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

JERROD LAMONT STEVENS, individually,
and on behalf of all others similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

v.

BBQ HOLDINGS, INC., a corporation; BBQ
GROWTH LLC, an unknown business entity;
TAHOE JOE'S STEAKHOUSE, LLC, a limited
liability company; and DOES 1 through 10,
inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.: VCU300433

CLASS & REPRESENTATIVE ACTION

[Assigned for all purposes to: Hon. David C.
Mathias, Dept. 1]

**DECLARATION OF TYLER J. WOODS
IN SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFF'S
MOTION FOR PRELIMINARY
APPROVAL OF CLAS ACTION
SETTLEMENT**

PRELIMINARY APPROVAL HEARING

Date: January 22, 2026

Time: 8:30 a.m.

Dept: 1

Complaint filed: July 28, 2023

FAC filed: August 7, 2025

Trial date: Not set

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1. I am admitted, in good standing, to practice as an attorney in the State of California and the United States District Courts for the Central, Southern, Eastern, and Northern Districts of California. I am a Senior Partner at Wilshire Law Firm, PLC, counsel of record for Plaintiff Jerrod Lamont Stevens (“Plaintiff”). I have personal knowledge of the facts set forth in this declaration and could and would competently testify to them under oath if called as a witness. This Declaration is submitted in support of Plaintiff’s Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Action Settlement.

2. This is a wage and hour class and Private Attorneys General Act (“PAGA”) (Cal. Lab. Code §§ 2699, *et seq.*) representative action. Plaintiff and putative class members worked in California as hourly-paid or non-exempt employees for Defendants BBQ Holdings, Inc. (“BBQ Holdings”), BBQ Growth LLC (“BBQ Growth”), and Tahoe Joe’s Steakhouse, LLC (“Tahoe Joe’s”, and together with BBQ Holdings and BBQ Growth, “Defendants”) during the class period. Defendants operate a multi-brand restaurant company. Notably, Tahoe Joe’s, a California-based steakhouse chain was acquired by BBQ Holdings, Inc. on October 8, 2021.

4. On July 28, 2023, Plaintiff filed a putative wage-and-hour class action complaint against Defendant for: (1) failure to pay minimum and straight time wages (Labor Code §§ 204, 1194, 1194.2, and 1197); (2) failure to pay overtime wages (Labor Code §§ 1194 and 1198); (3) failure to provide meal periods (Labor Code §§ 226.7 and 512); (4) failure to authorize and permit rest periods (Labor Code §§ 226.7 and 512); (5) failure to timely pay final wages at

1 termination (Labor Code §§ 201-203); (6) failure to provide accurate itemized wage statements
2 (Labor Code § 226); (7) failure to indemnify employees for expenditures (Labor Code § 2802);
3 and (8) unfair business practices (Business and Professions Code 17200 et seq.). Plaintiff sent
4 a notice to Defendants and the California Labor & Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”)
5 alleging similar wage and hour violations pursuant to the PAGA (Cal. Lab. Code §§ 2699, *et*
6 *seq.*) on August 22, 2023.

7 DISCOVERY AND INVESTIGATION

8 5. Following the filing of the Complaint, the Parties exchanged documents and
9 information before mediating this action. Defendants produced over 300 pages of documents
10 relevant to Plaintiff’s wage and hour claims, including documents of its wage and hour policies
11 and practices during the class period, a sample of time and pay records for class members, and
12 information regarding the total number of current and former employees in its informal
13 discovery responses.

14 6. After reviewing documents regarding Defendants’ wage and hour policies and
15 practices, analyzing Defendants’ timekeeping and payroll records, and interviewing Class
16 Members, Class Counsel was able to evaluate the probability of class certification, success on
17 the merits, and Defendants’ maximum monetary exposure for all claims. Class Counsel also
18 investigated the applicable law regarding the claims and defenses asserted in the litigation.
19 Class Counsel reviewed these records and prepared a damage analysis prior to mediation.

20 SETTLEMENT NEGOTIATIONS

21 7. On October 18, 2024, the Parties participated in private mediation with
22 experienced class action mediator, Francis J. Ortmann III, Esq. The mediation was conducted
23 via Zoom. The settlement negotiations were at arm’s length and, although conducted in a
24 professional manner, were adversarial. The Parties went into the mediation willing to explore
25 the potential for a settlement of the dispute, but each side was also prepared to litigate their
26 position through trial and appeal if a settlement had not been reached.

27 8. After extensive negotiations and discussions regarding the strengths and
28 weaknesses of Plaintiff’s claims and Defendants’ defenses, the Parties were able to reach a

1 resolution, the material terms of which are encompassed within the Settlement Agreement.
2 Attached as **Exhibit 1** is a true and correct copy of the Class Action and PAGA Settlement
3 Agreement and Class Notice (“Settlement Agreement”).

4 9. The Parties used the Los Angeles Superior Court’s Form Class Action and PAGA
5 Settlement Agreement and Class Notice.

6 10. Class Counsel submitted the proposed Settlement to the LWDA before filing the
7 Motion for Preliminary Approval.

8 11. Wilshire Law Firm requested several bids from experienced class action settlement
9 administrators to handle the responsibilities of the Settlement Administrator under this Settlement.
10 The Parties accepted the bid of ILYM Group, Inc. (“ILYM”). ILYM has multiple years of
11 experience in the field of Class Action Administration, particularly in the wage-and-hour arena.
12 In its bid, Apex agreed to cap its costs at \$9,950.00 if there are 744 class members. ILYM’s bid
13 also accounts for Notice in English and Spanish. A true and correct copy of the bid is attached
14 hereto as **Exhibit 2**.

15 12. Plaintiff does not have any interest, financial or otherwise, in the proposed third-
16 party administrator, ILYM.

17 13. No one at Wilshire Law Firm, PLC (meaning the law firm itself and anyone
18 employed at the law firm) has any interest, financial or otherwise, in the proposed third-party
19 administrator, ILYM.

20 14. Wilshire Law Firm, PLC has no fee-splitting agreement with any other counsel in
21 this case.

22 15. Class Counsel is not aware of any other pending matter or action asserting claims
23 that will be extinguished or affected by the Settlement.

24 **THE PROPOSED SETTLEMENT IS FAIR AND REASONABLE**

25 16. Class Counsel has conducted a thorough investigation into the facts of this case.
26 Based on the foregoing discovery and their own independent investigation and evaluation, Class
27 Counsel is of the opinion that the Settlement is fair, reasonable, and adequate and is in the best
28 interests of the Settlement Class Members in light of all known facts and circumstances, the risk

1 of significant delay, the defenses that could be asserted by Defendants both to certification and on
2 the merits, trial risk, and appellate risk.

3 17. Based on an analysis of the facts and legal contentions in this case, documents and
4 information from Defendant, Wilshire Law Firm evaluated Defendants' maximum exposure. We
5 took into account the risk of not having the claims certified and the risk of not prevailing at trial,
6 even if the claims are certified. After using the data Defendants provided, including class member
7 timekeeping and payroll records, as well as class member demographics (i.e., the number of class
8 members, workweeks, and average total compensation of the class), with the assistance of a
9 statistics expert, we created a damages model to evaluate the realistic range of potential recovery
10 for the class. The damages model is based on the following benchmarks:

11 Total Class Members: 744

12 Terminated Class Members during 3-year statute: 221

13 Total Workweeks: 32,148

14 PAGA Pay Periods: 5,230

15 PAGA Eligible Employees: 260

16 Avg. Hourly Rate: \$16.30

17 18. Based on Plaintiff's discovery and investigation, Class Counsel reached the
18 conclusion that Defendants had a policy and practice of not providing its employees with California
19 compliant meal and rest periods, which it did not pay appropriate premiums for, and Defendants
20 required its employees to work "off-the-clock" prior to clocking in for the workday, during meal
21 periods, and after clocking out for the workday, time which it did not pay for, and Defendants
22 failed to reimburse its employees for business-related expenses. Defendants denies these claims.

23 19. Plaintiff alleges that Defendants failed to pay for all hours worked, including
24 minimum wages, straight time wages, and overtime wages, by requiring class members to work
25 off-the-clock, unpaid. Our expert calculated unpaid off-the-clock based on the difference between
26 the time recorded versus the time paid in the time records, for a total of \$89,283.00. This results
27 in an estimate of \$131,003.10 (32,148 weeks * \$16.30 hourly overtime rate * 0.25 hour of unpaid
28 work per week), but we discounted this figure by 80% to account for the difficulty of prevailing

1 on a motion for class certification and a trial on the merits because liability depends on whether
2 Defendant knew or should have known that class members were working off-the-clock, yielding a
3 realistic damage estimate of \$26,200.62.¹

4 20. With respect to the meal period claim, Plaintiff alleges that Defendants required him
5 and similarly situated class members to either work in lieu of taking meal periods, or their meal
6 periods were untimely or interrupted. Our expert analyzed Defendants' timekeeping records and
7 opined that approximately 75% of all meal breaks had violations of short, missed, or no meal
8 periods. Potential liability for the meal period claim is \$1,454,134.41 (32,148 workweeks * 3.7
9 average shifts per workweek * \$16.30 * 75%). We discounted this figure by 80% to account for
10 the difficulty of certifying and proving meal period claims, as well as Defendants' contention that
11 the claim lacks merit, particularly in light of its numerous meal period premium payments, yielding
12 a realistic damage estimate of \$290,826.88.

13 21. With respect to the rest period claim, Plaintiff alleges that Defendants required him
14 and similarly situated class members to work in lieu of taking rest periods, or their rest periods
15 were untimely or interrupted. Assuming a 90% violation rate for the class period based on
16 Plaintiff's and other class members' experience working for Defendants, Defendants' potential
17 liability for the rest period claim is \$1,744,961.29 (32,148 workweeks * 3.7 average shifts per
18 workweek * \$16.30 * 90%); however, we discounted this figure by 80% to account for the
19 difficulty of certifying and proving rest period claims, particularly because rest periods do not have
20 to be recorded, and to account for the possibility of class members voluntarily choosing to forego
21 a rest period, yielding a realistic damage estimate of \$348,992.26.

22 22. Plaintiff alleges that Defendants failed to reimburse necessary business expenses.
23 Defendants' employees (including Plaintiff) were frequently required to use their personal cell
24 phones to communicate with their supervisors and managers about work-related duties. This
25 _____

26 ¹ An 80% discount for risk at certification and trial is reasonable because the Judicial
27 Council of California found that only 21.4% of all class actions were certified either as part of a
28 settlement *or* as part of a contested certification motion. See Findings of the Study of California
Class Action Litigation, 2000-2006, available at [http:// www.courts.ca.gov/documents/class-
action-lit-study.pdf](http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/class-action-lit-study.pdf).

1 included communication regarding their schedules and/or the following day's or week's tasks. For
2 purposes of calculating Defendants' liability based on a best case scenario for Plaintiff and the
3 Class, I estimated that Defendants was liable to each class member for \$30 per month, or \$7.50 per
4 workweek in unreimbursed expenses, for a total amount of \$241,110.00 ($\$7.50 * 32,148$); however,
5 I discounted this figure by 80% to account for the difficulty of certifying and proving expense
6 reimbursement claims, particularly in light of written policies and practices providing a mechanism
7 for class member's to seek reimbursement, yielding a realistic damage estimate of \$48,222.00.

8 23. In sum, we estimated that Plaintiff's maximum recovery for the off-the-clock claim,
9 meal period violations, rest period violations, and failure to reimburse expenses is \$3,571,208.80,
10 but, after factoring in the risk and uncertainty of prevailing at certification and trial, we estimate
11 that Plaintiff's realistic estimated recovery for the non-penalty claims is \$714,241.76.

12 24. With respect to Plaintiff's derivative claims for statutory and civil penalties,
13 Plaintiff estimated that Defendants' realistic potential liability is \$551,121.52. While Defendants'
14 maximum potential liability for waiting time penalties is \$572,765.70 based on approximately 221
15 terminated class members during the 3-year statute ($221 * \$16.30 * 5.3 \text{ hours} * 30 \text{ days}$),
16 \$536,000.00 for inaccurate wage statements based on approximately 260 class members who
17 worked 5,230 pay periods within the 1-year statute ($\$50 * 260 + \$100 * 5,230$), and \$523,000.00
18 for PAGA violations based on the Court assessing a \$100 penalty for initial violations for all 5,230
19 pay periods within the 1-year statute, we believe that it would be unrealistic to expect the Court to
20 award the full \$1,631,765.70 in penalties given Defendants' defenses, the contested nature of
21 Plaintiff's claims, and the discretionary nature of penalties. Considering that the underlying claims
22 are realistically estimated to be \$714,241.76, such a disproportionate award would also raise due
23 process concerns. Weighing these factors and applying a discount of 80% to account for the risk
24 and uncertainty of prevailing at trial, we arrived at \$326,353.14 for statutory and civil penalties.

25 25. Using these estimated figures, Plaintiff predicted that the realistic maximum
26 recovery for all claims, including penalties, would be \$1,040,594.90. This means that the
27 \$650,000.00 settlement figure represents 63% of the realistic maximum recovery ($\$650,000.00 /$
28 $\$1,040,594.90 = 62.5\%$). Considering the risk and uncertainty of prevailing at class certification

1 and at trial, this is an excellent result for the Class.² Indeed, because of the proposed Settlement,
2 class members will receive timely, guaranteed relief and will avoid the risk of an unfavorable
3 judgment.

4 26. While Plaintiff is confident in the merits of his claims, a legitimate controversy
5 exists as to each cause of action. Plaintiff also recognizes that proving the amount of wages due
6 to each Class Member would be an expensive, time-consuming, and uncertain proposition.

7 27. This Settlement avoids the risks and the accompanying expenses of further
8 litigation. Although the Parties had engaged in significant amount of investigation, informal
9 discovery and class-wide data analysis, the Parties had not yet completed formal written discovery.
10 Plaintiff intended to depose corporate officers and managers of Defendant. Moreover, preparation
11 for a class certification and a trial remained for the Parties as well as the prospect of appeals in the
12 wake of a disputed class certification ruling for Plaintiff and/or adverse summary judgment ruling.
13 Had the Court certified any claims, Defendant could not move to decertify the claims. As a result,
14 the Parties would incur considerably more attorneys' fees and costs through trial.

15 28. The Net Settlement Amount available for Class Member settlement payments is
16 estimated to be \$350,883.33, for a class of 744 persons.³ As a result, each Settlement Class
17 Member is eligible to receive an average net benefit of approximately \$471.62.

18 29. The proposed Settlement of \$650,000.00, therefore, represents a substantial
19 recovery when compared to Plaintiff's reasonably forecasted recovery. When considering the risks
20 of litigation, the uncertainties involved in achieving class certification, the burdens of proof
21 necessary to establish liability, the probability of appeal of a favorable judgment, it is clear that the

22
23 ² See, e.g., *Wise v. Ulta Salon, Cosmetics & Fragrance, Inc.* (E.D. Cal. Aug. 21, 2019)
24 2019 WL 3943859 at *8 (granting preliminary approval where the proposed allocation to settle
25 class claims was between 9.53 percent of Plaintiffs' maximum recovery); *Bravo v. Gale Triangle,*
26 *Inc.* (C.D. Cal. Feb 16, 2017) 2017 WL 708766 at * 10 (finding that "a settlement for fourteen
percent recovery of Plaintiffs' maximum recovery is reasonable"); *In re Omnivision Techs., Inc.*
(N.D. Cal. 2008) 559 F.Supp.2d 1036, 1042 (approving settlement amount that "is just over 9% of
the maximum potential recovery asserted by either party.").

27 ³ The Net Settlement Amount is: \$650,000.00 minus \$216,666.67 for Class Counsel's
28 attorneys' fees, minus \$30,000.00 for Class Counsel's litigation expenses, minus \$9,950.00 in
administration costs, minus \$75,000.00 for the PAGA payment, and minus \$10,000.00 for the class
representative service award to Plaintiff.

1 settlement amount of \$650,000.00 is within the “ballpark” of reasonableness, and preliminary
2 settlement approval is appropriate.

3 ENHANCEMENT AWARD FOR PLAINTIFF IS REASONABLE

4 30. Class Counsel represent that Plaintiff devoted a great deal of time and work assisting
5 counsel in the case, communicated with counsel very frequently for litigation and to prepare for
6 mediation, and was frequently in contact with Class Counsel during the mediation. Plaintiff’s
7 requested enhancement award is reasonable particularly in light of the substantial benefits Plaintiff
8 generated for all class members.

9 31. Throughout this Litigation, Plaintiff, who is a former employee of Defendants, has
10 cooperated immensely with my office and has taken many actions to protect the interests of the
11 class. Plaintiff provided valuable information regarding the off-the-clock, meal period, and rest
12 period claims. Plaintiff also informed my office of developments and information relevant to this
13 action, participated in decisions concerning this action, made himself available to answer questions
14 during the mediation, and provided my office with the names and contact information of potential
15 witnesses in this action. Before we filed this case, Plaintiff provided my office with documents
16 regarding the claims alleged in this action. The information and documentation provided by
17 Plaintiff was instrumental in establishing the wage and hour violations alleged in this action, and
18 the recovery provided for in the Settlement Agreement would have been impossible to obtain
19 without Plaintiff’s participation.

20 32. At the same time, Plaintiff faced many risks in adding himself as the class
21 representative in this matter. Plaintiff faced actual risks with his future employment, as putting
22 himself on public record in an employment lawsuit could also very well affect his likelihood for
23 future employment. Furthermore, as part of this Settlement, Plaintiff is executing a general release
24 of all claims against Defendants.

25 33. In turn, class members will now have the opportunity to participate in a settlement,
26 reimbursing them for alleged wage violations they may have never known about on their own or
27 been willing to pursue on their own. If these class members would have each tried to pursue their
28 legal remedies on their own, that would have resulted in each having to expend a significant amount

1 of their own monetary resources and time, which were obviated by Plaintiff putting himself on the
2 line on behalf of these other class members.

3 34. In the final analysis, this class action would not have been possible without the aid
4 of Plaintiff, who put his own time and effort into this Litigation, sacrificed the value of his own
5 individual claims, and placed himself at risk for the sake of the class members. The requested
6 enhancement award for Plaintiff for his service as the class representative and for his general
7 release of all individual claims is a relatively small amount of money when the time and effort put
8 into the Litigation are considered and in comparison to enhancements granted in other class actions.
9 The requested incentive award is therefore reasonable to compensate Plaintiff for his active
10 participation in this lawsuit.

11 THE REQUEST FOR ATTORNEYS' FEES AND COSTS IS REASONABLE

12 35. The Settlement provides for attorney's fees payable to Class Counsel in an amount
13 up to one-third (33 1/3%) of the Settlement Amount, for a maximum fees award of \$216,666.67,
14 plus actual costs and expenses not to exceed \$30,000.00. The proposed award of attorneys' fees
15 to Class Counsel in this case can be justified under either method – lodestar or percentage recovery.
16 Class Counsel, however, intend to base the proposed award of fees, costs and expenses on the
17 percentage method as many of the entries in the time records will have to be redacted to preserve
18 attorney-client and attorney work product privileges

19 36. I am informed and believe that the fee and costs provision is reasonable. The fee
20 percentage requested is less than that charged by my office for most employment cases. My office
21 invested significant time and resources into the case, with payment deferred to the end of the case,
22 and then, of course, contingent on the outcome.

