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County of Stanislaus
Hugh K. Swift
Clerk of the Court
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9 **SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**
10 **FOR THE COUNTY OF STANISLAUS**

11 SONIA CHAVEZ, individually, and on behalf of
12 all others similarly situated,

13 Plaintiff,

14 vs.
15

16 SAPUTO CHEESE USA, INC.; and DOES 1
17 through 10, inclusive,

18 Defendants
19

Case No.: CV-25-011575

**PAGA REPRESENTATIVE ACTION
COMPLAINT:**

[Filed as a matter of right under Cal. Lab.
Code § 2699.3(a)]

1. Civil Penalties Under PAGA [Cal. Lab.
Code §§ 2698, *et seq.*].

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

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28 This case has been assigned to Judge Speiller, Stacy,
Department 22, for all purposes including Trial.

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1 Plaintiff Sonia Chavez (“Plaintiff”), based upon facts that either have evidentiary support
2 or are likely to have evidentiary support after a reasonable opportunity for further investigation
3 and discovery, alleges as follows:

4 **INTRODUCTION & PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

5 1. Plaintiff brings this Action against Defendants Saputo Cheese USA, Inc., and Does
6 1 through 10 (collectively referred to as “Defendants”) for civil penalties under the Private
7 Attorneys General Act of 2004, California Labor Code §§ 2698, *et seq.* (“PAGA”), stemming from
8 Defendants’ failure to pay minimum wages, failure to pay overtime wages, failure to provide meal
9 periods, failure to authorize and permit rest periods, failure to maintain accurate records of hours
10 worked and meal periods, failure to timely pay all wages to terminated employees, failure to
11 indemnify necessary business expenses, and failure to furnish accurate wage statements.

12 2. For over 50 years, California’s courts and legislature have recognized that this
13 State’s wage-and-hour laws serve a compelling public interest of fostering a stable job market.
14 Wages are not ordinary debts. Because of the economic position of the average worker and his or
15 her family, it is essential to the public welfare that employers obey the wage-and-hour laws so that
16 employees are promptly paid the minimum/overtime wages that the Legislature has required for
17 employees. So fundamental are California’s wage-and-hour laws that the Legislature has
18 criminalized certain types of violations. In extending extra protection to deter violations of these
19 underlying statutes—since Plaintiff is not seeking general and/or special damages, restitution or
20 other damages other than civil penalties—California has enacted the PAGA to permit an individual
21 to bring an action on behalf of herself and on behalf of others for PAGA penalties only, which is
22 the precise and sole nature of this Action.

23 3. Plaintiff brings this Action individually, the State of California, and certain current
24 and former employees of Defendants who are or were harmed by Defendants’ illegal practices
25 (hereinafter collectively referred to as the “Aggrieved Employees”). The Aggrieved Employees
26 consists of Plaintiff and all other persons who have been employed by any Defendants in California
27 as an hourly-paid, non-exempt employee during the statute of limitations period applicable to the
28 claims pleaded here.

1 4. Plaintiff brings this Action against Defendants seeking only to recover penalties for
2 herself, on behalf of all the Aggrieved Employees, and on behalf of the State of California. Plaintiff
3 does not seek to recover anything other than penalties as permitted by California Labor Code §
4 2699 at this time. To the extent that statutory violations are mentioned for wage violations, Plaintiff
5 does not seek underlying general and/or special damages for those violations, but simply penalties
6 as permitted by California Labor Code § 2699, declaratory relief, and injunctive relief for herself
7 and all the Aggrieved Employees as permitted by the PAGA.

8 5. Defendants own/owned and operate/operated an industry, business, and
9 establishment within the State of California, including Stanislaus County. As such, and based upon
10 all the facts and circumstances incident to Defendants' business in California, Defendants are
11 subject to the California Labor Code and Wage Orders issued by the Industrial Welfare
12 Commission ("IWC").

