Orders, which require such compensation to non-exempt employees.

44. Accordingly, Plaintiff and the Class are entitled to recover minimum wages for all non-overtime hours worked for Defendants.

45. By and through the conduct described above, Plaintiff and the Class have been deprived of their rights to be paid wages earned by virtue of their employment with Defendants.

46. By virtue of the Defendants' unlawful failure to pay additional compensation to Plaintiff and the Class for their non-overtime hours worked without pay, Plaintiff and the Class suffered, and will continue to suffer, damages in amounts which are presently unknown to Plaintiff and the Class, but which exceed the jurisdictional minimum of this Court, and which will be ascertained according to proof at trial.

1 47. By failing to keep adequate time records required by California Labor Code section
2 1174, subdivision (d), Defendants have made it difficult to calculate the full extent of minimum
3 wage compensation due Plaintiff and the Class.

4 48. Pursuant to California Labor Code section 1194.2, Plaintiff and the Class are
5 entitled to recover liquidated damages (double damages) for Defendants' failure to pay minimum
6 wages.

7 49. California Labor Code section 204 requires employers to provide employees with
8 all wages due and payable twice a month. Throughout the statute of limitations period applicable
9 to this cause of action, Plaintiff and the Class were entitled to be paid twice a month at rates
10 required by law, including minimum wages. However, during all such times, Defendants
11 systematically failed and refused to pay Plaintiff and the Class all such wages due and failed to pay
12 those wages twice a month.

13 50. Plaintiff and the Class are also entitled to seek recovery of all unpaid minimum
14 wages, interest, and reasonable attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to California Labor Code
15 sections 218.5, 218.6, and 1194, subdivision (a).

16 **THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION**

17 **Failure to Provide Overtime Compensation (Lab. Code §§ 510, 1194, 1198)**

18 (Against All Defendants)

19 51. Plaintiff incorporates all preceding paragraphs of this Complaint as though set forth
20 fully herein.

21 52. California Labor Code section 510 provides that employees in California shall not
22 be employed more than eight (8) hours in any workday or forty (40) hours in a workweek unless
23 they receive additional compensation beyond their regular wages in amounts specified by law.

24 53. California Labor Code sections 1194 and 1198 provide that employees in California
25 shall not be employed more than eight hours in any workday unless they receive additional
26 compensation beyond their regular wages in amounts specified by law. Additionally, California
27 Labor Code section 1198 states that the employment of an employee for longer hours than those
28 fixed by the IWC is unlawful.

54. At all times relevant hereto, Plaintiff and the Class have worked more than eight hours in a workday, as employees of Defendants.

55. At all times relevant hereto, Defendants failed to pay Plaintiff and the Class overtime compensation for the hours they have worked in excess of the maximum hours permissible by law as required by California Labor Code sections 510 and 1198. Plaintiff and the Class are regularly required to work overtime hours.

56. By virtue of Defendants' unlawful failure to pay additional premium rate compensation to the Plaintiff and the Class for their overtime hours worked, Plaintiff and the Class have suffered, and will continue to suffer, damages in amounts which are presently unknown to them but which exceed the jurisdictional minimum of this Court and which will be ascertained according to proof at trial.

57. By failing to keep adequate time records required by California Labor Code section 1174, subdivision (d), Defendants have made it difficult to calculate the full extent of overtime compensation due to Plaintiff and the Class.

58. Plaintiff and the Class also request recovery of overtime compensation according to proof, interest, attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to California Labor Code section 1194, subdivision (a), as well as the assessment of any statutory penalties against Defendants, in a sum as provided by the California Labor Code and/or other statutes.

59. California Labor Code section 204 requires employers to provide employees with all wages due and payable twice a month. IWC Wage Orders also provide that every employer shall pay to each employee, on the established payday for the period involved, overtime wages for all overtime hours worked in the payroll period. Defendants failed to provide Plaintiff and the Class with all compensation due, in violation of California Labor Code section 204.

FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION

Failure to Provide Meal Periods (Lab. Code §§ 226.7, 512, and IWC Wage Orders)

(Against All Defendants)

60. Plaintiff incorporates all preceding paragraphs of this Complaint as though set forth fully herein.

1 61. At all relevant times, Defendants were aware of and were under a duty to comply
2 with California Labor Code sections 226.7 and 512 and applicable sections of IWC Wage Orders.