23 37. It is further estimated that my office will need to expend at least another 50 to 100
24 hours to monitor the process leading up to the final approval and payments made to the class. My
25 office also bears the risk of taking whatever actions are necessary if Defendants fails to pay.

26 38. The risk to my office has been very significant, particularly if we would not be
27 successful in pursuing this class action. In that case, we would have been left with no compensation
28 for all the time taken in litigating this case. Indeed, Wilshire Law Firm has taken on a number of

1 class action cases that have resulted in thousands of attorney hours being expended and ultimately
2 having certification denied or the defendant company going bankrupt. The contingent risk in these
3 types of cases is very real and they do occur regularly. Furthermore, we were precluded from
4 focusing on, or taking on, other cases which could have resulted in a larger, and less risky,
5 monetary gain.

6 39. Because most individuals cannot afford to pay for representation in litigation on an
7 hourly basis, Wilshire Law Firm, PLC represents virtually all of its employment law clients on a
8 contingency fee basis. Pursuant to this arrangement, we are not compensated for our time unless
9 we prevail at trial or successfully settle our clients' cases. Because Wilshire Law Firm, PLC is
10 taking the risk that we will not be reimbursed for our time unless our client settles or wins his or
11 her case, we cannot afford to represent an individual employee on a contingency basis if, at the
12 end of our representation, all we are to receive is our regular hourly rate for services. It is essential
13 that we recover more than our regular hourly rate when we win if we are to remain in practice so
14 as to be able to continue representing other individuals in civil rights employment disputes.

15 PLAINTIFF'S COUNSELS' EXPERIENCE

16 40. Wilshire Law Firm, PLC was selected by Best Lawyers and U.S. News & World
17 Report as one of the nation's Best Law Firms for every year since 2020 and is comprised of over
18 120 attorneys and over 600 employees. Wilshire Law Firm, PLC is actively and continuously
19 practicing in employment litigation, representing employees in both individual and class actions
20 in both state and federal courts throughout California.

21 41. Wilshire Law Firm, PLC is qualified to handle this litigation because its attorneys
22 are experienced in litigating Labor Code violations in both individual, class action, and
23 representative action cases. Wilshire Law Firm, PLC has handled, and is currently handling,
24 numerous wage and hour class action lawsuits, as well as class actions involving consumer rights
25 and data privacy litigation.

26 42. I graduated from the University of California, Davis in 1999 with a Bachelor of Arts
27 degree in Communications with minors in Spanish and Psychology. I received by Juris Doctor
28 from USC Gould School of Law in 2004.

1 43. Upon graduating from law school in 2004, I worked for international firm
2 McDermott Will & Emery LLP practicing general litigation which included employment law
3 matters. Since 2010, and exclusively since 2013, my practice has focused on labor and
4 employment matters including handling wage and hour class, collective, and representative actions
5 (including the California Private Attorneys general Act or “PAGA”), including at the law firms of
6 McDermott Will & Emery LLP (where I was a partner), Pacific Trial Attorneys (where I was a
7 partner), and labor and employment powerhouse Fisher Phillips (where I was a partner and head
8 of Fisher Phillips Class Action Practice Group). During my time at these law firms, I was the lead
9 trial counsel or took a major leading role in defending employers on numerous wage and hour
10 class, collective, and representative actions. Under my leadership as lead counsel during my tenure
11 as defense counsel I successfully defeated class certification of a potential 10,000 plus class as lead
12 counsel on behalf of a nationwide quick service restaurant during my time as defense counsel and
13 negotiated several wage and hour class actions that were subsequently approved by the Courts.

14 44. In late March 2024, I left Fisher Phillips and joined my current firm, WLF, to
15 represent plaintiff employees. I have been and am handling many wage and hour class and
16 representative actions litigating such matters on behalf of plaintiff employees in numerous Superior
17 Courts. From matters representing both plaintiff and defendants, I have successfully mediated the
18 resolution of many wage and hour class, collective, and representative actions.

19 45. In July 2025, I obtained a jury verdict in excess of \$6,000,000 in a wage and hour
20 case in Los Angeles Superior Court against Javier’s Cantina & Grill (Los Angeles Superior Court
21 Case No. 19STCV36438).

22 46. I have received numerous awards for my legal work. For example, from 2009-2011
23 and 2014, I was listed as a Rising Star in Los Angeles Super Lawyers (Thomas Reuters). I have
24 also served on numerous prominent boards and in other leadership positions, including currently
25 serving on the board of the Orange County Chapter of the California Restaurants Association.

26 47. I have also presented monthly webinars on labor and employment issues to hundreds
27 of participants since 2022, including on wage and hour issues. For example, I presented “10
28 Reasons Employers Get Sued (and How to Avoid These Mistakes” (while a partner with Fisher

1 Phillips) and “Key Insights for Hospitality Employers: Arbitration Agreements 101” (while a
2 partner with Fisher Phillips).

3 48. My current contingent billing rate of \$1,000 per hour is consistent with my actual
4 billing rate for my practice area, experience, legal market, and accepted hourly rate. The
5 reasonableness of my firm’s hourly rates is also supported by several surveys of legal rates,
6 including the following:

7 a. The 2022 Real Rate Report survey compiled by Wolters Kluwer, which presents the
8 real market rates of Los Angeles area attorneys who practice litigation. For that
9 category, the third quartile 2022 rate was \$1,045 per hour for partners and \$855 for
10 associates. Likewise, page 32 of the Report describes the rates charged by 183 Los
11 Angeles partners with “21 or more years of experience” and “Fewer than 21 years.”
12 For those categories, the third quartile Los Angeles partner rate in 2022 were \$1,133
13 per hour for 21 or more years and \$1,075 for attorneys with fewer than 21 years. A
14 true and correct copy of portions of the 2022 Real Rate Report is attached hereto as
15 **Exhibit 3.**

16 b. In an article entitled “Big Law Rates Topping \$2,000 Leave Value ‘In Eye of
17 Beholder,’” written by Roy Strom and published by Bloomberg Law on June 9,
18 2022, the author describes how Big Law firms have crossed the \$2,000-per hour
19 rate. The article also notes that law firm rates have been increasing by just under
20 3% per year. A true and correct copy of this article is attached hereto as **Exhibit 4.**

21 49. Alan Wilcox is a Senior Attorney at Wilshire Law Firm. He graduated from the
22 University of California, Berkeley in 2007, and graduated from Pepperdine University’s School of
23 Law and became a member of the California State Bar in 2012. Throughout his career, Alan has
24 represented clients in both state and federal Courts in a wide variety of matters, including contract
25 disputes, wrongful foreclosure, unlawful detainer, divorce, product defect, tort, and employment
26 matters. From 2014 to the present, he has exclusively practiced complex civil litigation
27 representing plaintiff employees in employment matters. He has handled both individual wrongful
28 discharge and collective wage and hour actions, with the class action and PAGA matters including

1 Flores v. Aqua Terra Culinary, Inc., Monterey Superior Court Case No. 17CV002672, Garcia v.
2 Construction Innovations Group, LLC, Sacramento Superior Court Case No. 34-2020-00285239,
3 Kim v. Sheraton Operating Corp., Central District of California Case No. 2:17-cv-09247-FMO-E,
4 Pease v. Wattrans, Inc., San Bernardino Superior Court Case No. CIVDS1919832, and Lachman
5 v. Berlitz Languages, Inc., Los Angeles Superior Court Case No. 19STCV01533, among others.

6 50. Bradford Smith is a former Settlement Attorney at Wilshire Law Firm. He
7 graduated from the University of California, Irvine with a Bachelor of Arts in History and received
8 his Juris Doctor from Loyola Law School, Los Angeles in 2022. He was admitted to practice law
9 in the State of California in 2022. Before joining Wilshire Law Firm, he worked at a law firm
10 specializing in insurance defense litigation. Mr. Smith now focuses on the settlement of wage and
11 hour class action cases.

12 51. Justin F. Marquez is a former Senior Partner at Wilshire Law Firm who was actively
13 involved in the litigation and resolution of this matter from its inception through December 2024.
14 He graduated from University of California, Los Angeles's College Honors Program in 2004 with
15 Bachelor of Arts degrees in History and Japanese, *magna cum laude* and *Phi Beta Kappa*. His
16 practice focused primarily on advocating for the rights of consumers and employees in class action
17 litigation and appellate litigation. He received numerous awards for his legal work: from 2017 to
18 2020, Super Lawyers selected him as a "Southern California Rising Star," and from 2022 to 2025,
19 he was selected as a "Southern California Super Lawyer"; he was selected as one of the "Best
20 Lawyers in America" from 2023 to 2025; and in 2024, he, along with his colleagues at Wilshire
21 Law Firm, received a CLAY (California Lawyer Attorneys of the Year) award for their work on a
22 false advertising case against Apple which ultimately led to a \$25 million settlement. He also was
23 selected to speak at multiple CELA conferences throughout his career – in 2019, he spoke on the
24 topic of manageability of class actions at CELA's 2019 Advanced Wage & Hour Seminar, and in
25 2024, he spoke on the topic of dealings with multiple cases against the same defendant at CELA's
26 2024 Advanced Wage & Hour Seminar. He served as lead or co-lead in negotiating class action
27 settlements worth over \$10 million in gross recovery to class members for each year since 2020,
28 including over \$37.5 million in 2022 and over \$75 million in 2023. His contingent hourly rate

1 while at Wilshire Law Firm, PLC was \$1,500 per hour.

2 52. Arsiné Grigoryan is a former Associate Attorney at my office. She earned two
3 Bachelor of Arts degrees from the University of California, Berkeley in (1) Political Science with
4 an emphasis on international relations and (2) Media Studies. She obtained her Juris Doctor degree
5 from Southwestern Law School. She is presently admitted to practice in all state courts of
6 California (admitted in 2017) and before all federal district courts in California. The focus of her
7 practice at Wilshire Law Firm is currently on class action wage-and-hour law, including Private
8 Attorneys General Act of 2004 (“PAGA”) matters. Prior to joining Wilshire Law Firm, PLC, she
9 worked at a law firm specializing in wage-and-hour class action cases. She is also handling more
10 than a dozen active class action matters currently pending and prosecuting multiple PAGA
11 collective action matters in various courts throughout the State of California.

12 53. Dorota A. James is a former Associate Attorney at my office. She earned her
13 master’s degree in law and business administration at the University of Wroclaw, where she
14 received recognition as an outstanding alumna. She also holds a J.S.D. degree in Comparative Law
15 Studies and a master’s degree in German law from the University of Saarland (Germany). She then
16 went on to get an LL.M. degree in Comparative Law at the University of San Diego Law School.
17 She is presently admitted to practice in all state courts of California (admitted in 2016) and before
18 all federal district courts in California. Prior to joining Wilshire Law Firm in May 2024, Ms. James
19 gained invaluable litigation experience working at various Plaintiffs and defense firms, including
20 ShortLegal, APC, Tyson Mendes, LLP, and Dinsmore and Shohl, LLP. Ms. James’ current
21 practice has been primarily focused on wage-and-hour class and representative action litigation
22 brought on behalf of employees. She also litigates discrimination and harassment cases as
23 individual and complex multi-party litigation.

24 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California and the United
25 States that the foregoing is true and correct.

26 Executed on October 24, 2025, at Los Angeles, California.

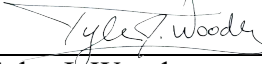
27 
28 Tyler J. Woods

Exhibit 1

CLASS ACTION AND PAGA SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT AND CLASS NOTICE

This Class Action and PAGA Settlement Agreement (“Agreement”) is made by and between plaintiff Jerrod Lamont Stevens (“Plaintiff”) and defendants BBQ Holdings, Inc., BBQ Growth, LLC, and Tahoe Joe’s Steakhouse, LLC (collectively “Defendants”). The Agreement refers to Plaintiff and Defendants collectively as “Parties,” or individually as “Party.”

1. DEFINITIONS.

- 1.1. “Action” means the Plaintiff’s lawsuit alleging wage and hour violations against Defendant captioned *Jerrod Lamont Stevens v. BBQ Holdings, Inc., et al.*, Case No. VCU300433 (“Complaint”), initiated on July 28, 2023, pending in Superior Court of the State of California, County of Tulare.
- 1.2. “Administrator” means ILYM Group, Inc., the neutral entity the Parties have agreed to appoint to administer the Settlement.
- 1.3. “Administration Expenses Payment” means the amount the Administrator will be paid from the Gross Settlement Amount to reimburse its reasonable fees and expenses in accordance with the Administrator’s “not to exceed” bid submitted to the Court in connection with Preliminary Approval of the Settlement with any excess in cost reducing the amount available to distribute to the Class and any short fall increasing the amount available to distribute to the Class.
- 1.4. “Aggrieved Employee” means a person who worked for Defendants in California as an hourly, non-exempt employee at any time during the PAGA Settlement Covered Period.
- 1.5. “Class” means persons who worked for Defendants in California as an hourly, non-exempt employees at any time during the Class Settlement Covered Period.
- 1.6. “Class Counsel” means Tyler Woods, Peter Horton, and Alan Wilcox of Wilshire Law Firm, PLC.
- 1.7. “Class Counsel Fees Payment” and “Class Counsel Litigation Expenses Payment” mean the amounts allocated to Class Counsel for reimbursement of reasonable attorneys’ fees and expenses, respectively, incurred to prosecute the Action.
- 1.8. “Class List” means a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet containing the following information for each Class Member and Aggrieved Employee: (1) full name; (2) last known home address; (3) social security number; (4) start and end dates of work performed in California as a non-exempt employee of Defendants; (5) total Pay Periods for work performed in California during the Covered Period; and (6) any other information required by the Settlement Administrator to effectuate the terms of the Settlement.

- 1.9. “Class Member” or “Settlement Class Member” means a member of the Class, as either a Participating Class Member or Non-Participating Class Member (including a Non-Participating Class Member who qualifies as an Aggrieved Employee).
- 1.10. “Class Member Address Search” means the Administrator’s investigation and search for current Class Member mailing addresses using all reasonably available sources, methods and means including, but not limited to, the National Change of Address database, skip traces, and direct contact by the Administrator with Class Members.
- 1.11. “Class Notice” means the COURT APPROVED NOTICE OF CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT AND HEARING DATE FOR FINAL COURT APPROVAL, to be mailed to Class Members in English, with a Spanish translation, if applicable, in the form, without material variation, attached as Exhibit A and incorporated by reference into this Agreement.
- 1.12. “Class Settlement Covered Period” means the period from October 7, 2021, through the date of preliminary approval of the Settlement or pursuant to the provisions of Paragraph 8.
- 1.13. “Class Representative” means the named Plaintiff in the operative complaint in the Action seeking Court approval to serve as Class Representative.
- 1.14. “Class Representative Service Payment” means the payment to the Class Representative for initiating the Action and providing services in support of the Action.
- 1.15. “Court” means the Superior Court of California, County of Tulare.
- 1.16. “Defendants” means named Defendants BBQ Holdings, Inc., BBQ Growth LLC and Tahoe Joe’s Steakhouse, LLC.
- 1.17. “Defense Counsel” means Gregory Iskander and Helen Braginsky of Littler Mendelson P.C.
- 1.18. “Effective Date” means the later of the following events: five (5) calendar days after the period for filing any appeal, writ, or other appellate proceeding opposing Final Approval has elapsed without any appeal, writ, or other appellate proceeding having been filed, *i.e.*, 65 days from the date the court grants Final Approval; or, if any appeal, writ, or other appellate proceedings opposing the Settlement has been finally and conclusively dismissed with no right to pursue further remedies or relief or the appellate court affirms the Final Approval and issues remittitur.
- 1.19. “Final Approval” means the Court’s order granting final approval of the Settlement.
- 1.20. “Final Approval Hearing” means the Court’s hearing on the Motion for Final Approval of the Settlement.

- 1.21. “Final Judgment” means the Judgment Entered by the Court upon Granting Final Approval of the Settlement.
- 1.22. “Gross Settlement Amount” means \$650,000.00 which is the total amount Defendants agree to pay under the Settlement except as provided in Paragraph 8 below. The Gross Settlement Amount will be used to pay Individual Class Payments, Individual PAGA Payments, the LWDA PAGA Payment, Class Counsel Fees, Class Counsel Expenses, Class Representative Service Payment and the Administrator’s Expenses. Defendants will fund the Gross Settlement Amount within 5 business days of the Effective Date.
- 1.23. “Individual Class Payment” means the Participating Class Member’s pro rata share of the Net Settlement Amount calculated according to the number of Workweeks worked during the Class Period.
- 1.24. “Individual PAGA Payment” means the Aggrieved Employee’s pro rata share of 25% of the PAGA Penalties calculated according to the number of Workweeks worked during the PAGA Settlement Covered Period.
- 1.25. “Judgment” means the judgment entered by the Court based upon the Final Approval.
- 1.26. “LWDA” means the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency, the agency entitled, under Labor Code section 2699, subd. (i).
- 1.27. “LWDA PAGA Payment” means the 75% of the PAGA Penalties paid to the LWDA under Labor Code section 2699, subd. (i).
- 1.28. “Net Settlement Amount” means the Gross Settlement Amount, less the following payments in the amounts approved by the Court: Individual PAGA Payments, the LWDA PAGA Payment, Class Representative Service Payment, Class Counsel Fees Payment, Class Counsel Litigation Expenses Payment, and the Administration Expenses Payment. The remainder is to be paid to Participating Class Members as Individual Class Payments.
- 1.29. “Non-Participating Class Member” means any Class Member who opts out of the Settlement by sending the Administrator a valid and timely Request for Exclusion.
- 1.30. “PAGA Pay Period” means any Pay Period during which an Aggrieved Employee worked for Defendants for at least one day during the PAGA Settlement Covered Period.
- 1.31. “PAGA Settlement Covered Period” means the period from October 18, 2023, through the date of preliminary approval of the Settlement, or pursuant to the provisions of Paragraph 8.
- 1.32. “PAGA” means the Private Attorneys General Act (Labor Code §§ 2698. et seq.).
- 1.33. “PAGA Notice” means Plaintiff’s August 22, 2023, letter to Defendants and the LWDA providing notice pursuant to Labor Code section 2699.3, subd. (a).

