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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

MICHELLE RYAN aka MICHELLE DE LA TORRE, individually, and on behalf of other similarly situated employees,

Plaintiff,

vs.

GREENHOUSE SOFTWARE, INC.; and DOES 1 through 10, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No. CGC-25-627487

CLASS AND REPRESENTATIVE ACTION

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

[*Filed with the Declaration of Kane Moon, the Declaration of Plaintiff, the Declaration of Jodey Lawrence, and [Proposed] Preliminary Approval Order*]

PRELIMINARY APPROVAL HEARING:
Date: December 18, 2026
Time: 11:30 a.m.
Judge: Hon. Jeffrey S. Ross
Dept.: 613

Action Filed: July 22, 2025
Trial Date: Not Set

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

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on December 18, 2026, at 11:30 a.m., in Department 613 of this Court located at 400 McAllister St. San Francisco, California 94102, pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure § 382 and California Rules of Court 3.769 *et seq*., Plaintiff Michelle Ryan aka Michelle De La Torre ("Plaintiff") will, and hereby does, move the Court for an Order granting preliminary approval of the proposed class action settlement between Plaintiff and Defendant Greenhouse Software, Inc. ("Defendant"). Plaintiff further moves the Court for an Order:

1. Granting preliminary approval of the Class and Representative Action Settlement Agreement and Release ("Settlement" or "Settlement Agreement");
2. Certifying a Class for settlement purposes;
3. Approving the Class Notice for Final Court Approval and plan for its distribution;
4. Appointing Plaintiff as Class Representative for settlement purposes;
5. Appointing Plaintiff's Counsel, Moon Law Group, PC as Class Counsel for settlement purposes;
6. Appointing Phoenix Class Action Administration Solutions as the Administrator; and
7. Setting a final approval hearing approximately 160 days from preliminary approval.

The motion will be based upon this notice, the attached memorandum of points and authorities, the declarations filed herewith, and the records and files in this action, and any other further evidence or argument that the Court may properly receive at or before the hearing.

As this Motion is unopposed, Plaintiff respectfully requests relief from the page limit requirement set by California Rules of Court, Rule 3.1113(d).

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: October 14, 2026 MOON LAW GROUP, PC

By: _____
Kane Moon
Allen Feghali
S. Phillip Song

Attorneys for Plaintiff

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MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES

I. INTRODUCTION

Plaintiff Michelle Ryan aka Michelle De La Torre ("Plaintiff") seeks preliminary approval of a proposed $220,000.00 non-reversionary, wage and hour class action settlement with Defendant Greenhouse Software, Inc. ("Defendant") (Plaintiff and Defendant, collectively, the "Parties"). The Settlement will provide substantial monetary payments to approximately 36 Class Members. 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 arm's-length and were facilitated by experienced neutral mediator, Deborah Saxe, Esq., through a mediation session. 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

Defendant is a hiring platform company that provides recruiting, talent sourcing, and applicant tracking software services. (Declaration of Kane Moon in Support of Plaintiff's Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class and Representative Action Settlement ["Moon Decl."] ¶ 3.) Plaintiff worked for Defendant as a sales development representative from approximately July 2024 to April 2025. (Declaration of Plaintiff Michelle Ryan aka Michelle De La Torre in Support of Approval of Class and PAGA Representative Action Settlement ["Plaintiff Decl."], ¶ 2.) Plaintiff was classified as non-exempt during the entirety of her employment and was subjected to the same labor practices as her coworkers. (Moon Decl., ¶ 3.)

Plaintiff's claim for unpaid minimum and overtime wages stem from allegations that Defendant failed to compensate Plaintiff and others for off-the-clock work, and failed to incorporate all remuneration into employees' regular rate of pay for purposes of paying overtime, meal premium or sick pay. (*Id.* at ¶ 4.) Moreover, Plaintiff alleges that Defendant systematically failed to provide meal periods and rest breaks. (*Id.*) In addition to the foregoing claims, Plaintiff brings claims for reimbursement of necessary business expenses, and derivative claims against Defendant for waiting

time penalties, wage statement violations, unfair business practices, and civil penalties under the California Private Attorneys General Act, Labor Code sections 2698, *et seq.* ("PAGA"). (*Id.*)

Because of Defendant's alleged violations of various provisions of the Labor Code, Plaintiff commenced this Action on July 22, 2025, by filing a Class Action Complaint, alleging that Defendant systematically: (1) failed to pay minimum wages, (2) failed to pay overtime compensation, (3) failed to provide meal periods, (4) failed to authorize and permit rest breaks, (5) failed to indemnify necessary business expenses; (6) failed to timely pay final wages at termination, (7) failed to provide accurate itemized wage statements, and (8) engaged in unfair business practices. (*Id.* at ¶ 5.) On September 24, 2025, Plaintiff filed a First Amended Class Action Complaint against Defendant adding a cause of action for civil penalties under PAGA (the "Operative Complaint"). (*Id.*)

