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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO

JOSE CRUZ CHAVEZ, individually, and on
behalf of all others similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

v.

HEMINGTON LANDSCAPE SERVICES, INC.,
a California corporation; and DOES 1 through
10, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.: 34-2022-00324239-CU-OE-GDS
(consolidated with Case No.: 34-2022-
00328975-CU-OE-GDS)

Assigned for all purposes to:
Hon. Jill H. Talley
Dept. 23

**PLAINTIFF'S NOTICE OF MOTION
AND MOTION FOR PRELIMINARY
APPROVAL OF CLASS ACTION AND
PAGA SETTLEMENT; MEMORANDUM
OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES**

PRELIMINARY APPROVAL HEARING

Date: August 29, 2025
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Dept: 23

Class Complaint filed:	July 26, 2022
PAGA Complaint filed:	October 27, 2022
Trial date:	Not set

1 **TO THE COURT AND TO ALL PARTIES AND THEIR COUNSEL OF RECORD:**

2 PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on August 29, 2025 at 9:00 a.m., in Department 23 of the
3 Sacramento County Superior Court, located at 720 9th Street, Sacramento, California 95814,
4 pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure § 382 and California Rules of Court, Rule 3.769,
5 *et seq.*, Plaintiff Jose Cruz Chavez (“Plaintiff”) will move the Court for an Order granting
6 preliminary approval of the proposed class action settlement between Plaintiff and Defendant
7 Hemington Landscape Services, Inc. (“Defendant”). Plaintiff further moves the Court for an Order:

- 8 1. Granting preliminary approval of the Class Action and PAGA Settlement Agreement;
9 2. Certifying a Class for settlement purposes;
10 3. Approving the Notice and the plan for distribution of the Notice;
11 4. Appointing Plaintiff Jose Cruz Chavez as Class Representative for settlement purposes;
12 5. Appointing Plaintiff’s Counsel, Benjamin H. Haber, Arrash T. Fattahi, Lisa B. Iturriaga,
13 and Arman A. Salehi of Wilshire Law Firm, PLC, as Class Counsel for settlement
14 purposes;
15 6. Appointing Phoenix Settlement Administrators as the Settlement Administrator; and
16 7. Scheduling a final approval hearing.

17 The motion will be based upon this notice, the attached memorandum of points and
18 authorities, the Declaration of Arrash T. Fattahi, the Declaration of Jose Cruz Chavez, filed
19 concurrently herewith, the records and files in this action, and any other further evidence or
20 argument that the Court may properly receive at or before the hearing.

21 Respectfully submitted,

22 Dated: August 7, 2025

23 **WILSHIRE LAW FIRM**

24 By: 

25 Benjamin H. Haber
26 Arrash T. Fattahi
27 Lisa B. Iturriaga
28 Arman A. Salehi

Attorneys for Plaintiff

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	ii
TABLE OF AUTHORITIES.....	iv
MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES.....	1
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. SUMMARY OF THE LITIGATION AND SETTLEMENT.....	1
A. Plaintiff’s Claims	1
B. Discovery and Investigation.....	2
C. Settlement Negotiations	2
D. Key Terms of the Proposed Settlement.....	3
III. DISCUSSION	7
A. The Settlement Is Fair, Reasonable, Adequate, and the Product of Investigation, Litigation, and Negotiation	8
1. The Settlement Is the Product of Discovery, Investigation, and Informed and Non-Collusive Arm’s-Length Negotiations.....	8
2. The Settlement Is Fair and Reasonable in Light of the Parties’ Respective Legal Positions.....	9
3. Class Counsel Has Extensive Experience in Class Action Litigation.....	10
B. The Proposed Class Notice of Settlement Should Be Approved	10
C. The Proposed Attorneys’ Fees and Costs Are Reasonable	10
1. Class Counsel Request an Award of Fees Based on the “Common Fund” Method	10
2. The Requested Fee Award Is in Line with Typical Cases	11
3. This Matter Involves A “Fee-Shifting” Provision of the Labor Code	12
4. The Experience, Reputation and Ability of Class Counsel Support the Requested Fee Award	12
D. The PAGA Allocation is Reasonable.....	13
E. The Service Award to Named Plaintiff Is Reasonable.....	14

1	IV. CERTIFICATION FOR SETTLEMENT PURPOSES IS WARRANTED	15
2	A. Legal Standard	15
3	B. Plaintiff Maintains That the Criteria for Class Certification Are Satisfied for	
4	Settlement Purposes.	16
5	1. The Classes Are Ascertainable and Numerous	16
6	2. There are Many Common Issues of Law and Fact Which Predominate.....	17
7	3. Plaintiff’s Claims Are Typical of the Claims of the Class.....	17
8	4. Plaintiff and His Counsel Meet the Adequacy Requirement	18
9	5. A Class Action is Superior to a Multiplicity of Litigation.....	18
10	V. THE PROPOSED NOTICE IS CONSTITUTIONALLY SOUND.....	18
11	A. The Proposed Notice Plan Satisfies Due Process	18
12	B. The Notice is Accurate and Informative	19
13	VI. CONCLUSION	20

