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FILED
Superior Court of California
County of Los Angeles
04/03/2023

David W. Slayton, Executive Officer / Clerk of Court
By: K. Martinez Deputy

Attorneys for Plaintiffs ALIXUS CORTEZ, KIARA THIBODEAUX, ASHLEY MENDEZ, and
all others similarly situated

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

ALIXUS CORTEZ, an individual; KIARA
THIBODEAUX, an individual; ASHLEY
MENDEZ, an individual; on behalf of
themselves and all others similarly situated and
the general public,

Plaintiffs,

v.

BLACK KNIGHT PATROL, INC., a
California corporation; and DOES 1 to 100,
inclusive,

Defendants.

) Case No.: 23STCV02135

) [Assigned for all purposes to the Hon. Stuart
) M. Rice, Dept. 1]

) CLASS ACTION

) **FIRST AMENDED COMPLAINT FOR:**

-) 1. Violation of B&PC §17200, et seq.
) 2. Violation of Labor Code §§ 204, 510, 1194 and
) 1198;
) 3. Violation of Labor Code §§ 200, et seq.;
) 4. Failure to Pay Meal and Rest Break Premiums
) at the Proper Regular Rate of Pay (Labor Code
) §226.7)
) 5. Failure to Provide & Maintain Accurate Wage
) Statements Pursuant to Labor Code §226;
) 6. Failure to Provide Meal Periods (Lab. Code
) §226.7);
) 7. Failure to Provide Rest Breaks (Lab. Code
) §226.7);
) 8. Failure to Reimburse Expenses (Lab. Code
) §2802);
) 9. Violation of Labor Code §§2698-2699 (PAGA).

) **DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

1 Plaintiffs ALIXUS CORTEZ, KIARA THIBODEAUX, and ASHLEY MENDEZ, on
2 behalf of themselves and all other persons similarly situated, and the general public
3 (hereinafter, “Plaintiffs”), hereby complain against Defendant, BLACK KNIGHT PATROL,
4 INC., a California corporation (“Black Knight”); and DOES 1 to 100, inclusive (hereinafter
5 Black Knight and Does 1-100 are collectively referred to herein as “Defendants”), and on
6 information and belief allege as follows:

7 **GENERAL ALLEGATIONS**

8 **JURISDICTION**

9 1. This is a civil action seeking recovery of unpaid wages, waiting time penalties,
10 pay stub penalties and meal and rest period premiums under California Labor Code §§ 510,
11 1194 et seq., 201 et seq., 226 and 226.7. Plaintiffs bring an action for monetary damages for
12 failure to pay wages as well as for restitution for Defendants’ violations of Business and
13 Professions Code (B&PC) §17200, et seq., including full restitution of all compensation
14 retained by Defendants as a result of their unlawful, fraudulent and unfair business practices.
15 Plaintiffs seek all available relief, including full restitution of all compensation retained by
16 Defendants as a result of their unlawful and unfair business practices. Further, Plaintiffs seek
17 injunctive relief under B&PC §17200, et seq.

18 **VENUE**

19 2. Venue as to each of the Defendants is proper in this judicial district pursuant to
20 California Code of Civil Procedure (CCP) §§ 395(a) and 395.5, as at least some of the acts
21 complained of herein occurred in the County of Los Angeles. Each defendant either owns,
22 maintains offices, transacts business, has an agent or agents within the County of Los
23 Angeles, or otherwise is found within the County of Los Angeles, and each defendant is
24 within the jurisdiction of this Court for purposes of service of process.

25 **PARTIES**

26 3. Plaintiffs Alixus Cortez (“Cortez”), Kiara Thibodeaux (“Thibodeaux”) and
27 Ashley Mendez (“Mendez”) are all individuals over the age of eighteen (18). At all relevant
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1 times herein, Plaintiffs Cortez, Thibodeaux, and Mendez worked for Defendants within the
2 State of California.

3 4. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that at all times
4 mentioned herein, defendant Black Knight is and was a California corporation.

5 5. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that at all times
6 mentioned herein, Defendant Black Knight was authorized to do business in the State of
7 California, County of Los Angeles, and offering security guard services. Thus, each named
8 defendant and DOES 1 to 100 are subject to B&PC §17200, et seq. (Unfair Competition Law)
9 and the Labor Code, as hereinafter alleged.

10 6. Plaintiffs do not know the true names or capacities, whether individual,
11 partner, or corporate, of defendants sued herein as DOES 1 to 100, inclusive, and for that
12 reason, those defendants are sued under such fictitious names, and Plaintiffs will seek from
13 this Court leave to amend this Complaint when such true names and capacities are discovered.
14 Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that each of the Defendants and each
15 fictitious defendant, whether individual, partners, or corporate, was responsible in some
16 manner for the circumstances alleged herein, and proximately caused Plaintiffs and all others
17 similarly situated hereinafter alleged and the general public to be subjected to the unlawful
18 employment practices, wrongs, injuries and damages complained of herein.

19 7. At all times herein mentioned, each of the Defendants participated in the doing
20 of the acts hereinafter alleged to have been done by the named Defendants; and furthermore,
21 Defendants, and each of them, were the agents, servants, and employees of each and every
22 one of the other Defendants, as well as the agents of all Defendants, and at all times herein
23 mentioned were acting within the course and scope of said agency and employment. Plaintiffs
24 herein allege that Defendants and each of them is the joint employer of Plaintiffs and the
25 classes.