On July 19, 2025, Plaintiff submitted a PAGA notice of alleged Labor Code violations to Defendant and the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (the "LWDA"). (*Id.* at ¶ 6, Ex. 2.) On October 8, 2026, Plaintiff subsequently submitted an amended PAGA notice to the LWDA to correct Plaintiff's employment position and employment dates. (*Id.*) Plaintiff's administrative exhaustion period under PAGA expired without the LWDA indicating its intent to investigate the alleged violations. (*Id.*)

On July 30, 2026, the Parties participated in an all-day remote mediation before Deborah Saxe, a JAMS mediator with experience litigating and mediating employment wage-and-hour class actions. (*Id.* at ¶ 7.) After a full day of mediation, the Parties accepted a mediator's proposal agreeing to the material terms of the Settlement, which were documented in a Memorandum of Understanding of Class and PAGA Settlement executed on July 30, 2026. (*Id.*)

Defendant contends that it has acted properly and lawfully at all times and denies any wrongdoing, including any of the wrongful acts or violations of law or duty alleged in the Complaint, First Amended Complaint, PAGA notice, amended PAGA notice, or the Action. (*Id.* at ¶ 8.) Defendant also denies that Plaintiff or any of the Class Members are entitled to any form of wages, damages, penalties, interests, attorneys' fees, costs, or any relief whatsoever (at law or at equity). (*Id.*) Defendant is prepared to vigorously litigate this matter and has entered into the Settlement solely to avoid the substantial expense and burdens of litigation and business interruptions that it

creates. (*Id.*) Defendant has concluded that it is beneficial to fully and finally settle and terminate the Action in the manner and upon the terms and conditions set forth in the Settlement. (*Id.*)

B. Discovery and Investigation

Following the filing of Plaintiff's complaint, the Parties met and conferred regarding an agreement to mediate the claims. (*Id.* at ¶ 9.) Thereafter, the Parties agreed to a protocol for exchanging documents and information before the mediation. (*Id.*) Plaintiff obtained from Defendant, through informal but extensive discovery, information sufficient to meaningfully evaluate the claims at issue in the action, including applicable written policies, the employee handbook in effect during the Class Period, Plaintiff's complete personnel file, a sample of time and corresponding payroll records for Class Members, and information regarding the estimated number of current and former Class Members, Workweeks, PAGA Group Members, PAGA Pay Periods, and average hourly pay. (*Id.*)

In preparation for mediation, Plaintiff's Counsel reviewed and analyzed all the information Defendant provided, including the sample time/pay records and documents regarding Defendant's wage and hour policies. (*Id.* at ¶ 10.) Plaintiffs' Counsel retained a statistics expert to analyze the sample records and prepare a damage analysis prior to mediation. (*Id.*) The sample of time and pay records contained the records of 8 Class Members (representing approximately 22% of the Class), which allowed Plaintiff's expert to prepare an analysis with a reasonable degree of certainty. (*Id.*) In conjunction with their extensive factual investigation, Plaintiff's Counsel also investigated the applicable law regarding the claims and defenses asserted in the litigation. (*Id.*) Accordingly, Plaintiff's Counsel were able to evaluate the probability of class certification, success on the merits, and Defendant's maximum and realistic monetary exposure for all claims. (*Id.*) Thus, Plaintiff's and her counsel's familiarity with the facts of the case and the legal issues raised by the pleadings allowed them to act intelligently in negotiating the Settlement. (*Id.*)

After a reasonable inquiry, Plaintiff's Counsel aver that they are not aware of any case, the nature of any claims asserted in such case, or the definition of a class of parties on whose behalf any action was brought that would overlap with the putative Class, as defined in this matter, or would otherwise be extinguished or adversely affected by approval of this Settlement. (*Id.* at ¶ 11.)

C. Settlement Negotiations

On July 30, 2026, the Parties participated in a full day mediation with Deborah Saxe, Esq., a professional and neutral class and PAGA action mediator. (*Id.* at ¶ 12.) The settlement negotiations were at arm's length and, although conducted in a professional manner, were adversarial. (*Id.*) The Parties went into the mediation willing to explore the potential for a settlement of the dispute, but each side was also prepared to litigate their position through trial and appeal if a settlement had not been reached. (*Id.*) After extensive discussion regarding the merits and certifiability of Plaintiff's claims and Defendant's defenses, a settlement was reached by the parties, the material terms of which are encompassed within the Class and Representative Action Settlement Agreement and Release (*Id.* at ¶ 12, Ex. 1 ["Settlement" or "Settlement Agreement"].)

Plaintiff's Counsel have conducted a thorough investigation into the facts of this case. (*Id.* at ¶ 19.) Based on the foregoing discovery and their own independent investigation and evaluation, Plaintiff's Counsel is of the opinion that the Settlement is fair, reasonable, and adequate. (*Id.*) Furthermore, in light of all known facts and circumstances, the risk of significant delay, trial risk, appellate risk, the defenses that could be asserted by Defendant both to certification and on the merits, the settlement is in the best interests of the Class Members. (*Id.*) **Indeed, the $220,000.00 Settlement represents approximately 19% of Plaintiff's maximum potential recovery of $1,138,929.40 and 77% of Plaintiff's realistic recovery of $284,732.35.** (*Id.* at ¶¶ 27-29.)