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

STATE CASES

Bowles v. Super. Ct.,

(1955) 44 Cal.2d 57416

Cartt v. Super. Ct.,

(1975) 50 Cal.App.3d 960.....19

Chavez v. Netflix, Inc.,

(2008) 162 Cal.App.4th 43.....12

City and County of San Francisco v. Sweet,

(1995) 12 Cal.4th 10511

Classen v. Weller,

(1983) 145 Cal.App.3d 27.....17

Clothesrigger, Inc. v. GTE Corp.,

(1987) 191 Cal.App.3d 605.....17

Collins v. Rocha,

(1972) 7 Cal.3d 23216

D’Amico v. Bd. of Medical Examiners,

(1974) 11 Cal.3d 110

Daar v. Yellow Cab Co.,

(1967) 67 Cal.2d 69515

Dunk v. Ford Motor Co.,

(1996) 48 Cal.App.4th 1794.....7

Gentry v. Super. Ct.,

(2007) 42 Cal.4th 44314, 18

Kullar v. Foot Locker Retail, Inc.,

(2008) 168 Cal.App.4th 116.....7

Laffitte v. Robert Half Int’l Inc.,

(2016) 1 Cal.5th 48011

1	<i>Linder v. Thrifty Oil Co.,</i>	
2	(2000) 23 Cal.4th 429	16
3	<i>Mallick v. Super. Ct.,</i>	
4	(1979) 89 Cal.App.3d 434.....	7
5	<i>McGhee v. Bank of America,</i>	
6	(1976) 60 Cal.App.3d 442.....	18
7	<i>Miller v. Woods,</i>	
8	(1983) 148 Cal.App. 3d 862.....	18
9	<i>Munoz v. BCI Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of Los Angeles,</i>	
10	(2010) 186 Cal.App.4th 399.....	7, 14
11	<i>Quinn v. State of California,</i>	
12	(1995) 15 Cal.3d 162	11
13	<i>Richmond v. Dart Indus., Inc.,</i>	
14	(1981) 29 Cal.3d 462	16
15	<i>Rose v. City of Hayward,</i>	
16	(1981) 126 Cal.App.3d 926.....	16
17	<i>Serrano v. Priest,</i>	
18	(1977) 20 Cal.3d 25	10
19	<i>Stamburgh v. Super. Ct.,</i>	
20	(1976) 62 Cal.App.3d 231	8
21	<i>Wershba v. Apple Computers, Inc.,</i>	
22	(2001) 91 Cal.App.4th 224.....	9
23	<i>Wilner v. Sunset Life Ins. Co.,</i>	
24	(2000) 78 Cal.App.4th 952.....	16
25	<u>FEDERAL CASES</u>	
26	<i>Frank v. Eastman Kodak Co.,</i>	
27	(W.D.N.Y. 2005) 228 F.R.D. 174	14
28	<i>Garcia v. Gordon Trucking, Inc.,</i>	

1	(E.D. Cal. Oct. 31, 2012) No. 1:10-CV-0324 AWI SKO, 2012 WL 5364575.....	13
2	<i>Hopson v. Hanesbrands Inc.</i> ,	
3	(N.D. Cal. Apr. 3, 2009) No. CV-08-0844 EDL, 2009 WL 928133.....	13
4	<i>Jack v. Hartford Fire Ins. Co.</i> ,	
5	(S.D. Cal. Oct. 13, 2011) 2011 WL 4899942	13
6	<i>Leyva v. Medline Ind.</i> ,	
7	(9th Cir. 2013) 716 F.3d 510.....	18
8	<i>McKenzie v. Fed. Express Corp.</i> ,	
9	(C.D. Cal. Jan. 23, 2012) 2012 WL 12882124.....	13
10	<i>Priddy v. Edelman</i> ,	
11	(6th Cir. 1989) 883 F.2d 438.....	8
12	<i>Rodriguez v. W. Publ'g Corp.</i> ,	
13	(9th Cir. 2009) 563 F.3d 948.....	14
14	<i>Van Vranken v. Atlantic Richfield Company</i> ,	
15	(N.D. Cal. 1995) 901 F.Supp. 294.....	11
16	<i>Vincent v. Hughes Air West, Inc.</i> ,	
17	(9th Cir. 1977) 557 F.2d 759.....	11
18	<i>Zubia v. Shamrock Foods Co.</i> ,	
19	(C.D. Cal. Dec. 21, 2017) No. CV1603128ABAGRX, 2017 WL 10541431.....	13
20	<u>STATE STATUTES</u>	
21	Cal. Civ. Proc. § 382.....	i, 3, 15, 16
22	Cal. Lab. Code § 90.5	14
23	Cal. Lab. Code § 1194	12
24	Cal. Lab. Code §§ 2699, <i>et seq.</i>	1
25	<u>RULES</u>	
26	California Rules of Court, Rule 3.766 (e)	18
27	California Rules of Court, Rule 3.766 (f).....	18
28	California Rules of Court, Rule 3.769, <i>et seq.</i>	i

1	California Rules of Court, Rule 3.769(f).....	10
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3	Conte & Newberg, <i>Newberg on Class Actions</i> (3rd Ed.)	8, 11, 19
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MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES

I. INTRODUCTION

Plaintiff Jose Cruz Chavez (“Plaintiff”) seeks preliminary approval of a proposed \$425,000.00 non-reversionary, wage and hour class action settlement with Defendant Hemington Landscape Services, Inc. (“Defendant,” and together with Plaintiff, the “Parties”). This motion for preliminary approval is unopposed. The Settlement will provide substantial monetary payments to approximately 375 class members. And, as set forth more fully below, the proposed Settlement satisfies all the criteria for settlement approval under California law. The Settlement was reached after extensive investigation, discovery, and negotiations. The negotiations were at arms-length and were facilitated by an experienced class action mediator, Mark LeHocky, Esq., over the course of a full day of mediation. After extensive negotiations and discussions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of Plaintiff’s claims and Defendant’s defenses, the Parties reached a settlement. Accordingly, Plaintiff requests that the Court preliminarily approve the proposed Settlement, certify the proposed settlement class, approve the proposed notice, and set a final approval hearing.

II. SUMMARY OF THE LITIGATION AND SETTLEMENT

A. Plaintiff’s Claims

This is a wage and hour class and Private Attorneys General Act (“PAGA”) (Cal. Lab. Code §§ 2699, *et seq.*) representative action. Plaintiff and putative class members worked in California as non-exempt, hourly-paid employees during the Class Period, (Declaration of Arrash T. Fattahi in Support of Plaintiff’s Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Action and PAGA Settlement [“Fattahi Decl.”], ¶ 2.)

Plaintiff alleges that Defendant’s payroll, timekeeping, and wage and hour practices resulted in Labor Code violations. Plaintiff alleges that Defendant failed to pay for all hours worked. Plaintiff further alleges that Defendant failed to provide employees with legally compliant meal and rest periods, and Defendant failed to reimburse business expenses. Based on these allegations, Plaintiff asserts related claims for failure to provide accurate wage statements, failure to pay all final wages at termination, unfair business practices, and civil penalties under PAGA. (*Id.* at ¶ 3.)

1 On July 26, 2022, Plaintiff filed a putative wage and hour class action complaint against
2 Defendant for: (1) failure to pay minimum and straight time wages; (2) failure to pay overtime
3 wages; (3) failure to provide meal periods; (4) failure to authorize and permit rest periods; (5)
4 failure to timely pay final wages at termination; (6) failure to provide accurate itemized wage
5 statements; (7) failure to indemnify employees for expenditures; and (8) violation of
6 California’s Unfair Competition Law, California Business and Professions Code §§ 17200, *et*
7 *seq.* (“Class Action”) On the same date, Plaintiff sent a notice to Defendant and the California
8 Labor & Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”) alleging similar wage and hour violations
9 pursuant to the PAGA. On October 27, 2022, Plaintiff filed a representative action complaint
10 against Defendant for civil penalties under PAGA. (“PAGA Action”, and together with Class
11 Action “the Actions”). (Fattahi Decl., ¶ 4.)

