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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

PABLO ACOSTA, COLLEEN DUARTE,
CALVIN SMITH, SLEEM SHEIKH, and CHIA-
CHEN CHANG, individuals, on behalf of
themselves, and on behalf of all persons similarly
situated,

Plaintiffs,

vs.

AXLEHIRE, INC., a Corporation; and DOES 1
through 50, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No. 23CV057116
[consolidated with 23CV055896]

**DECLARATION OF PABLO ACOSTA
IN SUPPORT OF MOTION FOR
PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF
CLASS SETTLEMENT**

Hearing Date: August 5, 2025

Hearing Time: 2:30 p.m.

Judge: Honorable Somnath Raj Chatterjee
Dept: 21

Date Filed: December 1, 2023

Trial Date: Not set

1 I, Pablo Acosta, declare as follows:

2 1. I am over the age of eighteen, a Plaintiff and a proposed Class Representative in the
3 above-entitled matter. I submit this declaration in support of the Motion for Preliminary
4 Approval of Class Settlement and in support of my application for a Class Representative
5 Service Payment.
6

7 2. I have personal knowledge of all the facts stated herein. I could and would competently
8 testify under oath to these facts in court if requested to do so.

9 3. During the class period I worked as a Courier for the Defendant Axlehire, Inc.
10 ("Axlehire" or "Defendant") in California and during that time period I was classified by
11 Axlehire as an independent contractor.
12

13 4. I retained my attorneys who are experienced in both class action and PAGA
14 representative action litigation and claims against employers for violations of the California
15 Labor Code. I have no personal relationship or family ties to my attorneys or any officer of the
16 Court. I am not aware of having any actual or potential conflicts of interest with another class
17 member in this case nor am I aware of having any actual or potential conflicts of interest with
18 Apex Class Action Services LLC, the settlement administrator. I am not aware of any other
19 pending matter or action asserting claims that will be extinguished or adversely affected by this
20 settlement.
21

22 5. I decided to pursue this class action lawsuit and be a plaintiff/class representative
23 because I felt that my legal rights as an employee and others like me were violated. Defendant
24 Axlehire misclassified my job position, Courier, as an independent contractor. Therefore,
25 Axlehire failed to provide me with all my meal breaks and failed to provide me with all my rest
26 breaks during my employment as a result of Defendant's strict route schedules and job demands.
27

1 Also, Axlehire failed to compensate me for all my overtime hours worked and at the proper rate.
2 As another example, Axlehire failed to issue accurate wage statements to me. Axlehire also
3 failed to record the time I performed work for the company.
4

5 6. I spoke to my attorneys several times and discussed how Axlehire implemented its
6 company policies and procedures. I also assisted my attorneys in their investigation into my
7 claims by providing them documents and answering their questions. I reviewed the complaint
8 before it was filed and after it was filed I was given access to an electronic file sharing program
9 that alerted me via email when important documents were filed so that I could review them and
10 keep up with the developments in the case which I understood was one of my duties as a class
11 representative. I would also contact my attorneys from time to time if I had any questions about
12 the case.
13

14 7. Even though this action is in the process of settling, I was and remain prepared to
15 perform all the duties of a class representative. I understand that as a class representative I have
16 assumed a fiduciary responsibility to prosecute this class action on behalf of the absent class
17 members. I have understood that as a fiduciary, I have a duty to prosecute this action for the
18 benefit of the class members and surrender any right to compromise the group action for an
19 individual gain.
20

21 8. I understood that being a plaintiff/class representative in this case meant that I was
22 seeking damages not only for myself but also other current and/or former Couriers classified as
23 independent contractors working for Axlehire in California who make up the class. I felt that
24 these individuals were not aware of their labor law rights and even if they were they would
25 probably be apprehensive about speaking up or even simply because of the time, effort and risk
26 involved in filing a class action lawsuit.
27

9. I understood that being a part of this lawsuit involved risks. For example, my attorneys explained to me that if the case went to trial and we lost, I could be held responsible to pay for all or part of the attorney fees and costs paid by Axlehire to defend this lawsuit. Also, I knew there was a risk that future employers, if they ever find out about this lawsuit, could hold it against me or downgrade me as a potential hire. As one of only five named Plaintiffs in this case it would not be difficult for a future employer to become aware that I sued my employer for labor law violations. Ultimately, I decided these risks were worth it and decided to fight for my rights and the rights of others regardless of the risks, time and effort I spent on this case.

10. During the lawsuit I stayed in touch with my attorneys by phone and email. I also kept up to date on important developments by reviewing court filings that were made available to me electronically as I described above.

11. A mediation took place on January 16, 2025 with Kevin Barnes, a well-respected and experienced mediator of wage and hour class actions. After the mediation the parties were able to reach an agreement to settle the action. I communicated with my attorneys regarding the terms of the settlement which was reached between the parties and understood that I was representing absent class members and therefore wanted the best possible result to be obtained for the class members and I believe a very positive result was in fact achieved via settlement. I reviewed and signed the Memorandum of Understanding on February 12, 2025 and when the final settlement papers were ready, I closely reviewed the Settlement Agreement which I signed on June 24, 2025.

12. I have been actively involved with this lawsuit performing the duties described above. Although I did not keep time records, I was in regular contact with my attorneys, reviewed court filings, and spent a significant amount of time on the issues presented during the lawsuit and in

1 the settlement process. I estimate that I spent approximately 30-40 hours working on this case
2 up until this point. I believe I have been diligent and have done what is expected of a named
3 plaintiff and a proposed class representative to date and will continue to do so. I have and always
4 will maintain the best interests of the class members.

5
6 13. My attorneys explained to me that the settlement process involves a two-step review by
7 the Court to determine whether the settlement is fair before approving the settlement. I know
8 this process also involves notifying all class members of the settlement terms and of their rights
9 to make a claim for their settlement share, to opt out of the settlement or to object to the
10 settlement.

11
12 14. I believe I did the right thing by filing this case on behalf of the class members who,
13 subject to court approval, are in line to receive monetary payments as a result of this case and
14 settlement. This is money they may never have ever gotten if I did not pursue this action on their
15 behalf. I feel significant personal satisfaction to know that I played a role in the class members
16 being entitled to monetary payments as a result of the filing of this lawsuit. I also believe that
17 the requested Class Representative Service Payment of \$15,000 from the settlement is fair
18 compensation for the work I performed and the risks I undertook.

19
20 15. As part of the settlement it was necessary for me to sign a general release of all claims I
21 may have against Axlehire. I believe the Class Representative Service Payment I have requested
22 provides me with some compensation for this agreed release.

23 16. In light of all the time and effort I have spent on this case, the risk I undertook by suing
24 my employer, the exposure to being responsible for paying Defendant's costs in the event we did
25 not win the case, the reputational risk that future employers may hold this lawsuit against me, the
26

1 general release and in light of the size of the settlement, I believe the request for \$15,000 as a
2 Class Representative service payment is fair and reasonable.

3
4 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the
5 foregoing is true and correct.

6 Executed on 07/03/2025, at Los Angeles, CA.
7 (city, state)

8 
9 Pablo Acosta (Jul 3, 2025 15:13 PDT)
Pablo Acosta