



1875 Century Park East, Suite 1000
Los Angeles, California 90067
310.556.4811 Main | 310.943.0396 Fax

MAO SHIOKURA
310.712.8030 Direct
Mao.Shiokura@capstonelawyers.com

June 27, 2025

VIA ONLINE SUBMISSION

California Labor & Workforce Development Agency
ATTN: PAGA Administrator
(<https://dir.govfa.net/412>)

Subject: *Edward Ruffin v. PetSmart LLC*
LWDA Case No. LWDA-CM-1092453-25 – AMENDED NOTICE

Dear PAGA Administrator:

This office represents Edward Ruffin in connection with his claims under the California Labor Code, and this letter is sent in compliance with the notice requirements of the California Labor Code Private Attorneys General Act, California Labor Code section 2699.3. Mr. Ruffin was an employee of PETSMART LLC (“PETSMART”). We previously provided notice of Mr. Ruffin’s claims to the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”) on April 15, 2025, and submitted the applicable filing fee pursuant to Labor Code section 2699.3(a)(1)(B). This amended notice supplements Mr. Ruffin’s prior LWDA notice and is intended to clarify the facts and theories supporting his claims.

The employer may be contacted directly at the address below:

PETSMART LLC
19601 NORTH 27TH AVENUE
PHOENIX, AZ 85027

Mr. Ruffin intends to seek civil penalties, attorneys’ fees, costs, and other available relief for violations of the California Labor Code, which are recoverable under sections 2698, *et seq.*, the Labor Code Private Attorneys General Act of 2004 (“PAGA”). Mr. Ruffin seeks relief on behalf of himself, the State of California, and other persons who are or were employed by PETSMART as a non-exempt employee in a California retail store location (“aggrieved employees”). This letter is sent in compliance with the notice and reporting requirements of California Labor Code section 2699.3.

PETSMART employed Mr. Ruffin as a non-exempt employee from approximately June 2024 to January 2025. Mr. Ruffin worked for PETSMART as an Associate Manager at its PETSMART store in Daly City (315 Gellert Blvd., Daly City, California 94015). Mr. Ruffin typically worked eight (8) hours per day and five (5) days per week, at varying times. Mr. Ruffin’s job duties included, without

limitation, operating the cash register, performing safety walks, stocking the store, assisting customers, counting cash and managing deposits, and cleaning the store.

PETSMART committed each of the following Labor Code violations against Mr. Ruffin, the facts and theories of which follow, making him an “aggrieved employee” pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699(c)(1).¹ Mr. Ruffin’s relevant claims are as follows:

PETSMART’s Company-Wide and Uniform HR Practices

PETSMART LLC is a Delaware limited liability company that operates pet superstores offering pet food, supplies, grooming, training, veterinary care (through third-party clinics), and adoption services. PETSMART operates over 1,660 retail locations in the United States, including approximately 165 locations in California.

Upon information and belief, PETSMART maintains a centralized Human Resources (HR) department at its corporate headquarters in Phoenix, Arizona, for all non-exempt employees working for PETSMART at retail stores in California, including Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees. PETSMART maintained uniform practices with respect to its provision of seats (or lack thereof) in its retail stores for all non-exempt employees in California, including Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees, regardless of their location or position.

Violation of California Labor Code § 1198 and California Code of Regulations Title 8, Section 11070 Subdivision 14(A) – Failure to Provide Suitable Seating

California Labor Code section 1198 makes it illegal to employ an employee under conditions of labor that are prohibited by the applicable Industrial Welfare Commission (“IWC”) Wage Order. California Labor Code section 1198 requires that “. . . 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.” California Code of Regulations, Title 8, section 11070(14)(A) provides that “[a]ll working employees shall be provided with suitable seats when the nature of the work reasonably permits the use of seats.”