12 **B. Discovery and Investigation**

13 Following the filing of the Actions, the Parties exchanged documents and information
14 before mediating these actions. Defendant produced a sample of time and pay records for class
15 members. Defendant also provided documents of its wage and hour policies and practices during
16 the class period, and information regarding the total number of current and former employees
17 in its informal discovery responses. (*Id.* at ¶ 5.)

18 After reviewing documents regarding Defendant’s wage and hour policies and practices
19 and analyzing Defendant’s timekeeping and payroll records, Class Counsel was able to evaluate
20 the probability of class certification, success on the merits, and Defendant’s maximum monetary
21 exposure for all claims. (*Id.* at ¶ 6.) Class Counsel also investigated the applicable law regarding
22 the claims and defenses asserted in the litigation. (*Id.*) Class Counsel reviewed these records
23 and utilized an expert to prepare a damages analysis prior to mediation. (*Id.*)

24 **C. Settlement Negotiations**

25 On July 25, 2023, the Parties participated in private mediation with experienced class
26 action mediator, Mark LeHocky, Esq. (*Id.* at ¶ 7.) The settlement negotiations were at arm’s
27 length and, although conducted in a professional manner, were adversarial. The Parties went
28 into the mediation willing to explore the potential for a settlement of the dispute, but each side

1 was also prepared to litigate their position through trial and appeal if a settlement had not been
2 reached. (*Id.*) After extensive negotiations and discussions regarding the strengths and
3 weaknesses of Plaintiff’s claims and Defendant’s defenses, the Parties reached a settlement, the
4 material terms of which are encompassed within the Settlement. (*Id.* at ¶ 8, **Ex. 1** [Class Action
5 and PAGA Settlement Agreement].)

6 Class Counsel has conducted a thorough investigation into the facts of this case. Based
7 on the Parties’ informal exchange of documents and information and Class Counsel’s own
8 independent investigation and evaluation, Class Counsel is of the opinion that the Settlement is
9 fair, reasonable, and adequate and is in the best interests of the Settlement Class Members in
10 light of all known facts and circumstances, the risk of significant delay, the defenses that could
11 be asserted by Defendant both to certification and on the merits, trial risk, and appellate risk.
12 (*Id.* at ¶ 14.)

13 Indeed, the \$425,000.00 Settlement represents approximately **98.4%** of the **realistic**
14 **maximum recovery** of \$431,902.74. (*Id.* at ¶ 23.) Although Class Counsel estimated that
15 Defendant’s maximum potential liability for all claims was approximately \$7.25 million, when
16 the risk of prevailing at certification and trial are factored into the equation, Class Counsel
17 believes that Defendant’s realistic exposure was \$431,902.74, meaning the Settlement achieves
18 a significant recovery. (*Id.* at ¶¶ 14-27.) Considering the risk and uncertainty of prevailing at
19 class certification and at trial, this is an excellent result for the Class. (*Id.* at ¶ 23.) Indeed,
20 because of the proposed Settlement, class members will receive timely, guaranteed relief and
21 will avoid the risk of an unfavorable judgment. (*Id.*)

22 **D. Key Terms of the Proposed Settlement**

23 The Settlement’s key terms include:

24 1. Class Definition: For settlement purposes only, the Parties agree to the
25 certification of a class pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure § 382 defined as: “all
26 persons employed by Hemington in California and classified as an hourly paid, non-exempt
27 employee during the Class Period.” (Settlement, § 1.5)
28

2. Class Period: means “the period from July 26, 2018 to September 30, 2023.” (Settlement, § 1.12)

3. Settlement Class Member: means “a member of the Class, as either a Participating Class Member or Non-Participating Class Member (including a Non-Participating Class Member who qualifies as an Aggrieved Employee).” (Settlement, § 1.9)

4. Aggrieved Employee: means “a person employed by Hemington in California and classified as an hourly paid, non-exempt employee who worked for Hemington during the PAGA Period.” (Settlement, § 1.4)

5. PAGA Period: means “the period from July 26, 2021 to September 30, 2023” (Settlement, § 1.32)

6. Gross Settlement Amount: “Except as provided by Paragraph 8 in the Settlement, Hemington promises to pay \$425,000.00 and no more as the Gross Settlement Amount. Hemington has no obligation to pay the Gross Settlement Amount prior to the deadline stated in paragraph 4.3 in the Settlement. The Administrator will disburse the entire Gross Settlement Amount without asking or requiring Participating Class Members or Aggrieved Employees to submit any claim as a condition of payment. None of the Gross Settlement Amount will revert to Hemington.” (Settlement, § 3.1)

7. Funding of Gross Settlement Amount: “Assuming the Court grants Final Approval, Hemington will fund the Gross Settlement in two installments: 50% of the Gross Settlement will be paid by no later than 15 calendar days after Final Approval, and the final 50% will be paid six (6) months after Final Approval. (Settlement, § 4.3)

8. Uncashed Checks: Any settlement checks remaining uncashed after one hundred and eighty (180) days shall be transmitted to Casa of El Dorado County, the *cy pres* recipient. (Settlement, §§ 4.4.1, 4.4.3.)

9. Released Parties: means “Hemington Landscape Services, Inc., together with its former and current officers, directors, employees, members, member managers, owners, affiliates, successors, assigns, agents, attorneys and representatives.” (Settlement, § 1.42)

1 10. Release: Upon the final approval of the Settlement by the Court, Plaintiff, Class
2 Members, and Class Counsel will release claims against Released Parties of “[a]ll class members
3 who do not opt-out will release Defendant from any and all claims asserted in the Operative
4 Complaint, and any future amendments to the Operative Complaint, including, but not limited to,
5 state wage and hour claims for any and all violations of California's Labor Code and Unfair
6 Competition Law based on Hemington's failure to pay for all hours worked (including minimum,
7 straight time, and overtime wages), failure to provide meal periods, failure to authorize and
8 permit rest periods, failure to timely pay final wages at termination, failure to furnish accurate
9 itemized wage statements, failure to indemnify employees for expenditures, civil penalties under
10 PAGA based on the alleged Labor Code violations, and all damages interest, penalties, attorneys'
11 fees, costs, and other amounts recoverable under said causes of action under California law, to
12 the extent permissible, including, but not limited to, the California Labor Code and the applicable
13 Wage Orders. (Settlement, § 5.2.)

