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on behalf of himself and current and former aggrieved employees

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE**

FRANCISCO J. MEZA, on behalf of himself
and other aggrieved employees,

Plaintiff,

vs.

SWIFT BEEF COMPANY; and DOES 1 to 100,
inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.: **CVRI2301315**

PAGA ACTION

**PLAINTIFF FRANCISCO J. MEZA'S
COMPLAINT FOR:**

- CIVIL PENALTIES PURSUANT
TO THE PRIVATE ATTORNEYS
GENERAL ACT OF 2004
("PAGA"), LABOR CODE
SECTIONS 2698, ET SEQ.**

COMES NOW Plaintiff FRANCISCO J. MEZA ("Plaintiff"), who alleges and complains
against Defendants SWIFT BEEF COMPANY; and DOES 1 to 100, inclusive (collectively
"Defendants") as follows:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This is a Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, Labor Code §§ 2698, *et seq.*
("PAGA") representative action brought by Plaintiff on behalf of the State of California, himself
and other current and former aggrieved employees of Defendants who worked as hourly non-
exempt employees in California during the relevant time period seeking civil penalties associated
with Defendants' violation of the Labor Code based on Defendants' failure to pay wages for all
hours worked at minimum wage; failure to authorize or permit all legally required and/or

1 compliant meal periods or pay meal period premium wages; failure to authorize or permit all
2 legally required and/or compliant rest periods or pay rest period premium wages; statutory
3 penalties for failure to timely pay earned wages during employment; statutory penalties for failure
4 to provide accurate wage statements; statutory waiting time penalties in the form of continuation
5 wages for failure to timely pay employees all wages due upon separation of employment. Plaintiff
6 seeks on a representative basis, following notice to the Labor and Workforce Development
7 Agency, civil penalties, reasonable attorneys' fees pursuant to Labor Code section 2699(g)(1) and
8 costs brought on behalf of Plaintiff, the State of California, and others aggrieved.

9 **II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

10 2. This Court has jurisdiction over the claims of Plaintiff and all other current and
11 former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees because Plaintiff's lawsuit seeks
12 civil penalties on behalf of herself, all other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly
13 non-exempt employees, and the State of California in excess of twenty-five thousand dollars
14 (\$25,000); Defendants employed Plaintiff and all other current and former aggrieved California-
15 based hourly non-exempt employees; and the injuries to Plaintiff and all other current and former
16 aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees occurred in locations throughout
17 California, including but not limited to Riverside County, at 15555 Meridian Pkwy, Riverside,
18 California 92518.

19 3. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Judicial Council of California enacted
20 Emergency Rule 9 to the California Rules of Court, which provided that, notwithstanding any
21 other law, the statutes of limitations and repose for civil causes of action that exceed 180 days are
22 tolled from April 6, 2020, until October 1, 2020.

23 **III. PARTIES**

24 4. Plaintiff brings this action as a representative of the Labor and Workforce
25 Development Agency on behalf of himself and other current and former employees subject to
26 violations of the Labor Code. The named Plaintiff and the persons on whose behalf this action is
27 filed include current, former and/or future employees of Defendants who work, worked, or will
28 work for Defendants as direct employees as well as temporary employees employed through temp

1 agencies as hourly non-exempt employees in California. At all times mentioned herein, the
2 currently named Plaintiff is and was domiciled and a resident and citizen of California and was
3 employed by Defendants in an hourly position at Defendants' location in Riverside from in or
4 around August 2020 to present.

5 5. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that Defendant SWIFT BEEF
6 COMPANY is authorized to do business within the State of California and is doing business in the
7 State of California and/or that Defendants DOES 1-50 are, and at all times relevant hereto were
8 persons acting on behalf of SWIFT BEEF COMPANY in the establishment of, or ratification of,
9 the aforementioned illegal wage and hour practices or policies. Defendant SWIFT BEEF
10 COMPANY operates in Riverside County and employed Plaintiff and aggrieved employees in
11 Riverside County, including but not limited to, at 15555 Meridian Pkwy, Riverside, California
12 92518.