3 62. California Labor Code section 512 prohibits an employer from employing an
4 employee for a work period of more than five hours per day without providing the employee with
5 a meal period of not less than 30 minutes, or for a work period of more than 10 hours per day
6 without providing the employee with a second meal period of not less than 30 minutes.

7 63. Section 11 of Wage Order No. 4 provides, and at all times relevant hereto provided,
8 in relevant part that:

9 No employer shall employ any person for a work period of more
10 than five (5) hours without a meal period of not less than 30 minutes,
11 except that when a work period of not more than six (6) hours will
12 complete the day's work the meal period may be waived by mutual
13 consent of the employer and employee. Unless the employee is
14 relieved of all duty during a 30 minute meal period, the meal period
15 shall be considered an "on duty" meal period and counted as time
16 worked. An "on duty" meal period shall be permitted only when the
17 nature of the work prevents an employee from being relieved of all
18 duty and when by written agreement between the parties an on-the-
19 job paid meal period is agreed to. The written agreement shall state
20 that the employee may, in writing, revoke the agreement at any time.
21 If an employer fails to provide an employee a meal period in
22 accordance with the applicable provisions of this Order, the
23 employer shall pay the employee one (1) hour of pay at the
24 employee's regular rate of compensation for each work day that the
25 meal period is not provided.

26 64. Labor Code section 226.7 prohibits any employer from requiring any employee to
27 work during any meal or rest period mandated by an applicable IWC wage order, and provides that
28 an employer that fails to provide an employee with a required rest break or meal period shall pay

1 that employee one additional hour of pay at the employee's regular rate of compensation for each
2 work day that the employer does not provide a compliant meal or rest period.

3 65. Defendants knowingly failed to provide Plaintiff and the Class with meal periods as
4 required by law. Defendants also failed to provide Plaintiff and the Class with any payment of
5 meal premiums. Plaintiff and the Class are entitled to be paid one hour of premium wages rate for
6 each workday he or she was not provided with all required meal break(s), plus interest thereon.

7 66. Plaintiff and the Class have therefore been damaged and are entitled to payment of
8 the meal period premiums as provided by law.

9 **FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

10 **Failure to Provide Rest Periods (Lab. Code §§ 226.7, 512, and IWC Wage Orders)**

11 (Against All Defendants)

12 67. Plaintiff incorporates all preceding paragraphs of this Complaint as though set forth
13 fully herein.

14 68. Section 12 of Wage Order No. 4 provides, and at all times relevant hereto provided,
15 in relevant part that:

16 Every employer shall authorize and permit all employees to take rest
17 periods, which insofar as practicable shall be in the middle of each
18 work period. The authorized rest period time shall be based on the
19 total hours worked daily at the rate of ten (10) minutes net rest time
20 per four (4) hours or major fraction thereof. However, a rest period
21 need not be authorized for employees whose total daily work time
22 is less than three and one-half (3 ½) hours. Authorized rest period
23 time shall be counted, as hours worked, for which there shall be no
24 deduction from wages. If an employer fails to provide an employee
25 a rest period in accordance with the applicable provisions of this
26 Order, the employer shall pay the employee one (1) hour of pay at
27 the employee's regular rate of compensation for each work day that
28 the rest period is not provided.

69. California Labor Code section 226.7 prohibits any employer from requiring any employee to work during any meal or rest period mandated by an applicable IWC wage order, and provides that an employer that fails to provide an employee with a required rest break or meal period shall pay that employee one additional hour of pay at the employee's regular rate of compensation for each work day that the employer does not provide a compliant meal or rest period.

70. Defendants knowingly failed to provide Plaintiff and the Class with rest periods as required by law, and knowingly failed to authorize and permit Plaintiff to take rest periods as required by law. Defendants also failed to provide Plaintiff and the Class with any payment of rest premiums. Plaintiff and the Class are entitled to be paid one hour of premium wages rate for each workday he or she was not provided with all required rest break(s), plus interest thereon.

71. Plaintiff and the Class have therefore been damaged and are entitled to payment of the meal and rest period premiums as provided by law.

SIXTH CAUSE OF ACTION

Failure to Indemnify Necessary Business Expenses (Lab. Code § 2802)

(Against All Defendants)

72. Plaintiff incorporates all preceding paragraphs of this Complaint as though set forth fully herein.

73. Defendants violated California Labor Code section 2802 and the IWC Wage Orders, by failing to pay and indemnify the Plaintiff and the Class for their necessary expenditures and losses incurred in direct consequence of the discharge of their duties or of their obedience to directions of Defendants.