D. Key Terms of the Proposed Settlement

Under the Settlement, Defendant will pay a non-reversionary, Gross Settlement Amount of $220,000.00 and any employer payroll taxes owed, to resolve this litigation. (Settlement, ¶ 2.1.) The Settlement's key terms include:

1. Class, and Class Period: The proposed Class for purposes of the Settlement contains approximately 36 members and is defined as: all current and former non-exempt employees who worked for Defendant in California at any time between July 22, 2021, and December 31, 2026 ("Class Period"). (*Id.* at ¶¶ 1.1, 1.5.)

2. Workweek: means a week worked by a Class Member for Defendant during the Class Period. (*Id.* at ¶ 1.41.)

3. Release of Claims by Class Members: Upon the Effective Date and full funding of the Gross Settlement Amount, all Releasing Parties shall waive and forfeit, and be deemed to have fully, finally and forever released and discharged all Released Class Claims (as defined in the Settlement) arising during the Class Period against all Released Parties. (*Id.* at ¶ 2.8.)

4. PAGA Release: Upon the Effective Date and full funding of the Gross Settlement Amount, Plaintiff and all PAGA Group Members shall, on behalf of themselves and on behalf of the LWDA, waive, release, and forever discharge all Released PAGA Claims (as defined in the Settlement) arising during the PAGA Period against all Released Parties. (*Id.* at ¶ 2.9.)

5. PAGA Penalty Amount: means twenty-two thousand dollars and no cents ($22,000.00) to be paid to settle any and all claims for which penalties under PAGA may be sought or are otherwise available, as set forth in Sections 2.5 and 1.30 of the Settlement. (*Id.* at ¶ 1.25.) The Administrator will calculate each Individual PAGA Payment by (a) dividing the amount of the PAGA Group Members' 35% share of PAGA Group Amount ($7,700.00) by the total number of PAGA Pay Periods worked by all PAGA Group Members during the PAGA Period and (b) multiplying the result by each PAGA Group Member's PAGA Pay Periods. (*Id.* at ¶ 7.2.) Plaintiff's Counsel submitted the proposed settlement to the LWDA. (Moon Decl., ¶ 13, Ex. 2.)

6. Net Settlement Fund: means the Gross Settlement Amount less the Class Counsel Award to Class Counsel, all Settlement Administration Costs, the Representative Service Payment, the LWDA Payment, and the PAGA Group Amount. To the extent the Court does not approve the full requested Class Counsel Award to Class Counsel, the Representative Service Payment, or Settlement Administration Costs, the Net Settlement Fund will increase. Individual Class Payments will be paid out of the Net Settlement Fund. (Settlement, ¶ 1.19.)

7. Individual Class Payment: means the amount(s) paid in settlement hereunder to each Settlement Class Member as determined pursuant to the terms set forth in Section 7.1 of the Settlement. (*Id.* at ¶ 1.15.)

8. Unclaimed Funds: If any checks mailed to Class Members remain uncashed after the expiration of ninety (90) days, or an envelope mailed to a Class Member is returned and no forwarding address can be located for the Class Member after reasonable efforts have been made

(including, but not limited to, skip tracing), then any such funds shall be transmitted to the Settlement Administrator and distributed to the State of California Unclaimed Property Fund in the name of the Class Member or PAGA Group Member. (*Id.* at ¶ 7.4.) Any Settlement Class Member who fails to timely cash or deposit their check(s) shall remain subject to the terms of the Settlement, including without limitation all releases contained herein, and the Final Approval Order and Judgment from the Court. (*Id*.)

9. Tax Treatment: The Settlement Agreement provides that one-third (33.33%) of each Settlement Class Member's Individual Class Payment will be allocated to settlement of wage claims (the "Wage Portion"). (*Id.* at ¶ 7.1(d).) The remaining one-third (33.33%) of each Settlement Class Member's Individual Class Payment will be allocated to settlement of claims for interest, and one-third (33.33%) will be allocated to settlement of claims for penalties (collectively, for the interest and penalties portions, the "Non-Wage Portion(s)"). (*Id.*) Defendant will separately pay any and all employer payroll taxes owed on the Wage Portions of the Individual Class Payments. (*Id*.) One hundred percent (100%) of each PAGA Group Member's Individual PAGA Payment will be allocated to settlement of claims for penalties. (*Id.* at ¶ 7.2.)

