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April 11, 2025

VIA ONLINE SUBMISSION

California Labor & Workforce Development Agency
ATTN: PAGA Administrator
(<https://dir.govfa.net/418>)

Subject: *Frank Quiroz v. Smart & Final Stores LLC, et al.*

Dear PAGA Administrator:

This office represents Frank Quiroz 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. Quiroz was an employee of SMART & FINAL STORES LLC and/or CHEDRAUI USA, INC. For the purpose of this letter, Mr. Quiroz collectively refers to these entities as "SMART & FINAL."

The employers may be contacted directly at the addresses below:

SMART & FINAL STORES LLC
600 CITADEL DRIVE
COMMERCE, CA 90040

CHEDRAUI USA, INC.
600 CITADEL DRIVE
COMMERCE, CA 90040

Mr. Quiroz 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. Quiroz seeks relief on behalf of himself, the State of California, and other persons who are or were employed by SMART & FINAL 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.

SMART & FINAL employed Mr. Quiroz as a non-exempt employee from approximately October 2024 to March 2025. Mr. Quiroz worked for SMART & FINAL as a Cashier at its Smart & Final store in Chatsworth (Store #528, located at 10340 Mason Avenue, Chatsworth, California, 91311). Mr. Quiroz typically worked four (4) hours per day and three (3) days per week, on a varied schedule. Mr. Quiroz's job duties included, without limitation, operating the cash register and handling customer transactions.

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

SMART & FINAL’s Company-Wide and Uniform HR Practices

SMART & FINAL STORES LLC is a California limited liability company and CHEDRAUI USA, INC. is a Delaware corporation. Together, they own and operate warehouse-style food and supply retail stores throughout the United States under the “Smart & Final” and “Smart & Final Extra!” store brands. SMART & FINAL operates approximately 255 retail locations in the United States, including approximately 240 locations in California.

Upon information and belief, SMART & FINAL maintains a centralized Human Resources (HR) department at its corporate headquarters in Commerce, California, for all non-exempt employees working for SMART & FINAL at retail stores in California, including Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees. SMART & FINAL 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. Quiroz 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 burden of proof to show suitable seating is not available is on the employer. *Id.* at 568. In other

¹ These facts, theories, and claims are based on Mr. Quiroz’s experience and counsel’s review of those records currently available relating to Mr. Quiroz’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. Quiroz 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.

words, the employer must show that compliance is “infeasible because no suitable seating exists.”
See id.

SMART & FINAL’s California retail stores are generally similar in their layout and design and there was, and continues to be, space at cash wraps that would allow for the presence and use of a seat or stool by Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees during the performance of their work duties at the cash wraps. However, SMART & FINAL has designed its cash wraps to require Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees to stand while performing their work duties at those locations. SMART & FINAL could have provided Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees with suitable seats at cash wraps, with reasonable or no modification to the work area(s), but instead has denied and continues to deny them seats altogether or denies them suitable seats. As a result, Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees are and have been forced to stand throughout the day. In addition, SMART & FINAL failed to expressly advise Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees that they could utilize seats while performing their duties.

During his employment, Mr. Quiroz performed cashiering duties at the cash wrap and spent a significant portion of his day behind the cash wrap. Other aggrieved employees similarly spent a portion of their day at cash wraps performing cash register duties. The nature of the work of an employee performing cashier duties can reasonably be accomplished from a seated position. Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees could have handled customer transactions and performed other similar tasks at cash wraps at any of SMART & FINAL’s stores while seated without affecting the quality and effectiveness of the performance of their job duties. However, as set forth herein, SMART & FINAL systematically, and on a company-wide basis, does not provide seats or does not provide suitable seats at cash wraps and expressly prohibits employees from sitting while working, forcing Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees to stand throughout their work shifts.

SMART & FINAL violated California Labor Code section 1198 and California Code of Regulations, Title 8, section 11070(14)(A) because Mr. Quiroz 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. SMART & FINAL’s management did not inform Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees that they were allowed to sit down, provide any means for them to sit down, or mention any policy regarding sitting. SMART & FINAL’s failure to provide suitable seating to Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees violates California Labor Code section 1198 and IWC Wage Order No. 7-2001, subdivision 14(A).

Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees are entitled to recover civil penalties, attorneys’ fees, costs, and interest thereon, and seek injunctive relief to bring SMART & FINAL 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 under subdivision 14(B) during “lulls in operation.” *Id.*

SMART & FINAL 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. Quiroz experienced lulls in his work at various times during a typical shift, especially when the store was not busy, such as in the mid-afternoon. During these lulls, when Mr. Quiroz was not actively performing tasks (the nature of which require standing), Mr. Quiroz could have taken a moment to sit and rest his legs, back, and feet if seating was provided. SMART & FINAL could have provided Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees with a suitable seat or stool within reasonable proximity of their work areas but instead denies employees seats and forces Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees to stand throughout the day. Moreover, SMART & FINAL did not inform Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees of their rights to a seat or stool under California law. SMART & FINAL’s failure to provide suitable seating to Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees within reasonable proximity of their work areas and permit them to use those seats when not actively engaged in their standing duties violates California Labor Code section 1198 and IWC Wage Order No. 7-2001, subdivision 14(B).

Mr. Quiroz and other aggrieved employees are entitled to recover civil penalties, attorneys’ fees, costs, and interest thereon, and seek injunctive relief to bring SMART & FINAL 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. Quiroz, 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 SMART & FINAL for violations of California Labor Code section 1198 and the applicable IWC Wage Order.

Therefore, on behalf of all aggrieved employees, Mr. Quiroz 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:

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

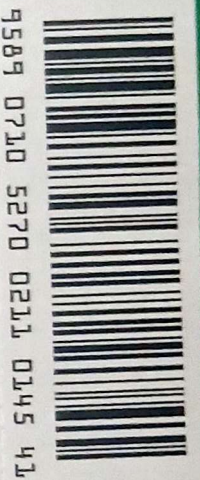
Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alexander Lima', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Alexander Lima

Copy: SMART & FINAL STORES LLC (via U.S. Certified Mail); CHEDRAUI USA, INC. (via U.S. Certified Mail)

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



CHEDRAUI USA, INC.
600 CITADEL DRIVE
COMMERCE, CA 90040

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CHEDRAUI USA, INC.
600 CITADEL DRIVE
COMMERCE, CA 90040

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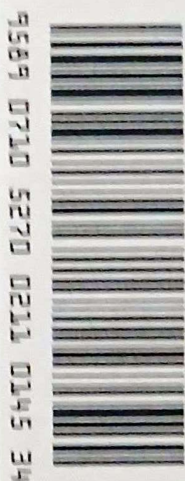
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- B. Received by (Printed Name) ☐ Addressee
- C. Date of Delivery
- D. Is delivery address different from item 1? ☐ Yes
If YES, enter delivery address below: ☐ No

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- ☐ Certified Mail[®]
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Domestic Return Receipt

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



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600 CITADEL DRIVE
COMMERCE, CA 90040

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600 CITADEL DRIVE
COMMERCE, CA 90040

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☒ X
- 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



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