74. As a result, Plaintiff and the Class were damaged at least in the amounts of the expenses they paid, or which were deducted by Defendants from their wages.

75. Plaintiff and the Class they represent are entitled to attorney's fees, expenses, and costs of suit pursuant to California Labor Code section 2802, subdivision (c) and interest pursuant to California Labor Code section 2802, subdivision (b).

//

1 **SEVENTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

2 **Waiting Time Penalties (Lab. Code §§ 201-203)**

3 (Against All Defendants)

4 76. Plaintiff incorporates all preceding paragraphs of this Complaint as though set forth
5 fully herein.

6 77. California Labor Code sections 201 and 202 require an employer to pay its
7 employees all wages due immediately upon discharge or within 72 hours of resignation. This
8 requirement applies to unpaid overtime wages. California Labor Code section 203 provides that if
9 an employer willfully fails to pay such wages, the employer must continue to pay the subject
10 employee's wages until the back wages are paid in full or an action is commenced, up to a
11 maximum of thirty days of wages.

12 78. Defendants willfully failed to pay Plaintiff and the Class their earned and unpaid
13 wages for 30 days from the time such wages should have been paid under the Labor Code.

14 79. As a result of Defendants' willful failure to pay owed wages upon separation from
15 employment, Plaintiff and the Class have been harmed and Defendants are liable for statutory
16 waiting time penalties pursuant to California Labor Code section 203.

17 **EIGHTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

18 **Failure to Provide Accurate Wage Statements (Lab. Code § 226)**

19 (Against All Defendants)

20 80. Plaintiff incorporates all preceding paragraphs of this Complaint as though set forth
21 fully herein.

22 81. California Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a) requires employers to provide
23 employees, semi-monthly or at the time of each payment of wages, with a statement that
24 accurately reflects certain itemized information including total number of hours worked.

25 82. Defendants knowingly and intentionally failed to furnish Plaintiff and the Class
26 with timely and accurate wage statements that accurately reflected the total number of hours
27 worked and wages earned, as required by California Labor Code section 226.
28

83. As a result of Defendants' failure to provide accurate itemized wage statements, Plaintiff and the Class suffered actual damages and harm by being unable to determine the amount of overtime worked each pay period in a timely manner, which prevented them from asserting their rights under California law.

84. Calculation of the true wage entitlement for Plaintiff and the Class is difficult and time consuming. As a result of this unlawful burden, Plaintiff and the Class were also injured as a result of having to bring this action to attempt to obtain correct wage information following Defendants' refusal to comply with many of the mandates of the California Labor Code and related laws and regulations.

85. Plaintiff and the Class are entitled to recover from Defendants their actual damages caused by Defendants' failure to comply with California Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a).

86. Plaintiff and the Class are also entitled to injunctive relief, as well as an award of attorney's fees and costs to ensure compliance with this section, pursuant to California Labor Code section 226, subdivision (h).

NINTH CAUSE OF ACTION

Violation of Unfair Competition Law (Bus. & Prof. Code § 17200, *et seq.*)

(Against All Defendants)

87. Plaintiff incorporates all preceding paragraphs of this Complaint as though set forth fully herein.

88. Business and Professions Code section 17200, *et seq.* (“UCL”) prohibits any “unlawful, unfair, or fraudulent business act or practice.” Defendants have engaged in unlawful activity as follows:

a. violations of California Labor Code sections 510, 1194, 1198 for failure to pay minimum wages, including overtime wages;

b. violations of California Labor Code sections 226.7 and 512 for failure to provide meal periods and rest breaks;

c. violations of California Labor Code section 226 for failure to provide accurate wage statements;

1 d. violation of California Labor Code section 2802 for failure to indemnify
2 necessary business expenses; and

3 e. violations of California Labor Code sections 201 through 203 for failure to
4 pay accrued wages upon separation of employment.

5 89. By and through their unfair, unlawful and/or fraudulent business practices described
6 herein, the Defendants, have obtained valuable property, money and services from Plaintiff, and all
7 persons similarly situated, and have deprived Plaintiff, and all persons similarly situated, of
8 valuable rights and benefits guaranteed by law, all to their detriment.

