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VIA ONLINE FILING

Labor and Workforce Development Agency

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<https://www.dir.ca.gov/Private-Attorneys-General-Act/Private-Attorneys-General-Act.html>

RE: *John Westfall v. Star 1 MS, Incorporated*

Dear Representative:

This office represents John Westfall ("**Mr. Westfall**") with respect to his claims under the California Labor Code against Star 1 MS, Inc., ("**Employer**"). This letter is being sent simultaneously to Employer by certified mail.

Employer employed Mr. Westfall from approximately August 15, 2024, to September 5, 2024, as an hourly, non-exempt employee. During his employment with Employer, Mr. Westfall was employed as a Construction Specialist at Employer's location at 6352 Dana Ave., Jurupa Valley, CA 91752. Employer is a General Contractor.

Mr. Westfall 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. Westfall is seeking penalties solely in a representative capacity on behalf of the State of California and all current and former non-exempt employees of Employer ("**Aggrieved Employees**"). This letter is being sent in compliance with California Labor Code section 2699.3.

As detailed below, Employer violated several of California's wage and hour laws during Mr. Westfall's employment, including but not limited to violations of California Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 226(a), 226.7, 510, 512(a), 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2800, 2802, and 6300, *et seq.*, and the Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Orders ("**IWC Wage Order**") including *inter alia*, IWC Wage Order No. 16. These claims 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

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

First, Employer regularly required Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees to work more than eight (8) hours in a day or forty (40) hours in a workweek but failed to pay them overtime compensation for such work. Employer also failed to provide Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees with adequate training as



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to the payment of overtime compensation, all in an effort to keep its workers uninformed as to their legal right to overtime compensation. In addition, Employer regularly required Mr. Westfall 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 Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees to perform work before clocking in for the start of their shift. Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees regularly performed 20-30 minutes of preparatory work before clocking in, including gathering and organizing tools, preparing ice chests, and setting up for the day's tasks. This work was essential to beginning their assigned duties on time. These pre-shift tasks were performed off-the-clock and were done at the direction of the foremen, who explicitly instructed Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees to complete this setup before clocking in. Although this work directly benefited Employer, Employer did not compensate Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees for this off-the-clock work, resulting in a failure to pay minimum wages and straight time wages. Moreover, this off-the-clock work typically caused Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees to work more than eight (8) hours in a day and forty (40) hours in week, resulting in a failure to pay overtime compensation.

In addition to requiring Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees to perform work off-the-clock without compensation, Employer also failed to accurately record the actual time worked by Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees, which resulted in a failure to pay Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees for all hours actually worked, including minimum wages, straight time wages and overtime wages. Finally, and as a matter of policy and/or practice, Employer failed to pay overtime to Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees for all overtime hours worked based on regular rates of pay correctly calculated to include all applicable remuneration.

As a result of the foregoing practices, Employer has failed to pay Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees for all wages earned at the correct rates of pay, including minimum wages, straight time wages, and overtime compensation. Accordingly, Employer violated IWC Wage Order No. 16 and California Labor Code sections 204, 510, 1194, 1197, 1197.1 and 1198.

Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek unpaid wages; PAGA default penalties; penalties pursuant to paragraph (20)(A) of IWC Wage Order No. 16; penalties pursuant to California Labor Code sections 558, 1197.1, and 1199; compensation pursuant to Labor Code Section 1194; and attorneys' fees and costs.

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

Employer failed to provide Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees with legally-compliant 30-minute meal periods. Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees were required by Employer to work more than five (5) hours per day but were not provided with timely uninterrupted 30-minute meal periods. Further, Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees were not provided with a second uninterrupted 30-minute meal period when they worked over ten (10) hours per day. Employer regularly required Mr. Westfall 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



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of work. Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees were frequently required to take meal break periods after the fifth hour of work. While Employer occasionally provided premium pay for these late meal periods, Employer did not pay all premiums required. On many occasions, instead of compensating Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees properly, Employer would modify or alter time records to make it appear as though the meal period was timely taken.

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

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

Accordingly, Employer violated IWC Wage Order No. 16 and California Labor Code sections 226.7, 512(a) and 1198.

Mr. Westfall 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 No. 16; penalties pursuant to 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

Employer failed to authorize and permit Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees take legally-compliant 10-minute rest periods. Employer required Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees to work through rest periods. Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees were not provided with uninterrupted, duty-free rest periods when they worked more than four (4) hours or a major fraction thereof. Further, Mr. Westfall 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. Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees were not provided with separate, uninterrupted 10-minute rest breaks. Instead, Employer impermissibly combined rest periods with meal periods, effectively denying Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees their legally-



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mandated rest periods. At no point during Mr. Westfall's employment did he get paid a rest period premium, nor was he informed of what a rest period premium was. He was never compensated for missed rest periods, despite Employer's legal obligation to do so. Moreover, Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees were not completely relieved of duty as required by *Augustus v. ABM Security Services, Inc.*, 2 Cal.5th 257 (2016).