14 11. PAGA Allocation: The settlement includes \$10,000.00 allocated to Plaintiff's
15 claims under PAGA, with 75% of which (\$7,500.00) being paid to the LWDA and 25% (\$2,500.00)
16 being paid to the Aggrieved Employees. (Settlement, § 3.2.5.) Class Counsel submitted the
17 proposed settlement to the LWDA before filing this Motion for Preliminary Approval. (Fattahi
18 Decl., ¶ 9.)

19 12. Net Settlement Amount: means “the Gross Settlement Amount, less the following
20 payments in the amounts approved by the Court: Individual PAGA Payments, the LWDA PAGA
21 Payment, the Class Representative's Service Payment, Class Counsel Fees Payment, Class
22 Counsel Litigation Expenses Payment, the Administration Expenses Payment, and the
23 Employer's Share of Payroll Taxes. The remainder is to be paid to Participating Class Members
24 as Individual Class Payments” (Settlement, § 1.28.)

25 13. Distribution Formula: “[a]n Individual Class Payment calculated by (a) dividing
26 the Net Settlement Amount by the total number of Workweeks worked by all Participating Class
27 Members during the Class Period and (b) multiplying the result by each Participating Class
28 Member's Workweeks.” (Settlement, § 3.2.4.) As to PAGA: “[t]he Administrator will calculate

each Individual PAGA Payment by (a) dividing the amount of the Aggrieved Employees' 25% share of PAGA Penalties (\$2,500) by the total number of PAGA Period Pay Periods worked by all Aggrieved Employees during the PAGA Period and (b) multiplying the result by each Aggrieved Employee's PAGA Period Pay Periods. Aggrieved Employees assume full responsibility and liability for any taxes owed on their Individual PAGA Payment and agree to hold Hemington harmless, and indemnify Hemington, from any dispute or controversy regarding any tax liability or responsibility on their Individual PAGA Payment” (Settlement, § 3.2.5.1.)

14. Tax Allocation: Any settlement money paid to Settlement Class Members will be allocated as 10% wages and 90% to penalties, interest, and non-wage damages. (Settlement, § 3.2.4.1)

15. Class Representative Service Payment: Defendant agrees not to oppose Plaintiff’s request for a service payment to Plaintiff of up to \$12,500.00. (Settlement, § 3.2.1) This payment shall be in addition to the *pro rata* recovery received by Plaintiff as part of the settlement. Plaintiff agrees not to opt-out of the settlement. (*Id.*) Any portion of the Service Payment allocation not approved by the court will revert to participating class members. (*Id.*) In exchange for this Service Payment, Plaintiff will provide to Released Parties a general release, including a Civil Code section 1542 waiver. (*Id.*)

16. Attorneys’ Fees and Costs: The Settlement provides that Defendant will not oppose a fee application of up to one-third (\$148,750.00) of the Gross Settlement Amount, plus out-of-pocket costs not to exceed \$22,500.00. (Settlement, § 3.2.2)

17. Notice of Proposed Class Action Settlement: The Notice sets forth in plain terms, a statement of the case, the terms of the Settlement Agreement, the approximate amount of attorneys’ fees, costs, and service payment or enhancement award being sought, and an explanation of how the settlement allocations are calculated. (Settlement, Ex. A, Class Notice.) Class Members will be notified by first-class mail of the settlement. (Settlement, § 7.4.2.) Phoenix, the proposed Settlement Administrator, will undertake its best efforts to ensure that the notice is provided to the current addresses of class members, including conducting a national change of address search and

1 re-mailing the notice to updated addresses. (*Id.*; Fattahi Decl., ¶ 10, Ex. 2 [Settlement
2 Administrator Bid].)

3 **III. DISCUSSION**

4 To prevent fraud, collusion, or unfairness to the class, the settlement of a class action
5 requires court approval. (*Dunk v. Ford Motor Co.* (1996) 48 Cal.App.4th 1794, 1800-01.) This
6 Court has wide discretion to determine whether the proposed settlement is fair. (*Mallick v. Super.*
7 *Ct.* (1979) 89 Cal.App.3d 434, 438.) Fairness is presumed when: (1) the settlement is reached
8 through arm's-length bargaining; (2) investigation is sufficient to allow counsel and the court to
9 act intelligently; (3) counsel is experienced in similar litigation; and (4) the percentage of objectors
10 is small. (*Dunk*, 48 Cal.App.4th at p. 1800.)

11 In considering whether a settlement is reasonable, the trial court should consider relevant
12 factors, which may include the strength of plaintiff's case, the risk, expense, complexity and likely
13 duration of further litigation, the risk of maintaining class action status through trial, the amount
14 offered in settlement, the extent of discovery completed and the stage of the proceedings, the
15 experience and views of counsel, the presence of a governmental participant, and the reaction of
16 the class members to the proposed settlement. (*Kullar v. Foot Locker Retail, Inc.*, (2008) 168
17 Cal.App.4th 116, 128.) In order to approve a class action settlement, the court must satisfy itself
18 that the class settlement is within the "ballpark" of reasonableness. (*Id.* at p. 133.) The record need
19 not contain an explicit statement of the maximum theoretical recovery. (*Munoz v. BCI Coca-Cola*
20 *Bottling Co. of Los Angeles* (2010) 186 Cal.App.4th 399, 408-9 [holding that *Kullar* does not
21 require "an explicit statement of the maximum amount the plaintiff class could recover if it
22 prevailed on all its claims", but instead, only an "understanding of the amount that is in controversy
23 and the realistic range of outcomes of the litigation."].)

24 As discussed below, Class Counsel has provided information exceeding the threshold
25 required to provide this Court with materials and information necessary to determine that the
26 proposed settlement is fair, adequate, and reasonable.

27 ///

28 ///

1 **A. The Settlement Is Fair, Reasonable, Adequate, and the Product of**
2 **Investigation, Litigation, and Negotiation**

3 **1. The Settlement Is the Product of Discovery, Investigation, and Informed**
4 **and Non-Collusive Arm’s-Length Negotiations**

5 Courts presume the absence of fraud or collusion in the negotiation of a settlement, unless
6 evidence to the contrary is offered; thus, there is a presumption here that the negotiations were
7 conducted in good faith. (Conte & Newberg, *Newberg on Class Actions* (3rd Ed.) § 11.51.)
8 Settlement is favored, and settlement agreements are realistically assessed. (*Stamburgh v. Super.*
9 *Ct.* (1976) 62 Cal.App.3d 231, 236; *Priddy v. Edelman* (6th Cir. 1989) 883 F.2d 438, 447 [“The
10 fact that a plaintiff might have received more if the case had been fully litigated is no reason not
11 to approve the settlement.”].)