13 6. Despite these requirements, throughout the statutory period Defendants maintained
14 a systematic, company-wide policy and practice of:

- 15 (a) Failing to pay employees for all hours worked, including all minimum
16 wages, and overtime wages in compliance with the California Labor Code
17 and IWC Wage Orders;
- 18 (b) Failing to provide employees with timely and duty-free meal periods in
19 compliance with the California Labor Code and IWC Wage Orders, failing
20 to maintain accurate records of all meal periods taken or missed, and failing
21 to pay an additional hour's pay for each workday a meal period violation
22 occurred;
- 23 (c) Failing to authorize and permit employees to take timely and duty-free rest
24 periods in compliance with the California Labor Code and IWC Wage
25 Orders, and failing to pay an additional hour's pay for each workday a rest
26 period violation occurred;
- 27 (d) Failing to indemnify employees for all necessary business expenses
28 incurred;

- 1 (e) Willfully failing to pay employees all minimum wages, overtime wages,
2 meal period premium wages, and rest period premium wages due within the
3 time period specified by California law when employment terminates;
4 (f) Failing to maintain accurate records of the hours that employees worked;
5 and
6 (g) Failing to provide employees with accurate, itemized wage statements
7 containing all the information required by the California Labor Code and
8 IWC Wage Orders.

9 7. On information and belief, Defendants, and each of them were on actual and
10 constructive notice of the improprieties alleged herein and intentionally refused to rectify their
11 unlawful policies. Defendants' violations, as alleged above, during all relevant times herein were
12 willful and deliberate.

13 8. At all relevant times, Defendants were and are legally responsible for all of the
14 unlawful conduct, policies, practices, acts and omissions as described in each and all of the
15 foregoing paragraphs as the employer of Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees. Further,
16 Defendants are responsible for each of the unlawful acts or omissions complained of herein under
17 the doctrine of "respondeat superior".

18 **THE PARTIES**

19 **A. Plaintiff**

20 9. Plaintiff is a California resident who worked for Defendants in the County of
21 Stanislaus, State of California from approximately May 2021 to July 2025.

22 10. Plaintiff reserves the right to seek leave to amend this complaint to add new
23 plaintiffs, if necessary, in order to establish suitable representative(s) pursuant to *La Sala v.*
24 *American Savings and Loan Association* (1971) 5 Cal.3d 864, 872, and other applicable law.

25 **B. Defendants**

26 11. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based upon that information and belief
27 alleges, that Defendants are:

- 28 (a) Business entities with their principal places of business in Stanislaus,

California.

(b) Business entities conducting business in numerous counties throughout the State of California, including in Stanislaus County; and

(c) The former employers of Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees. Defendants suffered and permitted Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees to work, and/or controlled their wages, hours, or working conditions; and

(d) At all times mentioned herein, Defendants are and were the joint employers of Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees.

12. Plaintiff does not currently know the true names or capacities of the persons or entities sued herein as Does 1-10, inclusive, and therefore sues said Defendants by such fictitious names. Each of the Doe Defendants was in some manner legally responsible for the damages suffered by Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees as alleged herein. Plaintiff will amend this complaint to set forth the true names and capacities of these Defendants when they have been ascertained, together with appropriate charging allegations, as may be necessary.

13. At all times mentioned herein, Defendants named as Does 1-10, inclusive, and each of them, were residents of, doing business in, availed themselves of the jurisdiction of, and/or injured a significant number of Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees in the State of California.

14. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that at all relevant times each Defendant, directly or indirectly, or through agents or other persons, employed Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees, and exercised control over their wages, hours, and working conditions. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that, at all relevant times, each Defendant was the principal, agent, partner, joint venturer, officer, director, controlling shareholder, subsidiary, affiliate, parent corporation, successor in interest, and/or predecessor in interest of some or all of the other Defendants, and was engaged with some or all of the other Defendants in a joint enterprise for profit, and bore such other relationships to some or all of the other Defendants so as to be liable for their conduct with respect to the matters alleged below. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that each Defendant acted pursuant to and within the scope of the relationships alleged above, that each Defendant knew or should have known about, and

1 authorized, ratified, adopted, approved, controlled, aided, and abetted the conduct of all other
2 Defendants.

3 **FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

4 15. Plaintiff is a California resident who worked for Defendants in the County of
5 Stanislaus, State of California during the statutory period. During the statutory time period,
6 Defendants classified Plaintiff as a non-exempt employee. Plaintiff was typically scheduled to
7 work at least 5 days in a workweek, and typically in excess of 8 hours in a single workday.

