



NOTICE OF LABOR CODE VIOLATIONS - PAGA
(Labor Code § 2699.3)

DATE February 11, 2025

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RECIPIENTS California
Workforce Development Agency
PAGAfilings@dir.ca.gov

SUBJECT: ELIOVALDO RODRIGUEZ CAZAREZ v. ELITE AGRICULTURE LABOR INC. ET AL —NOTICE OF LABOR CODE VIOLATIONS UNDER CAL. LABOR CODE §2699.3

Dear Representative:

This office represents Eliovaldo Rodriguez Cazarez (“Mr. Rodriguez” or Complainant) with respect to their claims against Elite Agriculture Labor Inc., Anthony Vineyards, Inc., and Olimpo Medina Gonzalez (“Employer”) for violations of the California Labor Code and IWC Wage Orders. This letter is being sent simultaneously to Employers by certified mail. Employers jointly exercised control over the wages, hours, or working conditions, directly or indirectly of the Complainant and Aggrieved Employees and are thus jointly and severally liable.

Employers are a corporation doing business in the State of California. Employers employed Mr. Rodriguez from approximately 2020, until their last date of employment of approximately October 25, 2024. During their employment with Employers, Mr. Rodriguez was employed as a “general labor worker” at Employers’ location located at 110 S. Montclair, Suite 203 Bakersfield, CA 93309 and 5512 Valpredo Ave, Bakersfield, CA 93307.

Mr. Rodriguez intends to seek penalties for violations of the California Labor Code which are recoverable under California Labor Code section 2698, et seq., the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004 (“PAGA”). Mr. Rodriguez is seeking penalties on behalf of themselves and in a representative capacity on behalf of the State of California and all current and former non-exempt/hourly employees of any of the Employers working within California holding various positions who experienced the same violations as themselves as set forth in this notice.

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("Aggrieved Employees"). This letter is being sent in compliance with California Labor Code section 2699.3.

As detailed below, Employers violated several of California's wage and hour laws during Complainant's employment, including but not limited to violations of California Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 226(a), 226.7, 227.3, 510, 512(a), 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2800 and 2802, and the applicable Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Orders ("IWC Wage Order"). The claims made on behalf of Complainant and Aggrieved Employees are based upon the following facts and theories:

1. FAILURE TO PAY FOR ALL TIME WORKED AT CORRECT RATES OF PAY, INCLUDING MINIMUM WAGES, STRAIGHT TIME WAGES, AND OVERTIME COMPENSATION.

Employers have engaged in numerous unlawful practices which resulted in the failure to pay Complainant and Aggrieved Employees for all time worked at the correct rates of pay, including minimum wages, straight time wages, and overtime compensation.

First, Employers regularly required Complainant and Aggrieved Employees to work off-the-clock in order to complete their duties and responsibilities. This off-the-clock work included, amongst other things, requiring Complainant and Aggrieved Employees to: (1) respond to Employers and work-related requests and perform work while clocked out for purported meal breaks; (2) perform work before clocking in for the start of their shift; and (3) perform work after clocking out for the end of their shift. Complainant and Aggrieved Employees were not compensated for this off-the-clock work, resulting in a failure to pay minimum wages and straight time wages.

Employers also failed to accurately record the actual time worked by Complainant and Aggrieved Employees. Finally, and as a matter of policy and/or practice, Employers failed to pay overtime to Complainant and Aggrieved Employees for all overtime hours worked based on regular rates of pay correctly calculated to include all applicable remuneration and all compensable work time.

As a result of the foregoing practices, Employers have failed to pay Complainant and Aggrieved Employees all owed wages for all wages earned at the correct rates of pay, including minimum wages, straight time wages, and overtime compensation. Accordingly, Employers violated the applicable IWC Wage Order and California Labor Code sections 204, 510, 1194, 1197, 1197.1 and 1198.

Complainant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties; penalties pursuant to paragraph (20)(A) of the applicable IWC Wage Order; penalties pursuant to California Labor Code sections 558, 1197.1, and 1199; and attorneys' fees and costs.