- 1.34. "PAGA Penalties" means the total amount of PAGA civil penalties to be paid from the Gross Settlement Amount in the amount of \$32,500.00, allocated 25% to the Aggrieved Employees (\$8,125.00) and the 75% to LWDA (\$24,375.00) in settlement of PAGA claims.
- 1.35. "Participating Class Member" means a Class Member who does not submit a valid and timely Request for Exclusion from the Settlement.
- 1.36. "Plaintiff" means Jerrod Lamont Stevens, the named plaintiff in the Action.
- 1.37. "Preliminary Approval" means the Court's Order Granting Preliminary Approval of the Settlement.
- 1.38. "Preliminary Approval Order" means the proposed Order Granting Preliminary Approval and Approval of PAGA Settlement.
- 1.39. "Released Class Claims" means the claims being released as described in Paragraph 5.2 below.
- 1.40. "Released PAGA Claims" means the claims being released as described in Paragraph 5.3 below.
- 1.41. "Released Parties" means Defendants, as well as each and all of their past and present direct or indirect parents, subsidiaries, predecessors, successors, and affiliated corporations, entities, divisions, general and limited partners, joint venturers and affiliates, and each of their respective current and former directors, officers, managers, employees, principals, members, agents, managing agents, insurers, reinsurers, shareholders (both legal and beneficial), attorneys, advisors, representatives, general partners, limited partners, joint venturers, and affiliated companies, and each of their respective executors, predecessors, successors, assigns, trustees and legal representatives, and any individual or entity which could be jointly liable with Defendants (collectively, "Released Parties").
- 1.42. "Request for Exclusion" means a Class Member's submission of a written request to be excluded from the Class Settlement signed by the Class Member.
- 1.43. "Response Deadline" means 45 days after the Administrator mails Notice to Class Members and Aggrieved Employees and shall be the last date on which Class Members may: (a) fax, email, or mail Requests for Exclusion from the Settlement, or (b) fax, email, or mail his or her Objection to the Settlement. Class Members to whom Notice Packets are resent after having been returned undeliverable to the Administrator shall have an additional 14 calendar days beyond the Response Deadline has expired.
- 1.44. "Settlement" means the disposition of the Action effected by this Agreement and the Judgment.

- 1.45. “Workweek” means any week during which a Class Member worked for Defendants for at least one day, during the Class Settlement Covered Period.

2. RECITALS.

- 2.1. On July 28, 2023, Plaintiff commenced this Action by filing a Complaint alleging causes of action against Defendants for failure to pay minimum and straight time wages, failure to pay overtime wages, failure to provide meal periods, failure to authorize and permit rest periods, failure to timely pay final wages at termination, failure to provide accurate itemized wage statements, failure to indemnify necessary business expenditures, and violation of California’s Unfair Competition Law. As part of the Settlement, the Parties agree that Plaintiff will file a First Amended Complaint (“FAC”) against Defendants adding a cause of action for violation of PAGA that asserts all claims and allegations currently underlying Plaintiff’s class action complaint, via a stipulation. The Parties will stipulate to the filing of the amended complaint solely for purposes of settlement. If the Court requires Plaintiff to file a motion for leave to file an amended complaint, Plaintiff will provide a draft of said motion and Defendants will not oppose the motion if it is substantially similar to the stipulation for leave to file an amended complaint agreed upon between the Parties. The stipulation will be prepared by Plaintiff and is subject to approval by Defendants. The stipulation to amend the complaint will be filed after the Settlement Agreement is fully executed. Defendants will work cooperatively with Plaintiff’s Counsel for the purpose of amending the operative complaint. If, for any reason, the Settlement is not approved or does not become final and effective, the stipulation and order to permit Plaintiff leave to file an FAC will be void and the FAC shall be deemed withdrawn. The Action will be restored to its status quo ante as of the date of the mediation, and Parties will cooperate to the fullest extent possible to restore the Action to its status quo ante, with the statute of limitations period on the PAGA claims having been tolled by agreement of the Parties from October 18, 2023, to 14 days after denial of the motion for preliminary approval and agreement between the Parties to no longer pursue the Settlement, to allow Plaintiff time to separately file the PAGA claims. By stipulating to the filing of the FAC for the purpose of Settlement, Defendants are in no way agreeing that an amendment would be appropriate outside the context of this Settlement, and shall be deemed to have denied all of the allegations in the FAC. Defendants will not be required to file an answer or other responsive pleading to the FAC unless directed by the Court to do so. The Complaint currently filed in the Action is the operative complaint, but upon its filing, the FAC will become the operative complaint in the Action (the “Operative Complaint”). Defendants deny the allegations in the Operative Complaint, deny any failure to comply with the laws identified in in the Operative Complaint and deny any and all liability for the causes of action alleged.
- 2.2. Pursuant to Labor Code section 2699.3, subd. (a), on August 22, 2023, Plaintiff gave timely written notice to Defendants and the LWDA by sending the PAGA Notice.
- 2.3. On October 18, 2024, the Parties participated in an all-day mediation presided over by Tripper Ortman, Esq., which led to this Agreement to settle the Action.

- 2.4. Prior to mediation, Plaintiff obtained, through informal discovery, documents relevant to the case, including timekeeping records and payroll information for a sampling of the class, Defendants' policies relating to Plaintiff's claims, and Plaintiff's personnel files. Plaintiff's investigation was sufficient to satisfy the criteria for court approval set forth in *Dunk v. Foot Locker Retail, Inc.* (1996) 48 Cal. App. 4th 1794, 1801 and *Kullar v. Foot Locker Retail, Inc.* (2008) 168 Cal. App. 4th 116, 129-130 ("*Dunk/Kullar*").
- 2.5. The Court has not granted class certification.
- 2.6. The Parties, Class Counsel and Defense Counsel represent that they are not aware of any other pending matter or action asserting claims that will be extinguished or affected by the Settlement.

3. MONETARY TERMS.

- 3.1. Gross Settlement Amount. Except as otherwise provided by Paragraph 8 below, Defendants promise to pay \$650,000.00 and no more as the Gross Settlement Amount and to separately pay any and all employer payroll taxes owed on the wage portions of the Individual Class Payments. Defendants have no obligation to pay the Gross Settlement Amount (or any payroll taxes) prior to the deadline stated in Paragraph 4.3 of this Agreement. The Administrator will disburse the entire Gross Settlement Amount without asking or requiring Participating Class Members or Aggrieved Employees to submit any claim as a condition of payment. None of the Gross Settlement Amount will revert to Defendants.
- 3.2. Payments from the Gross Settlement Amount. The Administrator will make and deduct the following payments from the Gross Settlement Amount, in the amounts specified by the Court in the Final Approval:
 - 3.2.1. To Plaintiff: Class Representative Service Payment to the Class Representative of not more than \$10,000.00 (in addition to any Individual Class Payment and any Individual PAGA Payment the Class Representative is entitled to receive as a Participating Class Member). Defendants will not oppose Plaintiff's request for a Class Representative Service Payment that do not exceed this amount. As part of the motion for Class Counsel Fees Payment and Class Litigation Expenses Payment, Plaintiff will seek Court approval for any Class Representative Service Payments no later than 16 court days prior to the Final Approval Hearing. If the Court approves a Class Representative Service Payment less than the amount requested, the Administrator will retain the remainder in the Net Settlement Amount. The Administrator will pay the Class Representative Service Payment using IRS Form 1099. Plaintiff assumes full responsibility and liability for employee taxes owed on the Class Representative Service Payment.
 - 3.2.2. To Class Counsel: A Class Counsel Fees Payment of not more than 33 and 1/3%, which is currently estimated to be \$216,666.67 and a Class Counsel Litigation

Expenses Payment of not more than \$30,000.00. Defendants will not oppose requests for these payments provided they do not exceed these amounts. Plaintiff and/or Class Counsel will file a motion for Class Counsel Fees Payment and Class Litigation Expenses Payment no later than 16 court days prior to the Final Approval Hearing. If the Court approves a Class Counsel Fees Payment and/or a Class Counsel Litigation Expenses Payment less than the amounts requested, the Administrator will allocate the remainder to the Net Settlement Amount. Released Parties shall have no liability to Class Counsel or any other Plaintiff's Counsel arising from any claim to any portion any Class Counsel Fee Payment and/or Class Counsel Litigation Expenses Payment. The Administrator will pay the Class Counsel Fees Payment and Class Counsel Expenses Payment using one or more IRS1099 Forms. Class Counsel assumes full responsibility and liability for taxes owed on the Class Counsel Fees Payment and the Class Counsel Litigation Expenses Payment and holds Defendants harmless, and indemnifies Defendants, from any dispute or controversy regarding any division or sharing of any of these Payments.

3.2.3. To the Administrator: An Administrator Expenses Payment not to exceed \$9,950 except for a showing of good cause and as approved by the Court. To the extent the Administration Expenses are less or the Court approves payment less than \$9,950, the Administrator will retain the remainder in the Net Settlement Amount.

3.2.4. To Each Participating Class Member: An Individual Class Payment calculated by (a) dividing the Net Settlement Amount by the total number of Workweeks worked by all Participating Class Members during the Class Settlement Covered Period and (b) multiplying the result by each Participating Class Member's Workweeks.

3.2.4.1. Tax Allocation of Individual Class Payments. 25% of each Participating Class Member's Individual Class Payment will be allocated to settlement of wage claims (the "Wage Portion"). The Wage Portions are subject to tax withholding and will be reported on an IRS W-2 Form. The remaining 75% of each Participating Class Member's Individual Class Payment will be allocated to settlement of claims for interest and penalties (the Non-Wage Portion"). The Non-Wage Portions are not subject to wage withholdings and will be reported on IRS 1099 Forms. Participating Class Members assume full responsibility and liability for any employee taxes owed on their Individual Class Payment.

3.2.4.2. Effect of Non-Participating Class Members on Calculation of Individual Class Payments. Non-Participating Class Members will not receive any Individual Class Payments. The Administrator will retain amounts equal to their Individual Class Payments in the Net Settlement Amount for distribution to Participating Class Members on a pro rata basis.

3.2.5. To the LWDA and Aggrieved Employees: PAGA Penalties in the amount of \$32,500.00 to be paid from the Gross Settlement Amount, with 75% (\$24,375.00) allocated to the LWDA PAGA Payment and 25% (\$8,125.00) allocated to the

Individual PAGA Payments.

3.2.5.1. The Administrator will calculate each Individual PAGA Payment by (a) dividing the amount of the Aggrieved Employees' 25% share of PAGA Penalties (\$8,125.00) by the total number of PAGA Pay Periods worked by all Aggrieved Employees during the PAGA Settlement Covered Period and (b) multiplying the result by each Aggrieved Employee's PAGA Pay Periods. Aggrieved Employees assume full responsibility and liability for any taxes owed on their Individual PAGA Payment.

3.2.5.2. If the Court approves PAGA Penalties of less than the amount requested, the Administrator will allocate the remainder to the Net Settlement Amount. The Administrator will report the Individual PAGA Payments on IRS 1099 Forms.

4. SETTLEMENT FUNDING AND PAYMENTS.

4.1. Class Workweeks and Aggrieved Employee Pay Periods. Based on a review of its records at the time of mediation, Defendant estimated there were 744 Class Members collectively worked a total of 32,148 Workweeks during the Class Settlement Covered Period and 260 Aggrieved Employees who worked a total of 5,230 PAGA Pay Periods.

4.2. Class List. Not later than 20 calendar days after the Court grants Preliminary Approval of the Settlement, Defendants will deliver the Class List to the Administrator, in the form of a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. To protect Class Members' privacy rights, the Administrator must maintain the Class List in confidence, use the Class List only for purposes of this Settlement and for no other purpose, and restrict access to the Class List to Administrator employees who need access to the Class List to effect and perform under this Agreement. Defendants have a continuing duty to immediately notify Class Counsel if it discovers that the Class List omitted class member identifying information and to provide corrected or updated Class List as soon as reasonably feasible. The Parties and their counsel will expeditiously use best efforts, in good faith, to reconstruct or otherwise resolve any issues related to missing or omitted Class List.

4.3. Funding of Gross Settlement Amount. Defendant shall fully fund the Gross Settlement Amount, and also fund the amounts necessary to fully pay Defendant's share of payroll taxes by transmitting the funds to the Administrator no later than 5 business days after the Effective Date.

4.4. Payments from the Gross Settlement Amount. Within 14 days after Defendants fund the Gross Settlement Amount, the Administrator will mail checks for all Individual Class Payments, all Individual PAGA Payments, the LWDA PAGA Payment, the Administration Expenses Payment, the Class Counsel Fees Payment, the Class Counsel Litigation Expenses Payment, and the Class Representative Service Payment. Disbursement of the Class Counsel Fees Payment, the Class Counsel Litigation Expenses Payment and the Class Representative Service Payment shall not precede disbursement of Individual Class

Payments and Individual PAGA Payments.

4.4.1. The Administrator will issue checks for the Individual Class Payments and/or Individual PAGA Payments and send them to the Class Members via First Class U.S. Mail, postage prepaid. The face of each check shall prominently state the date (not less than 180 days after the date of mailing) when the check will be voided. The Administrator will cancel all checks not cashed by the void date. The Administrator will send checks for Individual Settlement Payments to all Participating Class Members (including those for whom Class Notice was returned undelivered). The Administrator will send checks for Individual PAGA Payments to all Aggrieved Employees including Non-Participating Class Members who qualify as Aggrieved Employees (including those for whom Class Notice was returned undelivered). The Administrator may send Participating Class Members a single check combining the Individual Class Payment and the Individual PAGA Payment. Before mailing any checks, the Settlement Administrator must update the recipients' mailing addresses using the National Change of Address Database.

4.4.2. The Administrator must conduct a Class Member Address Search for all other Class Members whose checks are returned undelivered without USPS forwarding address. Within 7 days of receiving a returned check the Administrator must re-mail checks to the USPS forwarding address provided or to an address ascertained through the Class Member Address Search. The Administrator need not take further steps to deliver checks to Class Members whose re-mailed checks are returned as undelivered. The Administrator shall promptly send a replacement check to any Class Member whose original check was lost or misplaced, requested by the Class Member prior to the void date.

4.4.3. For any Class Member whose Individual Class Payment check or Individual PAGA Payment check is uncashed and cancelled after the void date, the Administrator shall transmit the funds represented by such checks to the California Controller's Unclaimed Property Fund in the name of the Class Member thereby leaving no "unpaid residue" subject to the requirements of California Code of Civil Procedure Section 384, subd. (b).

4.4.4. The payment of Individual Class Payments and Individual PAGA Payments shall not obligate Defendants to confer any additional benefits or make any additional payments to Class Members (such as 401(k) contributions or bonuses) beyond those specified in this Agreement.

5. RELEASES OF CLAIMS. Effective on the date when Defendants fully fund the entire Gross Settlement Amount and fund all employer payroll taxes owed on the wage portion of the Individual Class Payments, Plaintiff, Class Members, and Class Counsel will release claims against all Released Parties as follows:

5.1 Plaintiff's Release. Plaintiff and his respective former and present spouses, representatives, agents, attorneys, heirs, administrators, successors, and assigns generally,

to the fullest extent permitted by law, release and discharge Released Parties from all claims, transactions, or occurrences known and unknown, asserted and not asserted, which Plaintiff has or may have against the Released Parties as of the date of execution of this Settlement Agreement that occurred during the Class Settlement Covered Period, including, but not limited to: (a) all claims that were, or reasonably could have been, alleged, based on the facts contained, in the Operative Complaint and (b) all PAGA claims that were, or reasonably could have been, alleged based on facts contained in the Operative Complaint, Plaintiff's PAGA Notice. ("Plaintiff's Release.") Plaintiff's Release does not extend to any claims or actions to enforce this Agreement, or to any claims for vested benefits, unemployment benefits, disability benefits, social security benefits, workers' compensation benefits that arose at any time, or based on occurrences outside the Class Settlement Covered Period. Plaintiff acknowledges that Plaintiff may discover facts or law different from, or in addition to, the facts or law that Plaintiff now knows or believes to be true but agrees, nonetheless, that Plaintiff's Release shall be and remain effective in all respects, notwithstanding such different or additional facts or Plaintiff's discovery of them.

5.1.1 Plaintiff's Waiver of Rights Under California Civil Code Section 1542. For purposes of Plaintiff's Release, Plaintiff expressly waives and relinquishes the provisions, rights, and benefits, if any, of section 1542 of the California Civil Code, which reads:

A general release does not extend to claims that the creditor or releasing party does not know or suspect to exist in his or her favor at the time of executing the release, and that if known by him or her would have materially affected his or her settlement with the debtor or releasing party.

5.2 Release by Participating Class Members: The claims released by the Class Members will include all claims pleaded in the Complaint, and/or First Amended Complaint, and/or any PAGA letters, and/or amended PAGA letters sent to the LWDA by Plaintiff during or prior to the Action, and/or which reasonably could have been alleged based on the facts, allegations and/or claims pleaded in the Action, against Defendants and/or Released Parties for work performed during the Class Settlement Covered Period, including but not limited to the following:

5.2.1 Any claims for unpaid wages and regular rate of pay, including minimum, regular, and/or overtime and/or double time wages (including but not limited to Cal. Labor Code ("Lab. Code") §§ 200, 510, 558, 1194, 1194(a), 1194.2, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, and/or all applicable Wage Orders); failure to provide meal periods and/or meal period premium payments (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 218, 218.6, 226.7, 512, and/or all applicable Wage Orders); failure to provide rest breaks and/or days of rest and/or rest break premium payments (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 226.7, and/or all applicable Wage Orders); expense reimbursement (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 2800 and/or 2802); failure to timely pay wages or vacation pay (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 201-204, 210); improper sick pay (Lab. Code § 246 et seq.); failure to maintain or furnish accurate

employment records (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 1174, 1174(d) 1174.5, 1175, 1198.5, and/or all applicable Wage Orders); failure to provide accurate wage statements (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 226, 226.3); failure to maintain or furnish accurate employment records (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 432, 1174, 1174.5, 1175, 1198.5, and/or all applicable Wage Orders, including but not limited Wage Order No. 7); claims for unfair competition and/or business practices (Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 17200 et seq.); all claims based on the foregoing under the applicable Wage Orders and/or California Code of Regulations; all claims for penalties pursuant to the California Labor Code and the California's Private Attorneys General Act (Lab. Code § 2698 et seq. with the LWDA, State of California, and/or Plaintiff as proxies for the LWDA release) based on the facts alleged in the Operative Complaint or which reasonably could have been alleged based upon the facts stated in the Operative Complaint and/or Plaintiff's August 22, 2023 PAGA letter to the LWDA; all claims for interest, penalties, premiums, and/or attorney's fees in connection with any of the preceding claims (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 210, 218.5, 218.6, 221, 222, 223, 226, 226.3, 1194, 1194.3); Cal. Civ. Code §§ 3287, 3289, California Code of Civil Procedure § 1021.5, and/or all other statutory and/or regulatory violations alleged in the LWDA letter and/or any Complaint or Amended Complaint in the Action.

5.2.2 Any claims for injunctive relief, declaratory relief, restitution, fraudulent business practices and/or punitive damages alleged and/or which could have been alleged under the facts, allegations and/or claims pleaded in the complaints filed as part of the Actions; and

5.2.3 In addition, to the extent required by law, the cashing of the settlement check by the Class Members shall be deemed an opt-in for purposes of releasing the Released Parties from any claims predicated under the FLSA which reasonably could have been alleged based on the facts, allegations and/or claims pleaded in the Action, against Defendants and/or Released Parties for work performed during the Class Settlement Covered Period. The Settlement Administrator shall include a legend on the settlement check stating: "By cashing this check, I am opting into the settlement in *Jerrod Lamont Stevens v. BBQ Holdings, Inc., et al.*, Tulare Superior Court, Case No. VCU300433 under the Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 U.S.C. § 216(b), and releasing the Released Claims described in the Settlement Agreement." 5.2.4 The claims set forth in subparagraphs 5.2.1 – 5.2.3 above shall be collectively referred to as the "Released Class Claims." The release shall be given full res judicata and collateral estoppel effect for the Released Class Claims upon entry of judgment.