26 8. At all times mentioned herein, Defendants, and each of them, were members of
27 and engaged in a joint venture, partnership, and common enterprise, and acting within the
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1 course and scope of and in pursuance of said joint venture, partnership, and common
2 enterprise.

3 9. At all times herein mentioned, the acts and omissions of various Defendants,
4 and each of them, concurred and contributed to the various acts and omissions of each and
5 every one of the other Defendants in proximately causing the complaints, injuries and
6 damages alleged herein.

7 10. At all times herein mentioned, Defendants, and each of them, approved of,
8 condoned, and/or otherwise ratified each and every one of the acts or omissions complained of
9 herein. At all times herein mentioned, Defendants, and each of them, aided and abetted the
10 acts and omissions of each and every one of the other Defendants, thereby proximately
11 causing the damages, as herein alleged.

12 11. The California Superior Court also has jurisdiction in this matter because both
13 the individual and aggregate monetary damages and restitution sought herein exceed the
14 minimal jurisdictional limits of the Superior Court and will be established at trial, according to
15 proof. The California Superior Court also has jurisdiction in this matter because Plaintiffs and
16 the putative classes herein worked within the State of California, and were subject to
17 California's wage and hour laws.

18 **PLAINTIFF CLASSES**

19 12. The class representative Plaintiffs who worked in the position of hourly non-
20 exempt employees or other similar titles while employed by Defendants within the State of
21 California, are as follows:

22 a. Alixus Cortez

23 Plaintiff Cortez has worked within California as a security guard for Defendants since
24 April 2022.

25 b. Kiara Thibodeaux

26 Plaintiff Thibodeaux has worked within California as a security guard for Defendants
27 since August 2022.

1 c. Ashley Mendez

2 Plaintiff Mendez has worked within California as a security guard for Defendants
3 since July 2022.

4 13. At all times mentioned herein, Plaintiffs and the entirety of the hourly Class
5 identified herein are current and former employees of Defendants who were not properly paid
6 all of their wages, including but not limited to, proper premium overtime, and/or double time
7 due to Defendants' failure to properly calculate the regular rate and/or include all hours
8 worked in a week to determine hours over eight (8) in a given day, or forty (40) in a week.

9 **CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS**

10 14. Plaintiffs bring this action on behalf of themselves and all others similarly
11 situated as a class action pursuant to CCP §382. The Classes which Plaintiffs seek to
12 represent are composed of and defined as follows:

13 **Class 1:**

14 All non-exempt hourly employees who worked for Defendants in California from
15 2019 through the date of judgment, who were not paid premium overtime and/or double time
16 at the employee's regular rate of pay.

17 **Subclass 1:**

18 All non-exempt hourly employees who worked for Defendants in California who were
19 paid for a missed meal or rest period at an allegedly "reduced" rate of pay from 2019 through
20 the date of judgment (Meal and Rest Reduced Rate Subclass);

21 **Class 2:**

22 All non-exempt hourly employees who worked for Defendants in California from
23 2019 through the date of judgment, who were not paid the minimum wage for all hours
24 worked (Minimum Wage Class);

25 **Class 3:**

26 All non-exempt hourly employees who worked for Defendants in California and who
27 worked at some point from 2020 through the present, who are no longer employed with
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Defendants and to whom Defendants willfully failed to pay all wages due upon separation from Defendants (Waiting Time Penalty Class);

Class 4:

All non-exempt hourly employees who worked for Defendants in California from 2019 to the present who were not provided legally compliant meal periods (Meal Break Class);

Class 5:

All non-exempt hourly employees who worked for Defendants in California from 2019 through the present who were not provided legally-compliant rest breaks (Rest Break Class);

Class 6:

All non-exempt hourly employees who worked for Defendants in California from 2022 through the present who were provided a paystub (a.k.a. wage statement) which failed to list all hours actually worked and wages owed (Pay Stub Class).

Class 7:

All non-exempt hourly employees who worked for Defendants in California from 2019 through the present who were not reimbursed for their necessary and reasonable business expenses (Reimbursement Class).

The members of the classes are so numerous that joinder of all members would be unfeasible and not practicable. The membership of the classes are unknown to Plaintiffs at this time; however, it is estimated that the classes number greater than 100 individuals. The identity of such membership is readily ascertainable via inspection of Defendants' employment records.

15. There are common questions of law and fact as to Plaintiffs and all others similarly situated which predominate over questions affecting only individual members including, without limitation to:

- i. Whether Defendants paid their employees proper premium overtime and/or double time at the employees' regular rate for hours over eight

(8) in a day and/or forty (40) hours in a week, in paying their hourly non-exempt employees;