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2. FAILURE TO PROVIDE MEAL PERIODS AND PAY MEAL PERIOD PREMIUMS

Employers required Complainant and Aggrieved Employees to work more than five (5) hours per day but were not provided with uninterrupted 30-minute meal periods. Further, Complainant and Aggrieved Employees were not provided with a second uninterrupted 30-minute meal period when they worked over ten (10) hours per day. Employers regularly required Complainant and Aggrieved Employees to work through their first and second meal periods, to take their first meal period after their fifth (5th) hour of work, and/or to take their second meal periods after their tenth (10th) hour of work. On the occasions that Complainant and Aggrieved Employees did take a meal period, their meal periods were frequently interrupted or cut short.

Employers' policies, practices, and procedures were responsible for the violations alleged above and prevented Complainant and Aggrieved Employees from taking timely, complete and duty-free meal periods because, amongst other reasons: (1) Employers did not have legally-compliant policies regarding the provision and timing of meal periods or systematically disregarded its own purported meal period policies; (2) Employers' management at various levels, affecting all non-exempt/hourly employees, failed and refused to implement and enforce legally compliant meal period policies and practices; (3) Employers failed to adequately inform and train Complainant and other Aggrieved Employees regarding their right to take timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free meal periods; (4) Employers failed to adequately inform and train Complainant and other Aggrieved Employees about their right to premium wages for non-compliant meal periods; (5) Employers failed to ensure that there was adequate staffing to allow Complainant and other Aggrieved Employees to take timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free meal periods; and (6) Employers' policy and culture prevented Complainant and other Aggrieved Employees from taking timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free meal periods because of the priority placed on completing job requirements over employees' right to receive timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free meal periods.

Accordingly, Employers violated of the applicable IWC Wage Order and California Labor Code sections 226.7(a), 512(a) and 1198.

Complainant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties pursuant to Labor Code section 2699; penalties of the applicable IWC Wage Order; penalties pursuant to California Labor Code California Labor Code sections 558 and 1199; and attorneys' fees and costs.

3. FAILURE TO AUTHORIZE AND PERMIT REST PERIODS AND PAY REST PERIOD PREMIUMS.

Employers failed to authorize and permit Complainant and Aggrieved Employees to take legally compliant 10-minute periods. Employers required Complainant and Aggrieved Employees to work through rest periods. Complainant and Aggrieved Employees were not provided with uninterrupted, duty-free rest periods when they worked more than four (4) hours or a major

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fraction thereof. Further, Complainant and Aggrieved Employees were not provided with a second uninterrupted, duty-free rest period when they worked more than six (6) hours in a day, or a third uninterrupted, duty-free rest period after working more than ten (10) hours in day. In the rare event that a rest period was taken, it was frequently interrupted or cut short. Moreover, Complainant and Aggrieved Employees were never completely relieved of duty as required by *Augustus v. ABM Security Services, Inc.*, 2 Cal.5th 257 (2016).

Employers' policies, practices, and procedures were responsible for the violations alleged above and prevented Complainant and other Aggrieved Employees from taking timely and complete rest periods because, amongst other reasons: (1) Employers did not have legally-compliant policies regarding the provision and timing of rest periods or systematically disregarded its own purported rest period policies; (2) Employers' management at various levels, affecting all hourly-non-exempt employees, failed and refused to implement and enforce legally compliant rest period policies and practices; (3) Employers failed to adequately inform and train Complainant and other Aggrieved Employees regarding their right to take timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free rest periods; (4) Employers failed to adequately inform and train Complainant and other Aggrieved Employees about their right to premium wages for non-compliant rest periods; (5) Employers failed to ensure that there was adequate staffing to allow Complainant and other Aggrieved Employees to take timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free rest periods; (6) Employers required Complainant and other Aggrieved Employees to remain on-call and respond to work-related requests at all times, including during rest periods, which included responding to in person verbal interruptions; and (7) Employers' policy and culture prevented Complainant and other Aggrieved Employees from taking timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free rest periods because of the priority placed on completing job requirements over employees' right to receive rest periods.

Complainant and Aggrieved Employees did not receive an extra hour of wages at their regular rate of pay for the rest periods which were not provided to them in compliance with California law.

Accordingly, Employers violated the applicable IWC Wage Order and California Labor Code sections 226.7(a), and 1198.

Complainant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties pursuant to Labor Code section 2699; penalties pursuant to the applicable IWC Wage Order; California Labor Code sections 558 and 1199 penalties; and attorneys' fees and costs.

