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**MATTEO VILLACA, individually
and in a representative capacity on
behalf of other members of the
general public similarly situated,**

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO**

MATTEO VILLACA, individually and in a
representative capacity on behalf of other
members of the general public similarly
situated

Plaintiff(s),

vs.

NORTON LILLY INTERNATIONAL, INC.
and DOES 1 through 10, inclusive,
Defendants.

Case No. 37-2023-00054751-CU-OE-CTL

**MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND
AUTHORITIES IN SUPPORT OF
PLAINTIFF” UNOPPOSED MOTION FOR
PAGA SETTLEMENT APPROVAL**

Hearing Date: April 4, 2025

Hearing Time: 11:00 a.m.

Dept.: C-63

Judge: Hon. Katherine A. Bacal

1 **I. SUMMARY OF MOTION**

2 Plaintiff MATTEO VILLACA (“Plaintiff”), respectfully submits the following
3 Memorandum of Points and Authorities in support of their motion for an order granting approval of
4 a PAGA Settlement. This motion is **unopposed**. The LWDA was timely notified of this proposal
5 and does **not** object.

6 This case involves PAGA and individual claims. The PAGA Period begins on October 8,
7 2022. There are currently approximately **1,655** pay periods and **54** aggrieved employees.
8 Declaration of Daniella Doern (“Doern Decl.” herein) ¶ 3. After several months of pre-filing
9 investigation and following lengthy settlement discussions, the parties agreed to the terms of the
10 proposed PAGA settlement. The parties have drafted and executed a formal PAGA Settlement
11 Agreement. (Doern Decl. ¶ 4; the “Agreement,” please see **Exhibit A.**) The proposed terms of the
12 settlement are as follows:

13	PAGA Members:	54
14	Settlement Fund (“GSA”):	\$110,000.00
15	Claims Period:	October 8, 2022 until the date of approval
16	LWDA Payment:	\$52,360.13
17	Attorney’s Fees:	\$36,630.00
18	Litigations Costs:	\$856.50
19	Third Party Administrator:	\$2,700.00
20	Resultant Net Settlement Fund:	\$17,453.37

21 An “average” PAGA employee will receive a payment of approximately **\$323.04**. Doern
22 Decl. ¶ 8.

23 The settlement agreement only covers PAGA claims. Doern Decl. ¶¶ 4, 8; Exhibit A III.6.

24 The Parties now move the court for approval of the PAGA Settlement Agreement.

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II. CONTROLLING LAW

PAGA “authorizes an employee to bring an action for civil penalties on behalf of the state against his or her employer for Labor Code violations committed against the employee and fellow employees.” *Iskanian v. CLS Trans. Los Angeles* (2014) 59 Cal. 4th 348, 360. “To compensate for the lack of [a]dequate financing of essential labor law enforcement functions” the California legislature enacted PAGA to permit aggrieved employees to act as a private attorneys general to collect civil penalties for violations of the Labor Code.” *Sakkab v. Luxottica* (9th Cir. 2015) 803 F.3d 425.

Statutory penalties would be calculated according to Labor Code 2699(f)(2): If, at the time of the alleged violation, the person employs one or more employees, the civil penalty is one hundred dollars (\$100) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for the initial violation and two hundred dollars (\$200) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for each subsequent violation. However, some courts have interpreted Labor Code section 2699(f)(2) to impose the enhanced "subsequent violation penalty" or "heightened penalty" only after an employer has been notified that its conduct violates the Labor Code. *See Trang v. Turbine Engine Components Technologies Corp.*, No. CV 12-07658 DDP (RZx), 2012 WL 6618854 (C.D. Cal. Dec. 19, 2012) ("courts have held that employers are not subject to heightened penalties for subsequent violations unless and until a court or commissioner notifies the employer that it is in violation of the Labor Code"); *Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1309, AFL-CIO v. Laidlaw Transit Services, Inc.*, No. 05cv1199-IEG-CAB, 2009 WL 2448430 (S.D. Cal. 2009) (finding that California law imposes the "subsequent violation penalty" only after an employer has been notified its conduct violates the Labor Code).