- ii. Whether Defendants violated the applicable Labor Code provisions including §510, 1194, and 203 by requiring substantial overtime work and not paying for said work according to the overtime laws of the State of California;
- iii. Whether Defendants failed to pay the appropriate premium overtime compensation to the hourly employees;
- iv. Whether Defendants improperly retained, appropriated or deprived Plaintiffs and the class members of the use of monies or sums to which Plaintiffs and the class were legally entitled;
- v. Whether Defendants engaged in unfair business practices;
- vi. Whether Defendants, and each of them, were participants in the alleged unlawful conduct;
- vii. Whether Defendants' conduct was willful or reckless;
- viii. The effect upon and the extent of injuries suffered by Plaintiffs and all others similarly situated and the appropriate amount of compensation;
- ix. The appropriate amount of monetary penalties allowed by Labor Code §201, et. seq.;
- x. Whether Defendants pay and continue to pay for missed meal and rest period premiums at an allegedly "reduced" rate of pay in violation of Section 11 of the applicable Wage Orders;
- xi. Whether Defendants violated Labor Code §226 and relevant IWC Wage Orders by failing to, among other violations, accurately report total hours worked, all applicable hourly rates in effect during each pay period and the corresponding number of hours worked at each hourly work, by Plaintiffs and the members of the Class;

xii. Whether Defendants knowingly and intentionally failed to maintain records for Plaintiffs and members of the Class as required by Labor Code § 1174 and the applicable IWC Wage Orders;

xiii. Whether Defendants failed to reimburse Plaintiffs and the class members for necessary expenditures incurred in the performance of their work for Defendants;

16. Plaintiffs' claims are typical of the claims of all members of the classes and subclasses mentioned herein. Plaintiffs, as representative parties, will fairly and adequately protect the interest of the classes by vigorously pursuing this suit through their attorneys who are skilled and experienced in handling matters of this type. Plaintiffs have no claim or interest that is antagonistic to any class member.

17. The nature of this action and the nature of laws available to the members of the classes and subclasses identified herein make use of the class action format a particularly efficient and appropriate procedure to afford relief to Plaintiffs for the wrongs alleged herein. Further, this claim involves a large corporate employer, Defendant Black Knight, and a large number of individual employees (Plaintiffs and all others similarly situated) with many relatively small claims with common issues of law and fact. If each employee were required to file an individual lawsuit, the corporate defendants would necessarily gain an unconscionable advantage since they would be able to exploit and overwhelm the limited resources of each individual plaintiff with their vastly superior financial and legal resources. Requiring each class member to pursue an individual remedy would also discourage the assertion of lawful claims by employees who would be disinclined to pursue an action against their present and/or former employer for an appreciable and justifiable fear of retaliation and permanent damage to their careers at present and/or subsequent employment. Proof of a common business practice or factual pattern, of which the Plaintiffs experienced, is representative of the class mentioned herein and will establish the right of each of the members of the named class to recovery on the causes of action alleged herein.

1 18. The prosecution of separate actions by the individual class members, even if
2 possible, would create a substantial risk of inconsistent or varying verdicts or adjudications
3 with respect to the individual class members against Defendants herein; and which would
4 establish potentially incompatible standards of conduct for Defendants; and/or (b) legal
5 determinations with respect to individual class members which would, as a practical matter,
6 be dispositive of the interest of the other class members not parties to adjudications or which
7 would substantially impair or impede the ability of the class members to protect their interests.
8 Further, the claims of the individual members of the class are not sufficiently large to warrant
9 vigorous individual prosecution considering all of the concomitant costs and expenses
10 attending thereto.

11 19. Plaintiffs and all others similarly situated are entitled to the wages and other
12 monies unlawfully withheld. This action is brought for the benefit of the public.

13 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

14 **(Violation of B&PC §17200, et seq.)**

15 20. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference herein the allegations of all
16 preceding paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.

17 21. Beginning on an exact date unknown to Plaintiffs but believed to have
18 occurred from 2019 on, Defendants have engaged in a pattern and practice of acts of unfair
19 competition in violation of B&PC §17200, including the practices alleged herein.

20 22. Defendants, and each of them, provide security guard services within
21 California, and have engaged in the practice of paying their non-exempt employees, in a
22 fashion that circumvents California's wage and hour laws.

23 **FAILURE TO PAY PROPER WAGES AND OVERTIME COMPENSATION**

24 23. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that as part of
25 Defendants' ongoing unfair business practices, Defendants' hourly employees worked in
26 excess of eight (8) hours per day, and in excess of forty (40) hours per week without receiving
27 the proper regular rate of pay and/or minimum wage rate because Plaintiffs regularly work
28 off-the-clock hours by showing up early and staying late to receive security briefings, without

1 pay. Defendants are therefore in violation of Labor Code §§ 510 and 1194, and the relevant
2 California Industrial Welfare Commission Orders.

3 24. Defendants, and each of them, consistently administered a corporate policy
4 regarding off-the-clock time, which required that employees work overtime without proper
5 premium overtime pay, the regular rate of pay, and/or minimum wage. This corporate policy
6 and pattern of conduct is accomplished with the advanced knowledge and designed intent to
7 avoid paying non-exempt employees for all hours worked. Accordingly, Plaintiffs and the
8 class members are entitled to all unpaid wages due under California law. Further, Plaintiffs
9 and the class are entitled to restitution of these wages obtained by Defendants, and each of
10 them.

11 **VIOLATION OF LABOR CODE § 200, ET SEQ.**

12 25. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that as part of
13 Defendants' ongoing unfair business practices, Defendants failed to provide all employees all
14 wages at the time of their separation in violation of Labor Code § 200, et. seq., including but
15 not limited to, §§201, 202, 203 & 204.