10. Attorneys' Fees and Costs: The Settlement Agreement provides for a Class Counsel Award of not more than one-third (1/3) of the Gross Settlement Amount (currently estimated to be $73,333.33) for Class Counsel's attorneys' fees, plus a reimbursement of actual litigation costs of not more than $20,000.00. (*Id.* at ¶ 2.2.) In the event the amount of actual costs is less and/or the amount of fees and costs approved by the Court are less than the requested amounts, the difference will revert to the Net Settlement Fund. (*Id.* at ¶ 2.4.) At this time, Plaintiff's Counsel's costs total $20,920.05. (Moon Decl., ¶ 15, Ex. 4.) However, Plaintiff's Counsel requests only $20,000.00 for reimbursement of litigation costs consistent with the Settlement. (*Id.* at ¶ 15.)

11. Class Representative Service Payment: The Settlement Agreement includes a Class Representative Service Payment to Plaintiff in an amount up to $7,500.00 from the Gross Settlement Amount, subject to the Court's approval, in addition to the amount she is eligible to receive as a Class Member. (Settlement, ¶ 2.3.) The award is in recognition of her role in the Action. (*Id.* at ¶ 1.11.)

12. Notice of Proposed Settlement: The Notice sets forth in plain terms, a statement of case, the terms of the Settlement Agreement, the approximate amounts of attorneys' fees, costs, and service awards being sought, and an explanation of how the settlement allocations are calculated. (*Id.* at Ex. B.) Using best efforts to perform as soon as possible, and within thirty (30) calendar days after entry of the Preliminary Approval Order, the Administrator will send to all Class Members identified in the Class Data, via first-class USPS mail. (*Id.* at ¶ 4.2.) Before mailing Class Notices, the Administrator shall update Class Member addresses using the National Change of Address Database. (*Id.* at ¶ 4.3.) Any Class Notice returned to the Settlement Administrator as non-deliverable on or before the Response Deadline shall be sent promptly via First-Class U.S. Mail to the forwarding address affixed thereto. (*Id.* at ¶ 4.4.) With respect to Class Notices returned to the Settlement Administrator without a forwarding address, the Settlement Administrator shall make an attempt to locate an address by way of skip-trace and promptly re-mail the returned Class Notice via First-Class U.S. Mail. (*Id.*) Settlement administration costs are estimated to be $4,250.00. (Moon Decl., ¶ 19, Ex. 5.) The Settlement Agreement provides the Administrator will be paid an amount not to exceed $4,250.00 from the Gross Settlement Amount, for its fees and expenses in administering this Settlement. (Settlement, ¶ 1.35.)

13. Response Deadline and Procedure for Challenging Workweeks and/or Pay Periods, Opting Out, or Objecting: Class Members will have 60 calendar days from the date of initial Class Notice mailing, which will be extended by 15 calendar days for any re-mailed Notice. (*Id.* at ¶ 1.34.) The Class Notice explains the procedure under which a Class Member and/or PAGA Group Member can challenge the number of his or her individual Workweeks and/or Pay Periods stated in their Notice. (*Id.* at Ex. B.) Additionally, the Notice explains how Class Members may, should they choose to do so, request exclusion, or otherwise submit a written objection or state an oral objection at the Final Approval Hearing. (*Id.*) Class Members need not file or serve, or state in any written objection, a notice of intention to appear at the Final Approval Hearing. (*See id.*)

III. THE COURT SHOULD GRANT PRELIMINARY APPROVAL

To prevent fraud, collusion, or unfairness to the class, the settlement of a class action requires court approval. (*Dunk v. Ford Motor Co.* (1996) 48 Cal.App.4th 1794, 1800-01.) This Court has

wide discretion to determine whether the proposed settlement is fair. (*Mallick v. Super. Ct.* (1979) 89 Cal.App.3d 434, 438.) Fairness is presumed when: (1) the settlement is reached through arm's-length bargaining; (2) investigation is sufficient to allow counsel and the court to act intelligently; (3) counsel is experienced in similar litigation; and (4) the percentage of objectors is small. (*Dunk,* 48 Cal.App.4th at p. 1800.)

In evaluating a settlement, the trial court considers the following factors: 1) the strength of plaintiff's case; 2) the risk, expense, complexity, and likely duration of further litigation; 3) the risk of maintaining class action status through trial; 4) the amount offered in settlement; 5) the extent of discovery completed and the stage of the proceedings; 6) the experience and views of counsel; 7) the presence of a governmental participant; and 8) the reaction of the class members to the proposed settlement. (*Kullar v. Foot Locker Retail, Inc*., (2008) 168 Cal.App.4th 116, 128.) In order to approve a class action settlement, the court must satisfy itself that the class settlement is within the "ballpark" of reasonableness. (*Id*. at p. 133.) The record need not contain an explicit statement of the maximum theoretical recovery. (*Munoz v. BCI Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of Los Angeles* (2010) 186 Cal.App.4th 399, 408-9 [holding that *Kullar* does not require "an explicit statement of the maximum amount the plaintiff class could recover if it prevailed on all its claims", but instead, only an "understanding of the amount that is in controversy and the realistic range of outcomes of the litigation."].)

As discussed below, Plaintiff's Counsel have provided information exceeding the threshold required to provide this Court with materials and information necessary to determine that the proposed settlement is fair, adequate, and reasonable.

