

Matthew S. Da Vega (SBN 195443)
Matthew H. Fisher (SBN 229532)
DAVEGA | FISHER | MECHTENBERG LLP
232 E. Anapamu St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
Telephone: (805) 232-4471
Facsimile: (877) 535-9358
mdavega@mdmflaw.com

Attorneys for Plaintiff and Proposed Plaintiffs Class

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

BREANA HARRISON, on behalf of herself
and all others similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

vs.

UNIVERSITY HEALTHCARE ALLIANCE;
and DOES 1-100, inclusive,

Defendant.

Case No.: 21CV003143

CLASS and REPRESENTATIVE ACTION

**DECLARATION OF TED D.
MECHTENBERG IN SUPPORT OF
MOTION FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF
CLASS SETTLEMENT and ATTORNEY
FEES and COSTS**

Assigned For All Purposes to the Honorable
Evelio Grillo (Dept. 21)

Date: August 25, 2023

Time: 10 a.m.

Location: Dept. 21 (Hon. Evelio Grillo)

Reservation ID#: 330161113494

I, Ted D. Mechtenberg, hereby declare as follows:

1. I make this Declaration based on personal knowledge. If called and sworn as a witness, I would testify competently as to the facts in this Declaration.
2. I am an attorney admitted to practice law in the State of California.
3. I am a named Partner of Da Vega Fisher Mechtenberg, LLP ("DFM LLP").
4. DFM LLP is lead and only counsel for the Plaintiff in this Lawsuit. ("Class Counsel.")

1 5. I have been intimately involved in all aspects of this dispute and the resulting
2 settlement. I make this declaration in support of Plaintiff's Motion for Final Approval of Class
3 Settlement and Attorney Fees and Costs.

4 **I. LEAD COUNSEL BACKGROUND and COMPETENCY**

5 6. **DA VEGA | FISHER | MECHTENBERG LLP ("DFM LLP"):** DFM LLP is a
6 small plaintiff-side contingency fee based law firm representing individuals who could not
7 otherwise afford legal counsel. Each case the firm takes, including this one, runs the risk of an
8 uncertain outcome and possibility of little or no recovery for the client or the firm. Many cases
9 the firm takes can require years of litigation and thousands of hours of attorney time and costs.
10 To represent our clients in this case on a contingent fee basis, our firm had to forego compensable
11 hourly work on other cases to devote the necessary time and resources to this case. In so doing,
12 our firm gave up work that a firm receives more immediate payment for in exchange for risky
13 contingent fee work in this case. This firm has previously invested in similar cases which resulted
14 in little or no recovery due to various issues, including but not limited to bankruptcy, change in
15 prevailing law, and/or lengthy appeals.

16 7. **Plaintiff's Counsel Ted D. Mechtenberg:** I am an equity partner at the firm. I am
17 a graduate of the University of Notre Dame, B.A. Anthropology, Cum Laude (1996) and
18 Washington University School of Law, J.D. (2001). I became a member of the California State
19 Bar in 2002. I have worked with firms both in Washington State and California. From 2011 to
20 2013 I worked with the Ventura, California firm of Anderson Kill. In 2013, I was designated as a
21 Rising Star by Southern California Super Lawyers. I joined DFM LLP in 2014 as a partner. DFM
22 LLP has always been a Plaintiff-side contingency based law firm representing clients
23 predominantly in employment and personal injury matters in both individual and class actions.
24 DFM LLP is experienced counsel in matters such as this and has worked on significant
25 employment cases such as *Salvatierra v. Intuitive Surgical, Inc.*, Santa Clara County Superior
26 Court, Case No. 2014-1-CV-272069 (2016) (\$4.6M gross settlement for class of 208 misclassified
27 class member employees); *Gibbins/Leal v. Hismeh Enterprises, Inc.*, Ventura County Superior
28 Court, Case No. 56-2015-00468352 (2017) (\$1M gross settlement for class of 4000+ delivery

1 driver members reimbursements); *Sena v. Facebook, Inc.*, San Mateo County Superior Court,
2 Case No. 16CIV00496 (2018) (\$4.25M gross settlement for class of 900+ class member
3 employees for unpaid overtime wage); and *Magpiong v. CareLinx*, San Mateo County Superior
4 Court, Case No. 21-CIV-03038 (2022) (\$1.8 M gross settlement for class of 2000+ class member
5 employees for IC misclassification /unpaid overtime wage), to name but a few.

