



October 14, 2025

BY ONLINE SUBMISSION

California Labor & Workforce Development Agency
PAGAfiling@dir.ca.gov

Re: HOT TOPIC, INC.; STEVE VRANES, AN INDIVIDUAL

Dear Representative:

We have been retained to represent Brooke Wallace against Hot Topic, Inc., and Steve Vranes, an individual (including any and all affiliates, subsidiaries, parents, directors, officers, agents, and executive employees) (collectively referred to as "Hot Topic") for violations of California wage-and-hour laws. Ms. Wallace seeks penalties for violations of the California Labor Code, which are recoverable under California Labor Code section 2698, et seq., the Labor Code Private Attorneys General Act of 2004 ("PAGA") and all other remedies available under PAGA.

Steve Vranes is the Chief Executive Officer of Hot Topic, Inc. Steve Vranes, at all times herein relevant, was acting either individually or as an officer, owner, director, agent, or employee of Hot Topic, who caused and continues to cause all of the wage and hour violations alleged herein against the "aggrieved employees," as defined herein, including without limitation violations of Labor Code Section 558 and 1197.

Ms. Wallace seeks these remedies on behalf of the State of California and "aggrieved employees," as defined herein. This letter is sent in compliance with the reporting requirements of California Labor Code section 2699.3.

Hot Topic employed Ms. Wallace as an hourly-paid, non-exempt employee from approximately June 2024 to approximately May 2025, in the State of California.

The "aggrieved employees" that Ms. Wallace may seek penalties on behalf of are all current and former hourly-paid or non-exempt employees who worked for any of the above-referenced entities within the State of California, including, but not limited to all current and former hourly-paid or non-exempt employees who worked for any of the above-referenced entities within the State of California who earned shift differentials/non-discretionary bonuses/non-discretionary performance pay which was not used to calculate the correct regular rate of pay used to calculate the overtime and premium rates.

Based on the following facts and theories, Hot Topic has violated and/or continues to violate, among other provisions of the California Labor Code and applicable wage law, California Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 226(a), 226.7, 510, 512(a), 551, 552, 558, 1174(d), 1194, 1197,

1197.1, 1198, 2800 and 2802, and IWC Wage Orders including *inter alia*, Wage Orders 4-2001 and 7-2001.

Hot Topic required Ms. Wallace and other aggrieved employees to perform work before their scheduled shifts, after their scheduled shifts, during off-the-clock meal breaks, and/or during rest breaks and failed to compensate Ms. Wallace and other aggrieved employees for this time. Such work included, but was not limited to, assisting customers, taking inventory of products, restocking merchandise, taking out garbage, responding to work related communications, and completing other regular tasks/duties.

California Labor Code sections 510 and 1198 require employers to pay time-and-a-half or double time overtime wages, and make it unlawful to work employees for hours longer than eight hours in one day and/or over forty hours in one week without paying the premium overtime rates at one-and-one-half times or double the regular rate of pay, including additional remuneration. During the relevant time period, Ms. Wallace and other aggrieved employees worked in excess of 8 hours in a day and 40 hours in a week. Therefore, Ms. Wallace and other aggrieved employees were entitled to receive certain wages for overtime compensation, but they were not paid for all overtime hours worked.

California Labor Code sections 226.7 and 512 require employers to pay an employee one additional hour of pay at the employee's regular rate for each meal or rest period that is not provided. During the relevant time period, Hot Topic required Ms. Wallace and other aggrieved employees to work during meal and rest periods and failed to compensate them properly for non-compliant meal and rest periods including, *inter alia*, short, late, interrupted, and missed meal and rest periods.

California Labor Code sections 201 and 202 provide that if an employer discharges an employee, the wages earned and unpaid at the time of discharge are due and payable immediately, and if an employee quits his or her employment, his or her wages shall become due and payable not later than seventy-two (72) hours thereafter, unless the employee has given seventy-two (72) hours' notice of his or her intention to quit, in which case the employee is entitled to his or her wages at the time of quitting. During the relevant time period, Hot Topic failed to pay Ms. Wallace and other aggrieved employees all wages due to them within any time period specified by California Labor Code sections 201 and 202, including earned and unpaid minimum, overtime, and premium wages as discussed above.

California Labor Code section 204 requires that all wages earned by any person in any employment between the 1st and the 15th days, inclusive, of any calendar month, other than those wages due upon termination of an employee, are due and payable between the 16th and the 26th day of the month during which the labor was performed, and that all wages earned by any person in any employment between the 16th and the last day, inclusive, of any calendar month, other than those wages due upon termination of an employee, are due and payable between the 1st and the 10th day of the following month. California Labor Code section 204 also requires that all wages earned for labor in excess of the normal work period shall be paid no later than the payday for the next regular payroll period. During the relevant time period, Hot Topic failed to pay Ms. Wallace and other aggrieved employees all wages due to them within any time period specified by California Labor

Code section 204, including earned and unpaid minimum, overtime, and premium wages as discussed above.