Further, a court may award a lesser amount than the maximum civil penalty amount if, based on the facts and circumstances of the particular case, to do otherwise would result in an award that is unjust, arbitrary and oppressive, or confiscatory. Lab. Code, § 2699(e)(2); *Amaral vs. Cintas Corp. No. 2* (2008) 163 Cal.App.4th 1157, 1213-1214; *See e.g., Fleming v. Covidien Inc.*, 2011 WL 7563047, at *4 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 12, 2011)

“The superior court shall review and approve any settlement of any civil action filed pursuant to [PAGA].” Cal. Lab. Code § 2699(l). In doing so, the Court must consider whether the

1 proposed “PAGA settlement is fair and adequate in view of the purposes and policies of the
2 statute.” *O’Conner v. Uber Techs., Inc.* 201 F. Supp. 3d 1110, 1135 (N.D. Cal. 2016).

3 The Court of Appeal has given guidance to trial courts in reviewing a PAGA settlement:

4 We therefore hold **that a trial court should evaluate a PAGA settlement to**
5 **determine whether it is fair, reasonable, and adequate in view of PAGA’s**
6 **purposes to remediate present labor law violations, deter future ones, and to**
7 **maximize enforcement of state labor laws.** (See *Williams* , *supra* , 3 Cal.5th at
8 p. 546, 220 Cal.Rptr.3d 472, 398 P.3d 69 [PAGA “sought to remediate present
violations and deter future ones”]; *Arias* , *supra* , 46 Cal.4th at p. 980, 95
Cal.Rptr.3d 588, 209 P.3d 923 [the declared purpose of PAGA was to augment
state enforcement efforts to achieve maximum compliance with labor laws].)

9 *Moniz v. Adecco USA, Inc.*, (2021) 72 Cal. App. 4th 56, 77; *Accord Syed v. M-I LLC*, 2017
10 WL 714367 at *13 (E.D. Cal. Feb. 22, 2017)(concluding the “settlement related to
11 plaintiffs’ PAGA claims is fair, reasonable, and adequate in light of the public policy goals
of PAGA.”)

12 In deciding whether the settlement was “fair and adequate,” the *Flores* court looked sought
13 how the parties divvied up the civil penalties under Section 2699(i) of the California Labor Code.
14 *Flores* at 1076-77. As the court felt the parties’ division of penalties was fair and adequate pursuant
15 to the statute, the court approved the settlement. *Id.*

16 **III. DISCUSSION**

17 The Parties reached the terms of their proposed PAGA Settlement Agreement, following the
18 exchange of extensive information and employment records. Doern Decl. ¶ 10. The Parties submit
19 the proposed settlement of PAGA penalties is fair, adequate, and reasonable. *Id.* The Parties are
20 unaware of any other cases that may be impacted by the PAGA Settlement. *Id.*

21 **A. Settlement Terms**

22 The group of allegedly aggrieved employees is defined as all individuals employed by
23 Defendant Norton Lilly International, Inc. in California and classified as “non-exempt” from
24 October 8, 2022, through the date of the Court’s Order granting approval of the PAGA Settlement
25 (the “Aggrieved Employees”). Doern Decl.¶ 4; Exhibit A: I.4.

26 Upon the Effective Date (Doern Decl.¶ 4; Exhibit A: I.9.), Defendant agrees to pay the non-
27 reversionary settlement amount of \$110,000.00 in connection with the PAGA Settlement (“Gross
28 Settlement Amount”). Apart from the employer’s share of payroll taxes, Defendant shall not be

1 required to pay more than the Gross Settlement Amount in connection with the PAGA Settlement.

2 The Gross Settlement Amount is broken down as follows:

- 3 • \$2,700.00 Settlement Administrator Fees;
- 4 • \$36,630.00 Attorneys' Fees (1/3 of Gross Settlement Amount)
- 5 • \$856.50 Costs of Litigation

6 After deducting the proposed amounts for Plaintiff's counsel's Attorneys' Fees and Costs, and
7 the Settlement Administration Costs, from the Gross Settlement Amount, the amount remaining is
8 defined as the "PAGA Payment." One hundred percent (100%) of the PAGA Payment shall be
9 allocated to the payment of civil penalties under the PAGA (the "PAGA Payment"). Pursuant to the
10 PAGA, seventy-five percent (75%) of the PAGA Payment, or \$52,360.13 shall be allocated to the
11 State of California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (the "LWDA PAGA Payment"),
12 with the remaining twenty-five percent (25%) or \$17,453.37, allocated to the PAGA Employees
13 ("Aggrieved Employees PAGA Payments"). Doern Decl. ¶ 11.