- 5.3 Release by Aggrieved Employees: All Aggrieved Employees (and the LWDA and state of California) are deemed to release, on behalf of themselves and their respective former and present representatives, agents, attorneys, heirs, administrators, successors, and assigns, the Released Parties, from all claims for PAGA civil penalties pleaded in the Operative Complaint, and/or any PAGA letters and/or amended PAGA letters sent to the LWDA by Plaintiff during or prior to the Action, and/or which reasonably could have been alleged based on the facts, allegations and/or claims pleaded in the Action, against

Defendants and/or Released Parties, including any and all claims involving any alleged failure to pay minimum, straight or overtime wages, failure to provide meal and rest periods, failure to provide accurate wage statements, failure to pay all wages due at separation, and failure to reimburse business expenses, including Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 210, 216, 223, 225.5, 226, 226.3, 226.7, 245-248.5, 256, 432, 432.5, 432.7, 510, 512, 558, 558.1, 1024.5, 1174, 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 1198.5, 1199, 2699, 2699.3, 2802, 2810.5 during the PAGA Settlement Covered Period. Aggrieved Employees only release these claims for the duration of the PAGA Settlement Covered Period. These claims shall be collectively referred to as the “Released PAGA Claims.”

6. MOTION FOR PRELIMINARY APPROVAL. The Parties agree to jointly prepare and file a motion for preliminary approval (“Motion for Preliminary Approval”) that complies with the Court’s current checklist for Preliminary Approvals.

6.1 Plaintiff’s Responsibilities. Plaintiff will prepare and deliver to Defense Counsel all documents necessary for obtaining Preliminary Approval, including: (i) a draft of the notice, and memorandum in support, of the Motion for Preliminary Approval that includes an analysis of the Settlement under *Dunk/Kullar* and a request for approval of the PAGA Settlement under Labor Code Section 2699, subd. (f)(2)); (ii) a draft proposed Order Granting Preliminary Approval and Approval of PAGA Settlement; (iii) a draft proposed Class Notice; (iv) a signed declaration from the Administrator attaching its “not to exceed” bid for administering the Settlement and attesting to its willingness to serve; competency; operative procedures for protecting the security of Class List; amounts of insurance coverage for any data breach, defalcation of funds or other misfeasance; all facts relevant to any actual or potential conflicts of interest with Class Members and/or the proposed cy pres; and the nature and extent of any financial relationship with Plaintiff, Class Counsel or Defense Counsel; (v) a signed declaration from Plaintiff confirming willingness and competency to serve and disclosing all facts relevant to any actual or potential conflicts of interest with Class Members, and/or the Administrator and/or the proposed cy pres; (vi) a signed declaration from each Class Counsel firm attesting to its competency to represent the Class Members; its timely transmission to the LWDA of all necessary PAGA documents (initial notice of violations (Labor Code section 2699.3, subd. (a)), Operative Complaint (Labor Code section 2699, subd. (l)(1)), this Agreement (Labor Code section 2699, subd. (l)(2)); and (vii) all facts relevant to any actual or potential conflict of interest with Class Members, the Administrator and/or the cy pres recipient. In their Declarations, Plaintiff and Class Counsel shall aver that they are not aware of any other pending matter or action asserting claims that will be extinguished or adversely affected by the Settlement.

6.2 Responsibilities of Counsel. Class Counsel and Defense Counsel are jointly responsible for expeditiously finalizing and filing the Motion for Preliminary Approval no later than 30 days after the full execution of this Agreement, or as soon thereafter as is reasonably practicable; obtaining a prompt hearing date for the Motion for Preliminary Approval; and for appearing in Court to advocate in favor of the Motion for Preliminary Approval. Class Counsel is responsible for delivering the Court’s Preliminary Approval to the Administrator.

- 6.3 Duty to Cooperate. If the Parties disagree on any aspect of the proposed Motion for Preliminary Approval and/or the supporting declarations and documents, Class Counsel and Defense Counsel will expeditiously work together on behalf of the Parties by meeting in person or by telephone, and in good faith, to resolve the disagreement. If the Court does not grant Preliminary Approval or conditions Preliminary Approval on any material change to this Agreement, Class Counsel and Defense Counsel will expeditiously work together on behalf of the Parties by meeting in person or by telephone, and in good faith, to modify the Agreement and otherwise satisfy the Court's concerns.

7. SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION.

- 7.1 Selection of Administrator. The Parties have jointly selected the ILYM Group, Inc. to serve as the Administrator and verified that, as a condition of appointment, ILYM Group, Inc. agrees to be bound by this Agreement and to perform, as a fiduciary, all duties specified in this Agreement in exchange for payment of Administration Expenses. The Parties and their Counsel represent that they have no interest or relationship, financial or otherwise, with the Administrator other than a professional relationship arising out of prior experiences administering settlements.
- 7.2 Employer Identification Number. The Administrator shall have and use its own Employer Identification Number for purposes of calculating payroll tax withholdings and providing reports state and federal tax authorities.
- 7.3 Qualified Settlement Fund. The Administrator shall establish a settlement fund that meets the requirements of a Qualified Settlement Fund ("QSF") under US Treasury Regulation section 468B-1.
- 7.4 Notice to Class Members.
- 7.4.1 No later than three (3) business days after receipt of the Class List, the Administrator shall notify Class Counsel that the list has been received and state the number of Class Members, PAGA Members, Workweeks, and Pay Periods in the Class Data.
- 7.4.2 Using best efforts to perform as soon as possible, and in no event later than 14 days after receiving the Class List, the Administrator will send to all Class Members identified in the Class List, via first-class United States Postal Service ("USPS") mail, the Class Notice, with Spanish translation, if applicable, substantially in the form attached to this Agreement as Exhibit A. The first page of the Class Notice shall prominently estimate the dollar amounts of any Individual Class Payment and/or Individual PAGA Payment payable to the Class Member, and the number of Workweeks and PAGA Pay Periods (if applicable) used to calculate these amounts. Before mailing Class Notices, the Administrator shall update Class Member addresses using the National Change of Address database.
- 7.4.3 Not later than 3 business days after the Administrator's receipt of any Class

Notice returned by the USPS as undelivered, the Administrator shall re-mail the Class Notice using any forwarding address provided by the USPS. If the USPS does not provide a forwarding address, the Administrator shall conduct a Class Member Address Search, and re-mail the Class Notice to the most current address obtained. The Administrator has no obligation to make further attempts to locate or send Class Notice to Class Members whose Class Notice is returned by the USPS a second time.

7.4.4 The deadlines for Class Members' written objections, challenges to Workweeks and/or Pay Periods, and Requests for Exclusion will be extended an additional 14 days beyond the 45 days otherwise provided in the Class Notice for all Class Members whose notice is re-mailed. The Administrator will inform the Class Member of the extended deadline with the re-mailed Class Notice.

7.4.5 If the Administrator, Defendant or Class Counsel is contacted by or otherwise discovers any persons who believe they should have been included in the Class Data and should have received Class Notice, the Parties will expeditiously meet and confer in person or by telephone, and in good faith, in an effort to agree on whether to include them as Class Members. If the Parties agree, such persons will be Class Members entitled to the same rights as other Class Members, and the Administrator will send, via email or overnight delivery, a Class Notice requiring them to exercise options under this Agreement not later than 14 days after receipt of Class Notice, or the deadline dates in the Class Notice, whichever are later.

7.5 Requests for Exclusion (Opt-Outs).

7.5.1 Class Members who wish to exclude themselves (opt-out of) the Class Settlement must send the Administrator, by fax, email, or mail, a signed written Request for Exclusion not later than 45 days after the Administrator mails the Class Notice (plus an additional 14 days for Class Members whose Class Notice is re-mailed). A Request for Exclusion is a letter from a Class Member or his/her representative that reasonably communicates the Class Member's election to be excluded from the Settlement and includes the Class Member's name, address and email address or telephone number. To be valid, a Request for Exclusion must be timely faxed, emailed, or postmarked by the Response Deadline.

7.5.2 The Administrator may not reject a Request for Exclusion as invalid because it fails to contain all the information specified in the Class Notice. The Administrator shall accept any Request for Exclusion as valid if the Administrator can reasonably ascertain the identity of the person as a Class Member and the Class Member's desire to be excluded. If the Administrator has reason to question the authenticity of a Request for Exclusion, the Administrator may demand additional proof of the Class Member's identity. Any dispute regarding the Administrator's determination of authenticity and whether a person is a Class Member may be raised with the Court prior to or during the Final Approval Hearing.

7.5.3 Every Class Member who does not submit a timely and valid Request for

Exclusion is deemed to be a Participating Class Member under this Agreement, entitled to all benefits and bound by all terms and conditions of the Settlement, including the Participating Class Members' Releases under Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of this Agreement, regardless of whether the Participating Class Member actually receives the Class Notice or objects to the Settlement.

7.5.4 Every Class Member who submits a valid and timely Request for Exclusion is a Non-Participating Class Member and shall not receive an Individual Class Payment or have the right to object to the class action components of the Settlement. Because future PAGA claims are subject to claim preclusion upon entry of the Judgment, Non-Participating Class Members who are Aggrieved Employees are deemed to release the claims identified in Paragraph 5.3 of this Agreement and are eligible for an Individual PAGA Payment.

7.6 Challenges to Calculation of Workweeks. Each Class Member shall have 45 days after the Administrator mails the Class Notice (plus an additional 14 days for Class Members whose Class Notice is re-mailed) to challenge the number of Class Workweeks and PAGA Pay Periods (if any) allocated to the Class Member in the Class Notice. The Class Member may challenge the allocation by communicating with the Administrator via fax, email or mail. The Administrator must encourage the challenging Class Member to submit supporting documentation. In the absence of any contrary documentation, the Administrator is entitled to presume that the Workweeks contained in the Class Notice are correct so long as they are consistent with the Class Data. Any dispute regarding the Administrator's determination of each Class Member's allocation of Workweeks and/or Pay Periods may be raised with the Court prior to or during the Final Approval Hearing. The Administrator shall promptly provide copies of all challenges to calculation of Workweeks and/or Pay Periods to Defense Counsel and Class Counsel and the Administrator's determination regarding the challenges.

7.7 Objections to Settlement.

7.7.1 Only Participating Class Members may object to the class action components of the Settlement and/or this Agreement, including contesting the fairness of the Settlement, and/or amounts requested for the Class Counsel Fees Payment, Class Counsel Litigation Expenses Payment and/or Class Representative Service Payment.

7.7.2 Participating Class Members may send written objections to the Administrator, by fax, email, or mail. In the alternative, Participating Class Members may appear in Court (or hire an attorney to appear in Court) to present verbal objections at the Final Approval Hearing. A Participating Class Member who elects to send a written objection to the Administrator must do so not later than 45 days after the Administrator's mailing of the Class Notice (plus an additional 14 days for Class Members whose Class Notice was re-mailed).

7.7.3 Non-Participating Class Members have no right to object to any of the class action components of the Settlement.

- 7.8 Administrator Duties. The Administrator has a duty to perform or observe all tasks to be performed or observed by the Administrator contained in this Agreement or otherwise.
- 7.8.1 Website, Email Address and Toll-Free Number. The Administrator will establish and maintain and use a secure non-public internet website to post information of interest to Class Members including the date, time and location for the Final Approval Hearing and copies of the Settlement Agreement, Motion for Preliminary Approval, the Preliminary Approval, the Class Notice, the Motion for Final Approval, the Motion for Class Counsel Fees Payment, Class Counsel Litigation Expenses Payment and Class Representative Service Payments, the Final Approval and the Judgment. The Administrator will also maintain and monitor an email address and a toll-free telephone number to receive Class Member calls, faxes and emails.
- 7.8.2 Requests for Exclusion (Opt-outs) and Exclusion List. The Administrator will promptly review on a rolling basis Requests for Exclusion to ascertain their validity. Not later than 5 days after the expiration of the deadline for submitting Requests for Exclusion, the Administrator shall email a list to Class Counsel and Defense Counsel containing (a) the names and other identifying information of Class Members who have timely submitted valid Requests for Exclusion (“Exclusion List”); (b) the names and other identifying information of Class Members who have submitted invalid Requests for Exclusion; (c) copies of all Requests for Exclusion from Settlement submitted (whether valid or invalid).
- 7.8.3 Weekly Reports. The Administrator must, on a weekly basis, provide written reports to Class Counsel and Defense Counsel that, among other things, tally the number of: Class Notices mailed or re-mailed, Class Notices returned undelivered, Requests for Exclusion (whether valid or invalid) received, objections received, challenges to Workweeks and/or Pay Periods received and/or resolved, and checks mailed for Individual Class Payments and Individual PAGAPayments (“Weekly Report”). The Weekly Reports must include provide the Administrator’s assessment of the validity of Requests for Exclusion and attach copies of all Requests for Exclusion and objections received.
- 7.8.4 Workweek and/or Pay Period Challenges. The Administrator has the authority to address and make final decisions consistent with the terms of this Agreement on all Class Member challenges over the calculation of Workweeks and/or Pay Periods.
- 7.8.5 Administrator’s Declaration. Not later than 14 days before the date by which Plaintiff is required to file the Motion for Final Approval of the Settlement, the Administrator will provide to Class Counsel and Defense Counsel, a signed declaration suitable for filing in Court attesting to its due diligence and compliance with all of its obligations under this Agreement, including, but not limited to, its mailing of Class Notice, the Class Notices returned as undelivered, the re-mailing of

Class Notices, attempts to locate Class Members, the total number of Requests for Exclusion from Settlement it received (both valid or invalid), the number of written objections and attach the Exclusion List. The Administrator will supplement its declaration as needed or requested by the Parties and/or the Court. Class Counsel is responsible for filing the Administrator's declaration(s) in Court.

7.8.6 Final Report by Settlement Administrator. Within 10 days after the Administrator disburses all funds in the Gross Settlement Amount, the Administrator will provide Class Counsel and Defense Counsel with a final report detailing its disbursements. At least 15 days before any deadline set by the Court, the Administrator will prepare, and submit to Class Counsel and Defense Counsel, a signed declaration suitable for filing in Court attesting to its disbursement of all payments required under this Agreement. Class Counsel is responsible for filing the Administrator's declaration in Court.

8. **CLASS SIZE ESTIMATES AND ESCALATOR CLAUSE.** Based on its records, Defendant estimated that there were 32,148 total Workweeks worked by Class Members during the Class Settlement Covered Period. In the event, the total Workweeks on the final Class List are more than 10% higher, i.e. more than 3,215, over the 32,148 estimated Workweeks, at the option of Defendants, Defendants shall either increase the Gross Settlement Amount pro rata with a 10% grace margin (i.e. if the number of Workweeks increase by 11% over the 32,148 estimate, the Gross Settlement Amount shall increase by 1%), or elect to set the end date for determining class membership (i.e., the Class Settlement Covered Period) to a date no earlier than October 18, 2024 such that the threshold is not exceeded, to the extent possible – i.e., such that there is not increase in the number of Workweeks of more than 10%. Defendants must notify Class Counsel of its election under this provision no later than seven (7) days after the Class List is provided to the Administrator.
9. **DEFENDANTS' RIGHT TO WITHDRAW.** If the number of valid Requests for Exclusion identified in the Exclusion List exceeds 10% of the total of all Class Members, Defendants may, but are not obligated, elect to withdraw from the Settlement. The Parties agree that, if Defendants withdraw, the Settlement shall be void ab initio, have no force or effect whatsoever, and that neither Party will have any further obligation to perform under this Agreement; provided, however, Defendants will remain responsible for paying all Settlement Administration Expenses incurred to that point. Defendants must notify Class Counsel and the Court of its election to withdraw not later than seven (7) days after the Administrator sends the final Exclusion List to Defense Counsel; late elections will have no effect.
10. **MOTION FOR FINAL APPROVAL.** Not later than 16 court days before the calendared Final Approval Hearing, Plaintiff will file in Court, a Motion for Final Approval of the Settlement that includes a request for approval of the PAGA settlement under Labor Code section 2699, subd. (l), a Proposed Final Approval Order and a proposed Judgment (collectively "Motion for Final Approval"). Plaintiff shall provide drafts of these documents to Defense Counsel not later than seven (7) days prior to filing the Motion for Final Approval. Class Counsel and Defense Counsel will expeditiously meet and confer in person or by telephone, and in good faith, to resolve any disagreements concerning the Motion for Final

Approval.

- 10.1 Response to Objections. Each Party retains the right to respond to any objection raised by a Participating Class Member, including the right to file responsive documents in Court no later than five (5) court days prior to the Final Approval Hearing, or as otherwise ordered or accepted by the Court.
- 10.2 Duty to Cooperate. If the Court does not grant Final Approval or conditions Final Approval on any material change to the Settlement (including, but not limited to, the scope of release to be granted by Class Members), the Parties will expeditiously work together in good faith to address the Court's concerns by revising the Agreement as necessary to obtain Final Approval. The Court's decision to award less than the amounts requested for the Class Representative Service Payment, Class Counsel Fees Payment, Class Counsel Litigation Expenses Payment and/or Administrator Expenses Payment shall not constitute a material modification to the Agreement within the meaning of this paragraph.
- 10.3 Continuing Jurisdiction of the Court. The Parties agree that, pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure section 664.6, after entry of Judgment, the Court will retain jurisdiction over the Parties, Action, and the Settlement solely for purposes of (i) enforcing this Agreement and/or Judgment, (ii) addressing settlement administration matters, and (iii) addressing such post-Judgment matters as are permitted by law.
- 10.4 Waiver of Right to Appeal. Provided the Judgment is consistent with the terms and conditions of this Agreement, specifically including the Class Counsel Fees Payment and Class Counsel Litigation Expenses Payment reflected set forth in this Settlement, the Parties, their respective counsel, and all Participating Class Members who did not object to the Settlement as provided in this Agreement, waive all rights to appeal from the Judgment, including all rights to post-judgment and appellate proceedings, the right to file motions to vacate judgment, motions for new trial, extraordinary writs, and appeals. The waiver of appeal does not include any waiver of the right to oppose such motions, writs or appeals. If an objector appeals the Judgment, the Parties' obligations to perform under this Agreement will be suspended until such time as the appeal is finally resolved and the Judgment becomes final, except as to matters that do not affect the amount of the Net Settlement Amount.
- 10.5 Appellate Court Orders to Vacate, Reverse, or Materially Modify Judgment. If the reviewing Court vacates, reverses, or modifies the Judgment in a manner that requires a material modification of this Agreement (including, but not limited to, the scope of release to be granted by Class Members), this Agreement shall be null and void. The Parties shall nevertheless expeditiously work together in good faith to address the appellate court's concerns and to obtain Final Approval and entry of Judgment, sharing, on a 50-50 basis, any additional Administration Expenses reasonably incurred after remittitur. An appellate decision to vacate, reverse, or modify the Court's award of the Class Representative Service Payment or any payments to Class Counsel shall not constitute a material modification of the Judgment within the meaning of this paragraph, as long as the Gross Settlement Amount remains unchanged.