9 90. Plaintiff and the Class Members suffered monetary injury as a direct result of
10 Defendants' wrongful conduct.

11 91. Plaintiff, individually, and on behalf of members of the putative Class, is entitled to,
12 and does, seek such relief as may be necessary to disgorge money and/or property which the
13 Defendants have wrongfully acquired, or of which Plaintiff and the Class have been deprived, by
14 means of the above-described unfair, unlawful and/or fraudulent business practices. Plaintiff and
15 the Class are not obligated to establish individual knowledge of the wrongful practices of
16 Defendants in order to recover restitution.

17 92. Plaintiff, individually, and on behalf of members of the putative class, is further
18 entitled to and does seek a declaration that the above-described business practices are unfair,
19 unlawful and/or fraudulent, and injunctive relief restraining the Defendants, and each of them,
20 from engaging in any of the above-described unfair, unlawful and/or fraudulent business practices
21 in the future.

22 93. Plaintiff, individually, and on behalf of members of the putative class, has no plain,
23 speedy, and/or adequate remedy at law to redress the injuries which the Class Members suffered as
24 a consequence of the Defendants' unfair, unlawful and/or fraudulent business practices. As a
25 result of the unfair, unlawful and/or fraudulent business practices described above, Plaintiff,
26 individually, and on behalf of members of the putative Class, has suffered and will continue to
27 suffer irreparable harm unless the Defendants, and each of them, are restrained from continuing to
28 engage in said unfair, unlawful and/or fraudulent business practices.

94. Plaintiff also alleges that if Defendants are not enjoined from the conduct set forth herein above, they will continue to avoid paying the appropriate taxes, insurance and other withholdings.

95. Pursuant to the UCL, Plaintiff and putative Class Members are entitled to restitution of the wages withheld and retained by Defendants during a period that commences four years prior to the filing of this complaint; a permanent injunction requiring Defendants to pay all outstanding wages due to Plaintiff and Class Members; an award of attorneys' fees pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure section 1021.5 and other applicable laws; and an award of costs.

TENTH CAUSE OF ACTION

Private Attorneys General Act (Lab. Code § 2698, *et seq.*)

(Against All Defendants)

96. Plaintiff incorporates all preceding paragraphs of this Complaint as though set forth fully herein.

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

98. California Labor Code section 2699, subdivision (a) specifically provides for a private right of action to recover penalties for violations of the Labor Code: “[n]otwithstanding any other provision of law, any provision of this code that provides for a civil penalty to be assessed and collected by the Labor and Workforce Development Agency or any of its departments, divisions, commissions, boards, agencies, or employees, for a violation of this code, may, as an alternative, be recovered through a civil action brought by an aggrieved employee on behalf of himself or herself and other current or former employees pursuant to the procedures specified in Section 2699.3.”

99. Plaintiff has exhausted their administrative remedies pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699.3. On January 29, 2025, Plaintiff gave written notice by online filing to the Labor and Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”) and by certified mail to Defendants the specific provisions of the California Labor Code that Defendants violated against Plaintiff and current and former aggrieved employees, including the facts and theories to support the violations.

1 A true and correct copy of Plaintiff's notice to LWDA and Defendants is attached as **Exhibit A**.
2 Plaintiff's LWDA case number is LWDA-CM-1076560-25

3 100. At the time of this filing, LWDA has not indicated that it intends to investigate
4 Defendants' Labor Code violations discussed in the notice. If it does so, Plaintiff will amend her
5 complaint. Otherwise, Plaintiff will proceed with this civil action to recover penalties under
6 California Labor Code section 2699 pursuant to section 2699.3 for the violations of the Labor
7 Code alleged herein. These penalties include, but are not limited to, penalties under California
8 Labor Code sections 210, 226.3, 558, 1197.1, and 2699, subdivision (f)(2).

9 101. In addition, Plaintiff seeks penalties for Defendants' violation of California Labor
10 Code section 1174, subdivision (d). Pursuant to California Labor Code section 1174.5, any person,
11 including any entity, employing labor who willfully fails to maintain accurate and complete
12 records required by California Labor Code section 1174 is subject to a penalty under section
13 1174.5. Pursuant to the applicable IWC Order § 7(A)(3), every employer shall keep time records
14 showing when the employee begins and ends each work period. Meal periods, and total hours
15 worked daily shall also be recorded.