13 6. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that Defendants DOES 1
14 through 50 are corporations, or are other business entities or organizations of a nature unknown to
15 Plaintiff that employed Plaintiff and aggrieved California non-exempt employees, permitted
16 Plaintiff and aggrieved employees to work, and exercised control over the wages, hours and
17 working conditions of employment of Plaintiff and aggrieved employees.

18 7. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that Defendants DOES 51
19 through 100 are individuals unknown to Plaintiff. Each of the individual defendants is sued
20 individually and in his or her capacity as an agent, shareholder, owner, representative, manager,
21 supervisor, independent contractor and/or employee of each defendant who violated or caused to
22 be violated the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Labor Code and/or any provision of
23 the Industrial Welfare Commission's wage orders regulating hours and days of work.

24 8. Plaintiff is unaware of the true names of Defendants DOES 1 through 100. Plaintiff
25 sues said defendants by said fictitious names, and will amend this complaint when the true names
26 and capacities are ascertained or when such facts pertaining to liability are ascertained, or as
27 permitted by law or by the Court. Plaintiff is informed and believes that each of the fictitiously
28 named defendants is in some manner responsible for the events and allegations set forth in this

1 complaint.

2 9. Plaintiff makes the allegations in this complaint without any admission that, as to
3 any particular allegation, Plaintiff bears the burden of pleading, proving, or persuading and
4 Plaintiff reserves all of Plaintiff's right to plead in the alternative.

5 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

6 **CIVIL PENALTIES AND WAGES PURSUANT TO THE PRIVATE ATTORNEYS**

7 **GENERAL ACT OF 2004, LABOR CODE SECTIONS 2698, ET SEQ.**

8 **(Against all Defendants by Plaintiff)**

9 10. Plaintiff incorporates all paragraphs above as though fully set forth herein.

10 11. During the period beginning one (1) year preceding Plaintiff sending the initial
11 PAGA Claim Notice to the LWDA to the present, Defendants violated Labor Code sections 201,
12 202, 203, 204, 226, 226.7, 510, 512, 1194, 1197 and Sections 14 and 15 of the applicable Wage
13 Orders.

14 12. Specifically, Defendants have committed the following violations of California
15 Labor Code:

16 13. **Failure to pay wages for all hours worked at the legal minimum wage:**
17 Defendants employed many of their employees, including Plaintiff, as hourly non-exempt
18 employees. In California, an employer is required to pay hourly employees for all "hours worked,"
19 which includes all time that an employee is under control of the employer and all time the
20 employee is suffered and permitted to work. This includes the time an employee spends, either
21 directly or indirectly, performing services which endure to the benefit of the employer.

22 14. Labor Code sections 1194 and 1197 require an employer to compensate employees
23 for all "hours worked" at least at a minimum wage rate of pay as established by the IWC and the
24 Wage Orders.

25 15. In this case, Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based
26 hourly non-exempt employees worked more minutes per shift than Defendants credited them with
27 having worked. Specifically, Defendants failed to pay Plaintiff and other current and former
28 aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees all wages at the applicable minimum

1 wage for all hours worked due to Defendants' policies, practices, and/or procedures including, but
2 not limited to:

3 (a) Since the Outbreak of COVID-19, requiring Plaintiff and other current and former
4 aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees to line up to wait to undergo and
5 undergo off-the-clock COVID-19 temperature checks; and

6 (b) Requiring Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly
7 non-exempt employees to keep their employer-issued walkie-talkies on their person, monitored,
8 and to respond to calls received on them at all times during their shift, including while off-the-
9 clock during their meal breaks.

10 16. Therefore, Defendants suffered, permitted, and required Plaintiff and other current
11 and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees to be subject to Defendants'
12 control without paying wages for that time. This resulted in Plaintiff and other current and former
13 aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees working time for which they were not
14 compensated any wages, in violation of Labor Code sections 1194 and 1197 and the applicable
15 Wage Order.