14 Given the above, the average payment to each individual PAGA Employee will be
15 approximately **\$323.04**. Doern Decl. ¶ 8. Pursuant to the PAGA Settlement Agreement, any
16 unclaimed funds will be tendered to the State of California Unclaimed Property Fund. Doern Decl. ¶
17 4; Exhibit A § IV.4.

18 Each PAGA Employee's pro rata share shall be determined based on the number of Eligible
19 Pay Periods that he or she worked for Defendant during the PAGA Period, and shall be calculated
20 as follows: (1) for PAGA Employees, the Aggrieved Employees PAGA Payments will be divided
21 by the total number of eligible pay periods worked by all PAGA Employees during the PAGA
22 Period, and the resulting figure will be referred to as the "Multiplier," and (2) each PAGA
23 Employee's pro rata share of the Aggrieved Employees PAGA Payments will be determined by
24 multiplying the Eligible Pay Periods that the PAGA Employee worked during the PAGA Period by
25 the multiplier. Doern Decl. ¶ 4; Exhibit A § III. 2(c). That amount shall be referred to as the PAGA
26 Employee's "Individual PAGA Payments." Doern Decl. ¶ 4; Exhibit A: Section I.11.

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1 Each PAGA Employee's Individual PAGA Payment share will be treated as non-wage income
2 and reported by the Settlement Administrator on IRS Form 1099 to the respective PAGA Employee
3 and applicable governmental authority. Doern Decl. ¶ 4; Exhibit A § III.2.

4 Further, the Settlement only covers PAGA claims. Doern Decl. ¶ 4, 9; Exhibit A: "Released
5 Claims" § I.22. It does not cover PAGA Employee's individual wage and hour claims. *Id.*

6 The proposed notice of the PAGA Settlement to be sent to the allegedly aggrieved employees
7 (the "Notice") along with his or her Individual PAGA Payment is attached to the Declaration of
8 Daniella Doern as Exhibit D, paragraph 12.

9 The Settlement Administrator shall be responsible for: (a) processing the data provided by
10 Defendant to be used in calculating PAGA Employees' Individual PAGA Payments; (b) preparing,
11 printing and mailing the Notice to PAGA Employees, as well as following up with reasonable skip
12 tracing; (c) calculating and mailing Individual PAGA Payments to PAGA Employees; (d)
13 calculating and paying the employer's share of the applicable federal and state withholding tax; (e)
14 filing any required federal and state tax forms and related agency reporting; (f) filing any required
15 reports with the Court; and (g) any and all such tasks to which the Parties mutually agree, or which
16 the Court orders the Settlement Administrator to perform. Doern Decl. ¶ 13.

17 The Court will retain jurisdiction of this matter to enforce the settlement pursuant to C.C.P.
18 section 664.6. Doern Decl. ¶ 4; Exhibit A § III.10.

19 **B. Basis for Request**

20 The instant request is based on the fact that (1) the PAGA Period "cutoff date" is contingent on
21 Court approval, any delay diminishes the amounts received by the impacted employees; (2) Notice
22 to certain ex-employees may be adversely impacted by further delay (i.e. ex-employees may change
23 their mailing address without filing a proper "forwarding address"). Doern Decl. ¶ 14.

24 An expedient approval of this settlement will provide a direct benefit to the impacted employees
25 at issue. The "fixes" provide a guarantee of future Labor Code compliance, and an immediate
26 monetary benefit. It also allows Defendants (who admirably "stepped up" to address these issues)
27 the opportunity to move on, and focus on future business. Doern Decl. ¶ 15.

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1 **C. The Nature and Scope of the Alleged Violations**

2 The Complaint alleges Labor Code violations which triggered penalties under the PAGA statute
3 (Labor Code §2698 et seq.) (See ROA #1.) Plaintiff also alleged all employees were denied
4 compliant meal and rest periods, minimum wages, overtime, accurate wage statements,
5 reimbursements, and suffered waiting time violations. *Id.*

6 **D. Analysis of Potential Liability, on a Representative Basis**

7 One of the main issues of this litigation concerned allegations that Plaintiff was denied legally
8 compliant meal and rest periods and was not paid for all overtime hours worked, including off the
9 clock work. Doern Decl. ¶ 16. Plaintiff's counsel conducted an investigation and believe that
10 Defendant's timekeeping policies and employee records were not in compliance with California
11 law, but Defendant disputes this claim. Doern Decl. ¶ 17. However, Plaintiff's investigations also
12 revealed that the "rate of violation" by Defendant was significantly less than 100%. *Id.* On many of
13 those occasions, it appears that Defendant did, in fact, comply with the law. *Id.*

14 Based on the above, the maximum liability in a case of this type would be in the range of
15 \$50,000.00 to \$100,000.00. Doern Decl. ¶ 18.