A. <u>The Settlement Is Fair, Reasonable, Adequate, and the Product of Investigation, Litigation, and Negotiation</u>

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

Courts presume the absence of fraud or collusion in the negotiation of a settlement, unless evidence to the contrary is offered; thus, there is a presumption here that the negotiations were conducted in good faith. (Conte & Newberg, Newberg on Class Actions (3rd Ed.) § 11.51.) Settlement is favored, and settlement agreements are realistically assessed. (*Stamburgh v. Super. Ct.*

(1976) 62 Cal.App.3d 231, 236; *Priddy v. Edelman* (6th Cir. 1989) 883 F.2d 438, 447 ["The fact that a plaintiff might have received more if the case had been fully litigated is no reason not to approve the settlement."].)

The Settlement was reached following extensive negotiations following a mediation session with experienced employment mediator Deborah Saxe, Esq. (Moon Decl. ¶ 12.) The settlement negotiations were at arm's length and, although conducted in a professional manner, were adversarial. (*Id*.) The Parties went into the mediation willing to explore the potential for a settlement of the dispute, but each side was also prepared to litigate their or its position through trial and appeal if a settlement had not been reached. (*Id.*)

Prior to reaching this Settlement, Plaintiff's Counsel conducted informal discovery and investigation into the claims alleged by Plaintiff, including, among other things, reviewing and analyzing internal memoranda, policy manuals, and preparing a damage analysis. (Moon Decl., ¶¶ 9-10, 19-20.) Significantly, Plaintiff's Counsel's calculations are based on the analysis of a statistics expert retained by Plaintiff's Counsel to analyze the records produced by Defendant. (*Id*. at ¶¶ 10, 20.) In conjunction with their extensive factual investigation, Plaintiff's Counsel investigated the applicable law regarding the claims and defenses asserted in the litigation. (*Id*. at ¶¶ 10, 21.) Thus, Plaintiff and her counsel were able to act intelligently and effectively in negotiating the proposed settlement. (*Id*. at ¶ 10.)

Plaintiff's Counsel also have considerable experience and have demonstrated competence with litigating wage and hour class actions. (Moon Decl., ¶¶ 47-70.) Again, this supports that the terms of the Settlement are based on objective evidence that has been considered and weighed against the risks, expenses, and time consumption to both sides of continued litigation of this action.

2. The Settlement Is Fair and Reasonable in Light of the Parties' Respective Legal Positions

A settlement is not judged against what might plaintiff recovered had he prevailed at trial, nor does the settlement have to provide 100% of the damages sought to be fair and reasonable. (*Wershba v. Apple Computers, Inc.* (2001) 91 Cal.App.4th 224, 246, 250 ["Compromise is inherent and necessary in the settlement process…even if the relief afforded by the proposed settlement is

substantially narrower than it would be if the suits were to be successfully litigated, this is no bar to a class settlement because the public interest may indeed be served by a voluntary settlement in which each side gives ground in the interest of avoiding litigation."])

The settlement obviates the significant risk that this Court may deny certification of all or some of Plaintiff's claims. (Moon Decl., ¶ 32.) While Plaintiff is confident in the merits of her claims, a legitimate controversy exists as to each cause of action. (*Id*. at ¶ 30.) Plaintiff also recognizes that proving the amount of wages due to each class member would be an expensive, time-consuming, and uncertain proposition. (*Id*.) Furthermore, even if Plaintiff was able to pursue her claims on a class-wide basis and thereafter obtained certification of all or some of the claims, continued litigation would be expensive, involving a trial and possible appeals, and would substantially delay and reduce any recovery by the Class Members. (*Id*. at ¶ 32.)

The proposed settlement of $220,000.00 therefore represents a substantial recovery when compared to Plaintiff's reasonably forecasted recovery. (*Id*. at ¶ 35.) Because of the proposed Settlement, class members will receive timely, guaranteed relief and will avoid the risk of an unfavorable judgment. (*Id.* at ¶ 29.) When considering the risks of litigation, including the uncertainties involved in achieving class certification, the burdens of proof necessary to establish liability, the probability of appeal of a favorable judgment, it is clear that the settlement amount is within the "ballpark" of reasonableness, and preliminary settlement approval is appropriate. (*Id*. at ¶ 35.)

The Net Settlement Fund available for settlement payments is no less than **$92,916.67** for an estimated Class size of **36 individuals**.[1] (*Id.* at ¶ 34.) As a result, the average Individual Class Payment is approximately **$2,581.02** prior to tax withholdings on the wage portion of payments. Considering Class Members' average hourly rate is approximately $28.47, the average benefit is approximately **90.66 hours of work**. (*Id.*) Additionally, there are an estimated **25 PAGA Group Members**, which results in average Individual PAGA Payment of **$308.00** from the $7,700.00

[1] The Net Settlement Fund is at least $220,000.00 less the following: $7,500.00 for the Representative Service Payment, up to $4,250.00 for Settlement Administration Costs, $22,000.00 for PAGA Penalty Amount, $73,333.33 for attorney's fees, and $20,000.00 for litigation costs. (Settlement Agreement, ¶¶ 1.36, 2.1-.2.3.)

