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

211502

STACI NOWAK and CHRISTINA KUHL,
individually, and on behalf of the State of
California and other aggrieved persons,

Plaintiffs,

v.

CURTIS HOMES LLC, a California limited
liability company; and DOES 1 through 50,
inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.:

**PAGA REPRESENTATIVE ACTION
COMPLAINT:**

1. Civil Penalties Under PAGA [Cal. Lab.
Code § 2699, et seq.]

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1 Plaintiffs Staci Nowak and Christina Kuhl (“Plaintiffs”), on information and belief, allege
2 as follows:

3 **INTRODUCTION & PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

4 1. Plaintiffs bring this action individually, and on behalf of the State of California and
5 other aggrieved persons, against Defendant Curtis Homes LLC, and DOES 1 through 50
6 (collectively referred to as “Defendants”) for civil penalties under the Private Attorneys General
7 Act of 2004, California Labor Code §§ 2698 *et seq.* (“PAGA”) stemming from Defendants’ failure
8 to pay for all hours worked (minimum, straight time, and overtime wages), failure to provide meal
9 periods, failure to authorize and permit rest periods, failure to pay all earned wages twice per
10 month, failure to maintain accurate records of hours worked and meal periods, failure to timely
11 pay final wages, failure to furnish accurate wage statements, and failure to indemnify employees
12 for expenditures.

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

23 3. All California employees during the relevant period who are or were harmed by
24 Defendants’ illegal practices are “Aggrieved Employees.” The Aggrieved Employees worked for
25 Defendants as hourly-paid or non-exempt employees within the applicable period.

26 4. Plaintiffs bring this action against Defendants seeking only to recover penalties on
27 behalf of Plaintiffs individually, on behalf of certain Aggrieved Employees that worked for
28 Defendants, and on behalf of the State of California. Plaintiffs do not seek to recover anything

1 other than penalties as permitted by California Labor Code Section 2699 at this time. To the extent
2 that statutory violations are mentioned for wage violations, Plaintiffs do not seek underlying
3 general and/or special damages for those violations, but simply penalties as permitted by California
4 Labor Code Section 2699, declaratory relief, and injunctive relief for Plaintiffs individually, and
5 certain Aggrieved Employees as permitted by the PAGA.

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

11 6. On information and belief, Defendants were on actual and constructive notice of the
12 improprieties alleged herein and intentionally refused to rectify their unlawful conduct.
13 Defendants' violations, as alleged above, during all relevant times herein were willful and
14 deliberate.

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

20 **THE PARTIES**

21 **A. Plaintiffs**

22 8. Plaintiff Staci Nowak is a resident of Red Bluff, California who worked for
23 Defendants in Shasta County, California as an hourly-paid, non-exempt employee from
24 approximately December 2024 to approximately January 2026.

25 9. Plaintiff Christina Kuhl is a resident of Oroville, California who worked for Defendants
26 in Shasta County, California as an hourly-paid, non-exempt employee from approximately June
27 2025 to approximately March 2026.
28

1 **B. Defendants**

2 10. Plaintiffs are informed and believe, and based upon that information and belief
3 allege, that Defendant Curtis Homes LLC is, and at all times herein mentioned, was:

4 (a) A business entity conducting business in numerous counties throughout the
5 State of California, including Shasta County; and,

6 (b) The former employer of Plaintiffs, and the current and/or former employer
7 of Aggrieved Employees, because Defendant Curtis Homes LLC suffered
8 and permitted Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees to work; and/or
9 controlled their wages, hours, or working conditions; and or engaged
10 Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees, thereby creating a common law
11 employment relationship.

12 11. Plaintiffs do not know the true names or capacities of the persons or entities sued
13 herein as Does 1-50, inclusive, and therefore sue said Defendants by such fictitious names. Each
14 of the Doe Defendants were in some manner legally responsible for the damages suffered by
15 Plaintiffs and certain Aggrieved Employees as alleged herein. Plaintiffs will amend this complaint
16 to set forth the true names and capacities of these Defendants when they have been ascertained,
17 together with appropriate charging allegations, as may be necessary.