Employer's policies, practices, and procedures were responsible for the violations alleged above and prevented Mr. Westfall and other Aggrieved Employees from taking timely and complete rest periods because, amongst other reasons: (1) Employer did not have legally-compliant policies regarding the provision and timing of rest periods or systematically disregarded its own purported rest period policies; (2) Employer's 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) Employer failed to adequately inform and train Mr. Westfall and other Aggrieved Employees regarding their right to take timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free rest periods; (4) Employer failed to adequately inform and train Mr. Westfall and other Aggrieved Employees about their right to premium wages for non-compliant rest periods; (5) Employer failed to ensure that there was adequate staffing to allow Mr. Westfall and other Aggrieved Employees to take timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free rest periods; and (6) Employer's policy and culture prevented Mr. Westfall 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.

Mr. Westfall 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, Employer violated IWC Wage Order No. 16 and California Labor Code sections 226.7, and 1198.

Mr. Westfall 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 No. 16; 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, Employer has failed to timely pay all wages earned because Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees were not paid all the wages they were owed including, *inter alia*, overtime compensation, straight time wages, minimum wages, and meal and rest period premiums. Accordingly, Employer violated California Labor Code section 204(a).

Mr. Westfall 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.



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5. FAILURE TO PROVIDE ACCURATE ITEMIZED WAGE STATEMENTS

As a result of the practices described above, the wage statements provided to Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees failed to include the actual hours worked, the actual gross wages earned, and the correct rates of pay. Mr. Westfall's and Aggrieved Employees' wage statements did not accurately reflect all wages owed to them. Specifically, Mr. Westfall's and Aggrieved Employees' wage statements did not account for missed or late meal periods, missed rest periods, and the associated premium pay for those violations. As a result, the wage statements were incomplete and did not fully represent the compensation Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees were legally entitled to receive. Accordingly, Employer violated California Labor Code section 226(a).

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

6. FAILURE TO MAINTAIN ACCURATE RECORDS

Employer failed to maintain accurate records relating to Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees' work periods, meal periods, total daily hours worked, and total hours worked per payroll period. Accordingly, Employer violated IWC Wage Order No. 16 and California Labor Code sections 1198.5 and 1174(d).

Mr. Westfall 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 No. 16; California Labor Code section 1174.5 penalties; and attorneys' fees and costs.

7. 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 No. 16 requires employers to provide employees with the tools or equipment necessary for the performance of their job. During the relevant time period, Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees incurred necessary business-related expenses and costs that were not fully reimbursed by Employer. These costs include, but are not limited to, travel time and mileage. Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees were not compensated for travel time required for work-related duties. Additionally, Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees did not receive mileage reimbursement, despite regularly using his personal truck for work purposes.

Accordingly, Employer violated IWC Order No. 16 and California Labor Code sections 2800 and 2802.

Mr. Westfall 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 No. 16; and attorneys' fees and costs.



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8. FAILURE TO PROVIDE HAND WASHING MATERIALS

Pursuant to Labor Code section 1198 "... the standard conditions of labor fixed by the commission ... shall be ... the standard conditions of labor for employees. The employment of any employee. ... under conditions of labor prohibited by the order is unlawful." IWC Wage Order No. 16, paragraph 10(c) requires employers to provide an adequate supply of potable water, soap or other suitable cleansing agent, and single use towels for handwashing. Employer failed to provide Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees with soap or other suitable cleansing agent, and single use towels for handwashing. Accordingly, Employer violated Labor Code section 1198 and IWC Order No. 16.

Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties; penalties pursuant to paragraph (18)(A) of IWC Wage Order No. 16; and attorneys' fees and costs.

9. FAILURE TO TIMELY PAY ALL WAGES UPON TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Upon the termination of employment, Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees were not paid all wages due to them within twenty-four (24) hours or even within seventy-two (72) hours for those who resigned. Specifically, as a result of Employer's practices of requiring Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees to work off-the-clock without compensation, failing to pay proper overtime compensation, and failure to accurately record all hours actually worked, Employer failed to pay Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees for all straight time wage, minimum wages and overtime compensation owed to them upon termination of their employment. Employer also failed to pay Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees for meal period premiums and rest period premiums, they were owed, amongst other wages. Accordingly, Employer violated California Labor Code sections 201 and 202.

Mr. Westfall and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties pursuant to Labor Code section 2699; penalties pursuant to California Labor Code sections 203, 1199, and 2699(f)(2); and attorneys' fees and costs.

Therefore, on behalf of the State of California and all Aggrieved Employees, Mr. Westfall may seek all applicable penalties related to these violations of the California Labor Code pursuant to PAGA. If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Very Truly Yours,

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Notice provided to Employer via Certified Mail (9417 7112 0620 8847 1741 92)

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