11. AMENDED JUDGMENT. If any amended judgment is required under Code of Civil Procedure section 384, the Parties will work together in good faith to jointly submit and a proposed amended judgment.

12. ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS.

12.1 No Admission of Liability, Class Certification or Representative Manageability for Other Purposes. This Agreement represents a compromise and settlement of highly disputed claims. Nothing in this Agreement is intended or should be construed as an admission by Defendants that any of the allegations in the Operative Complaint have merit or that Defendants have any liability for any claims asserted; nor should it be intended or construed as an admission by Plaintiff that Defendants' defenses in the Action have merit. The Parties agree that class certification and representative treatment is for purposes of this Settlement only. If, for any reason the Court does grant Preliminary Approval, Final Approval or enter Judgment, Defendants reserve the right to contest certification of any class for any reasons, and Defendants reserve all available defenses to the claims in the Action, and Plaintiff reserves the right to move for class certification on any grounds available and to contest Defendants' defenses. The Settlement, this Agreement and Parties' willingness to settle the Action will have no bearing on, and will not be admissible in connection with, any litigation (except for proceedings to enforce or effectuate the Settlement and this Agreement).

12.2 Confidentiality Prior to Preliminary Approval. Plaintiff, Class Counsel, Defendants and Defense Counsel separately agree that, until the Motion for Preliminary Approval of Settlement is filed, they and each of them will not disclose, disseminate and/or publicize, or cause or permit another person to disclose, disseminate or publicize, any of the terms of the Agreement directly or indirectly, specifically or generally, to any person, corporation, association, government agency, or other entity except: (1) to the Parties' attorneys, accountants, or spouses, all of whom will be instructed to keep this Agreement confidential; (2) counsel in a related matter; (3) to the extent necessary to report income to appropriate taxing authorities; (4) in response to a court order or subpoena; or (5) in response to an inquiry or subpoena issued by a state or federal government agency. Each Party agrees to immediately notify each other Party of any judicial or agency order, inquiry, or subpoena seeking such information. Plaintiff, Class Counsel, Defendants and Defense Counsel separately agree not to, directly or indirectly, initiate any conversation or other communication, before the filing of the Motion for Preliminary Approval, any with third party regarding this Agreement or the matters giving rise to this Agreement except to respond only that "the matter was resolved," or words to that effect. This paragraph does not restrict Class Counsel's communications with Class Members in accordance with Class Counsel's ethical obligations owed to Class Members.

12.3 No Solicitation. The Parties separately agree that they and their respective counsel and employees will not solicit any Class Member to opt out of or object to the Settlement, or appeal from the Judgment. Nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to restrict Class Counsel's ability to communicate with Class Members in accordance with Class Counsel's ethical obligations owed to Class Members.

- 12.4 Integrated Agreement. Upon execution by all Parties and their counsel, this Agreement together with its attached exhibits shall constitute the entire agreement between the Parties relating to the Settlement, superseding any and all oral representations, warranties, covenants, or inducements made to or by any Party.
- 12.5 Attorney Authorization. Class Counsel and Defense Counsel separately warrant and represent that they are authorized by Plaintiff and Defendants, respectively, to take all appropriate action required or permitted to be taken by such Parties pursuant to this Agreement to effectuate its terms, and to execute any other documents reasonably required to effectuate the terms of this Agreement including any amendments to this Agreement.
- 12.6 Cooperation. The Parties and their counsel will cooperate with each other and use their best efforts, in good faith, to implement the Settlement by, among other things, modifying the Settlement Agreement, submitting supplemental evidence and supplementing points and authorities as requested by the Court. In the event the Parties are unable to agree upon the form or content of any document necessary to implement the Settlement, or on any modification of the Agreement that may become necessary to implement the Settlement, the Parties will seek the assistance of a mediator and/or the Court for resolution.
- 12.7 No Prior Assignments. The Parties separately represent and warrant that they have not directly or indirectly assigned, transferred, encumbered, or purported to assign, transfer, or encumber to any person or entity and portion of any liability, claim, demand, action, cause of action, or right released and discharged by the Party in this Settlement.
- 12.8 No Tax Advice. Neither Plaintiff, Class Counsel, Defendants nor Defense Counsel are providing any advice regarding taxes or taxability, nor shall anything in this Settlement be relied upon as such within the meaning of United States Treasury Department Circular 230 (31 CFR Part 10, as amended) or otherwise.
- 12.9 Modification of Agreement. This Agreement, and all parts of it, may be amended, modified, changed, or waived only by an express written instrument signed by all Parties or their representatives, and approved by the Court.
- 12.10 Agreement Binding on Successors. This Agreement will be binding upon, and inure to the benefit of, the successors of each of the Parties.
- 12.11 Applicable Law. All terms and conditions of this Agreement and its exhibits will be governed by and interpreted according to the internal laws of the state of California, without regard to conflict of law principles.
- 12.12 Cooperation in Drafting. The Parties have cooperated in the drafting and preparation of this Agreement. This Agreement will not be construed against any Party on the basis that the Party was the drafter or participated in the drafting.
- 12.13 Confidentiality. To the extent permitted by law, all agreements made, and orders

entered during Action and in this Agreement relating to the confidentiality of information shall survive the execution of this Agreement.

12.14 Use and Return of Class List. Information provided to Class Counsel pursuant to Cal. Evid. Code §1152, and all copies and summaries of the Class List provided to Class Counsel by Defendants in connection with the mediation, other settlement negotiations, or in connection with the Settlement, may be used only with respect to this Settlement, and no other purpose, and may not be used in any way that violates any existing contractual agreement, statute, or rule of court. Not later than 90 days after the date when the Court discharges the Administrator's obligation to provide a declaration confirming the final pay out of all Settlement funds, Plaintiff shall destroy, all paper and electronic versions of Class List received from Defendants unless, prior to the Court's discharge of the Administrator's obligation, Defendants make a written request to Class Counsel for the return, rather than the destruction, of Class List.

12.15 Headings. The descriptive heading of any section or paragraph of this Agreement is inserted for convenience of reference only and does not constitute a part of this Agreement.

12.16 Calendar Days. Unless otherwise noted, all reference to "days" in this Agreement shall be to calendar days. In the event any date or deadline set forth in this Agreement falls on a weekend or federal legal holiday, such date or deadline shall be on the first business day thereafter.

12.17 Notice. All notices, demands or other communications between the Parties in connection with this Agreement will be in writing and deemed to have been duly given as of the third business day after mailing by United States mail, or the day sent by email or messenger, addressed as follows:

To Plaintiffs:

Tyler Woods
tyler.woods@wilshirelawfirm.com
Peter Horton
peter.horton@wilshirelawfirm.com
Alan Wilcox
alan.wilcox@wilshirelawfirm.com
WILSHIRE LAW FIRM PLC
3055 Wilshire Blvd., 12th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90010
Telephone: (213) 784-3830
Facsimile: (213) 381-9989

To Defendants:

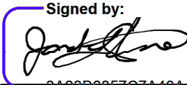
Gregory G. Iskander
giskander@littler.com
Helen Braginsky
hbraginsky@littler.com
LITTLER MENDELSON, P.C.
Treat Towers
1255 Treat Boulevard, Suite 600
Walnut Creek, California 94597
Telephone: (925) 932-2468
Facsimile: (925) 946-9809

12.18 Execution in Counterparts. This Agreement may be executed in one or more counterparts by facsimile, electronically (*i.e.* DocuSign), or email which for purposes of this

Agreement shall be accepted as an original. All executed counterparts and each of them will be deemed to be one and the same instrument if counsel for the Parties will exchange between themselves signed counterparts. Any executed counterpart will be admissible in evidence to prove the existence and contents of this Agreement.

12.19 Stay of Litigation. The Parties agree that upon the execution of this Agreement the litigation shall be stayed, except to effectuate the terms of this Agreement.

Dated: 7/17/2025 _____

Signed by:

3A23B8857C7A40A...
Plaintiff Jerrod Lamont Stevens

Dated: 07/29/2025 _____


WILSHIRE LAW FIRM PLC
Tyler Woods
Peter Horton
Alan Wilcox
Attorneys for Plaintiffs

Dated: 9/3/2025 _____


Defendants BBQ HOLDINGS, INC., BBQ
GROWTH LLC, and TAHOE JOE'S
STEAKHOUSE, LLC
By: Jenny Moody
Its: Chief Legal Counsel

Dated: 9/4/2025 _____


LITTLER MENDELSON P.C.
Gregory Iskander
Helen Braginsky
Attorneys for Defendants

EXHIBIT A

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COURT APPROVED NOTICE OF CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT AND HEARING DATE FOR FINAL COURT APPROVAL

Jerrod Lamont Stevens v. BBQ Holdings, Inc., et al., Case No. VCU300433.

***The Superior Court for the State of California authorized this Notice. Read it carefully!
It's not junk mail, spam, an advertisement, or solicitation by a lawyer. You are not being sued.***

You may be eligible to receive money from an employee class action lawsuit (“Action”) against BBQ Holdings, Inc., BBQ Growth LLC, and Tahoe Joe’s Steakhouse, LLC (collectively, “Defendants” is used herein as a placeholder) for alleged wage and hour violations. The Action was filed by former Defendants’ employee Jerrod Lamont Stevens (“Plaintiff”) and seeks payment of (1) back wages and other relief for a class of hourly employees (“Class Members”) who worked for Defendants during the Class Settlement Covered Period (October 7, 2021 to the date the Court grants preliminary approval of the settlement); and (2) penalties under the California Private Attorney General Act (“PAGA”) for all hourly employees who worked for Defendants during the PAGA Settlement Covered Period (October 18, 2023 to the date the Court grants preliminary approval of the settlement) (“Aggrieved Employees”).

The proposed Settlement has two main parts: (1) a Class Settlement requiring Defendants to fund Individual Class Payments, and (2) a PAGA Settlement requiring Defendants to fund Individual PAGA Payments and pay penalties to the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”).

Based on Defendants’ records, and the Parties’ current assumptions, **your Individual Class Payment is estimated to be \$_____ (less withholding) and your Individual PAGA Payment is estimated to be \$_____**. The actual amount you may receive likely will be different and will depend on a number of factors. (If no amount is stated for your Individual PAGA Payment, then according to Defendants’ records you are not eligible for an Individual PAGA Payment under the Settlement because you did not work during the PAGA Settlement Covered Period.)

The above estimates are based on Defendants’ records showing that **you worked _____ workweeks** during the Class Settlement Covered Period and **you worked _____ pay periods** during the PAGA Settlement Covered Period. If you believe that you worked more workweeks or pay periods during either period, you can submit a challenge by the deadline date. See Section 4 of this Notice.

The Court has already preliminarily approved the proposed Settlement and approved this Notice. The Court has not yet decided whether to grant final approval. Your legal rights are affected whether you act or not act. Read this Notice carefully. You will be deemed to have carefully read and understood it. At the Final Approval Hearing, the Court will decide whether to finally approve the Settlement and how much of the Settlement will be paid to Plaintiff and Plaintiff’s attorneys (“Class Counsel”). The Court will also decide whether to enter a judgment that requires Defendants to make payments under the Settlement and requires Class Members and Aggrieved Employees to give up their rights to assert certain claims against Defendants.

If you worked for Defendants during the Class Settlement Covered Period and/or the PAGA Settlement Covered Period, you have two basic options under the Settlement:

- (1) **Do Nothing.** You do not have to do anything to participate in the proposed Settlement and be eligible for an Individual Class Payment and/or an Individual PAGA Payment. As a Participating Class Member, though, you will give up your right to assert Class Settlement Covered Period wage claims and PAGA Settlement Covered Period penalty claims against Defendants.
- (2) **Opt-Out of the Class Settlement.** You can exclude yourself from the Class Settlement (opt-out) by submitting the written Request for Exclusion or otherwise notifying the Administrator in writing. If you opt-out of the Settlement, you will not receive an Individual Class Payment. You will, however, preserve your right to personally pursue Class Settlement Covered Period wage claims against Defendants, and, if you are an Aggrieved Employee, remain eligible for an Individual PAGA Payment. You cannot opt-out of the PAGA portion of the proposed Settlement.

Defendants will not retaliate against you for any actions you take with respect to the proposed Settlement.

SUMMARY OF YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS AND OPTIONS IN THIS SETTLEMENT

You Do Not Have to Do Anything to Participate in the Settlement	If you do nothing, you will be a Participating Class Member, eligible for an Individual Class Payment and an Individual PAGA Payment (if any). In exchange, you will give up your right to assert the wage claims against Defendants that are covered by this Settlement (Released Claims).
You Can Opt-out of the Class Settlement but not the PAGA Settlement The Opt-out Deadline is _____.	If you do not want to fully participate in the proposed Settlement, you can opt-out of the Class Settlement by sending the Administrator a written Request for Exclusion. Once excluded, you will be a Non-Participating Class Member and no longer eligible for an Individual Class Payment. Non-Participating Class Members cannot object to any portion of the proposed Settlement. See Section 6 of this Notice. You cannot opt-out of the PAGA portion of the proposed Settlement. Defendants must pay Individual PAGA Payments to all Aggrieved Employees and the Aggrieved Employees must give up their rights to pursue Released Claims (defined below).
Participating Class Members Can Object to the Class Settlement but not the PAGA Settlement	All Class Members who do not opt-out (“Participating Class Members”) can object to any aspect of the proposed Settlement. The Court’s decision whether to finally approve the Settlement will include a determination of how much will be paid to Class Counsel and Plaintiff who pursued the Action on behalf of the Class. You are not personally responsible for any payments to Class Counsel or

Written Objections Must be Submitted by _____.	Plaintiff, but every dollar paid to Class Counsel and Plaintiff reduces the overall amount paid to Participating Class Members. You can object to the amounts requested by Class Counsel or Plaintiff if you think they are unreasonable. See Section 7 of this Notice.
You Can Participate in the _____ Final Approval Hearing	The Court's Final Approval Hearing is scheduled to take place on _____. You do not have to attend but you do have the right to appear (or hire an attorney to appear on your behalf at your own cost), in person, by telephone or by using the Court's virtual appearance platform. Participating Class Members can verbally object to the Settlement at the Final Approval Hearing. See Section 8 of this Notice.
You Can Challenge the Calculation of Your Workweeks/Pay Periods Written Challenges Must be Submitted by _____.	The amount of your Individual Class Payment and PAGA Payment (if any) depend on how many workweeks you worked at least one day during the Class Settlement Covered Period and how many Pay Periods you worked at least one day during the PAGA Settlement Covered Period, respectively. The number of Class Period Workweeks and number of PAGA Pay Periods you worked according to Defendants' records is stated on the first page of this Notice. If you disagree with either of these numbers, you must challenge it by _____. See Section 4 of this Notice.

1. WHAT IS THE ACTION ABOUT?

Plaintiff is a former employee of Defendants. The Action accuses Defendants of violating California labor laws by failing to pay overtime wages, minimum wages, wages due upon termination and reimbursable expenses and failing to provide meal periods, rest breaks and accurate itemized wage statements. Based on the same claims, Plaintiff has also asserted a claim for civil penalties under the California Private Attorneys General Act (Labor Code §§ 2698, *et seq.*) ("PAGA"). Plaintiff is represented by attorneys in the Action: Tyler Woods, Peter Horton, and Alan Wilcox of Wilshire Law Firm, PLC. ("Class Counsel.")

The Court has not ruled on the merits of Plaintiff's factual or legal allegations in the Action. Defendants strongly deny violating any laws or failing to pay any wages and contend they complied with all applicable laws and have valid defenses. Defendant is represented by attorneys in the Action: Gregory Iskander and Helen Braginsky of Littler Mendelson, P.C. ("Defense Counsel").

By settling, Defendants are not admitting liability on any of Plaintiff's factual or legal allegations in the case or that the case can proceed as a class action and/or a representative action. After considering the risks, expenses, and inconvenience of continued litigation, Defendants and Plaintiff have concluded that it is in their best interests and the interests of the Class to settle the Action on the terms summarized in this Notice.

2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT THE ACTION HAS SETTLED?

So far, the Court has made no determination whether Defendants or Plaintiff is correct on

the merits. In the meantime, Plaintiff and Defendants hired an experienced, neutral mediator in an effort to resolve the Action by negotiating an end to the case by agreement (settle the case) rather than continuing the expensive and time-consuming process of litigation. The negotiations were successful. By signing a lengthy written settlement agreement (“Agreement”) and agreeing to jointly ask the Court to enter a judgment ending the Action and enforcing the Agreement, Plaintiff and Defendants have negotiated a proposed Settlement that is subject to the Court’s Final Approval. Both sides agree the proposed Settlement is a compromise of disputed claims. By agreeing to settle, Defendants do not admit any violations or concede the merit of any claims.

Plaintiff and Class Counsel strongly believe the Settlement is a good deal for you because they believe that: (1) Defendants have agreed to pay a fair, reasonable and adequate amount considering the strength of the claims and the risks and uncertainties of continued litigation; and (2) Settlement is in the best interests of the Class Members and Aggrieved Employees. The Court preliminarily approved the proposed Settlement as fair, reasonable and adequate, authorized this Notice, and scheduled a hearing to determine Final Approval.

3. WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT TERMS OF THE PROPOSED SETTLEMENT?

1. Defendant Will Pay \$650,000.00 as the Gross Settlement Amount (Gross Settlement). Defendants have agreed to deposit the Gross Settlement into an account controlled by the Administrator of the Settlement. The Administrator will use the Gross Settlement to pay the Individual Class Payments, Individual PAGA Payments, Class Representative Service Payments, Class Counsel’s attorney’s fees and expenses, the Administrator’s expenses, and penalties to be paid to the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”). Assuming the Court grants Final Approval, Defendants will fully fund the Gross Settlement Amount within 5 business days of the Effective Date. The Judgment will be final on the date the Court enters Judgment, or a later date if Participating Class Members object to the proposed Settlement or the Judgment is appealed.
2. Court Approved Deductions from Gross Settlement. At the Final Approval Hearing, Plaintiff and/or Class Counsel will ask the Court to approve the following deductions from the Gross Settlement, the amounts of which will be decided by the Court at the Final Approval Hearing:
 - A. Up to \$216,666.67 (33 and 1/3% of the Gross Settlement) to Class Counsel for attorneys’ fees and up to \$30,000.00 for their litigation expenses. To date, Class Counsel have worked and incurred expenses on the Action without payment.
 - B. Up to \$10,000.00 as a Class Representative Service Award for filing the Action, working with Class Counsel and representing the Class. The Class Representative Service Award will be the only monies Plaintiff will receive other than Plaintiff’s Individual Class Payment and any Individual PAGA Payment.
 - C. Up to \$9,950 to the Administrator for services administering the Settlement.
 - D. Up to \$32,500.00 for PAGA Penalties, allocated 75% (\$24,375.00) to the LWDA PAGA Payment and 25% (\$8,125.00) in Individual PAGA Payments to the

Aggrieved Employees based on their PAGA Period Pay Periods.