PAGA Group Amount, or 35% of the $22,000.00 allocated to PAGA Penalty Amount. (*Id.*) The average **pay period value is $11.03** based on approximately **698 PAGA Pay Periods**. (*Id.*) The actual amounts to Settlement Class Members and PAGA Group Members will vary based on each individual's duration of work during the Class Period or PAGA Period, respectively; thus, those who worked longer for Defendant during the relevant period will receive a benefit greater than the average estimated amount. (*Id.*) The high and low range of payments to Class Members will be calculated by the Administrator following preliminary approval and receipt and processing of the Class Data and will be provided to the Court in a motion for final approval. (*Id.*)

3. Plaintiff's Counsel Have Extensive Experience in Class Action Litigation

The settlement negotiations were conducted by highly capable and experienced counsel. Plaintiff's Counsel have a strong record of vigorous and effective advocacy for their clients and are experienced in handling complex wage and hour class action litigation. (*Id.* at ¶¶ 47-70.) Although Plaintiff and her counsel were prepared to litigate the claims alleged in the litigation, they support the proposed Settlement as being in the best interest of the class. (Moon Decl., ¶ 19.)

B. <u>The Proposed Class Notice of Settlement Should Be Approved</u>

The proposed Class Notice, in the form attached to the Settlement as Exhibit B, should be approved for dissemination to the class. The Class Notice informs the class of the terms of the Settlement and of their rights to be excluded from the Settlement. Additionally, if there are Class Members who wish to object to this proposed Settlement, they will have the opportunity to file their objections and be heard at the Final Approval Hearing. Accordingly, the proposed Class Notice meets all the requirements of Rule 3.769(f) of the California Rules of Court.

C. <u>The Proposed Attorneys' Fees and Costs Are Reasonable</u>

The Settlement provides a payment for attorneys' fees of not more than one-third (33%) of the Gross Settlement Amount, which is currently estimated to be $73,333.33 and a payment for litigation costs of not more than $20,000.00. (Settlement, ¶ 2.2.) These amounts are subject to Court approval. (*Id.*) These amounts will be disclosed to all class members in the proposed Notice and are reasonable.

1. Class Counsel Will Request an Award Of Fees Based On The "Common Fund" Method

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

Plaintiff's Counsel seek an award of attorneys' fees on the "percentage of recovery/common fund" theory. (Moon Decl., ¶ 40.) The purpose of this approach is to "spread litigation costs proportionally among all the beneficiaries so that the active beneficiary does not bear the entire burden alone." (*Vincent v. Hughes Air West, Inc.* (1977) 557 F.2d 759, 769.) In *Quinn v. State of California* (1995) 15 Cal.3d 162, the California Supreme Court stated: "[O]ne who expends attorneys' fees in winning a suit which creates a fund from which others derive benefits may require those passive beneficiaries to bear a fair share of the litigation costs." (*Id.* at p. 167.) Similarly, in *City and County of San Francisco v. Sweet* (1995) 12 Cal.4th 105, the California Supreme Court recognized that the common fund doctrine has been applied "consistently in California when an action brought by one party creates a fund in which other persons are entitled to share." (*Id.* at p. 110.)

The California Supreme Court recently affirmed in *Laffitte v. Robert Half Int'l Inc*. (2016) 1 Cal.5th 480 that, "when class action litigation establishes a monetary fund for the benefit of the class members, and the trial court in its equitable powers awards class counsel a fee out of that fund, the court may determine the amount of a reasonable fee by choosing an appropriate percentage of the fund created." (*Id*. at p. 503.) The court explained: "The recognized advantages of the percentage method—including relative ease of calculation, alignment of incentives between counsel and the class, a better approximation of market conditions in a contingency case, and the encouragement it provides counsel to seek an early settlement and avoid unnecessarily prolonging the litigation—

convince us the percentage method is a valuable tool that should not be denied our trial courts." (*Id*. [internal citations omitted].)

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

According to a leading treatise on class actions, "No general rule can be articulated on what is a reasonable percentage of a common fund. Usually 50% of the fund is the upper limit on a reasonable fee award from a common fund in order to assure that the fees do not consume a disproportionate part of the recovery obtained for the class, although somewhat larger percentages are not unprecedented." (*See* Conte & Newberg, Newberg on Class Actions (3rd Ed.) § 14.03.) Attorneys' fees that are fifty percent of the fund are typically considered the upper limit, with thirty to forty percent commonly awarded in cases where the settlement is relatively small. (*Id*; *see also Van Vranken v. Atlantic Richfield Company* (N.D. Cal. 1995) 901 F.Supp. 294 [stating that most cases where 30-50 percent was awarded involved "smaller" settlement funds of under $10 million].)