16 102. Additionally, pursuant to the applicable IWC Order § 7(A)(5), every employer shall
17 keep total hours worked in the payroll period and applicable rates of pay.

18 103. During the time period of employment for Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees,
19 Defendants failed to maintain records pursuant to the California Labor Code and IWC Orders by
20 failing to maintain accurate records showing meal periods, and accurate records showing when
21 employees begin and end each work period. Defendants' failure to provide and maintain records
22 required by the California Labor Code IWC Wage Orders deprived Plaintiff and the Aggrieved
23 Employees the ability to know, understand and question the accuracy and frequency of meal
24 periods, and the accuracy of their hours worked, as stated in Defendants' records. Therefore,
25 Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees had no way to dispute the resulting failure to pay wages, all
26 of which resulted in an unjustified economic enrichment to Defendants.

27 104. As a direct result, Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees have suffered and
28 continue to suffer, substantial losses related to the use and enjoyment of such wages, lost interest

1 on such wages and expenses and attorney's fees in seeking to compel Defendants to fully perform
2 its obligation under state law, all to their respective damage in amounts according to proof at trial.
3 Because of Defendants' knowing failure to comply with the California Labor Code and applicable
4 IWC Wage Orders, Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees have also suffered an injury in that they
5 were prevented from knowing, understanding, and disputing the wage payments paid to them.

6 105. Based on the conduct described in this complaint, Plaintiff is entitled to an award of
7 civil penalties on behalf of themselves, the State of California, and similarly Aggrieved Employees
8 of Defendants. The exact amount of the applicable penalties, in all, is in an amount to be shown
9 according to proof at trial. These penalties are in addition to all other remedies permitted by law.

10 106. In addition, Plaintiff seeks an award of reasonable attorney's fees and costs
11 pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699, subdivision (g)(1), which states, "[a]ny employee
12 who prevails in any action shall be entitled to an award of reasonable attorney's fees and costs."

13 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

14 Plaintiff, individually, and on behalf of all others similarly situated only with respect to the
15 class claims, prays for relief and judgment against Defendants, jointly and severally, as follows:

16 **Class Certification**

- 17 1. That this action be certified as a class action under California Code of Civil
18 Procedure section 382;
- 19 2. That Plaintiff be appointed as the representatives of the Class; and
- 20 3. That counsel for Plaintiff be appointed as Class Counsel.

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

- 22 4. That the Court declare, adjudge and decree that Defendants violated California
23 Labor Code sections 204 and 1194 and applicable IWC Wage Orders by willfully
24 failing to pay all minimum wages due;
- 25 5. For general unpaid wages as may be appropriate;
- 26 6. For pre-judgment interest on any unpaid compensation commencing from the date
27 such amounts were due;
- 28 7. For liquidated damages;

- 1 8. For reasonable attorneys' fees and for costs of suit incurred herein pursuant to
2 California Labor Code section 1194, subdivision (a); and,
3 9. For such other and further relief as the Court may deem equitable and appropriate.

4 As to the Second Cause of Action

- 5 10. That the Court declare, adjudge and decree that Defendants violated California
6 Labor Code sections 510 and 1198 and applicable IWC Wage Orders by willfully
7 failing to pay all overtime wages due;
8 11. For general unpaid wages at overtime wage rates as may be appropriate;
9 12. For pre-judgment interest on any unpaid overtime compensation commencing from
10 the date such amounts were due;
11 13. For reasonable attorneys' fees and for costs of suit incurred herein pursuant to
12 California Labor Code section 1194, subdivision (a); and,
13 14. For such other and further relief as the Court may deem equitable and appropriate.

14 As to the Third Cause of Action

- 15 15. That the Court declare, adjudge and decree that Defendants violated California
16 Labor Code sections 226.7 and 512, and the IWC Wage Orders;
17 16. For unpaid meal period premium wages as may be appropriate;
18 17. For pre-judgment interest on any unpaid compensation commencing from the date
19 such amounts were due;
20 18. For reasonable attorneys' fees under California Code of Civil Procedure section
21 1021.5, and for costs of suit incurred herein; and
22 19. For such other and further relief as the Court may deem equitable and appropriate.

23 As to the Fourth Cause of Action

- 24 20. That the Court declare, adjudge and decree that Defendants violated California
25 Labor Code sections 226.7 and 512, and the IWC Wage Orders;
26 21. For unpaid rest period premium wages as may be appropriate;
27 22. For pre-judgment interest on any unpaid compensation commencing from the date
28 such amounts were due;

- 1 23. For reasonable attorneys' fees under California Code of Civil Procedure section
2 1021.5, and for costs of suit incurred herein; and
3 24. For such other and further relief as the Court may deem equitable and appropriate.