California Labor Code section 226 requires employers to make, keep and provide complete and accurate itemized wage statements to their employees. During the relevant time period, Hot Topic did not provide Ms. Wallace and other aggrieved employees with complete and accurate itemized wage statements. The wage statements they received from Hot Topic were in violation of California Labor Code section 226(a). The violations include, but are not limited to, the failure to include the total hours worked by Ms. Wallace and other aggrieved employees, including time spent working off-the-clock and during meal and rest periods as discussed above.

California Labor Code sections 551 and 552 require that every person employed in any occupation of labor is entitled to one day's rest in a seven-day workweek, that no employer of labor shall cause his employees to work more than six days in a workweek, and that an employer shall pay a civil penalty in the amounts of fifty dollars (\$50) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for the initial violation and one hundred dollars (\$100) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for each subsequent violation. During the relevant time period, Ms. Wallace and the aggrieved employees were required to regularly and/or consistently work in excess of six (6) days in a workweek. During the relevant time period, Ms. Wallace and the aggrieved employees were required to work in excess of thirty (30) hours in a week and/or six (6) hours in any one (1) day thereof, during workweeks in which they were required to work in excess of six (6) days. During the relevant time period, Ms. Wallace and the aggrieved employees were required to work in excess of six (6) days in a workweek without accumulating or being provided the opportunity to take at least one (1) day of rest, and when Ms. Wallace and the aggrieved employees accumulated days of rest, they were not actually provided the opportunity to take the equivalent of one (1) day's rest in seven (7) during each calendar month.

California Labor Code sections 1174(d) requires an employer to keep, at a central location in the state or at the plants or establishments at which employees are employed, payroll records showing the hours worked daily by and the wages paid to, and the number of piece-rate units earned by and any applicable piece rate paid to, employees employed at the respective plants or establishments. These records shall be kept with rules established for this purpose by the commission, but in any case shall be kept on file for not less than two years. During the relevant time period, Hot Topic failed to keep accurate and complete payroll records showing the actual hours worked daily and the wages earned by Ms. Wallace and other aggrieved employees, including earned and unpaid minimum, overtime, and premium wages as discussed above.

California Labor Code sections 1194, 1197, and 1197.1 provide the minimum wage to be paid to employees, and the payment of a lesser wage than the minimum so fixed is unlawful. During the relevant time period, Hot Topic did not provide Ms. Wallace and other aggrieved employees with the minimum wages to which they were entitled for work performed "off-the-clock."

California Labor Code section 1198 provides that "The employment of any employee ... under conditions of labor prohibited by the [Industrial Wage Orders] is unlawful." The applicable Industrial Wage Orders, including *inter alia*, Wage Orders 4-2001 and 7-2001, require that for each workday an employee is required to report for work and does report, but is not put to work or is furnished less than half said employee's usual or scheduled day's work, the employee shall

be paid for half the usual or scheduled day's work, but in no event for less than two (2) hours nor more than four (4) hours, at the employee's regular rate of pay. Further, if an employee is required to report for work a second time in any one workday and is furnished less than two (2) hours of work on the second reporting, said employee shall be paid for two (2) hours at the employee's regular rate of pay. During the relevant time period, Hot Topic failed to pay Ms. Wallace and other aggrieved employees half the usual or scheduled day's work in an amount no less than two (2) hours nor more than four (4) hours at the employee's regular rate of pay for workdays in which Ms. Wallace and the other aggrieved employees reported to work and were furnished less than half the usual or scheduled day's work. During the relevant time period, Hot Topic failed to pay Ms. Wallace and other aggrieved employees for two (2) hours at the employee's regular rate of pay on days in which Ms. Wallace and the other aggrieved employees were required to report for work a second time in one workday and were furnished less than two (2) hours of work upon the second reporting.

California Labor Code sections 2800 and 2802 require an employer to reimburse its employee for all necessary expenditures incurred by the employee in direct consequence of the discharge of his or her job duties or in direct consequence of his or her obedience to the directions of the employer. During the relevant time period, Ms. Wallace and other aggrieved employees incurred necessary business-related expenses and costs that were not fully reimbursed by Hot Topic. These costs include, but are not limited to, the use of personal phones for business-related purposes.

Therefore, on behalf of all aggrieved employees, Ms. Wallace seeks all applicable penalties arising out of the above-referenced wage, hour, and payroll practices, or which could be assessed and collected by the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, for violation of the California Labor Code pursuant to PAGA, including civil penalties pursuant to Labor Code section 558.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you for your attention to this matter and the noble cause you advance each and every day.

With kind regards,



Arman Marukyan, Esq.

Cc: (By U.S. Certified Mail / Return Receipt Requested)

Hot Topic, Inc.
c/o CSC – Lawyers Incorporating Service
Agent for Service of Process
2710 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 150N
Sacramento, CA 95833

Steve Vranes
18305 E San Jose Ave.
City of Industry, CA 91748

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Brooke Wallace v. Hot Topic, Inc., et al.

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PS Form 3811, July 2020 PSN 7530-02-000-9053

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Brooke Wallace v. Hot Topic, Inc., et al.

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