Here, Plaintiff requests attorneys' fees equal to one-third (33%) of the Gross Settlement Amount, which is in line with the prevailing guidelines established in California case law and academic literature and is consistent with awards in California. (*Compare* Settlement, ¶ 2.2 *with Chavez v. Netflix, Inc.* (2008) 162 Cal.App.4th 43, 66, n.11 ["Empirical studies show that, regardless whether the percentage method or the lodestar method is used, fee awards in class actions average around one-third of the recovery."].) Accordingly, Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court approve the attorneys' fees as negotiated by the Parties and requested herein.

3. This Matter Involves A "Fee-Shifting" Provision of the Labor Code

Labor Code §§ 218.5, 226, 1194 and 2699, *et seq*. provide for the recovery of reasonable attorney's fees, and costs of suit, for the claims made in this action. Under these sections, Plaintiff would be permitted to recover her actual attorneys' fees, even if those fees were larger than the total class recovery at the conclusion of this case. This Settlement is beneficial in that it limits the risk of continued expenses and consumption of time, energy, and resources facing Defendant while at the same time rewarding Plaintiff's Counsel for their decision to assume risk by taking on this matter. In fact, prosecution of this action involved significant financial risk for Plaintiff's Counsel. (Moon Decl., ¶¶ 43-46.) Plaintiff's Counsel undertook this matter solely on a contingent basis, with no

guarantee of recovery. (*Id*.) Once Plaintiff's Counsel undertook this litigation on behalf of the Class, Class Counsel committed to pursue it to its conclusion, placing its fiduciary duty to the Class ahead of all other concerns. (*Id.* at ¶ 44.)

4. The Experience, Reputation and Ability of Plaintiff's Counsel Support the Requested Fee Award

As demonstrated by their past experience in pursuing class actions on behalf of consumers and employees, Plaintiff's Counsel possess considerable expertise in litigating class actions. (*Id.* at ¶¶ 47-69.) Plaintiff's Counsel has been involved as lead counsel or co-counsel in several class actions that resulted in millions in recovery. (*Id.* at ¶¶ 51, 57, 63, 66.) Because it is reasonable to compensate class counsel commensurate with their skill, reputation and experience, Plaintiff's Counsel's requested fee award is supported here.

Plaintiff's 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. (*Id.* at ¶ 52.) 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. (*See id*. at ¶ 70.) Based on these and other factors, Plaintiff's Counsel have frequently received fee awards of this percentage from the gross recovery for the class. (*Id*. at ¶¶ 51, 57, 63, 66.) Therefore, the requested fee award is reasonable and fair.

D. <u>The Class Representative Service Payment is Reasonable</u>

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.)

Enhancement payments 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 section 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.)

The Settlement Agreement includes a Class Representative Service Payment to Plaintiff in an amount up to $7,500.00 from the Gross Settlement Amount, subject to the Court's approval, in addition to the amount she is eligible to receive as a Class Member. (Settlement, ¶ 2.3.) Plaintiff's Counsel represents that Plaintiff devoted a great deal of time and work assisting counsel in the case and communicated with counsel very frequently for litigation and to prepare for mediation. (Moon Decl., ¶¶ 37-40.) This amount is reasonable particularly in light of the substantial benefits Plaintiff generated for all class members. (*Id*.)

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

IV. CERTIFICATION FOR SETTLEMENT PURPOSES IS WARRANTED

A. Legal Standard

The proposed Settlement Class is well suited for class certification.[2] All of the claims derive from a core set of alleged violations of California's wage and hour laws and regulations. For the reasons set forth more fully below, for purpose of settlement the Class satisfies the prerequisites for certification under Code of Civil Procedure § 382. Section 382 provides: "when the question is one of a common or general interest, of many persons, or when the parties are numerous, and it is impracticable to bring them all before the court, one or more may sue or defend for the benefit of all." (Code Civ. Proc., § 382.) There are two requirements to section 382: "(1) There must be an ascertainable class; and (2) there must be a well-defined community of interest in the questions of law and fact involved affecting the parties to be represented." (*Daar v. Yellow Cab Co*. (1967) 67 Cal. 2d 695, 704 [citations omitted].) To clarify these requirements, the California Supreme Court has looked to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23 to explain that the community-of-interest requirement itself embodies three factors: "(1) predominant questions of law or fact; (2) class representatives with claims or defenses typical of the class; and (3) class representatives who can adequately represent the class." (*Richmond v. Dart Indus., Inc*. (1981) 29 Cal. 3d 462, 470.)

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

B. Plaintiff Maintains That The Criteria For Class Certification Are Satisfied

1. The Class Is Ascertainable and Numerous

When determining whether a class is ascertainable, California courts focus on the following three factors: (1) the class definition, (2) the size of the class, and (3) the means of identifying class

[2] While Defendant denies Plaintiff's allegations, for purposes of settlement only, Defendant has stipulated to certification of the Class.

members. *See Miller v. Woods*, 148 Cal. App. 3d 862, 873 (1983). Here, the proposed class that Plaintiff seeks to represent is ascertainable because (1) the class definition is sufficiently precise, (2) consists of 36 class members, and (3) class members can be readily identified by looking at Defendant's records.