16 17. **Failure to pay wages to hourly non-exempt employees for workdays that**
17 **Defendants failed to provide legally required and compliant meal periods:** Plaintiff and other
18 current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees regularly worked
19 shifts of more than five (5) hours in length and shifts of more than ten (10) hours in length.

20 18. California law requires an employer to authorize or permit an employee an
21 uninterrupted meal period of no less than thirty (30) minutes in which the employee is relieved of
22 all duties and the employer relinquishes control over the employee's activities prior to the
23 employee's sixth hour of work. Labor Code sections 226.7, 512; Wage Order 4 at §11; *Brinker*
24 *Rest. Corp. v. Super Ct. (Hohnbaum)* (2012) 53 Cal.4th 1004. An employer may not employ an
25 employee for a work period of more than ten (10) hours per day without providing the employee
26 with a second such meal period of not less than thirty (30) minutes prior to the start of the eleventh
27 hour of work. *Id.* If the employee is not relieved of all duty during a meal period, the meal period
28 shall be considered an "on duty" meal period and counted as time worked. A paid "on duty" meal

1 period is only permitted when: (1) the nature of the work prevents an employee from being
2 relieved of all duty; and (2) the parties have a written agreement agreeing to on-duty meal periods.

3 19. If an employer fails to provide an employee a meal period in accordance with the
4 law, the employer must pay the employee one (1) hour of pay at the employee's regular rate of pay
5 for each workday that a legally required and compliant meal period was not provided. Labor Code
6 section 226.7; Wage Order 4 at §11.

7 20. In this case, Defendants failed to authorize or permit legally required and compliant
8 meal periods to Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-
9 exempt employees due to Defendants' policies, practices, and/or procedures, including but not
10 limited to:

11 (a) Failing to provide Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based
12 hourly non-exempt employees duty-free meal breaks due to Defendant requiring Plaintiff and
13 other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees to keep their
14 employer-issued walkie-talkies on their person, monitored, and to respond to calls received on
15 them while off-the-clock during their meal breaks.

16 21. Additionally, Plaintiff alleges that Defendants maintained a policy, practice, and/or
17 procedure of failing to compensate Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-
18 based hourly non-exempt employees one (1) hour of pay at their regular rate of pay for each
19 workday that Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt
20 employees did not receive legally required and compliant meal periods, in violation of Labor Code
21 section 226.7.

22 22. Defendants' foregoing policies, practices, and/or procedures resulted in Plaintiff
23 and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees not
24 receiving wages to compensate them for workdays during which Defendants did not provide them
25 with meal periods in compliance with California law.

26 23. **Failure to pay wages to hourly non-exempt employees for workdays that**
27 **Defendants failed to provide legally required and compliant rest periods:** Plaintiff and other
28 current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees regularly worked

1 shifts of more than three-and-a-half (3.5) hours.

2 24. California law requires every employer to authorize and permit an employee a rest
3 period of ten (10) net minutes for every four (4) hours worked or major fraction thereof. Labor
4 Code section 226.7; Wage Order 4 at §12. Under California law, “[e]mployees are entitled to 10
5 minutes’ rest for shifts from three and one-half to six hours in length, 20 minutes for shifts of more
6 than six hours up to 10 hours, 30 minutes for shifts of more than 10 hours up to 14 hours, and so
7 on.” *Brinker Restaurant Corp. v. Sup. Ct. (Hohnbaum)* (2012) 53 Cal.4th 1004, 1029; Labor Code
8 section 226.7; Wage Order 4 at §12. Rest periods, insofar as practicable, shall be in the middle of
9 each work period. Wage Order 4 at §12. Additionally, the rest period requirement “obligates
10 employers to permit – and authorizes employees to take – off-duty rest periods.” *Augustus v. ABM*
11 *Security Services, Inc.*, (2016) 5 Cal.5th 257, 269. That is, during rest periods employers must
12 relieve employees of all duties and relinquish control over how employees spend their time. *Id.*

13 25. If the employer fails to authorize or permit a required rest period, the employer
14 must pay the employee one (1) hour of pay at the employee’s regular rate of pay for each workday
15 the employer did not authorize or permit a legally required rest period. Labor Code section 226.7;
16 Wage Order 4 at § 12.