4. FAILURE TO TIMELY PAY WAGES DURING EMPLOYMENT.

As to each pay period, Employers have failed to timely pay all wages earned because Complainant and Aggrieved Employees were not paid all the wages they were owed including, inter alia, overtime compensation, straight time wages, and meal and rest period premiums. Accordingly, Employers violated California Labor Code section 204(a).

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Complainant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties pursuant to Labor Code section 2699; penalties pursuant to California Labor Code sections 210 and 1199; and attorneys' fees and costs.

5. FAILURE TO PAY ALL WAGES DUE TO DISCHARGED AND QUTTING EMPLOYEES.

As to each pay period, Employers have failed to timely pay all wages earned because Complainant Aggrieved Employees were not paid all the wages they were owed including, inter alia, overtime compensation, straight time wages, and meal and rest period premiums. Accordingly, Employers violated California Labor Code section 201(a), 202(a) and 203(a).

Complainant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties pursuant to Labor Code section 2699; penalties pursuant to California Labor Code sections 210 and 1199; and attorneys' fees and costs.

6. FAILURE TO PROVIDE ACCURATE ITEMIZED WAGE STATEMENTS.

As a result of the practices described above, the wage statements provided to Complainant and Aggrieved Employees never included the actual hours worked as the time worked was detrimentally rounded, the correct name and address of the legal employing entity, and the correct rates of pay. Accordingly, Employers violated California Labor Code section 226(a).

Complainant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties; penalties pursuant to California Labor Code section 226.3; and attorneys' fees and costs.

7. FAILURE TO MAINTAIN ACCURATE RECORDS.

Employers have failed to maintain accurate records relating to Complainant and Aggrieved Employees' work periods, meal periods, total daily hours worked, and total hours worked per payroll period. Accordingly, Employers violated the applicable IWC Wage Order and California Labor Code sections 1198.5 and 1174(d).

Complainant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties pursuant to Labor Code section 2699; penalties pursuant the applicable IWC Wage Order; California Labor Code section 1174.5 penalties; and attorneys' fees and costs.

8. FAILURE TO REIMBURSE NECESSARY EXPENDITURES.

California Labor Code sections 2800 and 2802 require an employer to reimburse its employees for all necessary expenditures incurred by the employee in direct consequence of the discharge of his or her job duties or in direct consequence of his or her obedience to the directions of the employer. IWC Wage Order requires employers to provide employees with the tools or equipment necessary for the performance of their job. During the relevant time period, Complainant and Aggrieved Employees incurred necessary business-related expenses and costs that were not fully reimbursed by Employers. These costs include but are not limited to the use

of Complainant and Aggrieved Employees were required to drive their personal vehicles to locations outside the usual scope of their place of employment without reimbursement. As well as maintaining the company vehicle by pumping diesel, doing oil changes and applying anti-freeze without being fully reimbursed.

Complainant and Aggrieved Employees were required to use their personal cellular telephones to communicate with fellow co-workers and supervisors regarding their job duties.

Accordingly, Employers violated IWC Order and California Labor Code sections 2800 and 2802.

Complainant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties pursuant to Labor Code section 2699; penalties pursuant to paragraph (20)(A) of IWC Wage Order; and attorneys' fees and costs.

9. FAILURE TO PAY VACATION TIME.

Pursuant to California Labor Code section 227.3, “. . . whenever a contract of employment or employer policy provides for paid vacations, and an employee is terminated without having taken off his vested vacation time, all vested vacation shall be paid to him as wages at his final rate in accordance with such contract of employment or employer policy respecting eligibility or time served.” During the relevant time period, Employers failed to pay Complainant and other Aggrieved Employees for all earned and unused and accrued vacation time at their final rate of pay at the time of termination of their employment. Accordingly, Employers have violated California Labor Code section 227.3.

Complainant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties pursuant to Labor Code section 2699; California Labor Code section 227 penalties; and attorneys' fees and costs.

10. FAILURE TO PAY SICK TIME.

Pursuant to California Labor Code section 246(l), all sick pay must be paid at the regular rate of pay. Employers have failed to pay Complainant and Aggrieved Employees their sick pay at the correct rate of pay. Accordingly, Employers have violated California Labor Code section 246(l).

Complainant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA penalties pursuant to Labor Code section 2699; California Labor Code section 227 penalties; relief under California Labor Code 248.5, and attorneys' fees and costs.

Sincerely,

JUSTIN LO ESQ.



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