12 The Settlement was reached following extensive negotiations following a full day of
13 mediation with experienced employment mediator, Mark LeHocky, Esq. (Fattahi Decl., ¶ 7.) The
14 settlement negotiations were at arm’s length and, although conducted in a professional manner,
15 were adversarial. (*Id.*) The Parties went into the mediation willing to explore the potential for a
16 settlement of the dispute, but each side was also prepared to litigate their or its position through
17 trial and appeal if a settlement had not been reached. (*Id.*) After extensive negotiations and
18 discussions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of Plaintiff’s claims and Defendant’s defenses,
19 the Parties reached an agreement. (*Id.* at ¶ 8.)

20 Prior to reaching this settlement, Class Counsel conducted informal discovery concerning
21 the claims set forth in the litigation, such as a sample of class member timekeeping and payroll
22 records, Defendant’s policies and procedures concerning the payment of wages, the provision of
23 meal and rest breaks, issuance of wage statements, and providing all wages at separation, as well
24 as information regarding the number of putative class members and the mix of current versus
25 former employees, the wage rates in effect, and the amount of meal and rest period premium wages
26 paid to class members. (*Id.* at ¶¶ 5-6.) In conjunction with their extensive factual investigation,
27 Class Counsel investigated the applicable law regarding the claims and defenses asserted in the
28

1 litigation. (*Id.* at ¶ 6.) Thus, Plaintiff and his counsel were able to act intelligently and effectively
2 in negotiating the proposed Settlement.

3 Class Counsel also has considerable experience and has demonstrated competence with
4 litigating wage and hour class actions. (*Id.* at ¶¶ 38-50.) Again, this supports the position that the
5 terms of the Settlement are premised on objective evidence that has been considered and weighed
6 in light of the risks, expenses, and time consumption to both sides of continued litigation of this
7 action.

8 **2. The Settlement Is Fair and Reasonable in Light of the Parties’** 9 **Respective Legal Positions**

10 A settlement is not judged against what might plaintiff recover had she prevailed at trial,
11 nor does the settlement have to provide 100% of the damages sought to be fair and reasonable.
12 (*Wershba v. Apple Computers, Inc.* (2001) 91 Cal.App.4th 224, 246, 250 [“Compromise is inherent
13 and necessary in the settlement process . . . even if the relief afforded by the proposed settlement
14 is substantially narrower than it would be if the suits were to be successfully litigated, this is no
15 bar to a class settlement because the public interest may indeed be served by a voluntary settlement
16 in which each side gives ground in the interest of avoiding litigation.”].)

17 This settlement avoids the risks and the accompanying expense of further litigation. (Fattahi
18 Decl., ¶ 25.) While Plaintiff is confident in the merits of his claims, a legitimate controversy exists
19 as to each cause of action. (*Id.* at ¶ 24.) Plaintiff also recognizes that proving the amount of wages
20 due to each class member would be an expensive, time-consuming, and uncertain proposition. (*Id.*)

21 The proposed settlement of \$425,000.00 therefore represents a substantial recovery when
22 compared to Plaintiff’s reasonably forecasted recovery. (*Id.* at ¶¶ 14-27.) Because of the proposed
23 Settlement, class members will receive timely, guaranteed relief and will avoid the risk of an
24 unfavorable judgment. When considering the risks of litigation, the uncertainties involved in
25 achieving class certification, the burdens of proof necessary to establish liability, the probability
26 of appeal of a favorable judgment, it is clear that the settlement amount of \$425,000.00 is well
27 within the “ballpark” of reasonableness, and preliminary settlement approval is appropriate. (*Id.*)
28

1 *Indeed, each Settlement Class Member is eligible to receive an average net benefit of*
2 *approximately \$590.00. (Id. at ¶ 26.)*

3 **3. Class Counsel Has Extensive Experience in Class Action Litigation**

4 The settlement negotiations were conducted by highly capable and experienced counsel.
5 Class Counsel have a strong record of vigorous and effective advocacy for their clients and are
6 experienced in handling complex wage and hour class action litigation. (Fattahi Decl., ¶¶ 38-50.)
7 Although Plaintiff and his counsel were prepared to litigate the claims alleged in the litigation,
8 they support the proposed Settlement as being in the best interests of the class.

9 **B. The Proposed Class Notice of Settlement Should Be Approved**

10 The proposed Notice, in the form attached to the Settlement Agreement, should be approved
11 for dissemination to the class. The Notice informs the class of the terms of the settlement and of
12 their rights to be excluded from the settlement. And if there are class members who wish to object
13 to this proposed class action settlement, they will have the opportunity to file their objections and
14 be heard at the Final Approval Hearing. Accordingly, the proposed Notice meets all the
15 requirements of Rule 3.769(f) of the California Rules of Court.

16 **C. The Proposed Attorneys' Fees and Costs Are Reasonable**

17 Under the Settlement, subject to the Court's approval, the Parties agreed to allocate
18 reasonable attorneys' fees in amount of \$148,750.00, and up to \$22,500.00 in costs. These amounts
19 are disclosed to all class members in the proposed Notice and are reasonable.

20 **1. Class Counsel Request an Award of Fees Based on the "Common Fund"**
21 **Method**

22 California courts have long awarded attorneys' fees as a percentage of the benefit created
23 by counsel in creating a common fund. The California Supreme Court held that "when a number
24 of persons is entitled in common to a specific fund, and an action brought by a plaintiff or plaintiffs
25 for the benefit of all results in the creation or preservation of that fund, such plaintiff or plaintiffs
26 may be awarded attorneys' fees out of the fund." (*Serrano v. Priest* (1977) 20 Cal.3d 25, 34,
27 quoting *D'Amico v. Bd. of Medical Examiners* (1974) 11 Cal.3d 1.)

28 Class Counsel seeks an award of attorneys' fees on the "percentage of recovery/common

1 fund” theory. The purpose of this approach is to “spread litigation costs proportionally among all
2 the beneficiaries so that the active beneficiary does not bear the entire burden alone.” (*Vincent v.*
3 *Hughes Air West, Inc.* (9th Cir. 1977) 557 F.2d 759, 769.) In *Quinn v. State of California* (1995)
4 15 Cal.3d 162, the California Supreme Court stated: “[O]ne who expends attorneys’ fees in
5 winning a suit which creates a fund from which others derive benefits may require those passive
6 beneficiaries to bear a fair share of the litigation costs.” (*Id.* at p. 167.) Similarly, in *City and*
7 *County of San Francisco v. Sweet* (1995) 12 Cal.4th 105, the California Supreme Court recognized
8 that the common fund doctrine has been applied “consistently in California when an action brought
9 by one party creates a fund in which other persons are entitled to share.” (*Id.* at p. 110.)