18 12. At all times mentioned herein, the Defendants named as Does 1-50, inclusive, and
19 each of them, were residents of, doing business in, availed themselves of the jurisdiction of, and/or
20 injured a significant number of the Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees in the State of California.

21 13. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that at all relevant times each
22 Defendant, directly or indirectly, or through agents or other persons, employed Plaintiffs and the
23 other employees and exercised control over their wages, hours, and working conditions. Plaintiffs
24 are informed and believe and thereon allege that, at all relevant times, each Defendant was the
25 principal, agent, partner, joint venturer, joint employer, officer, director, controlling shareholder,
26 subsidiary, affiliate, parent corporation, successor in interest and/or predecessor in interest of some
27 or all of the other Defendants, and was engaged with some or all of the other Defendants in a joint
28 enterprise for profit, and bore such other relationships to some or all of the other Defendants so as

1 to be liable for their conduct with respect to the matters alleged below. Plaintiffs are informed and
2 believe and thereon allege that each Defendant acted pursuant to and within the scope of the
3 relationships alleged above, that each Defendant knew or should have known about, and
4 authorized, ratified, adopted, approved, controlled, aided and abetted the conduct of all other
5 Defendants.

6 **ALLEGATIONS COMMON TO ALL CAUSES OF ACTION**

7 14. Plaintiff Staci Nowak worked for Defendants in Shasta County, California as an
8 hourly-paid, non-exempt employee from approximately December 2024 to approximately January
9 2026. Plaintiff Christina Kuhl worked for Defendants in Shasta County, California as an hourly-
10 paid, non-exempt employee from approximately June 2025 to approximately March 2026. At all
11 times, Defendants paid Plaintiffs an hourly wage and classified Plaintiffs as non-exempt from
12 overtime.

13 15. Throughout Plaintiffs' employment, Defendants committed numerous labor code
14 violations under state law. As discussed below, Plaintiffs' experience working for Defendants was
15 typical and illustrative.

16 **A. Failure to Pay for All Hours Worked, Including Minimum, Straight Time,**
17 **and Overtime Wages**

18 16. Under California law, an employer must pay for all hours worked by an employee.
19 "Hours worked" is the time during which an employee is subject to the control of an employer and
20 includes all the time the employee is suffered or permitted to work, whether or not required to do
21 so.

22 17. Labor Code § 510 provides that employees in California shall not be employed more
23 than eight hours in any workday or forty (40) hours in a workweek unless they receive additional
24 compensation beyond their regular wages in amounts specified by law.

25 18. Labor Code §§ 1194 and 1198 also provide that employees in California shall not
26 be employed more than eight hours in any workday unless they receive additional compensation
27 beyond their regular wages in amounts specified by law. Additionally, Labor Code § 1198 states
28 that the employment of an employee for longer hours than those fixed by the IWC is unlawful.

1 19. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants, at times, failed to pay Plaintiffs and
2 certain Aggrieved Employees for all hours worked, including minimum wages, straight time, and
3 overtime wages. Defendants, at times, required Plaintiffs and certain Aggrieved Employees to
4 work “off-the-clock,” uncompensated, by, for example, requiring Plaintiffs and certain Aggrieved
5 Employees to perform work during uncompensated meal periods and/or requiring Plaintiffs and
6 certain Aggrieved Employees to perform work after clocking out for the workday. Some of this
7 unpaid work should have been paid at the overtime rate. In failing to pay for all hours worked,
8 Defendants also failed, at times, to maintain accurate records of the hours Plaintiffs and certain
9 Aggrieved Employees worked.

10 **B. Failure to Provide Meal Periods**

11 20. Under California law, employers have an affirmative obligation to relieve
12 employees of all duty in order to take their first 30-minute, duty-free meal periods no later than the
13 end of the fifth hour of work in a workday, and to allow employees to take their second 30-minute
14 meal period no later than the end of the tenth hour of work in a workday. Further, employees are
15 entitled to be paid one hour of additional wages for each workday they were not provided with a
16 required meal period(s).