16 Moreover, Plaintiff's counsel is aware of the Court's discretion to mitigate penalties pursuant to
17 California Labor Code section 2699(e)(2). Doern Decl. ¶ 19. Plaintiff's counsel agrees with the
18 provision of the Labor Code, that penalties should be mitigated where violations are minimal (or
19 rare), or where the employer makes significant efforts to comply with the Labor Code. Doern Decl.
20 ¶ 20.

21 The Parties agree that, given the number of violations at issue here, that this settlement
22 represents a fair and adequate payment. Doern Decl. ¶ 21.

23 **E. Allocation of Penalties and *Limited Release* of Claims**

24 While Labor Code section 2699(l) requires a court to "review and approve any penalty sought as
25 part of the proposed settlement agreement," it does not provide any guidance as to what is
26 considered an 'adequate' allocation of these penalties. However, the California Court of Appeal has
27 upheld than an allocation of **zero dollars** to resolve PAGA claims may be appropriate:
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1 The Nordstrom Commission Cases settlement agreement identifies liability for PAGA
2 penalties as a claim against Nordstrom and includes the following language: “The
3 Parties allocate \$0 to any Private Attorney General Act penalty claim under Labor Code
4 § 2699 et seq., for penalty claims based on the Released Claims. During the Class
5 Period, Nordstrom paid Putative Class Members’ commissions pursuant to a
6 commission plan that it contends was approved by the United States District Court in
7 *Rios*, and consequently Nordstrom contends no claim for penalties of any nature is
8 valid.” Thus, the PAGA penalty claims were at issue, and were resolved as part of the
9 overall settlement of the case. We find no abuse of discretion in the trial court’s
10 approval of the settlement agreement containing these terms.

11 *Nordstrom Com’n Cases* (2010) 186 Cal.App.4th 576, 589.

12 Moreover, District Courts in California have routinely approved settlement agreements, which
13 allocate **less than 1%** of the overall settlement amount to PAGA penalties. *See, e.g., Chu v. Wells*
14 *Fargo Investments, LLC* (N. D. Cal., Feb. 16 2011, No. C 054526MHP) 2011 WL 672645 at *1
15 (approving allocation of \$10,000 to park at penalties out of us \$6,900,000 settlement); *see also*
16 *Schiller v. David’s Bridal, Inc.* (E.D. Cal June 11, 2012, No. 1:10 CV 00616 AWI) 2012 WL
17 2117001 at *14. (approving allocation of \$7,500 to PAGA penalties out of \$518,245 settlement).

18 Defendant, and its counsel, deserve credit for their willingness to consider – and address – the
19 allegations. Specifically, Defense Counsel, (who have extensive experience and knowledge and
20 “Wage and Hour” litigation) produced a substantial amount of documents and information
21 necessary to evaluate the parameters of settlement. Following month-long informal negotiation at
22 arms length, the parties have reached a proposed settlement. That includes a payment of penalties
23 under PAGA. Doern Decl. ¶ 22.

24 Here, the parties seek to allocate **\$70,083.51** of the Gross Settlement Amount to the total value
25 of the PAGA Penalties. Of this amount, the LWDA will receive \$52,360.13. Doern Decl. ¶ 4, 8;
26 Exhibit A. The remaining \$17,453.37 will be allocated and distributed among the PAGA
27 Employees. *Id.* Each PAGA member would receive an average payment of approximately **\$323.04**.
28 *Id.*

The Parties contend the PAGA Settlement agreement amount is very, adequate, and reasonable.
Doern Decl. ¶ 21. Moreover, the PAGA Settlement does not bar any employee from pursuing their
own individual Labor Code claims. Doern Decl. ¶ 9. The release only applies to the PAGA claims
for penalties, based upon the allegations in Plaintiff’s operative complaint. *Id.*

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