“The ‘nature of the work’ refers to an employee’s tasks performed at a given location for which a right to a suitable seat is claimed, rather than a ‘holistic’ consideration of the entire range of an employee’s duties anywhere on the jobsite during a complete shift. If the tasks being performed at a given location reasonably permit sitting, and provision of a seat would not interfere with performance of any other tasks that may require standing, a seat is called for.” *Kilby v. CVS Pharmacy, Inc.*, 368 P.3d 554, 558 (Cal. 2016). “Whether the nature of the work reasonably permits sitting is a question to be determined objectively based on the totality of the circumstances. An employer’s business judgment and the physical layout of the workplace are relevant but not dispositive factors. The inquiry focuses on the nature of the work, not an individual employee’s characteristics.” *Id.* The

¹ These facts, theories, and claims are based on Mr. Ruffin’s experience and counsel’s review of those records currently available relating to Mr. Ruffin’s employment. Discovery conducted in litigation of wage and hour claims such as these often reveals additional claims that the aggrieved employee was not initially aware of (because the aggrieved employee was not aware of the law’s requirements, the employer misinformed its employee of the law’s requirements, or because the employer effectively hid the violations). Thus, Mr. Ruffin reserves the right to supplement this letter with additional facts, theories, and claims if he becomes aware of them subsequent to the submission of this letter.

burden of proof to show suitable seating is not available is on the employer. *Id.* at 568. In other words, the employer must show that compliance is “infeasible because no suitable seating exists.” *See id.*

PETSMART’s California retail stores are generally similar in their layout and design and there was, and continues to be, space at cashwraps that could allow for the presence and use of a seat or stool by Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees during the performance of their work duties at the cashwraps. However, PETSMART has designed its cashwraps to require Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees to stand while performing their cashwrap duties. PETSMART could have designed its cashwraps in a manner that allowed Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees to sit while performing cashwrap duties and could have placed suitable seats or stools at or near each cashwrap for use by Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees. Instead, PETSMART designed its cashwraps to require Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees to stand at the work area(s) and did not provide suitable seats or stools they could use while working at the cashwrap. In addition, PETSMART prohibited Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees from sitting while working, and PETSMART’s management failed to expressly advise Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees that they could utilize seats while performing their duties.

During his employment, Mr. Ruffin performed cashiering duties at the cashwrap and spent a significant portion of his day behind the cash register. Other aggrieved employees similarly spent a portion of their day at cashwraps performing cashier duties. The nature of the work of an employee performing cashier duties can reasonably be accomplished from a seated position. Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees could have handled cash register transactions and performed other similar tasks at cashwraps at any of PETSMART’s retail stores while seated without affecting the quality and effectiveness of the performance of their job duties. However, as set forth herein, PETSMART systematically, and on a company-wide basis, designed cashwraps to require employees to stand while performing their cashier duties and did not provide suitable seats at cashwraps, forcing Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees to stand throughout their work shifts.

PETSMART violated California Labor Code section 1198 and California Code of Regulations, Title 8, section 11070(14)(A) because Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees were not allowed to sit, even when the nature of their work would reasonably permit the use of seats, nor were they provided with suitable seats. PETSMART’s management did not inform Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees that they were allowed to sit down or provide any means for them to sit down. PetSmart’s failure to provide suitable seating to Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees violates California Labor Code section 1198 and IWC Wage Order No. 7-2001, subdivision 14(A).

Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees are entitled to recover civil penalties, attorneys’ fees, costs, and interest thereon, and seek injunctive relief to bring PETSMART into compliance with the applicable IWC Wage Order and Labor Code section 1198, pursuant to Labor Code sections 1194.5 and/or 2699(a), (f), and (k).

Violation of California Labor Code § 1198 and California Code of Regulations Title 8, Section 11070 Subdivision 14(B) – Failure to Provide Suitable Seating

California Labor Code section 1198 makes it illegal to employ an employee under conditions of labor that are prohibited by the applicable IWC Wage Order. California Labor Code section 1198 requires that “. . . 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.” California Code of Regulations, Title 8, section 11070(14)(B) provides that “[w]hen employees are not engaged in the active duties of their employment and the nature of the work requires standing, an adequate number of suitable seats shall be placed in reasonable proximity to the work area and employees shall be permitted to use such seats when it does not interfere with the performance of their duties.”

The IWC states that subdivision 14(B) applies during “lulls in operation” when an employee, while still on the job, is not then actively engaged in any duties. *Kilby v. CVS Pharmacy, Inc.*, 368 P.3d 554, 565 (Cal. 2016), citing IWC, 1976 Wage Orders, Summary of Basic Provisions, Seats. When taken together, an employee is entitled to a seat under subdivision 14(A) if his or her actual tasks at a discrete location make seated work feasible, while working there. *Id.* However, if other job duties take the employee to a different location where he or she must perform tasks requiring standing, the employee would be entitled to a seat placed within reasonable proximity to their work area(s) under subdivision 14(B) during “lulls in operation.” *Id.*

PETSMART has not placed an adequate number of suitable seats within reasonable proximity to the work areas of employees who perform duties whose nature require standing and therefore has not permitted employees to use those seats when not actively engaged in performing their standing duties (i.e., during “lulls in operation”), even though sitting would not interfere with the performance of their job duties.