4 As to the Fifth Cause of Action

- 5 25. That the Court declare, adjudge and decree that Defendants violated California
6 Labor Code section 2802 the IWC Wage Orders;
7 26. For general unpaid wages and reimbursement of business expenses as may be
8 appropriate;
9 27. For pre-judgment interest on any unpaid compensation commencing from the date
10 such amounts were due;
11 28. For reasonable attorneys' fees and for costs of suit incurred herein; and
12 29. For such other and further relief as the Court may deem equitable and appropriate.

13 As to the Sixth Cause of Action

- 14 30. That the Court declare, adjudge and decree that Defendants violated California
15 Labor Code sections 201, 202, and 203 by willfully failing to pay all compensation
16 owed at the time of termination of the employment;
17 31. For statutory wage penalties pursuant to California Labor Code section 203 for
18 former employees who have left Defendants' employ;
19 32. For pre-judgment interest on any unpaid wages from the date such amounts were
20 due;
21 33. For reasonable attorneys' fees and for costs of suit incurred herein; and
22 34. For such other and further relief as the Court may deem equitable and appropriate.

23 As to the Seventh Cause of Action

- 24 35. That the Court declare, adjudge and decree that Defendants violated the record
25 keeping provisions of California Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a) and
26 applicable IWC Wage Orders, and willfully failed to provide accurate itemized
27 wage statements thereto;
28

- 1 36. For penalties and actual damages pursuant to California Labor Code section 226,
2 subdivision (e);
3 37. For injunctive relief to ensure compliance with this section, pursuant to California
4 Labor Code section 226, subdivision (h);
5 38. For reasonable attorneys' fees and for costs of suit incurred herein; and
6 39. For such other and further relief as the Court may deem equitable and appropriate.

7 As to the Eighth Cause of Action

- 8 40. That the Court declare, adjudge and decree that Defendants violated the UCL by
9 failing to pay wages for all hours worked (including minimum wages), failing to
10 provide meal periods, failing to maintain accurate records of meal periods, failing to
11 authorize and permit rest periods, and failing to maintain accurate records of all
12 hours worked and meal periods, and failing to furnish accurate wage statements;
13 41. For restitution of unpaid wages to Plaintiff and all Class Members and prejudgment
14 interest from the day such amounts were due and payable;
15 42. For the appointment of a receiver to receive, manage and distribute any and all
16 funds disgorged from Defendants and determined to have been wrongfully acquired
17 by Defendants as a result of Defendants' violations of the UCL;
18 43. For reasonable attorneys' fees and costs of suit incurred herein pursuant to
19 California Code of Civil Procedure section 1021.5;
20 44. For injunctive relief to ensure compliance with this section, pursuant to the UCL.;
21 and,
22 45. For such other and further relief as the Court may deem equitable and appropriate.

23 As to the Ninth Cause of Action

- 24 46. That the Court declare, adjudge and decree that Defendants violated the Labor Code
25 by failing to pay minimum wages, failing to provide meal periods, failing to
26 authorize and permit rest periods, failing to maintain accurate records of hours
27 worked and meal periods, failing to timely pay all wages to terminated employees,
28 and failing to furnish accurate wage statements;

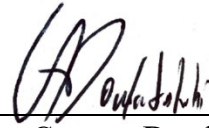
- 1 47. For all civil penalties pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699, *et seq.*, and
2 all other applicable Labor Code provisions;
3 48. For reasonable attorneys' fees and costs of suit incurred herein pursuant to Labor
4 Code section 2699; and
5 49. For such other and further relief as the Court may deem equitable and appropriate.