16 26. Labor Code § 200, et seq. provides that an employer is required to pay an
17 employee all wages (including accrued vacation) immediately upon the employee's
18 involuntary separation from employment; immediately upon his or her voluntary separation if
19 the employee gave at least seventy-two (72) hours notice, and within seventy-two (72) hours,
20 if the employee voluntarily separated, but did not give at least seventy-two (72) hours notice.

21 27. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that all employees who
22 have been separated from Defendants did not timely receive a final paycheck detailing the
23 proper amount of pay from Defendants in violation of Labor Code § 200, et. seq.

24 28. Pursuant to Labor Code § 200, et seq. employees that no longer work for
25 Defendants, and who were not timely paid, are entitled to one (1) day of pay in penalties for
26 each day that he or she was paid late, until payment was made, up to a maximum of thirty (30)
27 days.
28

1 **VIOLATION OF MEAL AND REST PERIOD PROVISIONS**

2 29. Defendants' improper meal and rest period policies are in violation of
3 California law including, but not limited to Labor Code § 226.7, 512, and the applicable IWC
4 Wage Orders. Plaintiffs and the class were entitled to 1 hour of pay for each meal and rest
5 break violation at their regular rate of pay. Defendants failed and continue to fail to pay for
6 meal and rest period violations at the employees' regular rate of pay in violation of Section 11
7 of the applicable Wage Orders.

8 30. Plaintiffs seek restitution and injunctive relief for said violations.

9 31. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that at all times herein
10 mentioned, Defendants have engaged in unlawful, deceptive, and unfair business practices
11 prohibited by California B&PC §17200, thereby depriving their employees and the putative
12 class the minimum working standards and conditions due to them under the California labor
13 laws and Industrial Welfare Commission wage orders as specifically described herein.
14 Plaintiffs seek an injunction preventing Defendants from continuing their unfair business
15 practice of improperly depriving their employees of overtime pay, and payment of their
16 regular rate of pay for meal and rest period premiums. Plaintiffs further seek an order
17 requiring Defendants to identify by full name, telephone number, and last known address
18 employees who worked or still work for Defendants between 2019 through the date of
19 judgment; Plaintiffs further seek an order requiring Defendants to timely pay restitution to all
20 current and former employees, including back wages, premium payments, and interest.

21 **FAILURE TO PROVIDE ITEMIZED WAGE STATEMENTS**

22 32. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that as part of
23 Defendants' ongoing unfair business practices, Defendants, and each of them, fail to provide
24 their employees with proper and understandable itemized wage statements, as required by
25 Labor Code § 226.

26 33. Plaintiffs are informed and believe, and thereon allege, that Defendants, and
27 each of them, fail to provide each employee with an itemized statement which states the actual
28 regular rate paid, the total hours worked by the employee, the gross and net wages earned, and

1 all applicable hourly rates in effect during the pay period and the corresponding number of
2 hours worked at each hourly rate by the employee.

3 **FAILURE TO REIMBURSE EXPENSES**

4 34. Defendants have adopted and implemented an illegal reimbursement policy
5 that fails to compensate Plaintiffs for all of their necessary business expenses incurred in
6 discharging their duties for Defendants.

7 35. Defendants' conduct in failing to reimburse Plaintiffs and the class for their
8 necessary business expenses is also unfair within the meaning of Business and Professions
9 Code §17200 because it is against established public policy and has been pursued to attain an
10 unjustified monetary advantage for Defendants by unfairly and unlawfully reducing Plaintiffs'
11 and the other class members' compensation, as Plaintiffs and the class are required to come
12 out of pocket for such expenses. As such, Defendants' business practices, including their
13 illegal reimbursement policy and practice, is unfair, illegal and fraudulent, in that such policy
14 and practice was intended to reduce Plaintiffs' and the class' due and owing compensation.
15

16 **SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION**

17 **RECOVERY OF UNPAID WAGES & PENALTIES**

18 **(Violation of Labor Code §§ 204, 510, 1194 and 1198)**

19 36. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference herein the allegations of all
20 preceding paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.

21 37. Plaintiffs and all others similarly situated identified herein were and are
22 employed and scheduled as a matter of established company policy to work and in fact
23 worked as non-exempt hourly employees in excess of eight (8) hours per day and/or in excess
24 of forty (40) hours per week. Defendants employed and scheduled all employees without
25 providing overtime compensation for such excess hours worked in violation of Labor Code §§
26 510 and 1194 and the relevant California Industrial Welfare Commission (IWC) orders.
27 Labor Code § 204 establishes the fundamental right of all employees in the State of California
28 to be paid the proper amount of wages in a timely fashion for their work, including overtime.

1 Defendants always had a written and verbal agreement to pay overtime and double time based
2 on the Plaintiffs' and classes' regular rate of pay.

3 38. Pursuant to Labor Code §§ 218 and 1194(a), Plaintiffs may bring a civil action
4 for overtime wages directly against the employer without first filing a claim with the Division
5 of Labor Standards Enforcement (hereinafter "DLSE") and may recover such wages, together
6 with interest thereon, penalties, attorneys' fees and costs.

7 39. At all times relevant hereto, Defendants have failed to pay to Plaintiffs and all
8 persons similarly situated wages when due as required by Labor Code § 204.

9 40. Pursuant to Labor Code § 1198, it is unlawful to employ persons for longer
10 than the hours set by the IWC or under conditions prohibited by the applicable IWC Wage
11 Orders.

