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May 15, 2025

Via Electronic Filing Only

Attn: PAGA Administrator
1515 Clay Street, Ste. 801
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 622-3273

Via Certified Mail: 9407111898765447325896

El Centro De Amistad
C/O Luis Cervantes
566 S Brand Blvd,
San Fernando, California 91340

Via U.S. Mail:

Keith A. Fink & Associates
C/O Keith A. Fink, Esq.
11693 San Vicente Blvd., Suite 128
Los Angeles, California 90049

RE: ANGELICA DUENAS v. EL CENTRO DE AMISTAD
PRIVATE ATTORNEY GENERAL ACT Notice of Labor Code Violations
Pursuant to Labor Code § 2699.3(a)

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter serves as formal written notice under California Labor Code § 2699.3(a) of Plaintiff Angelica Dueñas's intent to seek civil penalties on behalf of herself, other aggrieved employees, and the State of California under the Private Attorneys General Act ("PAGA"), Labor Code §§ 2698–2699.5.

Plaintiff is an "aggrieved employee" within the meaning of Labor Code § 2699(c). She was employed by El Centro de Amistad, Inc. ("ECDA") in September 2023 and terminated after two days due to her lawful political candidacy for public office. ECDA's retaliatory and politically motivated conduct violated numerous provisions of the California Labor Code, as outlined below.

I. IDENTIFICATION OF VIOLATED LABOR CODE SECTIONS

Labor Code § 1101 — ECDA, through Executive Director Luis Cervantes, adopted and enforced a practice that interfered with Plaintiff’s protected political activity. Cervantes told Plaintiff her employment would end unless she withdrew from her political campaign.

Labor Code § 1102 — ECDA used the threat of discharge to influence Plaintiff to refrain from political activity, specifically her congressional campaign, a protected political action.

Labor Code § 1102.5(c) — Plaintiff refused to accede to an unlawful condition of employment: terminating her candidacy for Congress. ECDA retaliated against her for this refusal.

Labor Code § 98.6 — Plaintiff was discharged for engaging in lawful off-duty conduct: seeking elective office, a right protected by state law and public policy.

Labor Code § 96(k) — ECDA terminated Plaintiff for engaging in political activity outside of working hours, a clear violation of protections afforded under § 96(k).

Labor Code § 98.7 — On June 18, 2024, Plaintiff filed a retaliation complaint with the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE), Case No. RCI-CM-1034590. On August 17, 2024, the DLSE notified Plaintiff that the complaint had been accepted for investigation. As more than one year has passed without resolution, Plaintiff now invokes her right to pursue civil penalties under PAGA.

II. FACTUAL BASIS SUPPORTING THE VIOLATIONS

- Plaintiff was hired as an HR Specialist and began working on September 1, 2023.
- During onboarding, HR Director Elizabeth Diaz asked Plaintiff if she was running for Congress. Plaintiff confirmed but assured her campaign would not interfere with her job.
- On September 5, 2023, Plaintiff was summoned by Executive Director Luis Cervantes and was summarily terminated.
- Cervantes expressly stated Plaintiff’s candidacy was the reason for her termination. He suggested she could reapply if she ended her campaign or lost the election.
- No performance deficiencies, complaints, or misconduct were cited.
- Plaintiff’s candidacy was fully disclosed and conducted on her own time.
- ECDA’s decision was made in the context of its pursuit of \$5 million in federal funds requested by Rep. Tony Cárdenas, Plaintiff’s political opponent, whose brother and son are closely affiliated with ECDA’s leadership and affiliated entities.

- The timing and nature of Plaintiff's termination strongly suggest that ECDA acted to protect its funding pipeline by retaliating against a political opponent of its federal benefactor.

III. TOLLING & PROCEDURAL COMPLIANCE

Plaintiff's PAGA claims are timely. Her pursuit of remedies with the Labor Commissioner tolled the statute of limitations under Labor Code § 98.7, as courts have acknowledged such tolling to apply equitably to Labor Code claims. (See *Pinder v. EDD*, 2013 WL 4482955, at *8–9, 12 (E.D. Cal. 2013)). Plaintiff also provided timely written notice to the LWDA and Defendant. There is no prejudice to ECDA. Plaintiff acted in good faith and with reasonable diligence throughout.