6 As to All Causes of Action

- 7 50. For any additional relief that the Court deems just and proper.
8

9 Dated: January 29, 2025

MILLS SADAT DOWLAT LLP

10
11 By: 
12 _____

Camron Dowlatshahi

13 Attorneys for Plaintiff Alexandra Therese
14 and the Putative Class
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EXHIBIT A

January 29, 2025

**VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION;
VIA CERTIFIED MAIL TO EMPLOYER**

California Labor and Workforce Development Agency
Attn: PAGA Administrator
455 Golden Gate Avenue, 9th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102

Pocket FM Corp.
10642 N Portal Avenue
Cupertino, CA 95014

Re: Notice of Claim Under Private Attorneys General Act (“PAGA”)

Dear LWDA:

My firm represents Alexandra Therese (“Plaintiff”) and all other aggrieved employees who intend to file an action against Pocket FM Corp. (“Defendant” or “Pocket FM”) in connection with Defendant’s violations of the California Labor Code. This letter shall serve as notice, and a request, pursuant to Labor Code section 2699.3, *et seq.* (“PAGA”), that the Labor and Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”) investigate the violations by Defendant described herein against Plaintiff and other current and/or former employees. If LWDA does not intend to investigate the violations described herein, we respectfully request that the agency specifically notify our office of the same at your earliest possible opportunity.

Statement of Specific Provisions of the Labor Code Violated

Plaintiffs intend to prosecute a civil action against Defendant for violations of Labor Code sections 201-204 [failure to pay all wages upon termination], 226, subdivision (a) [failure to provide accurate wage statements], 246, subdivision (i) [failure to give notice of sick time accrual], 226.7 [meal and rest breaks: failure to provide premium pay for meal and rest break violations, requiring employees to work during meal or rest break], 510 [overtime pay], 512 [failure to provide meal breaks], [226.8, subdivision (a) [misclassification as independent contractor], 558 [unpaid wages penalties], 1182.12 [minimum wage requirements], 1194 [failure to pay overtime and/or minimum wage], 1198 [failure to pay overtime], and 2750.3 [ABC test for IC].

Facts and Theories in Support of Violations

Defendant is a narrative podcast provider and is registered to do business in the State of California. Defendant employed Plaintiff from on or about August 21, 2023 to September 20, 2024. Plaintiff worked as an in-house writer.

Plaintiff's position as a writer and her duties, which included generating original writing content and performing localization of existing content, are within the purview of Defendant's usual course of business as a narrative podcast producer. Moreover, Defendant exercised requisite control over Plaintiff by setting Plaintiff's hours and requiring Plaintiff to be present at mandatory meetings. As a result, Plaintiff was Defendant's employee.

However, Defendant misclassified Plaintiff as an independent contractor when it hired her in 2023. Defendant willfully misclassified Plaintiff in an attempt to avoid providing Plaintiff with meal and rest breaks, overtime, and accurate wage statements. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, that Defendant misclassified many of its other employees as independent contractors, as well.

Misclassification as an Independent Contractor

Pursuant to Labor Code section 226.8, it is unlawful for an employer to willfully misclassify an individual as an independent contractor.

An employer in violation of section 226.8 is subject to civil penalties. (*See* Lab. Code § 226.8, subs. (b)-(c).) The California Supreme Court has set forth the stringent requirements for an individual to be considered an independent contractor. (*Dynamex Operations v. Superior Court* (2018) 4 Cal.5th 903.) The "ABC test" as articulated in *Dynamex* requires the following:

- (a) that the worker is free from the control and direction of the hiring entity in connection with the performance of the work, both under the contract for the performance of the work and in fact;
- (b) that the worker performs work that is outside the usual course of the hiring entity's business; and
- (c) that the worker is customarily engaged in an independently established trade, occupation, or business of the same nature as the work performed.

These requirements have been codified in Labor Code section 2750.3. Because the test is phrased in the conjunctive, all three prongs of the ABC test must be answered in the affirmative for a worker to be lawfully classified as an independent contractor.

Here, none of the prongs are satisfied. Plaintiff and other in-house writers working for Defendant were undoubtedly employees and not independent contractors under the ABC test. First, the employees' schedules were set by Defendant and Defendant directed the work they would perform. Further Plaintiff was required to attend mandatory meetings.

Second, Plaintiff and Defendant's other in-house writers created original narrative podcast content. According to its website, Pocket FM's goal is to "to enrich the lives of millions of listeners across the globe. This is achieved through a diverse range of engaging audio series

... the platform offers an eclectic array of narratives, ensuring that there's always something for everyone.”” (See <https://pocketfm.com/us.>) Simply put, Plaintiff’s job duties of creating original content fall squarely within Defendant’s business as a narrative podcast producer. The same is true of Defendant’s other misclassified employees, which include in-house writers.