Participating Class Members have the right to object to any of these deductions. The Court will consider all objections.

3. Net Settlement Distributed to Class Members. After making the above deductions in amounts approved by the Court, the Administrator will distribute the rest of the Gross Settlement (the “Net Settlement”) by making Individual Class Payments to Participating Class Members based on their Class Covered Settlement Period Workweeks.
4. Taxes Owed on Payments to Class Members. Plaintiff and Defendants are asking the Court to approve an allocation of 25% of each Individual Class Payment to taxable wages (“Wage Portion”) and 75% to interest and penalties (“Non-Wage Portion.”). The Wage Portion is subject to withholdings and will be reported on IRS W-2 Forms. Defendants will separately pay employer payroll taxes it owes on the Wage Portion. The Individual PAGA Payments are counted as penalties rather than wages for tax purposes. The Administrator will report the Individual PAGA Payments and the Non-Wage Portions of the Individual Class Payments on IRS 1099 Forms.

Although Plaintiff and Defendants have agreed to these allocations, neither side is giving you any advice on whether your Payments are taxable or how much you might owe in taxes. You are responsible for paying all taxes (including penalties and interest on back taxes) on any Payments received from the proposed Settlement. You should consult a tax advisor if you have any questions about the tax consequences of the proposed Settlement.

5. Need to Promptly Cash Payment Checks. The front of every check issued for Individual Class Payments and Individual PAGA Payments will show the date when the check expires (the void date). If you don’t cash it by the void date, your check will be automatically cancelled, and the monies will be deposited with the California Controller's Unclaimed Property Fund in your name.

If the monies represented by your check is sent to the Controller’s Unclaimed Property, you should consult the rules of the Fund for instructions on how to retrieve your money.

6. Requests for Exclusion from the Class Settlement (Opt-Outs). You will be treated as a Participating Class Member, participating fully in the Class Settlement, unless you notify the Administrator in writing, not later than _____, that you wish to opt-out. The easiest way to notify the Administrator is to send a written and signed Request for Exclusion by the _____ Response Deadline. The Request for Exclusion should be a letter from a Class Member or his/her representative setting forth a Class Member’s name, present address, telephone number, and a simple statement electing to be excluded from the Settlement. Excluded Class Members (i.e., Non-Participating Class Members) will not receive Individual Class Payments, but will preserve their rights to personally pursue wage and hour claims against Defendant.

You cannot opt-out of the PAGA portion of the Settlement. Class Members who exclude

themselves from the Class Settlement (Non-Participating Class Members) remain eligible for Individual PAGA Payments and are required to give up their right to assert PAGA claims against Defendant based on the PAGA Period facts alleged in the Action.

7. The Proposed Settlement Will be Void if the Court Denies Final Approval. It is possible the Court will decline to grant Final Approval of the Settlement or decline enter a Judgment. It is also possible the Court will enter a Judgment that is reversed on appeal. Plaintiff and Defendants have agreed that, in either case, the Settlement will be void: Defendants will not pay any money and Class Members will not release any claims against Defendants.
8. Administrator. The Court has appointed a neutral company, ILYM Group, Inc. (the “Administrator”) to send this Notice, calculate and make payments, and process Class Members’ Requests for Exclusion. The Administrator will also decide Class Member Challenges over Workweeks, mail and re-mail settlement checks and tax forms, and perform other tasks necessary to administer the Settlement. The Administrator’s contact information is contained in Section 9 of this Notice.
9. Participating Class Members’ Release. After the Judgment is final and Defendants have fully funded the Gross Settlement and separately paid all employer payroll taxes, Participating Class Members will be legally barred from asserting any of the claims released under the Settlement. This means that unless you opted out by validly excluding yourself from the Class Settlement, you cannot sue, continue to sue, or be part of any other lawsuit against Defendants or related entities for wages based on the Class Settlement Covered Period facts and PAGA penalties based on PAGA Settlement Covered Period facts, as alleged in the Action and resolved by this Settlement.

The Participating Class Members will release Defendants, as well as each and all of their past and present direct or indirect parents, subsidiaries, predecessors, successors, and affiliated corporations, entities, divisions, general and limited partners, joint venturers and affiliates, and each of their respective current and former directors, officers, managers, employees, principals, members, agents, managing agents, insurers, reinsurers, shareholders (both legal and beneficial), attorneys, advisors, representatives, general partners, limited partners, joint venturers, and affiliated companies, and each of their respective executors, predecessors, successors, assigns, trustees and legal representatives, and any individual or entity which could be jointly liable with Defendants (collectively, “Released Parties”) as follows:

The claims released by the Class Members will include all claims pleaded in the Complaint, and/or First Amended Complaint, and/or any PAGA letters, and/or amended PAGA letters sent to the LWDA by Plaintiff during or prior to the Action, and/or which reasonably could have been alleged based on the facts, allegations and/or claims pleaded in the Action, against Defendants and/or Released Parties (defined below) for work performed during the Class Settlement Covered Period including but not limited to the following:

- (a) Any claims for unpaid wages and regular rate of pay, including minimum, regular, and/or overtime and/or double time wages (including but not limited to Cal. Labor Code (“Lab. Code”) §§ 200, 510, 558, 1194, 1194(a), 1194.2, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, and/or all

applicable Wage Orders); failure to provide meal periods and/or meal period premium payments (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 218, 218.6, 226.7, 512, and/or all applicable Wage Orders); failure to provide rest breaks and/or days of rest and/or rest break premium payments (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 226.7, and/or all applicable Wage Orders); expense reimbursement (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 2800 and/or 2802); failure to timely pay wages or vacation pay (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 201-204, 210); improper sick pay (Lab. Code § 246 et seq.); failure to maintain or furnish accurate employment records (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 1174, 1174(d) 1174.5, 1175, 1198.5, and/or all applicable Wage Orders); failure to provide accurate wage statements (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 226, 226.3); failure to maintain or furnish accurate employment records (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 432, 1174, 1174.5, 1175, 1198.5, and/or all applicable Wage Orders, including but not limited Wage Order No. 7); claims for unfair competition and/or business practices (Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 17200 et seq.); all claims based on the foregoing under the applicable Wage Orders and/or California Code of Regulations; all claims for penalties pursuant to the Labor Code and the California's Private Attorneys General Act (Lab. Code § 2698 *et seq.* with the LWDA, State of California, and/or Plaintiff as proxies for the LWDA release) based on the facts alleged in the Operative Complaint or which reasonably could have been alleged based upon the facts stated in the Operative Complaint and/or Plaintiff's August 22, 2023 PAGA letter to the LWDA; all claims for interest, penalties, premiums, and/or attorney's fees in connection with any of the preceding claims (including but not limited to Lab. Code §§ 210, 218.5, 218.6, 221, 222, 223, 226, 226.3, 1194, 1194.3); Cal. Civ. Code §§ 3287, 3289, California Code of Civil Procedure § 1021.5, and/or all other statutory and/or regulatory violations alleged in the LWDA letter and/or any Complaint or Amended Complaint in the Action.

(b) Any claims for injunctive relief, declaratory relief, restitution, fraudulent business practices and/or punitive damages alleged and/or which could have been alleged under the facts, allegations and/or claims pleaded in the complaints filed as part of the Actions; and

(c) The claims set forth in subparagraphs (a) – (b) above shall be collectively referred to as the “Released Class Claims.” The release shall be given full res judicata and collateral estoppel effect for the Released Claims upon entry of judgment.

10. Aggrieved Employees' PAGA Release. After the Court's judgment is final, and Defendant has paid the Gross Settlement (and separately paid the employer-side payroll taxes), all Aggrieved Employees will be barred from asserting PAGA claims against Defendant, whether or not they exclude themselves from the Settlement. This means that all Aggrieved Employees, including those who are Participating Class Members and those who opt-out of the Class Settlement, cannot sue, continue to sue, or participate in any other PAGA claim against Defendant or its related entities based on the PAGA Settlement Covered Period facts alleged in the Action and resolved by this Settlement.

The Aggrieved Employees' Releases for Participating and Non-Participating Class Members are as follows:

All Aggrieved Employees are deemed to release, on behalf of themselves and their respective former and present representatives, agents, attorneys, heirs, administrators, successors, and assigns, the Released Parties, from all claims for PAGA civil penalties pleaded in the Operative Complaint, and/or any PAGA letters and/or amended PAGA letters sent to the LWDA by Plaintiff during or prior to the Action, and/or which reasonably could have been alleged based on the facts, allegations and/or claims pleaded in the Action, against Defendants and/or Released Parties, including any and all claims involving any alleged failure to pay straight, minimum or overtime wages, failure to provide meal and rest periods, failure to provide accurate wage statements, failure to pay all wages due at separation, and failure to reimburse business expenses, including Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 210, 216, 223, 225.5, 226, 226.3, 226.7, 245-248.5, 256, 432, 432.5, 432.7, 510, 512, 558, 558.1, 1024.5, 1174, 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 1198.5, 1199, 2699, 2699.3, 2802, 2810.5 during the PAGA Settlement Covered Period. Aggrieved Employees only release these claims for the duration of the PAGA Settlement Covered Period. The foregoing release shall be binding on Plaintiff, the Aggrieved Employees, and the State of California, and shall bar by res judicata any claim under the PAGA brought by any person, including the Aggrieved Employees, on behalf of the State of California, as to any claims predicated on the Released PAGA Claims.

4. HOW WILL THE ADMINISTRATOR CALCULATE MY PAYMENT?

1. Individual Class Payments. The Administrator will calculate Individual Class Payments by (a) dividing the Net Settlement Amount by the total number of Workweeks worked by all Participating Class Members, and (b) multiplying the result by the number of Workweeks worked by each individual Participating Class Member.
2. Individual PAGA Payments. The Administrator will calculate Individual PAGA Payments by (a) dividing \$8,125.00 by the total number of PAGA Pay Periods worked by all Aggrieved Employees and (b) multiplying the result by the number of PAGA Period Pay Periods worked by each individual Aggrieved Employee.
3. Workweek/Pay Period Challenges. The number of Class Workweeks you worked during the Class Period and the number of PAGA Pay Periods you worked during the PAGA Period, as recorded in Defendants' records, are stated in the first page of this Notice. You have until _____ to challenge the number of Workweeks and/or Pay Periods credited to you. You can submit your challenge by signing and sending a letter to the Administrator via mail, email or fax. Section 9 of this Notice has the Administrator's contact information.

You need to support your challenge by sending copies of pay stubs or other records. The Administrator will accept Defendants' calculation of Workweeks and/or Pay Periods based on Defendants' records as accurate unless you send copies of records containing contrary information. You should send copies rather than originals because the documents will not be returned to you. The Administrator will resolve Workweek and/or Pay Period challenges based on your submission and on input from Class Counsel (who will advocate on behalf of Participating Class Members) and Defendant's Counsel. Any dispute regarding the

Administrator's decision may be raised with the Court prior to or during the Final Approval Hearing.

5. HOW WILL I GET PAID?

1. Participating Class Members. The Administrator will send, by U.S. mail, a single check to every Participating Class Member (i.e., every Class Member who doesn't opt-out) including those who also qualify as Aggrieved Employees. The single check will combine the Individual Class Payment and the Individual PAGA Payment.
2. Non-Participating Class Members. The Administrator will send, by U.S. mail, a single Individual PAGA Payment check to every Aggrieved Employee who opts out of the Class Settlement (i.e., every Non-Participating Class Member).

Your check will be sent to the same address as this Notice. If you change your address, be sure to notify the Administrator as soon as possible. Section 9 of this Notice has the Administrator's contact information.

6. HOW DO I OPT-OUT OF THE CLASS SETTLEMENT?

Submit a written and signed letter with your name, present address, telephone number, and a simple statement that you do not want to participate in the Settlement. The Administrator will exclude you based on any writing communicating your request be excluded. Be sure to personally sign your request, identify the Action as *Jerrold Lamont Stevens v. BBQ Holdings, Inc., et al.*, Case No. VCU300433, and include your identifying information (full name, address, telephone number, approximatedates of employment, and social security number for verification purposes). You must make the request yourself. If someone else makes the request for you, it will not be valid. **The Administrator must be sent your request to be excluded by _____, or it will be invalid.** Section 9 of the Notice has the Administrator's contact information.

7. HOW DO I OBJECT TO THE SETTLEMENT?

Only Participating Class Members have the right to object to the Settlement. Before deciding whether to object, you may wish to see what Plaintiff and Defendants are asking the Court to approve. At least 16 days before the _____ Final Approval Hearing, Class Counsel and/or Plaintiff will file in Court (1) a Motion for Final Approval that includes, among other things, the reasons why the proposed Settlement is fair, and (2) a Motion for Fees, Litigation Expenses and Service Award stating (i) the amount Class Counsel is requesting for attorneys' fees and litigation expenses; and (ii) the amount Plaintiff is requesting as Class Representative Service Award. Upon reasonable request, Class Counsel (whose contact information is in Section 9 of this Notice) will send you copies of these documents at no cost to you. You can also view them on the Administrator's Website _____(url)_____ or the Court's website _____(url)_____.

A Participating Class Member who disagrees with any aspect of the Agreement, the Motion for Final Approval and/or Motion for Fees, Litigation Expenses and Service Award may wish to

object, for example, that the proposed Settlement is unfair, or that the amounts requested by Class Counsel or Plaintiffs are too high or too low. **The deadline for sending written objections to the Administrator is _____.** Be sure to tell the Administrator what you object to, why you object, and any facts that support your objection. Make sure you identify the Action *Jerrod Lamont Stevens v. BBQ Holdings, Inc. et al.*, Case No. VCU300433, and include your name, current address, telephone number, and approximate dates of employment for Defendants and sign the objection. Section 9 of this Notice has the Administrator's contact information.

Alternatively, a Participating Class Member can object (or personally retain a lawyer to object at your own cost) by attending the Final Approval Hearing. You (or your attorney) should be ready to tell the Court what you object to, why you object, and any facts that support your objection. See Section 8 of this Notice (immediately below) for specifics regarding the Final Approval Hearing.

8. CAN I ATTEND THE FINAL APPROVAL HEARING?

You can, but don't have to, attend the Final Approval Hearing on _____ at _____ (time) in Department 1 of the Tulare County Superior Court, located at 221 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia, California 93291. At the Hearing, the judge will decide whether to grant Final Approval of the Settlement and how much of the Gross Settlement will be paid to Class Counsel, Plaintiff, and the Administrator. The Court will invite comment from objectors, Class Counsel and Defense Counsel before making a decision. You can attend (or hire a lawyer to attend) either personally or virtually via Zoom. Check the Court's website for the most current information.

It's possible the Court will reschedule the Final Approval Hearing. You should check the Administrator's website _____ beforehand or contact Class Counsel to verify the date and time of the Final Approval Hearing.

9. HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

The Agreement sets forth everything Defendants and Plaintiff have promised to do under the proposed Settlement. The easiest way to read the Agreement, the Judgment or any other Settlement documents is to go to _____ (specify entity) 's website at _____ (url) _____. You can also telephone or send an email to Class Counsel or the Administrator using the contact information listed below, or consult the Superior Court website by going to (<https://www.tulare.courts.ca.gov/online-services/records-request>) and requesting online by entering the Case Number for the Action, Case No. VCU300433 or sending in a request by mail. You can also personally review and obtain copies of court documents from the Tulare County Superior Court, located at 221 South Mooney Blvd., Visalia, CA 93291.

DO NOT TELEPHONE THE SUPERIOR COURT TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT THE SETTLEMENT.

Class Counsel:

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Treat Towers
1255 Treat Boulevard, Suite 600
Walnut Creek, California 94597
Telephone: (925) 932-2468
Facsimile: (925) 946- 9809

Settlement Administrator:

Name of Company:
Email Address:
Mailing Address:
Telephone:
Fax Number:

10. WHAT IF I LOSE MY SETTLEMENT CHECK?

If you lose or misplace your settlement check before cashing it, the Administrator will replace it as long as you request a replacement before the void date on the face of the original check. If your check is already void you should consult the Unclaimed Property Fund (https://www.sco.ca.gov/search_upd.html) for instructions on how to retrieve the funds.

11. WHAT IF I CHANGE MY ADDRESS?

To receive your check, you should immediately notify the Administrator if you move or otherwise change your mailing address.

Exhibit 2

ILYM | GROUP, Inc.

C L A S S A C T I O N A D M I N I S T R A T I O N

Case Name: BBQ Growth LLC (Stevens)

Wednesday, July 2, 2025

Requesting Attorney:

Christina Hicklin

Wilshire Law Firm, PLC

christina.hicklin@wilshirelawfirm.com

213.381.9989

ILYM Group Contact:

Lisa Mullins

ILYM Group, Inc.

Lisa@ilymgroup.com

714.878.8836

Estimate For Administrative Solutions: Class & PAGA

KEY ASSUMPTIONS	
Total Number of Class Members	744
Estimated Percentage of Remails	15%
Certified Spanish Translation	Yes
ILYM Group Static Website	No
Case Duration (Years)	1

Summary of ILYM Group, Inc.'s Fees & Expenses

Case Startup:	\$650.00
Project Management:	\$2,490.00
Notification & Mailing:	\$2,080.92
Distribution (Includes EIN, Bank Acct * /QSF Setup):	\$3,764.08
Case Conclusion:	\$965.00

Estimated ILYM Fees & Expenses: \$9,950.00

ILYM | GROUP, Inc.

CLASS ACTION ADMINISTRATION

Case Name: BBQ Growth LLC (Stevens)

Wednesday, July 2, 2025

Requesting Attorney's Name: Christina Hicklin

Activity	Rate Type	Unit Cost	Volume	Amount
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CASE STARTUP				
Initial Setup - Import and Formatting of Data*	Hourly	\$150.00	2	\$300.00
Programming of Class Database	Hourly	\$175.00	2	\$350.00

**ILYM assumes that data will be in a standard format. Client will be notified immediately if not in standard format to correct data or ILYM can convert to standard format @ \$150.00 per hour.*

Subtotal **\$650.00**

PROJECT MANAGEMENT				
Project Manager (Case notification and maintenance)	Hourly	\$120.00	4	\$480.00
Staff Hours for Processing Returned Mail	Hourly	\$70.00	1	\$70.00
Staff Hours for Processing Opt-Outs, Disputes & Objection(s)	Hourly	\$70.00	1	\$70.00
Report Processing	Hourly	\$70.00	1	\$70.00
Certified Spanish Translation	Flat Fee	\$1,250.00	1	\$1,250.00
NCOA	Flat Rate	\$250.00	1	\$250.00
Toll Free Customer Service Representative	Flat Fee	\$300.00	1	\$300.00
Weekly Reports	Flat Rate	\$750.00	1	Waived

Subtotal **\$2,490.00**

NOTIFICATION & MAILING				
Fulfillment of Notice, English & Spanish	Per Piece	\$1.50	744	\$1,116.00
USPS First Class Postage	Per Piece	\$0.80	744	\$595.20
Re-Mails (Forward/Skip trace Undeliverables)	Per Piece	\$2.00	89	\$178.56
Storage, Photocopies, Deliveries	Flat Fee	\$191.16	1	\$191.16

Subtotal **\$2,080.92**

ILYM | GROUP, Inc.