10 The California Supreme Court affirmed in *Laffitte v. Robert Half Int’l Inc.* (2016) 1 Cal.5th
11 480 that, “when class action litigation establishes a monetary fund for the benefit of the class
12 members, and the trial court in its equitable powers awards class counsel a fee out of that fund, the
13 court may determine the amount of a reasonable fee by choosing an appropriate percentage of the
14 fund created.” (*Id.* at p. 503.) The court explained: “The recognized advantages of the percentage
15 method—including relative ease of calculation, alignment of incentives between counsel and the
16 class, a better approximation of market conditions in a contingency case, and the encouragement
17 it provides counsel to seek an early settlement and avoid unnecessarily prolonging the litigation—
18 convince us the percentage method is a valuable tool that should not be denied our trial courts.”
19 (*Id.* [internal citations omitted].)

20 2. The Requested Fee Award Is in Line with Typical Cases

21 According to a leading treatise on class actions, “[n]o general rule can be articulated on
22 what is a reasonable percentage of a common fund. Usually 50% of the fund is the upper limit on
23 a reasonable fee award from a common fund in order to assure that the fees do not consume a
24 disproportionate part of the recovery obtained for the class, although somewhat larger percentages
25 are not unprecedented.” (*See Conte & Newberg, Newberg on Class Actions* (3rd Ed.) § 14.03.)
26 Attorneys’ fees that are fifty percent of the fund are typically considered the upper limit, with thirty
27 to forty percent commonly awarded in cases where the settlement is relatively small. (*Id.*; *see also*
28 *Van Vranken v. Atlantic Richfield Company* (N.D. Cal. 1995) 901 F. Supp. 294 [stating that most

1 cases where 30-50 percent was awarded involved “smaller” settlement funds of under \$10
2 million].)

3 Here, Plaintiff requests attorneys’ fees equal to thirty-five percent (35%) of the Settlement
4 Amount, which is in line with the prevailing guidelines established in California case law and
5 academic literature and is consistent with awards in California. (*See Chavez v. Netflix, Inc.* (2008)
6 162 Cal.App.4th 43, 66, n.11 [“Empirical studies show that, regardless whether the percentage
7 method or the lodestar method is used, fee awards in class actions average around one-third of the
8 recovery.”].) Accordingly, Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court approve the attorneys’ fees
9 as negotiated by the Parties and requested herein.

10 **3. This Matter Involves A “Fee-Shifting” Provision of the Labor Code**

11 Labor Code § 1194 (a) provides for the recovery of “minimum wage or overtime
12 compensation, including interest thereon, reasonable attorney’s fees, and costs of suit.” Under this
13 section, Plaintiff would be permitted to recover his actual attorneys’ fees, even if those fees were
14 larger than the total class recovery at the conclusion of this case. This settlement is beneficial in
15 that it limits the risk of continued expenses and consumption of time, energy, and resources facing
16 Defendant while at the same time rewarding Class Counsel for their decision to assume risk by
17 taking on this matter. In fact, prosecution of this action involved significant financial risk for Class
18 Counsel. (Fattahi Decl., ¶¶ 36-37.) Class Counsel undertook this matter solely on a contingent
19 basis, with no guarantee of recovery. (*Id.*) Once counsel undertook this litigation on behalf of the
20 Class, Class Counsel committed to pursue it to its conclusion, placing its fiduciary duty to the Class
21 ahead of all other concerns.

22 **4. The Experience, Reputation and Ability of Class Counsel Support the** 23 **Requested Fee Award**

24 As demonstrated by their past experience in pursuing class actions on behalf of consumers
25 and employees, Class Counsel possess considerable expertise in litigating class actions. (Fattahi
26 Decl., ¶¶ 38-50.) Class Counsel has been involved as lead counsel or co-counsel in several class
27 actions that resulted in millions in recovery. (*Id.*) Because it is reasonable to compensate class
28 counsel commensurate with their skill, reputation and experience, Class Counsel’s requested fee

award is supported here.

Class Counsel's experience in wage and hour class actions was integral in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the case against Defendant and the reasonableness of the settlement. Practice in the narrow field of wage and hour litigation requires skill and knowledge concerning the rapidly evolving substantive law (state and federal), as well as the procedural law of class action litigation. Based on these and other factors, Class Counsel has frequently received fee awards of this percentage from the gross recovery for the class. Therefore, the requested fee award is reasonable and fair.

D. The PAGA Allocation is Reasonable

Where settlements negotiate a good faith amount for PAGA penalties and "there is no indication that this amount was the result of self-interest at the expense of other" class members, such amounts are generally considered reasonable. (*Hopson v. Hanesbrands Inc.* (N.D. Cal. Apr. 3, 2009) No. CV-08-0844 EDL, 2009 WL 928133 at *1, 9.) Courts have approved amounts for PAGA penalties in the range of zero to two percent of the total maximum amount of the Settlement. (*Id.* [approving a PAGA payment of 0.3%, or \$1,500]; *see also Jack v. Hartford Fire Ins. Co.* (S.D. Cal. Oct. 13, 2011) 2011 WL 4899942 at *6 [approving a PAGA payment of 0.25%]; *McKenzie v. Fed. Express Corp.* (C.D. Cal. Jan. 23, 2012) 2012 WL 12882124 at *5 [acknowledging that courts approve PAGA claim settlements in the range of zero to two percent of the total settlement].) Here, the amount to be paid to the LWDA is larger than many other PAGA settlement amounts approved by the courts where seemingly nominal amounts were allocated for such claims. (*See, e.g., Zubia v. Shamrock Foods Co.* (C.D. Cal. Dec. 21, 2017) No. CV1603128ABAGRX, 2017 WL 10541431, at *14 [approving a PAGA settlement of 0.1%]; *Hopson*, 2008 WL 3385452, at *1 [approving a PAGA settlement of 0.3% or \$1,500]; *Garcia v. Gordon Trucking, Inc.* (E.D. Cal. Oct. 31, 2012) No. 1:10-CV-0324 AWI SKO, 2012 WL 5364575, at *3 [approving a PAGA settlement of 0.27%].) Here, the Parties negotiated a good faith amount of \$10,000.00, 75% percent of which (\$7,500.00) will be paid to the LWDA and 25% (\$2,500.00) to be distributed to the Aggrieved Employees. (Settlement, § 3.2.5.) The \$10,000.00 settlement amount equates to approximately 2.4% of the Gross Settlement Amount, which exceeds amounts that are routinely approved. The

Parties negotiated to allocate 2.4% of the Settlement to PAGA penalties in good faith and this amount is reasonable considering that the maximum PAGA penalties were estimated at \$880,000.00 (which assumed \$100 per pay period). (Fattahi Decl., ¶ 22.)