12 41. At all times relevant hereto, Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon
13 allege that Defendants have treated Plaintiffs as hourly non-exempt employees. Despite this
14 classification, Defendants have willfully violated the Labor Code with respect to meeting the
15 requirements of paying one (1) regular rate of pay and calculating overtime and double time
16 based on that regular rate, as herein before alleged. Defendants have failed to properly pay
17 premium overtime for hours worked in a week, and as such, Defendants are able to reduce
18 their overhead and operating expenses and gain an unfair advantage over competing
19 companies complying with state law. Furthermore, Defendants have failed to include all
20 items of remuneration when determining the employees' regular rate of pay, as described
21 above.

22 42. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that Defendants
23 consistently administered a corporate policy regarding both staffing levels and duties and
24 responsibilities of the members of the classes which required the entirety of all classes to work
25 overtime without proper premium pay, and to fail all wages for hours worked. This corporate
26 policy and pattern of conduct was/is accomplished with the advance knowledge and design of
27 all Defendants herein. Thus, Plaintiffs and all others similarly situated routinely, regularly
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1 and customarily performed overtime work and/or work that they failed to be compensated at
2 the appropriate hourly wage.

3 43. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that the obligations and
4 responsibilities of the class employees are irrelevant because Plaintiffs and all others similarly
5 situated merely allege wrongdoing with Defendants' pay plans, policies and practices.
6 Further, the duties of Plaintiffs and all others similarly situated are not relevant in certifying
7 any of the classes.

8 44. Defendants, and each of them, had a consistent and uniform policy, practice
9 and procedure of willfully failing to pay the earned and unpaid wages of all such non-exempt
10 employees. Defendants have willfully failed to pay the earned and unpaid wages of such
11 individuals, including, but not limited to regular pay, premium pay, and other wages earned
12 and remaining uncompensated according to amendment, or proof.

13 45. The pattern, practice and uniform administration of corporate policy regarding
14 illegal employee compensation as described herein is unlawful and creates an entitlement to
15 recovery by Plaintiffs and all others similarly situated, in a civil action, for the unpaid balance
16 of the full amount of all wages owing, including the proper calculation of the regular rate and
17 the proper overtime premiums calculated at 1.5 or 2 times the legal regular rate which are
18 owing, including interest thereon, willful penalties, reasonable attorneys' fees, and costs of
19 suit according to the mandate of Labor Code § 1194, et. seq.

20 46. Likewise, Defendants have a pattern, practice and uniform administration of
21 corporate policy regarding failure to comply with the required provisions of Labor Code §
22 226.7, in failing to pay Plaintiffs and the class the meal and rest period premium payments at
23 the regular rate.

24 **THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION**

25 **(Violation of Labor Code §§ 200, et. seq.)**

26 47. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference herein the allegations of all
27 preceding paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.
28

1 48. Labor Code §§ 200, et. seq., provides that an employer is required to pay an
2 employee all wages (including accrued vacation) immediately upon an employee's
3 involuntary separation from employment; immediately upon her voluntary separation if the
4 employee gave at least seventy two (72) hours notice, and within seventy two (72) hours, if
5 the employee voluntarily separated, but did not give at least seventy two (72) hours notice.

6 49. Plaintiffs are informed and believe, and thereon allege, that former employees
7 of Defendants employed in the State of California separated from employment with
8 Defendants, and did not timely receive a final pay check with all of their wages due from
9 Defendants in violation of Labor Code §§ 200, et seq.

10 50. Pursuant to Labor Code §§ 200, et. seq., each member of the class that no
11 longer works for Defendants, and who was not timely paid all of his or her wages due is
12 entitled to one (1) day of pay in penalties for each day that he or she was paid late, until
13 payment was made, up to a maximum of thirty (30) days.

14 **FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

15 **FAILURE TO PAY MEAL AND REST PERIOD PREMIUMS AT THE PROPER**

16 **REGULAR RATE OF PAY**

17 **(Violation of Labor Code §§ 226.7 & 512, et seq.)**

18 51. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference herein the allegations of all
19 preceding paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.

20 52. Plaintiffs believe and thereon allege that Labor Code §226.7 requires an
21 employer to pay an additional hour of compensation at the employee's regular rate of pay for
22 each meal period and rest period violation. During the class period, Plaintiffs are informed
23 and believe, and based thereon allege that Defendants have failed to pay Plaintiffs and the
24 class members meal period and rest period premium pay at their regular rate of pay.
25 Defendants' improper meal and rest period practices and policies are in violation of California
26 law including, but not limited to Labor Code § § 226.7, 512, and the IWC Wage Orders.
27
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1 53. Pursuant to Labor Code §226.7, Plaintiffs are entitled to damages in an amount
2 equal to one (1) hour of the employee's regular rate of pay per each meal and rest period
3 violation, in a sum to be proven at trial.

4 **FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

5 **FAILURE TO PROVIDE ACCURATE ITEMIZED WAGE STATEMENTS**

6 **(Violation of Labor Code § 226)**

7 54. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference herein the allegations of all
8 preceding paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.