Finally, writing is not an independently established trade, nor were Plaintiff or Defendant’s other employees providing such services to other companies or individuals. Nearly all of these employees worked only for Defendant.

Failure to Provide Accurate Wage Statements

Pursuant to Labor Code section 226 (“Section 226”), subdivision (a), an employer is required to provide itemized wage statements. Plaintiff was issued inaccurate wage statements, which failed to list premium pay and all hours worked. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, that Defendant failed to notify other employees of their premium pay for each payroll period and their accurate total of hours worked.

Failure to Maintain Accurate Payroll Records

Pursuant to Labor Code section 1174, subdivision (d), an employer is required to keep payroll records showing the hours worked daily and wages paid to employees. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, that Defendant failed to maintain payroll records in compliance with this statute.

Labor Code section 1174.5 provides that any employer who fails to maintain accurate payroll records required by section 1174, subdivision (d), “shall be subject to a civil penalty of five hundred dollars (\$500).”

Penalties for Unpaid Wages

Pursuant to Labor Code section 558, subdivision (a), and employer who violates “any provision regulating hours and days of work in any order of the Industrial Welfare Commission shall be subject to a civil penalty.” (Lab. Code § 558, subd. (a).)

An employer’s initial violation is subject to a “fifty dollar penalty (\$50) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which the employee was underpaid in addition to an amount sufficient to recover underpaid wages.” (*Ibid.*) Thereafter, each subsequent violation is subject to a penalty of “one hundred dollars (\$100) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which the employee was underpaid in addition to an amount sufficient to recover underpaid wages.” (*Ibid.*)

Here, Defendant’s personnel were often required to work more than 8 hours per day to complete work within the timeframes dictated by Defendant. Because Defendant misclassified them, they were not paid their earned overtime. Defendant is therefore liable for civil penalties under section 558, subdivision (a).

Unlawful Failure to Provide Uninterrupted Off-Duty Meal and Rest Periods

Plaintiff and similarly situated employees regularly worked in excess of five hours per day without being provided at least one half-hour meal period in which they were relieved of all duties. (Lab. Code §§ 226.7, 512; *see also* Industrial Welfare Commission Order No. 4-2001.) Plaintiff and similarly situated employees also regularly worked in excess of four hours without being provided at least a ten-minute rest period in which they were relieved of all their duties. (Lab. Code §§ 226.7, 512; *see also* Industrial Welfare Commission Order No. 4-2001.)

Throughout Plaintiff's employment, she was not able to take uninterrupted off-duty meal and rest periods in accordance with Labor Code. Defendant did not maintain a policy that ensured Plaintiff received requisite meal and rest periods. Furthermore, Defendant caused Plaintiff to miss meal and rest periods and failed to pay her the premium compensation mandated by Labor Code section 226.7, subdivisions (b)-(c). As a result of these Labor Code violations, Defendant is liable for civil penalties. (Lab. Code § 2698, *et seq.*)

Conclusion

As described above, Defendant has violated numerous wage and hour provisions of the Labor Code. As a result, Defendant is liable to Plaintiff and other current and former employees for civil penalties, attorney's fees, and costs, pursuant to Labor Code sections 201-204 [failure to pay all wages upon termination], 226, subdivision (a) [failure to provide accurate wage statements], 246, subdivision (i) [failure to give notice of sick time accrual], 226.7 [meal and rest breaks: failure to provide premium pay for meal and rest break violations, requiring employees to work during meal or rest break], 510 [overtime pay], 512 [failure to provide meal breaks], [226.8, subdivision (a) [misclassification as independent contractor], 558 [unpaid wages penalties], 1182.12 [minimum wage requirements], 1194 [failure to pay overtime and/or minimum wage], 1198 [failure to pay overtime], and 2750.3 [ABC test for IC].

This letter shall serve as Plaintiff's notice pursuant to Labor Code section 2699.3 and we ask that LWDA conduct an investigation concerning the violations described herein. Alternatively, if LWDA does not intend to investigate these violations, we ask that it issue a notification letter to our office confirming the same so that we may proceed with our civil action asserting the PAGA claims described herein.

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Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if you would like to discuss this matter further. Nothing in this letter is intended to be, or should be construed as, an admission against the interests of Plaintiff or other current or former employees of Defendant and shall not be construed as a waiver of their rights, remedies, claims, or defenses, all of which are expressly reserved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Camron Dowlatshahi", written in a cursive style.

Camron Dowlatshahi