E. The Service Payment to Named Plaintiff Is Reasonable

Named plaintiffs in class action lawsuits “are eligible for reasonable incentive payments to compensate them for the expense or risk they have incurred in conferring a benefit on other members of the class.” (*Munoz, supra*, 86 Cal.App.4th at p. 412.) Courts routinely grant approval of class action settlement agreements containing enhancements for the class representatives, which are necessary to provide incentive to represent the class, and are appropriate given the benefit the class representatives help to bring about for the class. (*See Rodriguez v. W. Publ'g Corp.* (9th Cir. 2009) 563 F.3d 948, 958-59.)

Service awards are particularly important to plaintiffs in wage and hour cases because they promote the important public policies underlying the wage and hour laws. This strong policy is codified in California Labor Code § 90.5, which provides, “it is the policy of this state to vigorously enforce minimum labor standards in order to ensure employees are not required or permitted to work under substandard unlawful conditions” Nonetheless, the California Supreme Court has noted that “retaliation against employees for asserting statutory rights under the Labor Code is widespread,” despite anti-retaliation statutes designed to protect employees. (*Gentry v. Super. Ct.* (2007) 42 Cal.4th 443, 460-61.) In this context, class representatives should be rewarded for assuming the risk of retaliation for the sake of class members. (*See Frank v. Eastman Kodak Co.* (W.D.N.Y. 2005) 228 F.R.D. 174, 187.)

Under the Settlement, subject to the Court’s approval, Defendant agreed to pay a Service Payment in the amount of \$12,500.00 to Plaintiff. (Settlement, § 3.2.1.) This amount is also in exchange for Plaintiff’s general release of all claims against Defendant. Class Counsel represent that Plaintiff devoted a great deal of time and work assisting counsel in the case, communicated with counsel very frequently for litigation and to prepare for mediation, and was frequently in contact with Class Counsel during the mediation. (Fattahi Decl., ¶¶ 28-32) This amount is

1 reasonable particularly in light of the substantial benefits Plaintiff generated for all class members.
2 (*Id.*)

3 When compared with the amounts awarded in typical class action cases, the amount
4 requested here is particularly reasonable. Indeed, a 2006 study examining the average incentive
5 award given to class action plaintiffs from 1993 to 2002 found that the “average award per class
6 representative was \$15,992 and the median award per class representative was \$4,357.” (Eisenberg
7 & Miller, *Incentive Awards to Class Action Plaintiffs: An Empirical Study* (2006) 53 UCLA L.Rev.
8 1303, 1308.) That same study found that named plaintiffs in employment discrimination class
9 actions received an average award of \$69,850 and a median award of \$31,081, while named
10 plaintiffs in other employment class actions received an average award of \$12,121 and a median
11 award of \$13,059. (*Id.* at p. 1334.) The authors of the study found that higher awards in
12 employment cases reflected the “courts’ wish to make representative plaintiffs whole by
13 compensating them for the high costs of their service to the class, including risks of stigmatization
14 or retaliation on the job.” (*Id.* at p. 1308.)

15 **IV. CERTIFICATION FOR SETTLEMENT PURPOSES IS WARRANTED**

16 **A. Legal Standard**

17 The proposed Settlement Class is well suited for class certification. All of the claims derive
18 from a core set of alleged violations of California’s wage and hour laws and regulations. For the
19 reasons set forth more fully below, for purposes of settlement only, the Class satisfies the
20 prerequisites for certification under California Code of Civil Procedure § 382. Section 382
21 provides: “when the question is one of a common or general interest, of many persons, or when
22 the parties are numerous, and it is impracticable to bring them all before the court, one or more
23 may sue or defend for the benefit of all.” (Code Civ. Proc., § 382.) There are two requirements to
24 section 382: “(1) There must be an ascertainable class; and (2) there must be a well-defined
25 community of interest in the questions of law and fact involved affecting the parties to be
26 represented.” (*Daar v. Yellow Cab Co.* (1967) 67 Cal.2d 695, 704 [citations omitted].) To clarify
27 these requirements, the California Supreme Court has looked to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure
28 23 to explain that the community-of-interest requirement itself embodies three factors: “(1)

1 predominant questions of law or fact; (2) class representatives with claims or defenses typical of
2 the class; and (3) class representatives who can adequately represent the class.” (*Richmond v. Dart*
3 *Indus., Inc.* (1981) 29 Cal.3d 462, 470.)

4 California law and policy favor the fullest and most flexible use of the class action device.
5 (*Id.* at pp. 469-73.) Indeed, “Courts long have acknowledged the importance of class actions as a
6 means to prevent a failure of justice in our judicial system” particularly where the rights of
7 consumers are at issue. (*Linder v. Thrifty Oil Co.* (2000) 23 Cal.4th 429, 434.) Any doubt as to the
8 appropriateness of class treatment should be resolved in favor of certification. (*Richmond, supra*,
9 29 Cal.3d at pp. 473-75.)

10 **B. Plaintiff Maintains That the Criteria for Class Certification Are Satisfied for**
11 **Settlement Purposes.**

12 **1. The Class is Ascertainable and Numerous**

13 The proposed class that Plaintiff seeks to represent is easily ascertainable and includes
14 approximately 375 employees of Defendant.

15 Plaintiff maintains that there is an easily ascertainable class, defined by objective and
16 precise criteria. Because class members are identified using specific criteria in the regular business
17 records of Defendant, i.e., job position, the class is ascertainable. (*Wilner v. Sunset Life Ins. Co.*
18 (2000) 78 Cal.App.4th 952, 959-60 [class membership defined by ownership of product that is the
19 subject of the lawsuit is sufficient to make the class ascertainable].)

20 “The requirement of Code of Civil Procedure section 382 that there be ‘many’ parties to a
21 class action suit is indefinite and has been construed liberally.” (*Rose v. City of Hayward* (1981)
22 126 Cal.App.3d 926, 934.) “Where a question is of common interest to ‘many’ persons, an action
23 may be maintained as a class action even where the parties are numerous and it is in fact practicable
24 to join them all.” (*Id.*) “No set number is required as a matter of law for the maintenance of a class
25 action.” (*Id.*) “Thus, our Supreme Court has upheld a class representing the 10 beneficiaries of a
26 trust in an action for removal of the trustees.” (*Id.*, citing *Bowles v. Super. Ct.* (1955) 44 Cal.2d
27 574; *see also Collins v. Rocha* (1972) 7 Cal.3d 232 [upholding a 35 member class.]) Therefore,
28 Plaintiff contends that numerosity is plainly satisfied.