9 55. Labor Code §226(a) provides, in pertinent part:

10 An employer, semimonthly or at the time of each payment of wages, shall
11 furnish to his or her employee, either as a detachable part of the check, draft, or
12 voucher paying the employee's wages, or separately if wages are paid by
13 personal check or cash, an accurate itemized statement in writing showing (1)
14 gross wages earned, (2) total hours worked by the employee, except as
15 provided in subdivision (j), (3) the number of piece-rate units earned and any
16 applicable piece rate if the employee is paid on a piece-rate basis, (4) all
17 deductions, provided that all deductions made on written orders of the
18 employee may be aggregated and shown as one item, (5) net wages earned, (6)
19 the inclusive dates of the period for which the employee is paid, (7) the name
20 of the employee and only the last four digits of his or her social security
21 number or an employee identification number other than a social security
22 number, (8) the name and address of the legal entity that is the employer and, if
23 the employer is a farm labor contractor, as defined in subdivision (b) of Section
24 1682, the name and address of the legal entity that secured the services of the
25 employer, and (9) all applicable hourly rates in effect during the pay period and
26 the corresponding number of hours worked at each hourly rate by the
27 employee. . . .

28 56. During the Class Period, Defendants knowingly and intentionally failed to
provide the Class Members, including Plaintiffs Cortez, Thibodeaux, and Mendez, with timely
and accurate wage and hour statements showing gross wages earned, total hours worked, all
deductions made, net wages earned, the name and address of the legal entity employing that
Class Member, and all applicable hourly rates in effect during each pay period and the
corresponding number of hours worked at each hourly rate by that Class Member.

57. The Class Members, including Plaintiffs, suffered injury as a result of

1 Defendants' knowing and intentional failure to provide the Class Members, with the wage and
2 hour statements required by law.

3 58. Based on Defendants' conduct as alleged herein, Defendants are liable for actual
4 damages, statutory damages and/or statutory penalties pursuant to California Labor Code §
5 226, attorney's fees and costs and other applicable provisions of the Labor Code and
6 applicable Wage Order.

7
8 **SIXTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

9 **FAILURE TO PROVIDE MEAL PERIODS**

10 **(Violation of Labor Code §§ 226.7 and 512)**

11 59. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference herein the allegations of all
12 preceding paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.

13 60. California Labor Code § 512 and IWC Wage Orders state that an employer
14 may not employ an employee for a work period of more than five (5) hours per day without
15 providing the employee a meal period of not less than 30 minutes, and an employer may not
16 employ an employee for a work period of more than 10 hours per day without providing the
17 employee with a second meal period of not less than 30 minutes. Unless the employee is
18 relieved of all duty during a 30-minute meal period, the meal period shall be considered an
19 "on duty" meal period and counted as time worked. California Labor Code § 226.7(a) further
20 states that no employer shall require any employee to work during any meal or rest period
21 mandated by an applicable order of the IWC.

22 61. Employers are prohibited from exerting coercion against the taking of, creating
23 incentives to forego, or otherwise encouraging the skipping of legally protected breaks.

24 62. Plaintiffs and members of the Class were not provided with or given the
25 opportunity to take the requisite meal periods before the end of the first 5 hours of work, nor
26 were they provided with or given the opportunity to take a proper second meal period during
27 the days when they worked more than 10 hours in a day. Defendants coerced Plaintiffs and
28 the members of the Class to forego meal periods by disciplining and/or threatening

1 disciplinary action against them if they attempted to take meal periods, created incentives to
2 forego meal breaks, and encouraged the skipping of meal periods by scheduling work to
3 coincide with the meal periods, among other things. In addition, Defendants placed
4 unnecessarily tight timelines on Plaintiffs' work, forcing them to miss their meal periods in
5 order to complete their jobs. As a result, Plaintiffs and members of the Class were required to
6 work and/or were not relieved of all duties during any meal period taken, and thus were
7 considered "on duty;" however, Defendants failed to count as time worked any "on duty"
8 meal period taken by Plaintiffs and the members of the Class.

9 63. Defendants further required Plaintiffs, as a condition of their employment, to
10 sign "on-duty" meal period agreements, even though the nature of Plaintiffs' work does not
11 permit such agreements in California, and such blanket agreements are unenforceable.
12 Moreover, Defendants' "on-duty" agreements are illegal, in any event, because among other
13 things, they allow the employer to revoke the agreements, which does not comply with
14 California law, including but not limited to California's IWC Wage Orders.

15 64. Pursuant to California Labor Code § 226.7(c) and IWC Wage Orders, if an
16 employer fails to provide an employee a meal period in accordance with the applicable
17 provisions of the IWC Wage Orders, the employer shall pay the employee one (1) hour of pay
18 at the employee's regular rate of pay for each workday that the meal period is not provided.
19 As such, Plaintiffs and members of the Class are entitled to an additional one hour's pay for
20 each day in which Plaintiffs and members of the Class were not provided a proper meal break
21 under the above-described authorities.

22 65. Plaintiffs and the members of the Class request that the Court award interest on
23 all unpaid wages at the legal rate specified by California Civil Code § 3289(b), accruing from
24 the date the wages were due and payable pursuant to Labor Code § 218.6.

EIGHTH CAUSE OF ACTION
FAILURE TO REIMBURSE EXPENSES
(Violation of (Labor Code § 2802))

72. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference as if fully set forth herein, the allegations of the preceding paragraphs.