8 16. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants failed to pay Plaintiff for all hours
9 worked (including, but not limited to, minimum wages and overtime wages), failed to provide
10 Plaintiff with uninterrupted meal periods, failed to authorize and permit Plaintiff to take
11 uninterrupted rest periods, failed to indemnify Plaintiff for all necessary business expenses, failed
12 to timely pay all final wages to Plaintiff when Defendants terminated Plaintiff's employment, and
13 failed to furnish accurate wage statements to Plaintiff. As discussed below, Plaintiff's experience
14 working for Defendants was typical and illustrative.

15 17. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants maintained a policy and practice of not
16 paying Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees for all hours worked, including all overtime wages.
17 Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees were required to work off-the-clock, and uncompensated.
18 For example, Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees were required to wait in line in order to clock
19 into work, off the clock and uncompensated. Also, Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees were
20 sometimes interrupted during meal breaks without compensation. Also, throughout the statutory
21 period, Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees received nondiscretionary bonuses and other
22 remuneration. However, Defendants failed to incorporate all remuneration when calculating the
23 correct overtime rate of pay, meal break premium rate of pay, and sick day rate of pay, leading to
24 underpayment. Also, Defendants failed to include the amount of available and unused sick pay in
25 the wage statements.

26 18. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants have wrongfully failed to provide
27 Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees with legally compliant meal periods. Defendants
28 sometimes, but not always, required Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees to work in excess of

1 five consecutive hours a day without providing 30-minute, continuous and uninterrupted, duty-free
2 meal period for every five hours of work, or without compensating Plaintiff and the Aggrieved
3 Employees for meal periods that were not provided by the end of the fifth hour of work or tenth
4 hour of work. Defendants also did not adequately inform Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees
5 of their right to take a meal period by the end of the fifth hour of work, or, for shifts greater than
6 10 hours, by the end of the tenth hour of work. Accordingly, Defendants' policy and practice was
7 to not provide meal periods to Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees in compliance with
8 California law.

9 19. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants have wrongfully failed to authorize
10 and permit Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees to take timely and duty-free rest periods.
11 Defendants sometimes, but not always, required Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees to work in
12 excess of four consecutive hours a day without Defendants authorizing and permitting them to take
13 a 10-minute, continuous and uninterrupted, rest period for every four hours of work (or major
14 fraction of four hours), or without compensating Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees for rest
15 periods that were not authorized or permitted. Defendants also did not adequately inform Plaintiff
16 and the Aggrieved Employees of their right to take a rest period. Moreover, Defendants did not
17 have adequate policies or practices permitting or authorizing rest periods for Plaintiff and the
18 Aggrieved Employees, nor did Defendants have adequate policies or practices regarding the timing
19 of rest periods. Defendants also did not have adequate policies or practices to verify whether
20 Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees were taking their required rest periods. Further, Defendants
21 did not maintain accurate records of employee work periods, and therefore Defendants cannot
22 demonstrate that Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees took rest periods during the middle of
23 each work period. Accordingly, Defendants' policy and practice was to not authorize and permit
24 Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees to take rest periods in compliance with California law.

25 20. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants wrongfully required Plaintiff and the
26 Aggrieved Employees to pay expenses that they incurred in direct discharge of their duties for
27 Defendants without reimbursement, such as the occasional use of personal cellular telephones for
28 work purposes.

1 21. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants willfully failed and refused to timely
2 pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees at the conclusion of their employment all wages for all
3 minimum wages, overtime wages, meal period premium wages, and rest period premium wages.
4 Further, Defendants did not pay Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees their final paychecks
5 immediately upon termination.