1 **2. There are Many Common Issues of Law and Fact Which Predominate**

2 The Court should grant conditional class certification for settlement purposes here on the
3 grounds that questions of law and fact common to all class and subclass predominate over any
4 individual questions. This inquiry tests whether proposed classes are sufficiently cohesive to
5 warrant adjudication by representation. (*See, e.g., Clothesrigger, Inc. v. GTE Corp.* (1987) 191
6 Cal.App.3d 605.)

7 Here, the employment practices at issue are: whether Defendant had legally compliant
8 policies and practices for all hours worked, including overtime wages; whether Defendant had
9 legally compliant policies and practices to provide employees with meal periods; whether
10 Defendant had legally compliant policies and practices authorizing and permitting its employees
11 to take rest periods; whether Defendant reimbursed employees for business expenses; whether final
12 payment of wages was untimely and excluded unpaid wages, including meal and rest period
13 premium wages; and whether the wage statements were consequently non-compliant. Plaintiff
14 contends that the factual and legal issues are the same for all of the identified class members,
15 including Plaintiff. Further, all class members suffered from, and seek redress for, the same alleged
16 injuries.

17 **3. Plaintiff's Claims Are Typical of the Claims of the Class**

18 The typicality requirement does not focus on the individual characteristics or circumstances
19 of the representative plaintiff compared to those of the remainder of the class, but rather upon the
20 typicality of the proposed representative's claims as they relate to the defendant's conduct and
21 activities. (*Classen v. Weller* (1983) 145 Cal.App.3d 27, 47 ["[t]he only requirements are that
22 common questions of law and fact predominate and that the class representative be similarly
23 situated" vis-à-vis the class.].) A representative plaintiff's claims are typical of the class if they
24 arise from the same event, practice or course of conduct, and if the claims rest on the same legal
25 theories. (*Id.*) That is precisely the case here. Plaintiff is a former employee of Defendant; as such,
26 he alleges that he was subject to the same policies and practices as other similarly situated
27 employees.

1 **4. Plaintiff and His Counsel Meet the Adequacy Requirement**

2 The adequacy of representation requirements is met by fulfilling two conditions: first, a
3 named plaintiff must be represented by counsel qualified to conduct the pending litigation; second,
4 a named plaintiff's interests cannot be antagonistic to those of the class. (*McGhee v. Bank of*
5 *America* (1976) 60 Cal.App.3d 442, 451.)

6 All of these requirements are met here for settlement purposes. Plaintiff retained counsel
7 with extensive experience in prosecuting complex class actions, including similar class actions that
8 previously settled. (Fattahi Decl., ¶¶ 38-50.) Class Counsel unquestionably is "qualified,
9 experienced and generally able to conduct the proposed litigation." (*Miller v. Woods* (1983) 148
10 Cal.App.3d 862, 875.) In addition, Plaintiff has no conflicts, and Plaintiff has, with counsel,
11 litigated this case and diligently reviewed the settlement terms, showing his dedication. Plaintiff's
12 willingness to serve as a representative demonstrates her serious commitment to bringing about
13 the best results possible for the class. (*McGhee, supra*, 60 Cal.App.3d at p. 451.)

14 **5. A Class Action is Superior to a Multiplicity of Litigation**

15 Finally, in making its class certification decision, the Court must determine that a class
16 action would be superior to alternative means for the fair and efficient adjudication of the litigation.
17 By consolidating many potential individual actions into a single proceeding, this Court's use of the
18 class action device enables it to manage this litigation in a manner that serves the economics of
19 time, effort and expense for the litigants and the judicial system. Absent class treatment, similarly
20 situated employees with small but nevertheless meritorious claims for damages would, as a
21 practical matter, have no means of redress because of the time, effort and expense required to
22 prosecute individual actions. (*Gentry, supra*, 42 Cal.4th at pp. 457-62; *Leyva v. Medline Ind.* (9th
23 Cir. 2013) 716 F.3d 510, 515.) Moreover, in the context of settlement, the superiority concerns are
24 essentially non-existent.

25 **V. THE PROPOSED NOTICE IS CONSTITUTIONALLY SOUND**

26 **A. The Proposed Notice Plan Satisfies Due Process**

27 Notice requirements are set forth in the California Rules of Court. (Cal. Rules of Court,
28 Rule 3.766 (e), (f).) California law vests the Court with broad discretion in fashioning an

appropriate notice program. (*Cartt v. Super Ct.* (1975) 50 Cal.App.3d 960, 973-74.) There is no statutory or due process requirement that all class members receive actual notice, but in this matter, the class members will receive direct mailed notice. As the Court of Appeals has explained, “[t]he notice given should have a reasonable chance of reaching a substantial percentage of the Class Members . . .” (*Id.* at p. 974.) In this case, notice of the proposed settlement will be provided by direct mailing, the best possible form of notice.

B. The Notice is Accurate and Informative

The proposed Notice should be approved. It will be disseminated through direct U.S. first class mail to the last known address for each Class Member. It informs the Class Members of the terms of the Settlement and their right to be excluded from the Settlement. And if there are Class Members who wish to object to this proposed class action settlement, they will have the opportunity to file their objections and be heard at the Final Approval Hearing.

The Notice also fulfills the requirement of neutrality in class notices. (Conte & Newberg, *Newberg on Class Actions* (3rd Ed.) § 8.39.) It summarizes the proceedings to date and the terms and conditions of the settlement agreement, in an informative and coherent manner. It makes clear that the settlement agreement does not constitute an admission of liability by the Defendant, who denies all liability, and it recognizes that this Court has not ruled on the merits of the action. It also states that the final settlement approval decision has yet to be made. The Notice thus complies with the standards of fairness, completeness, and neutrality required of a combined settlement-certification class notice.

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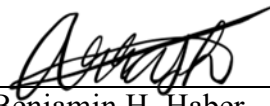
1 **VI. CONCLUSION**

2 For the foregoing reasons, Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court grant preliminary
3 approval of the proposed settlement and set a Final Approval Hearing.

4
5 Respectfully submitted,

6 Dated: August 7, 2025

WILSHIRE LAW FIRM

7
8 By:  _____

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