73. California Labor Code § 2802 provides that “[a]n employer shall indemnify his or her employee for all necessary expenditures or losses incurred by the employee in direct consequence of the discharge of his or her duties.”

74. Plaintiffs are informed and believe, and based thereon allege, that at all relevant times Plaintiffs and the class members incurred certain expenses for their jobs with Defendants, including but not limited to using their own personal cell phones for their work. Despite this, Defendants failed and refused to indemnify Plaintiffs and the class for all of their expenditures in carrying out their duties for Defendants.

75. As a result of Defendants’ failure to indemnify Plaintiff and the class members, they have suffered losses according to proof, including prejudgment interest, costs, and attorneys’ fees in prosecuting this case.

NINTH CAUSE OF ACTION
PRIVATE ATTORNEYS GENERAL ACT
(Violation of Labor Code §§ 2698 and 2699)

76. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference as if fully set forth herein, the allegations of the preceding paragraphs.

77. On or about January 25, 2023, Plaintiffs provided written notice to the Labor and Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”) and Defendants of the specific provisions of the Labor Code alleged to have been violated, including the facts and theories to support the alleged violations.

78. The LWDA failed to respond to Plaintiffs’ counsel’s correspondence and failed to notify Plaintiffs’ counsel as to whether it would investigate the allegations contained therein, within the time period requirements of the Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA), under Labor Code §2699.3. Plaintiffs have fully complied with the notice requirements set

1 forth in Labor Code §2699.3 in order to commence a civil action against an employer
2 pursuant to Labor Code §2699.

3 79. Defendants' failure to pay Plaintiffs for all hours worked, minimum wages,
4 overtime compensation, failure to provide meal periods, failure to authorize and permit rest
5 periods, failure to pay all wages upon termination or resignation, and failure to provide
6 accurate itemized wage statements, and failure to reimburse expenses, will subject Defendants
7 to civil penalties pursuant to, without limitation, Labor Code §§ 201, 202, 203, 204, 226, 510,
8 512, 551, 552, 1174, 1194, 1198, 2802 and IWC Wage Orders.

9 80. Plaintiffs are aggrieved employees as defined in Labor Code §§2699(a) and
10 (c), and related Labor Code provisions. Plaintiffs bring this cause of action on behalf of
11 themselves, as private attorneys general, and in a representative capacity on behalf of other
12 aggrieved employees, affected by the labor law violations alleged herein.

13 81. Defendants committed numerous violations of the California Labor Code and
14 IWC Wage Orders against the Plaintiffs, and on information and belief, against members of
15 the Class and other current and former employees while they were employed by Defendants,
16 including but not limited to:

17 a. Defendants violated Labor Code §§ 510, 511, 1194 and/or IWC Wage Orders
18 by failing to pay Plaintiffs and the members of the Class, and on information and belief, other
19 current and former employees of Defendants, all minimum, straight time and overtime wages
20 owed in compliance with California law;

21 b. Defendants violated Labor Code §§ 226.7, 510, 1194, 1197 and/or IWC Wage
22 Orders by failing to pay Plaintiffs and the members of the Class by failing to pay for a missed
23 meal or rest period at the regular rate of pay;

24 c. Defendants violated Labor Code §§ 1194, 1197 and/or IWC Wage Orders by
25 failing to pay Plaintiffs and the members of the Class, and on information and belief, other
26 current and former employees of Defendants, all minimum wages owed in compliance with
27 California law;

28 d. Defendants violated Labor Code §§ 1194, 204, 510, 511 and/or IWC Wage
Orders by failing to pay Plaintiffs and the members of the Class, and on information and

1 belief, other current and former employees of Defendants, all wages owed in a timely manner
2 in compliance with California law;

3 e. Defendants violated Labor Code § 226.7, 512, and /or IWC Wage Orders by
4 failing to provide Plaintiffs and the members of the Class, and on information and belief, other
5 current and former employees of Defendants, the opportunity to take the requisite meal
6 periods in compliance with California law;

7 f. Defendants violated Labor Code § 226.7 and/or IWC Wage Orders by
8 failing to authorize and permit Plaintiffs and the members of the Class, and on information
9 and belief, other current and former employees of Defendants, the opportunity to take the
10 requisite rest periods in compliance with California law;

11 g. Defendants violated Labor Code §§ 226, 1174 and/or IWC Wage Orders by
12 failing to properly maintain accurate employment time and records, maintain and/or submit
13 accurate itemized wage statements on behalf of Plaintiffs, members of the Class, and on
14 information and belief, on behalf of other current and former employees of Defendants as
described herein; and

15 h. Defendants violated Labor Code §§ 201, 202 and/or IWC Wage Orders by
16 failing to pay Plaintiffs, the Class, and on information and belief, other current and former
17 employees of Defendants as described herein; and

18 i. Defendants violated Labor Code § 2802 by failing to indemnify Plaintiffs and
19 members of the Class and on information and belief, other current and former employees of
20 Defendants as described herein;

21 82. Pursuant to Labor Code § 2699, Plaintiffs, members of the Class, and all other
22 aggrieved current and former employees seek to recover civil penalties, as otherwise provided
23 by statute and wage order, for which Defendants are liable as a result of their violations of the
24 California Labor Code and applicable wage order(s) in an amount to be proven at trial. These
25 penalties include, but are not limited to, those provided by Labor Code §§ 201, 202, 203, 204,
26 210, 226, 226.3, 226.7, 256, 510, 512, 558, 1174, 1194, 1197, 2699, 2802 and IWC Wage
27 Orders. Plaintiffs and aggrieved current and former employees further seek and award of
28 reasonable attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to Labor Code § 2698 and 2699.