CLASS ACTION ADMINISTRATION

Case Name: BBQ Growth LLC (Stevens)

Wednesday, July 2, 2025

Requesting Attorney's Name: Christina Hicklin

Activity	Rate Type	Unit Cost	Volume	Amount
DISTRIBUTION (Includes EIN, Bank Acct * /QSF Setup)				
Distribution Setup & Management	Hourly	\$150.00	2	\$300.00
Account Reconciliation & Distribution Reporting	Hourly	\$125.00	2	\$250.00
Check, Stub & Release - Print & Mail (W2/1099)	Per Check	\$1.00	744	\$744.00
USPS First Class Postage	Per Piece	\$0.70	744	\$520.80
Re-Mails (Forward/Skip trace Undeliverables up to 10%)	Per Piece	\$1.50	60	\$89.28
Preparation of Taxes	Hourly	\$120.00	3	\$360.00
Annual Filing of Tax Return	Per Year	\$1,500.00	1	\$1,500.00

**Additional Bank fees may apply*

Subtotal \$3,764.08

CASE CONCLUSION				
Data Manager Final Reporting	Hourly	\$100.00	1	\$100.00
Project Manager Final Reporting	Hourly	\$120.00	2	\$240.00
Process Unclaimed Funds to the State	Flat Fee	\$500.00	1	\$500.00
Declaration	Hourly	\$125.00	1	\$125.00

Subtotal \$965.00

Estimated ILYM Fees & Expenses: \$9,950.00

ILYM Group's Terms and Conditions

All services to be provided by ILYM Group, Inc. (hereinafter, "ILYM") to Client shall be subject to the following terms and conditions:

Services: Subject to the terms hereof, ILYM agrees to provide the Client with Administration Services (hereinafter, "services") as specified in the Proposal provided to Client to which these Terms and Conditions are attached. The estimate is in good faith and does not cover any applicable taxes and fees. The estimate does not make provision for any services or class members/size not delineated in the request for proposal or stipulations. Such services do not in any way constitute legal services or advice. ILYM is performing its services as an Independent Contractor and neither it nor its employees shall be deemed to be employees of the Client.

Mailing and Data Conversion: ILYM's database administration assumes the Client will provide complete data that includes all information required to send notifications and complete the administration process. Data must be provided in a complete, consistent, standardized electronic format. ILYM's standard format is Microsoft Excel, however, ILYM may accept other formats at its discretion. Further developments or enhancements to non-standardized data will be billed to Client by ILYM on a time and materials basis, according to ILYM's Standard Rates.

Charges for Services: Charges to the Client for services shall be on a time and materials basis at our prevailing rates, as the same may change from time to time. Any fee estimates set forth in the proposal are estimates only, based on information provided by Client to ILYM. Actual fees charged by ILYM to Client may be greater or less than such estimate, and Client shall be responsible for the payment of all such charges and expenses in accordance with Section 5 hereof. Charges incurred related to resolving post distribution withholdings and related corrective files due to voids and re-issues of payments and related correspondence with state and federal taxing authorities will not be charged to the Client to the extent that funds are received from the taxing authorities offset these charges. ILYM may derive financial benefits from financial institutions in connection with the deposit and investment of settlement funds with such institutions, including without limitation, discounts on eligible banking services and fees, and loans at favorable rates.

Indemnification: Client will indemnify and hold ILYM (and the officers, employees, affiliates and agents harmless against any Losses incurred by ILYM, arising out of, in connection with, or related to (i) any breach of the terms by Client; (ii) the processing and handling of any payment by ILYM in accordance with Client's instructions, including without limitation, the imposition of any stop payment or void payment on any check or the wrongful dishonor of a check by ILYM pursuant to Client's instructions.

Payment of Charges: ILYM reserves the right to request payment of postage charges and 50% of the final administration charges at the start of the case. ILYM bills are due upon receipt unless otherwise negotiated and agreed to with the Client. In the event settlement terms provide that ILYM is to be paid out of the Settlement Fund, ILYM will request that Counsel endeavor to make alternate payment arrangements for ILYM charges that are due at the onset of the case. The entire remaining balance is due and payable at the time the Settlement Account is funded by, or no later than the time of disbursement. Decisions of the court and actions of the parties, including disapproval or withdrawal of a settlement, do not affect the Client's liability to ILYM for payment of services. Services are not provided on a contingency fee basis.

Confidentiality: ILYM maintain reasonable and appropriate security measures and safeguards to protect the security and confidentiality of Client data provided to ILYM by Client in connection herewith. Should ILYM ever be notified of any judicial order or other proceedings in which a third party seeks to obtain access to the confidential data created by or for the Client, ILYM will promptly notify the Client, unless prohibited by applicable law. The Client shall have the option to (1) provide legal representation at the Client's expense to avoid such access or (2) promptly reimburse ILYM for any of its costs, including attorneys' fees, reasonably incurred in avoiding, attempting to avoid or providing such access and not paid by the entity seeking the data. If ILYM is required, pursuant to a court order, to produce documents, disclose data, or otherwise act in contravention of the obligations imposed by this Agreement, or otherwise, with respect to maintaining the confidentiality, proprietary nature and secrecy of the produced documents or disclosed data, ILYM will not be liable for breach of said obligation.

Data Rights: ILYM does not convey nor does the Client obtain any right in the programs, system data, or materials utilized or provided by ILYM in the ordinary course of business in the performance of this Agreement.

Document Retention: Unless directed otherwise in writing by Client, ILYM will destroy undeliverable mail on the effective date of the settlement or the date that the disposition of the case is no longer subject to appeal or review, whichever is later. ILYM will maintain claim forms and other correspondence for one year after final distribution of funds or benefits, or until the date that the disposition of the case is no longer subject to appeal or review, whichever is later.

Limitation of damages: ILYM is not responsible to the Client for any special, consequential or incidental damages incurred by Client. Any liability of ILYM to the Client shall not exceed the total amount billed to the Client for the particular services that give rise to any loss.

Termination: The services to be provided under this Agreement may be terminated, at will by the Client upon at least 30 calendar days' prior written notice to ILYM. The Client's obligation to pay for services or projects in progress at the time of notice of withdrawal shall continue throughout that 30 day period. ILYM may terminate this Agreement (i) with 10 calendar days' prior written notice, if the Client is not current in payment of charges or (ii) in any event, upon at least 3 months' prior written notice to the Client.

Notice: Any notice required or permitted hereunder shall be in writing and shall be delivered personally, or sent by registered mail, postage prepaid, or overnight courier service to the responsible officer or principal of ILYM or the Client, as applicable, and shall be deemed given when so delivered personally, or, if mailed, five days after the date of deposit in United States mail, or, if sent by courier, one business day after delivery to such courier service.

Force Majeure: To the extent performance by ILYM of any of its obligations hereunder is substantially prevented by reason of any act of God or by reason of any other matter beyond ILYM's reasonable control, then such performance shall be excused and this Agreement, at ILYM's option, be deemed suspended during the continuation of such condition and for a reasonable time thereafter.

Waiver of Rights: No failure or delay on the part of a party in exercising any right hereunder will operate as a waiver of, or impair, any such right. No single or partial exercise of any such right will preclude any other or further exercise thereof or the exercise of any other right. No waiver of any such right will be effective unless given in a signed writing.

Jurisdiction: The parties hereto submit to the jurisdiction of the Court of the applicable case for purposes of any suit, action or proceeding to enforce any provision of, or based on any right arising out of, this Agreement. The parties hereto hereby waive any objection to the laying of venue of any such suit, action or proceeding in the Court.

Entire Agreement: These terms and conditions and the proposal embody the entire agreement between the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof, and cancels and supersedes all prior negotiations, representations, and agreements related thereto, either written or oral, except to the extent they are expressly incorporated herein. No changes in, additions to, or waivers of, the terms and conditions set forth herein will be binding upon any party, unless approved in writing by such party's authorized representative.

Exhibit 3



ELM Solutions

2022 Real Rate Report[®]

The industry's leading
analysis of law firm rates,
trends, and practices

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Report Use Considerations

2022 Real Rate Report

- Examines law firm rates over time
- Identifies rates by location, experience, firm size, areas of expertise, industry, and timekeeper role (i.e., partner, associate, and paralegal)
- Itemizes variables that drive rates up or down

All the analyses included in the report derive from the actual rates charged by law firm professionals as recorded on invoices submitted and approved for payment.

Examining real, approved rate information, along with the ranges of those rates and their changes over time, highlights the role these variables play in driving aggregate legal cost and income. The analyses can energize questions for both corporate clients and law firm principals.

Clients might ask whether they are paying the right amount for different types of legal services, while law firm principals might ask whether they are charging the right amount for legal services and whether to modify their pricing approach.

Some key factors¹ that drive rates²:

Attorney location - Lawyers in urban and major metropolitan areas tend to charge more when compared with lawyers in rural areas or small towns.

Litigation complexity - The cost of representation will be higher if the case is particularly complex or time-consuming; for example, if there are a large number of documents to review, many witnesses to depose, and numerous procedural steps, the case is likely to cost more (regardless of other factors like the lawyer's level of experience).

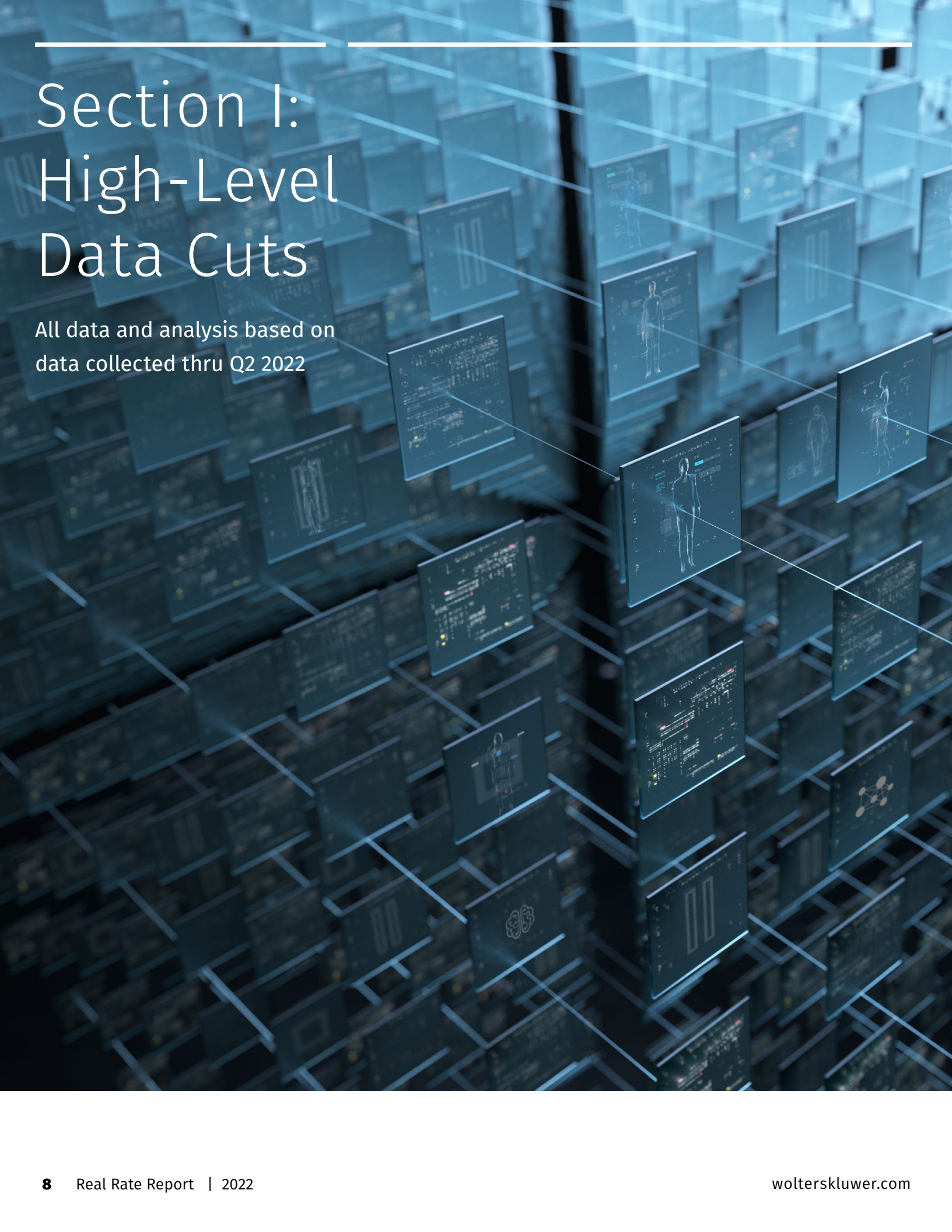
Years of experience and reputation - A more experienced, higher-profile lawyer is often going to charge more, but absorbing this higher cost at the outset may make more sense than hiring a less expensive lawyer who will likely take time and billable hours to come up to speed on unfamiliar legal and procedural issues.

Overhead - The costs associated with the firm's support network (paralegals, clerks, and assistants), document preparation, consultants, research, and other expenses.

Firm size - The rates can increase if the firm is large and has various timekeeper roles at the firm. For example, the cost to work with an associate or partner at a larger firm will be higher compared to a firm that has one to two associates and a paralegal.

¹ David Goguen, J.D., University of San Francisco School of Law (2020) Guide to Legal Services Billing Retrieved from: <https://www.lawyers.com/legal-info/research/guide-to-legal-services-billing-rates.html>

² Source: 2018 RRR. Factor order validated in multiple analyses since 2010



Section I: High-Level Data Cuts

All data and analysis based on
data collected thru Q2 2022

Section I: High-Level Data Cuts

Cities

By Matter Type

2022 - Real Rates for Associate and Partner

Trend Analysis - Mean

City	Matter Type	Role	n	First Quartile	Median	Third Quartile	2022	2021	2020
Jackson MS	Litigation	Associate	56	\$55	\$225	\$250	\$178	\$203	\$175
	Non-Litigation	Partner	24	\$315	\$420	\$485	\$418	\$394	\$375
		Associate	25	\$55	\$126	\$255	\$155	\$125	\$259
Kansas City MO	Litigation	Partner	74	\$413	\$450	\$556	\$472	\$450	\$450
		Associate	50	\$252	\$329	\$385	\$319	\$316	\$305
	Non-Litigation	Partner	101	\$411	\$487	\$615	\$519	\$487	\$464
		Associate	73	\$250	\$320	\$385	\$322	\$312	\$285
Las Vegas NV	Non-Litigation	Partner	20	\$350	\$425	\$525	\$440	\$422	\$432
		Associate	11	\$238	\$267	\$368	\$301	\$297	\$282
Little Rock AR	Non-Litigation	Partner	11	\$215	\$215	\$308	\$264	\$256	\$298
Los Angeles CA	Litigation	Partner	322	\$516	\$725	\$1,045	\$799	\$739	\$702
		Associate	408	\$400	\$615	\$855	\$642	\$606	\$564
	Non-Litigation	Partner	521	\$596	\$868	\$1,201	\$903	\$902	\$858
		Associate	667	\$441	\$603	\$845	\$653	\$712	\$648

Section I: High-Level Data Cuts

Cities

By Matter Type

2022 - Real Rates for Associate and Partner

Trend Analysis - Mean

City	Matter Type	Role	n	First Quartile	Median	Third Quartile	2022	2021	2020
Minneapolis MN	Non-Litigation	Associate	83	\$340	\$421	\$528	\$425	\$408	\$384
Nashville TN	Litigation	Partner	24	\$275	\$320	\$456	\$363	\$378	\$403
	Non-Litigation	Partner	78	\$412	\$484	\$576	\$505	\$481	\$470
		Associate	59	\$270	\$330	\$384	\$340	\$315	\$285
New Orleans LA	Litigation	Partner	47	\$290	\$332	\$412	\$343	\$330	\$340
		Associate	42	\$231	\$243	\$340	\$278	\$290	\$275
	Non-Litigation	Partner	32	\$295	\$347	\$405	\$419	\$380	\$391
		Associate	21	\$244	\$250	\$278	\$273	\$303	\$258
New York NY	Litigation	Partner	614	\$475	\$675	\$1,088	\$808	\$784	\$746
		Associate	631	\$323	\$460	\$729	\$545	\$527	\$509
	Non-Litigation	Partner	1,376	\$765	\$1,235	\$1,638	\$1,189	\$1,139	\$1,090
		Associate	1,809	\$550	\$776	\$1,050	\$796	\$766	\$716
Oklahoma City OK	Non-Litigation	Partner	14	\$235	\$338	\$393	\$337	\$319	\$311
Omaha NE	Litigation	Partner	12	\$293	\$339	\$353	\$329	\$338	\$341

Section I: High-Level Data Cuts

Cities

By Matter Type

2022 - Real Rates for Associate and Partner

Trend Analysis - Mean

City	Matter Type	Role	n	First Quartile	Median	Third Quartile	2022	2021	2020
Rochester NY	Non-Litigation	Partner	12	\$270	\$360	\$488	\$386	\$341	\$446
		Associate	13	\$220	\$310	\$375	\$314	\$278	\$287
Sacramento CA	Non-Litigation	Partner	11	\$381	\$437	\$682	\$534	\$559	\$516
Salt Lake City UT	Litigation	Partner	14	\$246	\$353	\$468	\$363	\$333	\$379
	Non-Litigation	Partner	42	\$297	\$371	\$447	\$391	\$363	\$353
		Associate	22	\$220	\$240	\$270	\$248	\$247	\$228
San Diego CA	Litigation	Associate	23	\$151	\$225	\$300	\$255	\$258	\$264
	Non-Litigation	Partner	89	\$332	\$540	\$1,066	\$699	\$667	\$649
		Associate	71	\$250	\$325	\$424	\$373	\$378	\$351
San Francisco CA	Litigation	Partner	143	\$423	\$675	\$995	\$742	\$711	\$691
		Associate	98	\$325	\$430	\$731	\$525	\$517	\$470
	Non-Litigation	Partner	221	\$475	\$750	\$950	\$758	\$746	\$741
		Associate	151	\$338	\$486	\$702	\$545	\$563	\$507
San Jose CA	Litigation	Partner	33	\$654	\$921	\$1,133	\$916	\$907	\$864