17 21. Despite these legal requirements, Defendants wrongfully failed, at times, to provide
18 Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, with their legally mandated 30-minute,
19 uninterrupted, and duty-free meal period in a manner required by law. Defendants also continued
20 to assert control over Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, by, among other
21 things, requiring, pressuring, or encouraging them to perform work tasks which could not be
22 completed without working in lieu of taking mandatory meal periods, or by denying Plaintiffs and
23 certain Aggrieved Employees permission to take a meal period under the conditions required by
24 law, and without properly compensating Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, for
25 meal periods that were not provided as required by law. Defendants also failed, at times, to permit
26 Plaintiffs to take a second meal period when Plaintiffs worked at least ten hours of work in a
27 workday. Accordingly, Defendants failed, at times, to provide meal periods to Plaintiffs and certain
28 Aggrieved Employees in compliance with California law.

22. Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, are thus entitled to be paid one hour of additional wages for each workday he or she was not provided with all required meal period(s). Defendants, however, at times, failed to pay Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, the additional wages to which they were entitled for meal periods that were not provided.

C. Failure to Authorize and Permit Rest Breaks

23. Employers are required by California law to authorize and permit breaks of ten uninterrupted minutes for each four hours of work or major fraction of four hours (i.e. more than two hours). Thus, for example, if an employee's work time is six hours and ten minutes, the employee is entitled to two rest breaks. Each failure to authorize rest breaks as so required is itself a violation of California's rest break laws.

24. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants have, at times, wrongfully failed to authorize and permit Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, to take legally compliant rest periods in a manner required by law. Defendants, at times, also required Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, to work in excess of four consecutive hours a day without Defendants authorizing and permitting them to take a 10-minute, uninterrupted, duty-free rest period for every four hours of work (or major fraction of four hours), and without properly compensating Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, for rest periods that were not authorized or permitted. Instead, among other things, Defendants continued to assert control over Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, by requiring, pressuring, or encouraging them to perform work tasks which could not be completed without working in lieu of taking mandatory rest periods, and by denying Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, permission to take a rest period under the conditions required by law. Accordingly, Defendants failed, at times, to authorize and permit Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, to take rest periods in compliance with California law.

25. Plaintiffs and certain Aggrieved Employees are thus entitled to be paid one hour of additional wages for each workday he or she was not authorized and permitted to take all required rest periods. Defendants, however, at times, failed to pay Plaintiffs and certain Aggrieved

Employees the additional wages to which they were entitled for rest periods and that they were not authorized and permitted to take.

D. Failure to Pay All Earned Wages Twice Per Month

26. Based on Defendants' failure to pay Plaintiffs and certain Aggrieved Employees for all wages as discussed above, Defendants also violated Labor Code § 204.

27. Labor Code § 204 requires employers to pay employees all earned wages two times per month. Throughout the period applicable to this cause of action, employees were entitled to be paid twice a month at their regular rates, including all meal period premium wages owed, rest period premium wages owed, and wages owed for overtime hours worked. However, Defendants, at times, failed and refused to pay the employees all wages due, and failed, at times, to pay those wages twice a month, in that employees were not paid all wages for all meal periods not provided by Defendants, all wages for all rest periods not authorized and permitted by Defendants, and all wages for all hours worked. As a result, Defendants owe employees the legally required wages not paid, and Plaintiffs and certain Aggrieved Employees suffered damages in those amounts.

E. Failure to Maintain Accurate Records of Hours Worked and Meal Periods

28. Plaintiffs seek penalties under California Labor Code § 1174(d). Pursuant to California Labor Code § 1174.5, any person, including any entity, employing labor who willfully fails to maintain accurate and complete records required by California Labor Code § 1174 is subject to a penalty under § 1174.5. Pursuant to the applicable IWC Order § 7(A)(3), every employer shall keep time records showing when the employee begins and ends each work period. Meal periods and total hours worked daily shall also be recorded.

29. Defendants, however, at times, failed to maintain accurate records of hours worked and all meal periods taken or missed by Plaintiffs and certain Aggrieved Employees.