1 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

2 WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs pray:

3 1. That the Court determine this action may be maintained as a class action;

4 **As to the First Cause of Action:**

5 2. For an order preliminarily and permanently enjoining Defendants from
6 engaging in the practices challenged herein;

7 3. An order for full restitution of all monies, as necessary and according to proof,
8 to restore any and all monies withheld by the Defendants by means of the unfair practices
9 complained of herein. Plaintiffs seek, on behalf of the putative class, the appointment of a
10 receiver, as necessary. The restitution includes all monies retained as wages, as defined in
11 Labor Code §§ 201, 202, 510 and 1194, and interest, and attorneys' fees as a result of the
12 unfair business practices;

13 4. For an order finding and declaring that Defendants' acts and practices as
14 challenged herein are unlawful, and unfair and/or fraudulent;

15 5. For an accounting, under administration of Plaintiffs and subject to court
16 supervision, to determine the amount to be returned by Defendants and the amounts to be
17 refunded to members who are or were not paid all their wages due to Defendants' unfair
18 business practices;

19 6. For the creation of an administrative process wherein each injured current and
20 former employee receives his or her back wages in the form of overtime pay or alternatively
21 that each current or former eligible employee may submit a claim in order to receive his/her
22 money;

23 7. For an order requiring Defendants to make full restitution and payment
24 pursuant to B&PC §§ 17200, et seq.;

25 8. For all other appropriate declaratory and equitable relief;

26 9. For pre-judgment interest to the extent permitted by law;

1 10. For an order requiring Defendants to identify, by name, address and telephone
2 number of each person who worked in California as an hourly non-exempt employee for
3 Defendants between 2018 through the time of judgment;

4 11. For an order imposing all civil and statutory penalties provided by law.

5 **As to the Second and Fourth Cause of Action:**

6 12. For damages according to proof, as set forth in Labor Code §§ 510, 226.7 and
7 1194, et seq., (and the applicable California Industrial Welfare Commission wage orders)
8 regarding wages due and owing;

9 13. For pre-judgment interest as allowed by Labor Code § 1194 and California
10 Civil Code § 3287(b), for waiting time penalties as authorized by Labor Code § 203, and for
11 reasonable attorneys' fees;

12 14. For an order imposing all civil and statutory penalties provided by law.

13 **As to the Third Cause of Action:**

14 15. For waiting time penalties for all former employees not timely paid their last
15 pay check, including vacation pay;

16 16. For reasonable attorneys' fees and costs;

17 17. For an order imposing all civil and statutory penalties provided by law.

18 **As to the Fifth Cause of Action:**

19 18. For recovery as authorized by Labor Code §226(e);

20 19. For injunctive relief to ensure Defendants' compliance with Labor Code §226
21 and the IWC Wage Orders §7(A) pursuant to Labor Code §226(h);

22 20. For an award of costs and reasonable attorneys' fees pursuant to Labor Code
23 §226(e) and/or §226(h);

24 21. For an order imposing all civil and statutory penalties provided by law.

25 **As to the Sixth Cause of Action:**

26 22. One (1) hour of pay at each of the employees' regular rate of compensation for
27 each workday that a meal period was not provided, impeded, discouraged and/or dissuaded;

28 23. For an order imposing all civil and statutory penalties provided by law.

1 **As to the Seventh Cause of Action:**

2 24. One (1) hour of pay at each of the employees' regular rate of compensation for
3 each workday that a rest period was not authorized or permitted, or impeded, interrupted,
4 discouraged and/or dissuaded;

5 25. For an order imposing all civil and statutory penalties provided by law.

6 **As to the Eighth Cause of Action:**

7 26. For recovery of all necessary expenditures or losses incurred by Plaintiffs and
8 the class members, according to proof;

9 27. For pre-judgment interest as allowed by Labor Code §§ 218.6, 1194(a), and
10 Civil Code § 3287;

11 28. For an award of reasonable attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to Labor Code §
12 2802(c);

13 **As to the Ninth Cause of Action:**

14 29. That the Court declare, adjudge and decree that Defendants violated California
15 Private Attorneys General Act, Labor Code § 2698 and 2699;

16 30. For an order imposing all civil and statutory penalties provided by law;

17 31. For reasonable attorneys' fees and for costs of suit incurred herein pursuant to
18 California Labor Code § 2699(g); and

19 32. For such other and further relief as the Court may deem equitable and
20 appropriate.

21 **As to All Causes of Action:**

22 33. For reasonable costs incurred;

23 34. For such other and further relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

24 Dated: April 3, 2023

BARTZ LAW GROUP, APC

25
26
27 By: /s/ Aaron A. Bartz
AARON A. BARTZ
Attorneys for Plaintiffs Alixus Cortez, Kiara
28 Thibodeaux, and Ashley Mendez and all others
similarly situated

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Dated: April 3, 2023

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BARTZ LAW GROUP, APC

/s/ Aaron A. Bartz
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