6 **II. CLASS COUNSEL AWARD OF ATTORNEY FEES and COSTS**

7 8. **Common Fund Settlement:** In this matter DFM LLP negotiated a Class action
8 settlement providing a common settlement fund with a payout of **\$90,000 (Ninety Thousand**
9 **dollars)**. (Second Amended Settlement Agreement §§ 1.16, 2.1). Class Counsel is seeking as a
10 Fee Award of 33% percentage of this common settlement fund. (Second Amended Settlement
11 Agreement § 2.2).

12 9. **Attorney Fees of 33% Percent of Common Fund is Reasonable:** Class Counsel
13 requests the Court grant its application for an award of attorneys' fees in the amount of **\$29,700**
14 **(Twenty Nine Thousand and Seven Hundred dollars)**. This is equal to 33% of the Gross
15 Settlement Amount of \$90,000 created on behalf of the Class. (*Second Amended Settlement*
16 *Agreement* §§ 1.5, 2.2). The requested award is fair, reasonable, and well within the common
17 range for attorney fees of 20% to 50% in a common fund settlement. The requested award also
18 compares favorably to the overall lodestar incurred to date (see below). Therefore, DFM LLP
19 respectfully requests approval of the agreed upon fee award.

20 10. **Contingency Fee Matter:** As this is a contingency matter, Class Counsel litigated
21 this action without receiving any payment for their services or reimbursement of their costs
22 incurred for the benefit of the Class. To represent the Class on a contingent fee basis, Class
23 Counsel had to forego compensable hourly work or other contingency fee cases to devote the
24 necessary time and resources to this contingent case. In so doing, Class Counsel gave up work
25 that a firm receives more immediate payment for in exchange for risky class action contingency
26 fee work which could have paid the Class and its Counsel nothing. A number of difficult issues,
27 the adverse resolution of any one of which could have barred the successful prosecution of the
28 action, were present here. Attorneys' fees in this case were not only contingent but risky, with a

1 very real chance that Class Counsel would receive nothing at all for their efforts, having devoted
2 time and advancing costs. Class Counsel has previously invested in similar cases which resulted
3 in little or no recovery due to various issues, including but not limited to bankruptcy, failed
4 certification/decertification, other overlapping class cases, and/or lengthy appeals.

5 **11. Contingency Fee Market:** I am familiar with the contingent fee market
6 throughout California and in particular as it pertains to complex employer, wage and hour, and
7 class action litigation. On behalf of my firm, I have negotiated hundreds of contingency fee
8 agreements with Plaintiffs, including both individual matters and as representatives in class action
9 suits. Many of those agreements provide that counsel will receive between 33% to 40%+ of any
10 recovery that is obtained, and, in addition that counsel be reimbursed for the costs they incurred
11 out of the recovery amount. These are typical and standard percentages in employment-related
12 contingency fee agreements throughout California. The Class Members in this complex wage and
13 hour case would not be likely to obtain competent counsel in California, for any amount less than
14 these standard fee percentages. Class Counsel has also advanced all costs in this matter and not
15 been paid for any attorney's fees or costs to date.

16 **12. Class Counsel's Hours and Hourly Rates:** I will have worked on this matter for
17 23 hours at the time of this motion and my current billable rate as of 2022 is \$625/hr. for class
18 action work (\$625/hr. x 13 hours = \$8,125 in lodestar). This rate has been previously approved
19 for my class action work in prior cases.

20 **13. Class Counsel Lodestar Cross-Check:** I have reviewed my firm's lodestar in this
21 matter and believe the charges are reasonable and were reasonably necessary to the conduct of the
22 case. These rates are in line with the prevailing rates of attorneys in the California legal
23 community for similar work. In this case, the reasonableness of the requested for \$29,700 in
24 attorneys' fees is further supported by a cross-check using attorney's lodestar in this matter. Class
25 Counsel has spent a significant amount of hours investigating, researching, and litigating this
26 matter, including but not limited to the following: interviewing Plaintiff and flushing out facts and
27 issues; researching employer and causes of action; developing facts and investigating Defendant's
28 ownership structure (Secretary of State, etc.); investigating and discussing job functions, duties,