30. Defendants' failure to provide and maintain records required by the California Labor Code and applicable IWC Wage Orders deprived Plaintiffs and certain Aggrieved Employees the ability to know, understand and question the accuracy and frequency of meal periods, and the accuracy of their hours worked stated in Defendants' records. Therefore, Plaintiffs and certain Aggrieved Employees had no way to dispute the resulting failure to pay wages, all of which

1 resulted in an unjustified economic enrichment to Defendants. As a direct result, Plaintiffs and
2 Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, have suffered and continue to suffer, substantial losses
3 related to the use and enjoyment of such wages, lost interest on such wages and expenses and
4 attorney's fees in seeking to compel Defendants to fully perform Defendants' obligation under
5 state law, all to their respective damage in amounts according to proof at trial. As a result of
6 Defendants' knowing failure to comply with the California Labor Code and applicable IWC Wage
7 Orders, Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, have also suffered an injury in that
8 they were prevented from knowing, understanding, and disputing the wage payments paid to them.

9 **F. Failure to Timely Pay All Wages at Termination**

10 31. Labor Code §§ 201 and 202 provide that if an employer discharges an employee,
11 the wages earned and unpaid at the time of discharge are due and payable immediately, and that if
12 an employee voluntarily leaves his or her employment, his or her wages shall become due and
13 payable not later than seventy-two (72) hours thereafter, unless the employee has given seventy-
14 two (72) hours previous notice of his or her intention to quit, in which case the employee is entitled
15 to his or her wages at the time of quitting.

16 32. Within the applicable period, the employment of Plaintiffs and many other
17 Aggrieved Employees ended, i.e., was terminated by quitting or being discharged, and the
18 employment of others will be terminated. However, during the relevant time period, Defendants at
19 times failed, and continue to fail, to pay Plaintiffs and certain terminated Aggrieved Employees,
20 without abatement, all wages required to be paid by Labor Code sections 201 and 202 either at the
21 time of discharge, or within seventy-two (72) hours of their leaving Defendants' employment.
22 These unpaid wages include wages for unpaid work time (including minimum, straight time, and
23 overtime wages), missed meal period premium wages, and missed rest period premium wages.

24 33. Defendants' conduct violates Labor Code §§ 201 and 202. Labor Code § 203
25 provides that if an employer willfully fails to pay wages owed, in accordance with sections 201
26 and 202, then the wages of the employee shall continue as a penalty wage from the due date, and
27 at the same rate until paid or until an action is commenced; but the wages shall not continue for
28 more than thirty (30) days.

34. Accordingly, Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, are entitled to recover from Defendants their additionally accruing wages for each day they were not paid, at their regular hourly rate of pay, up to thirty (30) days maximum pursuant to Labor Code § 203.

G. Failure to Furnish Accurate Itemized Wage Statements

35. Labor Code § 226(a) provides that every employer shall furnish each of his or her employees an accurate itemized wage statement in writing showing nine pieces of information, including: (1) gross wages earned, (2) total hours worked by the employee, (3) the number of piece-rate units earned and any applicable piece rate if the employee is paid on a piece-rate basis, (4) all deductions, provided that all deductions made on written orders of the employee may be aggregated and shown as one item, (5) net wages earned, (6) the inclusive dates of the period for which the employee is paid, (7) the name of the employee and the last four digits of his or her social security number or an employee identification number other than a social security number, (8) the name and address of the legal entity that is the employer, and (9) all applicable hourly rates in effect during the pay period and the corresponding number of hours worked at each hourly rate by the employee. An employee is presumed to suffer an injury if this information is missing. (Labor Code § 226(e)(2)(B)(iii).)

36. The statute further provides: “An employee suffering injury as a result of a knowing and intentional failure by an employer to comply with subdivision (a) is entitled to recover the greater of all actual damages or fifty dollars (\$50) for the initial pay period in which a violation occurs and one hundred dollars (\$100) per employee for each violation in a subsequent pay period, not to exceed an aggregate penalty of four thousand dollars (\$4,000), and is entitled to an award of costs and reasonable attorney’s fees.” (Labor Code § 226(e)(1).)

37. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants failed, at times, to furnish Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, with accurate, itemized wage statements showing all applicable hourly rates, and all gross and net wages earned (including correct hours worked, correct wages for meal periods that were not provided in accordance with California law, and correct wages for rest periods that were not authorized and permitted to take in accordance with California law). Because Defendants violated Labor Code § 226, Plaintiffs and similarly Aggrieved

1 Employees, or some of them, suffered injury and damage to their statutorily protected rights.
2 Accordingly, Plaintiffs and similarly Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, are entitled to
3 recover damages from Defendants including the greater of their actual damages caused by
4 Defendants' failure to comply with Labor Code § 226(a), or an aggregate penalty not exceeding
5 four thousand dollars (\$4,000) dollars per employee, or as otherwise permitted by PAGA based
6 upon all bases of liability.

7 **H. Failure to Indemnify for Necessary Expenditures**

8 38. Labor Code § 2802(a) provides that employers shall indemnify their employees for
9 all necessary business expenditures or losses that have been incurred by the employees in direct
10 discharge of his or her duties. Throughout the period applicable to this cause of action, Defendants
11 wrongfully required Plaintiffs and certain Aggrieved Employees to pay expenses that they incurred
12 in direct discharge of their duties for Defendants. Plaintiffs and similarly Aggrieved Employees,
13 or some of them, paid out-of-pocket for necessary employment-related expenses. Plaintiffs and
14 similarly Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, incurred substantial expenses as a direct result
15 of performing their job duties for Defendants, but Defendants failed, at times, to indemnify
16 Plaintiffs and certain Aggrieved Employees for these employment-related expenses.

17 39. As a result, Defendants are liable to Plaintiffs and certain Aggrieved Employees for
18 the civil penalties provided for in Labor Code §§ 2802 and 2699(f)(2) for failing to indemnify
19 Plaintiffs and certain Aggrieved Employees for necessary business expenditures.

20 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

21 **(By All Plaintiffs Against All Defendants for Civil Penalties Under the Private Attorneys**
22 **General Act of 2004, Cal. Lab. Code § 2698 et seq.)**

23 40. Plaintiffs incorporate by reference and re-allege all preceding paragraphs as though
24 fully set forth herein.

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

27 42. California Labor Code § 2699(a) specifically provides for a private right of action
28 to recover penalties for violations of the Labor Code: "Notwithstanding any other provision of law,

any provision of this code that provides for a civil penalty to be assessed and collected by the Labor and Workforce Development Agency or any of its departments, divisions, commissions, boards, agencies, or employees, for a violation of this code, may, as an alternative, be recovered through a civil action brought by an aggrieved employee on behalf of herself or himself and other current or former employees pursuant to the procedures specified in Section 2699.3.”

43. Plaintiffs gave written notice by online filing pursuant to California Labor Code § 2699.3 to the Labor and Workforce Development Agency and by certified mail to Defendants of the specific provisions of the Labor Code that Defendants have violated against Plaintiffs and certain current and former Aggrieved Employees, or some of them, including the facts and theories to support the violations. Plaintiffs also paid the filing fee. Plaintiffs’ PAGA case number is LWDA-CM-1161858-26 (*Staci Nowak and Christina Kuhl v. Curtis Homes LLC, et al.*). The Labor and Workforce Development Agency has not indicated that it intends to investigate Defendants’ Labor Code violations discussed in the notice. Plaintiffs hereby commence a civil action to recover penalties under Labor Code § 2699 pursuant to § 2699.3 for the violations of the Labor Code described in this Complaint. These penalties include, but are not limited to, penalties under California Labor Code §§ 210, 226.3, 1174.5, 1197.1, and 2699.

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

45. In addition, Plaintiffs seek an award of reasonable attorneys’ fees and costs pursuant to Labor Code § 2699(g)(1), which states, “Any employee who prevails in any action shall be entitled to an award of reasonable attorney’s fees and costs.”

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

Plaintiffs, individually, and on behalf of the State of California, and on behalf of all similarly Aggrieved Employees, pray for relief and judgment against Defendants, jointly and severally, as follows:

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

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

4. Attorneys' fees and costs reasonably incurred;

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

6. Such other and further relief that the Court deems proper.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: August 14, 2026

WILSHIRE LAW FIRM

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