17 26. In this case, Defendants failed to authorize or permit all legally required and
18 compliant rest periods to Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly
19 non-exempt employees due to Defendants’ policies, practices, and/or procedures including, but not
20 limited to:

21 (a) Failing to provide Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based
22 hourly non-exempt employees duty-free rest breaks due to Defendant requiring Plaintiff and other
23 current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees to keep their
24 employer-issued walkie-talkies on their person, monitored, and to respond to calls received on
25 them at all times during their shift including during rest breaks.

26 27. Additionally, Plaintiff alleges that Defendants maintained a policy, practice, and/or
27 procedure of failing to compensate Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-
28 based hourly non-exempt employees with one (1) hour of pay at their regular rate of pay for each

1 workday they did not receive legally required and compliant rest periods, in violation of Labor
2 Code section 226.7.

3 28. Defendants' foregoing policies, practices, and/or procedures resulted in Plaintiff
4 and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees not
5 receiving wages to compensate them for workdays in which Defendants did not provide them with
6 rest periods in compliance with California law.

7 29. **Failure to timely pay earned wages during employment:** In California, wages
8 must be paid at least twice during each calendar month on days designated in advance by the
9 employer as regular paydays, subject to some exceptions. Labor Code section 204(a). Wages
10 earned between the 1st and 15th days, inclusive, of any calendar month must be paid between the
11 16th and the 26th day of that month and wages earned between the 16th and the last day,
12 inclusive, of any calendar month must be paid between the 1st and 10th day of the following
13 month. *Id.* Other payroll periods such as those that are weekly, biweekly, or semimonthly, must be
14 paid within seven (7) calendar days following the close of the payroll period in which wages were
15 earned. Labor Code section 204(d).

16 30. As a derivative of Plaintiff's claims above, Plaintiff alleges that Defendants failed
17 to timely pay Plaintiff's and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-
18 exempt employees' earned wages (including minimum wages, meal period premium wages,
19 and/or rest period premium wages), in violation of Labor Code section 204. Defendants'
20 aforementioned policies, practices, and/or procedures resulted in their failure to pay Plaintiff's and
21 other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees' their earned
22 wages within the applicable time frames outlined in Labor Code section 204.

23 31. **Failure to provide complete and accurate wage statements:** Labor Code section
24 226, subdivision (a). Labor Code section 226(a) provides, *inter alia*, that, upon paying an
25 employee his or her wages, the employer must "furnish each of his or her employees ... an
26 itemized statement in writing showing (1) gross wages earned, (2) total hours worked by the
27 employee, except for any employee whose compensation is solely based on a salary and who is
28 exempt from payment of overtime under subdivision (a) of Section 515 or any applicable order of

1 the Industrial Welfare Commission, (3) the number of piece-rate units earned and any applicable
2 piece rate if the employee is paid on a piece-rate basis, (4) all deductions, provided, that all
3 deductions made on written orders of the employee may be aggregated and shown as one item, (5)
4 net wages earned, (6) the inclusive dates of the pay period for which the employee is paid, (7) the
5 name of the employee and his or her social security number, (8) the name and address of the legal
6 entity that is the employer, and (9) all applicable hourly rates in effect during the pay period and
7 the corresponding number of hours worked at each hourly rate by the employee.”

8 32. As a derivative of Plaintiff’s allegations above, Defendants’ failure to pay Plaintiff
9 and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees all wages
10 earned (including minimum wages, meal period premium wages, and/or rest period premium
11 wages) rendered Plaintiff’s and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-
12 exempt employees’ wage statements inaccurate, in violation of Labor Code section 226.

13 33. **Failure to pay employees all wages due at time of termination/resignation:** An
14 employer is required to pay all unpaid wages timely after an employee’s employment ends. The
15 wages are due immediately upon termination (Labor Code section 201) or within seventy-two (72)
16 hours of resignation (Labor Code section 202).