1 compensation, policies and procedures, etc.; regularly meeting and/or communicating with our
2 client who is the Class Representative; drafting pleadings (Complaint, case management
3 statements, mediation briefs); drafting and responding to informal discovery; reviewing
4 information produced in formal and informal discovery (payroll data, etc.); researching employee
5 misclassification or exemptions and various impacts on class actions; participating in Court-
6 ordered hearings and conferences; attending mediation; retention of expert witnesses; discussion
7 with expert witnesses issues related to damage model calculations; preparing and analyzing
8 damage models; negotiating the terms of the settlement; reviewing and making changes to
9 settlement agreement; and coordinating and overseeing all the administration of the settlement.
10 The contemporaneous billing records evidence that the attorneys' lodestar is \$86,075 (greater than
11 the amount of fees requested) with additional fees still to be incurred for preparation and attending
12 the final approval hearing, managing post approval settlement distribution with the settlement
13 administrator, responding to class member inquiries, and handling any potential appeal of the
14 matter. As a result, the current lodestar amount understates the total attorneys' fees ultimately
15 incurred in this action. Class Counsel lodestar crosscheck of attorney fees is as follows:

Attorney Name	Hours	Hourly Rate	Totals
Matthew S. Da Vega	84	\$750	\$63,000
Matthew H. Fisher	23	\$650	\$14,950
Ted Mechtenberg	13	\$625	\$8,125
TOTAL	120		\$86,075

19 The requested fee award of \$29,700 represents a **negative multiplier**. Whereas
20 “Multipliers of 1 to 4 are commonly found to be appropriate in complex class action cases.”
21 *Destefano v. Zynga, Inc.*, 2016 WL 537946, at *21 (N.D. Cal. Feb. 11, 2016) (quoting *Hopkins v.*
22 *Stryker Sales Corp.*, 2013 WL 496358, at *4 (N.D. Cal. Feb. 6, 2013)); see *Vizcaino v. Microsoft*
23 *Corp.*, 290 F.3d United States District Court Northern District 1043, 1051 n.6 (9th Cir.
24 2002)(citing survey finding most multipliers range from 1.0 to 4.0). As a result, this Court should
25 have no trouble concluding that an award is supported by the lodestar cross-check is fair and
26 reasonable and is justified under California law. “[T]he lodestar method better accounts for the
27 amount of work done, while the percentage of the fund method more accurately reflects the results
28 achieved.” *Rawlings v. Prudential-Bache Properties, Inc.* (6th Cir. 1993) 9 F.3d 513, 516.

1 14. **Class Counsel Attorney Costs:** The Settlement Agreement permits up to \$20,000
2 in reimbursement of costs. (*Second Amended Settlement Agreement* § 1.5). However, Plaintiff's
3 actual costs are only **\$16,516 (Sixteen Thousand Five Hundred and Sixteen dollars)**.
4 Therefore, Class Counsel requests the Court award it \$16,516 in costs related to filing fees, service
5 fees, mediation fees, travel costs, mediation fees, and expert fees which could not have been
6 recovered if this case had been lost. Class Counsel was required to advance all costs in this
7 litigation. In this type of litigation where the corporate defendant and their attorneys are well
8 funded, this can prove to be very expensive, risky, and therefore cost prohibitive to many
9 attorneys. The financial burdens undertaken by Plaintiff and Class Counsel in prosecuting this
10 action on behalf of the Class were substantial. Plaintiff undertook the risk of liability for
11 Defendant's costs and even fees had this case not succeeded, as well as other potential negative
12 financial ramifications from having come forward to sue Defendant on behalf of the Class.
13 Accordingly, the contingent nature of the fee and the financial burdens on Class Counsel and
14 Plaintiff also support the requested awards. The following list itemizes Class Counsel's costs and
15 expenses to date:

Filings/Service/Court Fees:	\$ 3,496
Travel (Flights, Lodging, Rentals, Meals):	\$ 1,146
Mediation Fees/Costs:	\$ 5,950
Experts Fees/Costs:	\$ 5,924
TOTAL	\$ 16,516

19 15. I am presently unaware of any opposition to the final approval of this settlement.
20
21 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the
22 foregoing is true and correct.

23 **DATED:** July 31, 2023

DA VEGA | FISHER | MECHTENBERG LLP

24 

25 By: _____
26 Ted D. Mechtenberg
27 Attorneys for Plaintiff and Class
28