6 22. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants failed to furnish Plaintiff and the
7 Aggrieved Employees with accurate, itemized wage statements showing all applicable hourly rates,
8 and all gross and net wages earned (including correct hours worked, correct wages earned for hours
9 worked, correct overtime hours worked, correct wages for meal periods that were not provided in
10 accordance with California law, correct wages for rest periods that were not authorized and
11 permitted to take in accordance with California law, and Defendant's address). Further, the wage
12 statements do not show Defendant's address as required by California law. As a result of these
13 violations of California Labor Code § 226(a), Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees suffered
14 injury because, among other things:

- 15 (a) the violations led them to believe that they were not entitled to be paid
16 minimum wages, overtime wages, meal period premium wages, rest period
17 premium wages, and business reimbursements to which they were entitled,
18 even though they were entitled;
- 19 (b) the violations led them to believe that they had been paid the minimum,
20 overtime, meal period premium, and rest period premium wages, even
21 though they had not been;
- 22 (c) the violations led them to believe they were not entitled to be paid minimum,
23 overtime, meal period premium, and rest period premium wages at the
24 correct California rate, even though they were;
- 25 (d) the violations led them to believe they had been paid minimum, overtime,
26 meal period premium, and rest period premium wages at the correct
27 California rate, even though they had not been;
- 28

- 1 (e) the violations hindered them from determining the amounts of minimum,
2 overtime, meal period premium, and rest period premium wages and
3 business reimbursements owed to them;
- 4 (f) in connection with their employment before and during this action, and in
5 connection with prosecuting this action, the violations caused them to have
6 to perform mathematical computations to determine the amounts of wages
7 owed to them, computations they would not have to make if the wage
8 statements contained the required accurate information;
- 9 (g) by understating the wages truly due them, the violations caused them to lose
10 entitlement and/or accrual of the full amount of Social Security, disability,
11 unemployment, and other governmental benefits;
- 12 (h) the wage statements inaccurately understated the wages, hours, and wages
13 rates to which Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees were entitled, and
14 Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees were paid less than the wages and
15 wage rates to which they were entitled.

16 Thus, Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees are owed the amounts provided for in California
17 Labor Code § 226(e), including actual damages.

18 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

19 **(Against all Defendants for Civil Penalties Under the Private Attorneys General Act of**
20 **2004, Cal. Lab. Code §§ 2698, *et seq.*)**

21 23. Plaintiff incorporates by reference and re-allege all preceding paragraphs of this
22 Complaint as though fully set forth herein.

23 24. At all times herein mentioned, Defendants were subject to the Labor Code of the
24 State of California and the applicable Orders of the IWC.

25 25. California Labor Code § 2699(a) specifically provides for a private right of action
26 to recover penalties for violations of the Labor Code: “Notwithstanding any other provision of law,
27 any provision of this code that provides for a civil penalty to be assessed and collected by the Labor
28 and Workforce Development Agency [(“LWDA”)] or any of its departments, divisions,

1 commissions, boards, agencies, or employees, for a violation of this code, may, as an alternative,
2 be recovered through a civil action brought by an aggrieved employee on behalf of the employee
3 and other current or former employees against whom a violation of the same provision was
4 committed pursuant to the procedures specified in Section 2699.3.”

5 26. Plaintiff has exhausted her administrative remedies pursuant to California Labor
6 Code § 2699.3. On September 20, 2025, she gave written notice by online filing to the LWDA and
7 by certified mail to Defendant Saputo Cheese USA, Inc. of the specific provisions of the Labor
8 Code that Defendants have violated against Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees, including the
9 facts and theories to support the violations. Plaintiff also paid the filing fee. Plaintiff’s PAGA case
10 number is LWDA-CM-1126639-25.

11 27. The statute of limitations is tolled while a plaintiff exhausts his/her administrative
12 remedies with the LWDA prior to suit, which is required by the statute. (*See* Cal. Lab. Code §
13 2699.3(a)(2)(A).)

14 28. More than 65 days has elapsed since Plaintiff provided notice, but the LWDA has
15 not indicated that it intends to investigate Defendants’ Labor Code violations discussed in the
16 notice. Accordingly, Plaintiff may commence a civil action to recover penalties under California
17 Labor Code § 2699, pursuant to California Labor Code § 2699.3, for the violations of the California
18 Labor Code described in Plaintiff’s notice and in this Complaint. These penalties include, but are
19 not limited to, penalties under California Labor Code §§ 210, 226.3, 1197.1, and 2699(f)(2).