Section I: High-Level Data Cuts

Cities

By Matter Type

2022 - Real Rates for Associate and Partner

Trend Analysis - Mean

City	Matter Type	Role	n	First Quartile	Median	Third Quartile	2022	2021	2020
San Jose CA	Litigation	Associate	22	\$461	\$580	\$745	\$608	\$593	\$498
	Non-Litigation	Partner	50	\$660	\$864	\$1,303	\$969	\$985	\$887
		Associate	46	\$380	\$460	\$775	\$616	\$639	\$567
Seattle WA	Litigation	Partner	76	\$497	\$655	\$760	\$635	\$567	\$510
		Associate	61	\$394	\$468	\$530	\$447	\$453	\$395
	Non-Litigation	Partner	148	\$410	\$526	\$760	\$571	\$547	\$547
		Associate	113	\$310	\$395	\$502	\$422	\$401	\$377
St. Louis MO	Litigation	Partner	46	\$260	\$350	\$435	\$376	\$373	\$388
		Associate	17	\$197	\$225	\$250	\$228	\$237	\$232
	Non-Litigation	Partner	57	\$352	\$419	\$540	\$451	\$446	\$473
Tampa FL	Litigation	Partner	31	\$369	\$508	\$595	\$490	\$467	\$452
		Associate	15	\$269	\$298	\$368	\$316	\$302	\$306
Trenton NJ	Non-Litigation	Partner	21	\$408	\$600	\$700	\$569	\$620	\$581
		Associate	12	\$480	\$495	\$500	\$448	\$376	\$387

Section I: High-Level Data Cuts

Cities

By Years of Experience

2022 - Real Rates for Associate

Trend Analysis - Mean

City	Years of Experience	n	First Quartile	Median	Third Quartile	2022	2021	2020
Kansas City MO	3 to Fewer Than 7 Years	15	\$270	\$325	\$360	\$318	\$295	\$283
	7 or More Years	28	\$292	\$334	\$391	\$333	\$312	\$302
Los Angeles CA	Fewer Than 3 Years	63	\$429	\$595	\$654	\$556	\$524	\$488
	3 to Fewer Than 7 Years	144	\$486	\$688	\$838	\$662	\$626	\$530
	7 or More Years	171	\$351	\$550	\$840	\$600	\$634	\$586
Miami FL	3 to Fewer Than 7 Years	19	\$300	\$360	\$457	\$380	\$331	\$313
	7 or More Years	36	\$295	\$450	\$595	\$460	\$433	\$385
Minneapolis MN	Fewer Than 3 Years	11	\$374	\$405	\$446	\$408		\$230
	3 to Fewer Than 7 Years	27	\$340	\$451	\$510	\$421	\$358	\$356
	7 or More Years	27	\$423	\$468	\$585	\$478	\$438	\$392
Nashville TN	7 or More Years	12	\$219	\$245	\$345	\$282	\$266	\$262
New Orleans LA	3 to Fewer Than 7 Years	12	\$232	\$243	\$265	\$261	\$242	\$245
	7 or More Years	18	\$243	\$312	\$343	\$306	\$318	\$294
New York NY	Fewer Than 3 Years	142	\$443	\$622	\$775	\$629	\$600	\$652

Section I: High-Level Data Cuts

Cities

By Years of Experience

2022 - Real Rates for Partner

Trend Analysis - Mean

City	Years of Experience	n	First Quartile	Median	Third Quartile	2022	2021	2020
Kansas City MO	Fewer Than 21 Years	46	\$400	\$450	\$537	\$473	\$411	\$397
	21 or More Years	68	\$440	\$553	\$658	\$539	\$497	\$491
Las Vegas NV	Fewer Than 21 Years	12	\$284	\$381	\$495	\$389	\$349	\$343
	21 or More Years	13	\$350	\$425	\$515	\$468	\$456	\$472
Los Angeles CA	Fewer Than 21 Years	183	\$533	\$801	\$1,075	\$804	\$797	\$682
	21 or More Years	333	\$550	\$765	\$1,133	\$863	\$842	\$808
Memphis TN	Fewer Than 21 Years	14	\$288	\$331	\$380	\$345	\$317	\$328
	21 or More Years	15	\$355	\$415	\$425	\$394	\$382	\$375
Miami FL	Fewer Than 21 Years	57	\$370	\$450	\$598	\$490	\$498	\$443
	21 or More Years	104	\$388	\$581	\$749	\$584	\$580	\$536
Milwaukee WI	21 or More Years	16	\$302	\$454	\$613	\$589	\$515	\$530
Minneapolis MN	Fewer Than 21 Years	36	\$470	\$530	\$607	\$532	\$486	\$499
	21 or More Years	84	\$507	\$675	\$796	\$656	\$620	\$589
Nashville TN	Fewer Than 21 Years	28	\$375	\$405	\$535	\$449	\$405	\$397



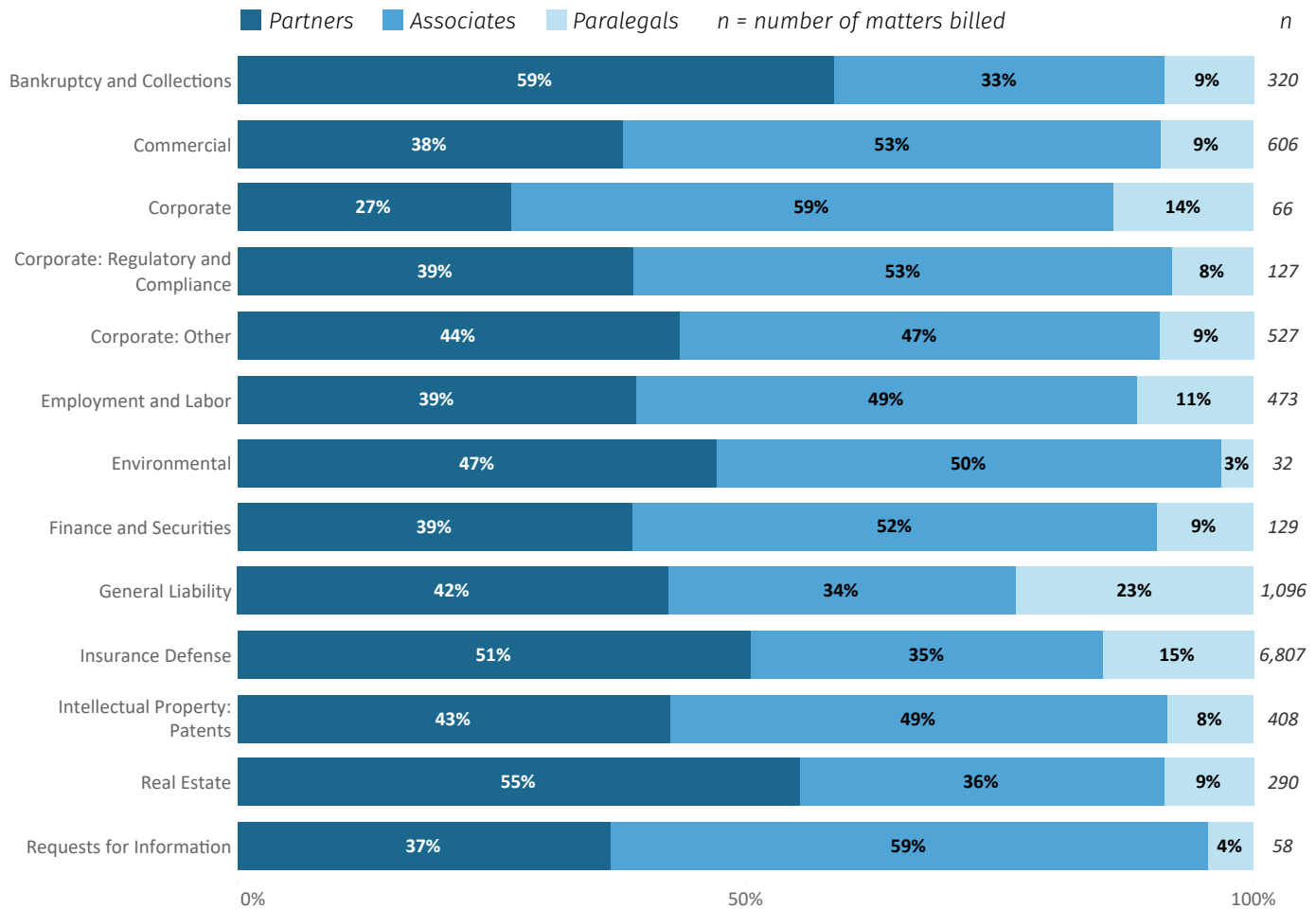
Section VI: Matter Staffing Analysis

All data and analysis based on
data collected thru Q2 2022

Section VI: Matter Staffing Analysis

Long Litigation Matters, More Than 100 Total Hours Billed

2019 to 2022 -- Percentage of Hours Billed per Matter



Section VII: Data Methodology

All data and analysis based on
data collected thru Q2 2022

Appendix: Data Methodology

Invoice Information

Data in Wolters Kluwer ELM Solutions' reference database and the 2022 Real Rate Report were taken from invoice line-item entries contained in invoices received and approved by participating companies.

Invoice data were received in the Legal Electronic Data Exchange Standard (LEDES) format (LEDES.org). The following information was extracted from those invoices and their line items:

- Law firm (which exists as a random number in the ELM Solutions reference database)
- Timekeeper ID (which exists as a random number in the ELM Solutions reference database)
- Matter ID (which exists as a random number in the ELM Solutions reference database)
- Timekeeper's position (role) within the law firm (partner, associate, paralegal, etc.)
- Uniform Task-Based Management System Code Set, Task Codes, and Activity Codes (UTBMS.com)
- Date of service
- Hours billed
- Hourly rate billed
- Fees billed

Non-Invoice Information

To capture practice area details, the matter ID within each invoice was associated with matter profiles containing areas of work in the systems of each company. The areas of work were then systematically categorized into legal practice areas. Normalization of practice areas was done based on company mappings to system-level practice areas available in the ELM Solutions system and by naming convention.

The majority of analyses included in this report have been mapped to one of 11 practice areas, further divided into sub-areas and litigation/non-litigation (for more information on practice areas and sub-areas, please refer to pages 232-234).

To capture location and jurisdiction details, law firms and timekeepers were systematically mapped to the existing profiles within ELM Solutions systems, as well as with publicly available data sources for further validation and normalization. Where city location information is provided, it includes any address within that city's defined Core-Based Statistical Area (CBSA) as defined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The CBSAs are urban centers with populations of 10,000 or more and include all adjacent counties that are economically integrated with that urban center.

Where the analyses focus on partners, associates, and paralegals, the underlying data occasionally included some sub-roles, such as "senior partner" or "junior associate." In such instances, those timekeeper sub-roles were placed within the broader partner, associate, and paralegal segments.

Demographics regarding law firm size, location, and lawyer years of experience were augmented by incorporating publicly available information.

Appendix: Data Methodology

A Note on US Cities

Principal City	CBSA Name
Hartford, CT	Hartford-East Hartford-Middletown, CT
Honolulu, HI	Urban Honolulu HI
Houston, TX	Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX
Indianapolis, IN	Indianapolis-Carmel-Anderson, IN
Jackson, MS	Jackson, MS
Jacksonville, FL	Jacksonville, FL
Kansas City, MO	Kansas City, MO-KS
Lafayette, LA	Lafayette, LA
Las Vegas, NV	Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV
Lexington, KY	Lexington-Fayette, KY
Little Rock, AR	Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway, AR
Los Angeles, CA	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA
Louisville, KY	Louisville/Jefferson County, KY-IN
Madison, WI	Madison, WI
Memphis, TN	Memphis-Forrest City, TN-MS-AR
Miami, FL	Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL
Milwaukee, WI	Milwaukee-Waukesha, WI
Minneapolis, MN	Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI
Nashville, TN	Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin, TN
New Haven, CT	New Haven-Milford, CT
New Orleans, LA	New Orleans-Metairie, LA
New York, NY	New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA
Oklahoma City, OK	Oklahoma City, OK
Omaha, NE	Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE-IA
Orlando, FL	Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL
Philadelphia, PA	Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD
Phoenix, AZ	Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ
Pittsburgh, PA	Pittsburgh, PA
Portland, ME	Portland-South Portland, ME
Portland, OR	Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA
Providence, RI	Providence-Warwick, RI-MA
Raleigh, NC	Raleigh-Cary, NC
Reno, NV	Reno-Carson City-Fernley, NV

Appendix: Data Methodology

Bankruptcy and Collections

Chapter 11
Collections

General/Other
Workouts and Restructuring

Commercial (Commercial Transactions and Agreements)

Contract Breach or Dispute
General, Drafting, and Review
General/Other

Corporate¹

Antitrust and Competition
Corporate Development
General/Other
Governance
Information and Technology
Mergers, Acquisitions, and Divestitures

Partnerships and Joint Ventures
Regulatory and Compliance
Tax
Treasury
White Collar/Fraud/Abuse

Employment and Labor

ADA
Agreements
Compensation and Benefits
Discrimination, Retaliation, and Harassment/EEO
Employee Dishonesty/Misconduct
ERISA

General/Other
Immigration
Union Relations and Negotiations/NLRB
Wages, Tips, and Overtime
Wrongful Termination

Environmental

General/Other
Health and Safety

Superfund
Waste/Remediation

Finance and Securities

Commercial Loans and Financing
Debt/Equity Offerings
Fiduciary Services
General/Other

Investments and Other Financial Instruments
Loans and Financing
SEC Filings and Financial Reporting
Securities and Banking Regulations

General Liability

Asbestos/Mesothelioma
Auto and Transportation
Consumer Related Claims
Crime, Dishonesty and Fraud
General/Other

Personal Injury/Wrongful Death
Premises
Product and Product Liability
Property Damage
Toxic Tort

¹ All references to “Corporate: General/Other” in the Real Rate Report are the aggregation of all Corporate sub-areas excluding the Mergers, Acquisitions, and Divestitures sub-area and the Regulatory and Compliance sub-area.

Exhibit 4

Free Newsletter Sign Up

Business & Practice

Big Law Rates Topping \$2,000 Leave Value ‘In Eye of Beholder’

By Roy Strom

Column

June 9, 2022, 2:30 AM

Welcome back to the Big Law Business column on the changing legal marketplace written by me, Roy Strom. Today, we look at a new threshold for lawyers' billing rates and why it's so difficult to put a price on high-powered attorneys. Sign up to receive this column in your inbox on Thursday mornings. Programming note: Big Law Business will be off next week.

Some of the nation's top law firms are charging more than \$2,000 an hour, setting a new pinnacle after a two-year burst in demand.

Partners at Hogan Lovells and Latham & Watkins have crossed the threshold, according to court documents in bankruptcy cases filed within the past year.

Other firms came close to the mark, billing more than \$1,900, according to the documents. They include Kirkland & Ellis, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett, Boies Schiller Flexner, and Sidley Austin.

Simpson Thacher & Bartlett litigator Bryce Friedman, who helps big-name clients out of jams, especially when they're accused of fraud, charges \$1,965 every 60 minutes, according to a court document.

In need of a former acting US Solicitor General? Hogan Lovells partner Neal Katyal bills time at \$2,465 an hour. Want to hire famous litigator David Boies? That'll cost \$1,950 an hour (at least). Reuters was first to report their fees.

Eye-watering rates are nothing new for Big Law firms, which typically ask clients to pay higher prices at least once a year, regardless of broader market conditions.

"Value is in the eye of the beholder," said John O'Connor, a San Francisco-based expert on legal fees. "The perceived value of a good lawyer can reach into the multi-billions of dollars."

Kirkland & Ellis declined to comment on its billing rates. None of the other firms responded to requests to comment.

Charge It Up

Big Law firms are crossing the \$2,000-an-hour threshold after two years of surging rates driven by an increase in demand for lawyers.

Firm	Highest Billing Rate
Hogan Lovells	\$2,465
Latham & Watkins	\$2,075
Kirkland & Ellis	\$1,995
Simpson Thacher & Bartlett	\$1,965
Boies Schiller Flexner	\$1,950
Sidley Austin	\$1,900

Source: Court documents

Bloomberg Law

Law firms have been more successful raising rates than most other businesses over the past 15 years.

Law firm rates rose by roughly 40 percent from 2007 to 2020, or just short of 3 percent per year, Thomson Reuters Peer Monitor data show. US inflation rose by about 28% during that time.

The 100 largest law firms in the past two years achieved their largest rate increases in more than a decade, Peer Monitor says. The rates surged more than 6% in 2020 and grew another 5.6% through November of last year. Neither level had been breached since 2008.

The price hikes occurred during a once-in-a-decade surge in demand for law services, which propelled profits at firms to new levels. Fourteen law firms reported average profits per equity partner in 2021 over \$5 million, according to data from The American Lawyer. That was up from six the previous year.

The highest-performing firms, where lawyers charge the highest prices, have outperformed their smaller peers. Firms with leading practices in markets such as mergers and acquisitions, capital markets, and real estate were forced to turn away work at some points during the pandemic-fueled surge.

Firms receive relatively tepid pushback from their giant corporate clients, especially when advising on bet-the-company litigation or billion-dollar deals.

The portion of bills law firms collected—a sign of how willingly clients pay full-freight—rose during the previous two years after drifting lower following the Great Financial Crisis. Collection rates last year breached 90% for the first time since 2009, Peer Monitor data show.

Professional rules prohibit lawyers from charging “unconscionable” or “unreasonable” rates. But that doesn’t preclude clients from paying any price they perceive as valuable, said Jacqueline Vinaccia, a San Diego-based lawyer who testifies on lawyer fee disputes.

Lawyers’ fees are usually only contested when they will be paid by a third party.

That happened recently with Hogan Lovells’ Katyal, whose nearly \$2,500 an hour fee was contested in May by a US trustee overseeing a bankruptcy case involving a Johnson & Johnson unit facing claims its talc-based powders caused cancer.

The trustee, who protects the financial interests of bankruptcy estates, argued Katyal’s fee was more than \$1,000 an hour higher than rates charged by lawyers in the same case at Jones Day and Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom.

A hearing on the trustee’s objection is scheduled for next week. Hogan Lovells did not respond to a request for comment on the objection.

Vinaccia said the firm’s options will be to reduce its fee, withdraw from the case, or argue the levy is reasonable, most likely based on Katyal’s extensive experience arguing appeals.

Still, the hourly rate shows just how valuable the most prestigious lawyers’ time can be—even compared to their highly compensated competitors.

“If the argument is that Jones Day and Skadden Arps are less expensive, then you’re already talking about the cream of the crop, the top-of-the-barrel law firms,” Vinaccia said. “I can’t imagine a case in which I might argue those two firms are more reasonable than the rates I’m dealing with.”

Worth Your Time

On Cravath: Cravath Swaine & Moore is heading to Washington, opening its first new office since 1973 by hiring former heads of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. Meghan Tribe reports the move comes as Big Law firms are looking to add federal government expertise as clients face more regulatory scrutiny.

On Big Law Promotions: It’s rare that associates get promotions to partner in June, but Camille Vasquez is now a Brown Rudnick partner after she shot to fame representing Johnny Depp in his defamation trial against ex-wife Amber Heard.

On Working From Home: I spoke this week with Quinn Emanuel’s John Quinn about why he thinks law firm life is never going back to the office-first culture that was upset by the pandemic. Listen to the podcast [here](#).



That's it for this week! Thanks for reading and please send me your thoughts, critiques, and tips.

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Documents

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