17 34. As a derivative of Plaintiff’s allegations above, because Defendants failed to pay
18 Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees
19 all their earned wages (including minimum wages, meal period premium wages, and/or rest period
20 premium wages), Defendants failed to pay those employees timely after each employee’s
21 termination and/or resignation, in violation of Labor Code sections 201, 202, and 203.

22 35. Defendants’ violations of Wage Order 4 constituted violations of Labor Code
23 section 1198, which prohibits employment under conditions of labor that violate the Wage Orders.

24 36. Labor Code sections 2699, subdivisions (a) and (g) authorize an aggrieved
25 employee, on behalf of himself or herself and other current or former employees, to bring a civil
26 action to recover civil penalties against all Defendants pursuant to the procedures specified in
27 Labor Code section 2699.3.

28 37. Plaintiff has complied with the procedures for bringing suit specified in Labor

1 Code section 2699.3. On January 9, 2023, Plaintiff filed a PAGA Claim Notice with the LWDA
2 and provided notice to Defendants by certified mail which provided notice of the specific
3 provisions of the Labor Code alleged to have been violated, including the facts and theories to
4 support the violations alleged.

5 38. Pursuant to Labor Code section 2699.3, the LWDA must give written notice by
6 certified mail to the parties that it intends to investigate the alleged violations of the Labor Code
7 within 60 days of the date of the complainant's written notice. The LWDA failed to provide the
8 parties notice within 60 days of the date of Plaintiff's PAGA Claim Notice that the LWDA intends
9 to investigate Plaintiff's claims.

10 39. Pursuant to Labor Code sections 2699(a) and (f), Plaintiff is entitled to recover civil
11 penalties for Defendants' violations of Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 226, 226.7, 510,
12 512, 1194, 1197 beginning one (1) year preceding Plaintiff sending the initial PAGA Claim Notice
13 to the LWDA to the present, in the following amounts:

14 a. For violations of Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 226.7, 512, one
15 hundred dollars (\$100) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for the initial violation and
16 two hundred dollars (\$200) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for each subsequent
17 violation [penalty amounts established by Labor Code section 2699(f)(2)].

18 b. For violations of Labor Code section 226, two hundred fifty dollars (\$250)
19 for each employee for each pay period for the initial violation, and for each subsequent violation,
20 one thousand dollars (\$1000) for each underpaid employee for each pay period [penalty amounts
21 established by Labor Code section 226.3].

22 c. For violations of Labor Code section 510, fifty dollars (\$50) for each
23 employee for each pay period for the initial violation, and for each subsequent violation, one
24 hundred dollars (\$100) for each underpaid employee for each pay period [penalty amounts
25 established by Labor Code section 558] and any unpaid wages.

26 d. For violations of Labor Code section 1194 and 1197, one hundred dollars
27 (\$100) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for the initial violation, and for each
28 subsequent violation, two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) for each underpaid employee for each pay

1 period [penalty amounts established by Labor Code section 1197.1] and any unpaid wages.

2 40. Pursuant to Labor Code section 2699(g), Plaintiff is entitled to an award of
3 reasonable attorneys' fees and costs in connection with his claims for civil penalties.

4 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

5 **WHEREFORE, PLAINTIFF, ON BEHALF OF HIMSELF AND ON OTHER**
6 **AGGRIEVED EMPLOYEES, PRAYS AS FOLLOWS:**

7 **ON THE FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION:**

8 1. That Defendants be found to have violated the provisions of the Labor Code and
9 the IWC Wages Orders as to the Plaintiff and aggrieved employees;

10 2. For any and all legally applicable penalties during the relevant statute of limitations
11 subject to any permissible tolling, including but not limited to those recoverable under the
12 California Labor Code, including but not limited to section 2699(f);

13 3. For attorneys' fees and costs of suit, including but not limited to those recoverable
14 under California Labor Code section 2699(g); and

15 4. For such and other further relief, in law and/or equity, as the Court deems just or
16 appropriate

17
18 Dated: March 15, 2023

Respectfully submitted,
LAVI & EBRAHIMIAN, LLP

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20
21 By:



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