During his employment, Mr. Ruffin experienced lulls in his work at various times during a typical shift, especially when the store was not busy, such as in the morning and during the last hour that the store is open. During these lulls, when Mr. Ruffin was not actively performing tasks (which, on information and belief, PETSMART would claim that the nature of the work requires standing), Mr. Ruffin could have taken a moment to sit and rest his legs, back, and feet if seating was provided. PETSMART could provide Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees with a suitable seat or stool in its work areas but instead denies employees seats and forces Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees to stand throughout the day. Moreover, on information and belief, PETSMART did not inform Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees of their rights to a seat or stool under California law. PETSMART’s failure to provide suitable seating to Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees within reasonable proximity of their work areas and failure to permit them to use those seats when not actively engaged in what PETSMART claims are their standing duties violates California Labor Code section 1198 and IWC Wage Order No. 7-2001, subdivision 14(B).

Mr. Ruffin and other aggrieved employees are entitled to recover civil penalties, attorneys’ fees, costs, and interest thereon, and seek injunctive relief to bring PETSMART into compliance with the applicable IWC Wage Order and Labor Code section 1198, pursuant to Labor Code sections 1194.5 and/or 2699(a), (f), and (k).

Mr. Ruffin, acting in the public interest as a private attorney general, seeks assessment and collection of civil penalties and injunctive relief for himself, all other aggrieved employees, and the State of California against PETSMART for violations of California Labor Code section 1198 and the applicable IWC Wage Order.

Therefore, on behalf of all aggrieved employees, Mr. Ruffin seeks all applicable penalties related to these violations of the California Labor Code pursuant to PAGA.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact me at the phone number or address below:

Mao Shiokura
Capstone Law APC
1875 Century Park East, Suite 1000
Los Angeles, CA 90067
(310) 556-4811

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mao Shiokura", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mao Shiokura

Copy: PETSMART LLC (via U.S. Certified Mail)

Capstone Law, APC
1875 Century Park, East, 1000
Los Angeles, CA. 90067



7022 2410 0000 2265 2483

PETSMART LLC
19601 NORTH 27TH AVENUE
PHOENIX, AZ 85027

U.S. Postal Service™
CERTIFIED MAIL® RECEIPT
Domestic Mail Only

For delivery information, visit our website at www.usps.com®.

OFFICIAL USE

7022 2410 0000 2265 2483

Certified Mail Fee	\$
Extra Services & Fees (check box, add fee as appropriate)	
☒ Return Receipt (hardcopy)	\$
☐ Return Receipt (electronic)	\$
☐	
☐	
☐	
Postage	\$
Total	\$
Sent	
Signature	
City	

Ruphin v.
PETSMART
Postmark

PETSMART LLC
19601 NORTH 27TH AVENUE
PHOENIX, AZ 85027

PS Form 3800, April 2015 PSN 7530-02-000-9047

See Reverse for instructions

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION

- Complete items 1, 2, and 3.
- Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you.

PETSMART LLC
19601 NORTH 27TH AVENUE
PHOENIX, AZ 85027



9590 9402 8803 4005 5685 68

2 Article Number (Transfer from service label)

7022 2410 0000 2265 2483

PS Form 3811, July 2020 PSN 7530-02-000-9053

COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Signature ☐ Agent
X ☐ Addressee

B. Received by (Printed Name) C. Date of Delivery

D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes
If YES, enter delivery address below: ☐ No

3. Service Type
- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Adult Signature | ☐ Priority Mail Express® |
| ☐ Adult Signature Restricted Delivery | ☐ Registered Mail™ |
| ☒ Certified Mail® | ☐ Registered Mail Restricted Delivery |
| ☐ Certified Mail Restricted Delivery | ☐ Signature Confirmation™ |
| ☐ Collect on Delivery | ☐ Signature Confirmation Restricted Delivery |
| ☐ Collect on Delivery Restricted Delivery | |

Restricted Delivery

Domestic Return Receipt