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

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

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

To satisfy the community of interest requirement, Parties must show: (1) common questions of law and fact that predominate over individual issues; (2) class representatives must have claims or defenses typical of the class; and (3) class representatives must adequately represent the class. *Dunk*, 48 Cal. App. 4th at 1806. This inquiry tests whether proposed classes are sufficiently cohesive to warrant adjudication by representation. (*See, e.g., Clothesrigger, Inc. v. GTE Corp*. (1987) 191 Cal.App.3d 605.) Plaintiff's claims satisfy all three requirements.

In this case, the employment practices at issue are: whether Defendant had legally compliant policies and practices to pay employees all wages owed; whether Defendant had legally compliant policies and practices to provide employees with meal periods; whether Defendant had legally

compliant policies and practices authorizing and permitting its employees to take rest periods; whether final payment of wages was untimely and excluded unpaid wages, including meal period premium wages, and rest period premium wages; whether all wages were paid to employees at the time of termination of the employment relationship; and whether the wage statements were consequently non-compliant. Plaintiff contends that the factual and legal issues are the same for all identified class members, including Plaintiff. Plaintiff further contends that all class members suffered from, and seek redress for, the same alleged injuries. Considering that Class Members would need to prove the same issues of law and fact to prevail and their legal remedies are identical, it would be preferable to resolve all claims through a settlement agreement than to force each Class Member to litigate their own individual claims. Thus, the Court should grant conditional class certification for settlement because common questions of law and fact predominate over any individual questions within the class.

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

The typicality requirement does not focus on the individual characteristics or circumstances of the representative plaintiff compared to those of the remainder of the class, but rather upon the typicality of the proposed representative's claims as they relate to the defendant's conduct and activities. (*Classen v. Weller* (1983) 145 Cal.App.3d 27, 47 ["[t]he only requirements are that common questions of law and fact predominate and that the class representative be similarly situated" vis-à-vis the class.].) A representative plaintiff's claims are typical of the class if they arise from the same event, practice or course of conduct, and if the claims rest on the same legal theories. (*Id*.) That is precisely the case here. Plaintiff is a former employee of Defendant; as such, she alleges that she was subject to the same policies and practices as other similarly situated employees. (Plaintiff Decl., ¶ 6.)

4. Plaintiff and Her Counsel Meet the Adequacy Requirement

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

Here, all requirements are met. Plaintiff retained counsel with extensive experience in prosecuting complex class actions, including similar class actions that previously settled. (Moon Decl., ¶¶ 47-70.) With their combined experience, Plaintiff's Counsel unquestionably are "qualified, experienced and generally able to conduct the proposed litigation." (*Miller*, *supra*, 148 Cal.App.3d at 875.) In addition, Plaintiff has no conflicts, and Plaintiff has, with counsel, litigated this case and diligently reviewed the settlement terms, showing her dedication. (Plaintiff Decl., ¶¶ 8-10.) Plaintiff's willingness to serve as representatives demonstrates their serious commitment to bringing about the best results possible for the class. (*Id.* at ¶¶ 11-22; *McGhee*, *supra,* 60 Cal.App.3d at p. 451.)

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

Finally, in making its class certification decision, the Court must determine that a class action would be superior to alternative means for the fair and efficient adjudication of the litigation. By consolidating many potential individual actions into a single proceeding, this Court's use of the class action device enables it to manage this litigation in a manner that serves the economics of time, effort and expense for the litigants and the judicial system. Absent class treatment, similarly situated employees with small but nevertheless meritorious claims for damages would, as a practical matter, have no means of redress because of the time, effort and expense required to prosecute individual actions. (*Gentry*, *supra,* 42 Cal.4th at 57-62; *Leyva v. Medline Ind.* (9th Cir. 2013) 716 F.3d 510, 515.) Moreover, in the context of settlement, the superiority concerns are essentially non-existent.

V. THE PROPOSED NOTICE IS CONSTITUTIONALLY SOUND

A. The Proposed Notice Plan Satisfies Due Process

Notice requirements are set forth in the California Rules of Court. Cal. Rules of Court, Rule 3.766 (e) and (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. (Settlement, ¶ 4.2.) 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 under the circumstances.

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. (Settlement, ¶ 4.2.) It informs the Class Members of the terms of the settlement and their right to be excluded from the Settlement. (*Id.* at Ex. B.) 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. (*Id.*)

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. (Settlement, Ex. B.) 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. (*Id.*) It also states that the final settlement approval decision has yet to be made. (*Id.*) Accordingly, the Notice complies with the standards of fairness, completeness, and neutrality required of a combined settlement-certification class notice.

VI. CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court grant preliminary approval of the proposed settlement and set a Final Approval Hearing approximately 160 days from preliminary approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: October 14, 2026

MOON LAW GROUP, PC

By: _____

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