IV. EXHIBIT ATTACHED

Exhibit A — DLSE Retaliation Complaint, Case No. RCI-CM-1034590, filed June 18, 2024.

V. REQUESTED ACTION

Plaintiff seeks to recover all available civil penalties under PAGA, including those recoverable on behalf of the State of California, herself, and any other aggrieved employees. Plaintiff also seeks reasonable attorneys' fees and costs under Labor Code § 2699(g)(1).

If the LWDA does not provide notice of its intention to investigate within 65 calendar days from the date of this letter, Plaintiff intends to file a civil action under Labor Code § 2699.3(a)(2)(A).

Please contact the undersigned should you require additional documentation or clarification.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zekiah N. Wright', is written over the printed name.

Zekiah N. Wright

EXHIBIT A

Labor Commissioner's Office
Retaliation Complaint Investigation Unit

Retaliation Complaint

State Case Number: RCI-CM-1034590

Date Filed: June 18, 2024



Complainant Information						
First Name	Last Name	Phone Number	Birthdate			
Angelica	Duenas					
Street Address	City	State	Zip Code			
5757 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 535	Los Angeles	CA	90036			
Interpreter Requested?	Language	Email				
No		bblady@bwlawgroup.com				

Complainant's Representative/Advocate			
Representative/Advocate Name			
BWLG			
Phone Number	Email		
310	bblady@bwlawgroup.com		
Street Address	City	State	Zip Code
5757 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 535	Los Angeles	CA	90036

Employer Information			
Employer / Business Name		Phone Number	
El Centro de Amistad			
Business Address	City	State	Zip Code
566 S. Brand Boulevard	San Fernando	CA	91340
Address where Complainant worked (if different from Business Address)	City	State	Zip Code
Name of Person in Charge		Job Title / Position of Person in Charge	
Luis Cervantes		Executive Director	
Type of Work Performed	Total Number of Employees	Employer still in Business?	
Health Care	100	Yes	

Immigration Threat
Did your employer make immigration related threats? No
Please Explain:

Other Claims Filed			
Claim for unpaid wages?	Date claim filed:	Claim filed by:	Case Number
No			
Issued claimed:			
Are other employees also filing retaliation claims against your employer?		Have you filed or do you plan to file a separate EPA (Equal Pay Act) complaint?	
No		No	

Employment Status			
Date of Hire	Quit on	Suspended on	Discharged on
September 1, 2023			September 5, 2023
	Still working for employer?	Other:	
	No		
Final Rate of Pay		Last job title with Employer	
\$26		HR Specialist	

Retaliation Complaint			
Why was this Complaint Filed	Date	Name of Person Carrying out Change	Title of Person Carrying out Change
Terminated/Discharged/Fired	September 5, 2023	Luis Cervantes; Elizabeth Diaz (HR) (only other witnesses)	Executive Director; Human Resources Specialist
Describe what happened:			
Claimant was terminated because she was running for Congress. Labor Code § 1101 and/or 1102. Respondent informed Claimant that if she withdrew from running for office she would not be terminated.			
What reason would the employer give for the changes you experienced that you selected from the list above and described?			
Employer may assert that Claimant by running for public office was seeking another job, i.e., only allowed to run for office or hold office if her employment was terminated.			
What right did you exercise or action did you take that led to your change in employment?			
Claimant was running for public office. Labor Code § 1101 or 1102; 1102.5; 96(k); 98.6.			
Describe how your employer knew about the right you exercised or the action(s) you took?			
Employer told Claimant she was being terminated for running for public office.			

Witnesses			
First Name	Last Name	Phone Number	Email
1.			

Street Address	City	State	Zip Code
1.			
<i>Please provide a brief explanation of what they saw/heard related to your complaint.</i>			
1.			

Remedies
<i>Briefly describe what you hope happens as a result of filing the complaint.</i>
All available remedies.

Authorizations to Release Information
☒ By submitting this form, I hereby certify that the information I have provided is true to the best of my knowledge and/or recollection, and I further acknowledge that this information is being collected by the State and may be shared with another state agency or a private party in accordance with California Civil Code section 1798.24 and the Information Practices Act of 1977 generally.