20 29. In addition, Plaintiff seeks penalties for Defendants’ violation of California Labor
21 Code § 1174(d). Pursuant to California Labor Code § 1174.5, any person, including any entity,
22 employing labor who willfully fails to maintain accurate and complete records required by
23 California Labor Code § 1174 is subject to a penalty under California Labor Code § 1174.5.
24 Pursuant to the applicable IWC Order § 7(A)(3), every employer shall keep time records showing
25 when the employee begins and ends each work period. Meal periods and total hours worked daily
26 shall also be recorded. Additionally, pursuant to the applicable IWC Order § 7(A)(5), every
27 employer shall keep total hours worked in the payroll period and applicable rates of pay.
28

1 30. During the time period of employment for Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees,
2 Defendants failed to maintain records pursuant to the California Labor Code and IWC Orders by
3 failing to maintain accurate records showing meal periods, and accurate records showing when
4 employees begin and end each work period. Defendants' failure to provide and maintain records
5 as required by the California Labor Code and IWC Wage Orders deprived Plaintiff and the
6 Aggrieved Employees the ability to know, understand, and question the accuracy and frequency of
7 meal periods and the accuracy of their hours worked as stated in Defendants' records. Therefore,
8 Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees had no way to dispute the resulting failure to pay wages,
9 all of which resulted in an unjustified economic enrichment to Defendants. As a direct result,
10 Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees have suffered, and continue to suffer, substantial losses
11 related to the use and enjoyment of such wages, lost interest on such wages, expenses, and
12 attorneys' fees in seeking to compel Defendants to fully perform their obligation under state law,
13 all to their respective damage in amounts according to proof at trial. Because of Defendants'
14 knowing failure to comply with the California Labor Code and applicable IWC Wage Orders,
15 Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees have also suffered an injury in that they were prevented
16 from knowing, understanding, and disputing the wage payments paid to them.

17 31. Based on the conduct described in this Complaint, Plaintiff is entitled to an award
18 of civil penalties on behalf of herself, the State of California, and similarly Aggrieved Employees
19 of Defendants. The exact amount of the applicable penalties, in all, is in an amount to be shown
20 according to proof at trial. These penalties are in addition to all other remedies permitted by law.

21 32. In addition, Plaintiff seeks an award of reasonable attorneys' fees and costs pursuant
22 to California Labor Code § 2699(k)(1), which states, "Any employee who prevails in any action
23 shall be entitled to an award of reasonable attorney's fees and costs."

24 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

25 Plaintiff, individually, and on behalf of all others similarly situated only with respect to the
26 representative PAGA claims, prays for relief and judgment against Defendants, jointly and
27 severally, as follows:

28 1. That the Court declare, adjudge, and decree that Defendants violated the California

1 Labor Code by failing to pay wages for all hours worked (including, but not limited to, minimum
2 wages and overtime wages), failing to provide meal periods, failing to authorize and permit rest
3 periods, failing to furnish accurate wage statements, failing to reimburse all business expenses, and
4 failing to maintain accurate records of all hours worked and meal periods;

5 2. An award of civil penalties on behalf of herself, all similarly Aggrieved Employees,
6 and the State of California pursuant to PAGA;

7 3. Pre-judgment and post-judgment interest at the maximum rate allowed;

8 4. For reasonable attorneys' fees and for costs of suit incurred herein pursuant to
9 California Labor Code § 2699(k)(1);

10 5. Injunctive and declaratory relief to the extent allowed by PAGA;

11 6. That counsel for Plaintiff be appointed as PAGA Counsel; and

12 7. For such other and further relief as the Court may deem equitable and appropriate.
13

14 Dated: November 24, 2025

Respectfully submitted,

15 MOON LAW GROUP, PC

16 By: 
17 Kane Moon
18 Allen Feghali
19 Charlotte Mikat-Stevens
Attorneys for Plaintiff

20 **DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

21 Plaintiff demands a trial by jury as to all causes of action triable by jury.
22

23 Dated: November 24, 2025

MOON LAW GROUP, PC

24 By: 
25 Kane Moon
26 Allen Feghali
27 Charlotte Mikat-Stevens
28 Attorneys for Plaintiff