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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

FOR THE COUNTY OF KERN

TYLER KRUG & FERNANDO JARAMILLO,
individually, and on behalf of those similarly
situated and members of the general public; and
FRANCISCO BALBUENA, individually, and
on behalf of those similarly situated,

Plaintiffs,

vs.

EKC ENTERPRISES, INC., a California
Corporation; and DOES 1 through 25, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.: BCV-23-103975

Honorable Bernard C. Barmann
Department H

**DECLARATION OF PLAINTIFF
FRANCISCO BALBUENA IN SUPPORT OF
MOTION FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF
CLASS ACTION AND PAGA
SETTLEMENT, ATTORNEYS' FEES AND
COSTS, ENHANCEMENT PAYMENTS,
AND SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION
COSTS**

Date: November 18, 2025
Time: 8:30 a.m.
Dept: H

Complaint Filed: November 28, 2023
FAC Filed: January 18, 2024
SAC Filed: February 20, 2025
Trial Date: Not Set

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1. I am over the age of eighteen (18) and a resident of the State of California. I am one of the named plaintiffs in the above-captioned case. I have personal knowledge of the facts and statements set forth in this declaration, and if called upon to testify, I could and would competently testify thereto.
2. I was employed by Defendant EKC Enterprises, Inc. (“EKC”) as an hourly-paid, non-exempt warehouse clerk and delivery driver from approximately February 2019 to approximately February 2022.
3. Because I thought the practices at EKC may not be lawful, I decided to seek legal advice about my work experiences at EKC and about filing a lawsuit to obtain relief for my grievances. I contacted Blackstone Law, APC and spoke with their attorneys. I wanted to take steps to make sure EKC was held accountable for not properly compensating its employees for all hours worked and for non-compliant meal and rest breaks. After speaking with the attorneys, I also investigated class and representative action lawsuits on my own. Thereafter, I further consulted with the attorneys at Blackstone Law, APC about my situation, class actions, and what it meant to bring a class action so that I understood what I was considering doing.
4. I have regularly conferred with my attorneys regarding the case as part of my responsibilities as a class representative. This process included searching for and providing documents concerning my employment with EKC, answering any questions my attorneys had about the documents, providing information regarding the company’s practices and the duties of other hourly-paid and/or non-exempt employees, and helping my attorneys develop a strategy as to what additional documents and information they could seek to obtain from EKC.
5. I routinely checked in with my attorneys and their staff to make sure that they had all of my most current information and any additional information that I had obtained. I made myself available to answer any questions my attorneys had about EKC’s practices and treatment of its employees whenever they needed me. I responded to them as quickly as possible and gave them as much information as I could.

1 6. I understood that in the event this matter did not settle and proceeded with trial, I would
2 need to be in court to participate in the trial. I was ready to perform that role, as well as fulfill any
3 responsibilities that are necessary for this lawsuit.

4 7. I know that I took a sizeable risk by bringing and pursuing this lawsuit for several
5 reasons. First, I understood that if I lost, I would potentially have to pay the costs in the lawsuit. I
6 also understood there was a risk of losing any job and/or income due to the time that I would have to
7 spend fulfilling my responsibilities in this matter, including having to attend the trial, if needed. Most
8 importantly, I believe that by pursuing this case, I have taken a significant risk because future
9 employers can easily find out that I sued my prior employer, and that may negatively impact my ability
10 to find employment within this industry – and even outside of it – in the future. In contrast, the other
11 employees who will be receiving money from this lawsuit did not have to file a claim or take the risk
12 that I took in bringing this action.

13 8. I reviewed the settlement agreement, discussed the settlement agreement with my
14 attorneys, and asked them questions before signing it.

15 9. I believe that I have done everything that my attorneys have asked of me and tried, to
16 the best of my ability, to seek relief for the Class. I have spent approximately 44-51 hours participating
17 in this case as described above. I believe my efforts helped get the result obtained in this case.

18 10. I understand that any resolution of this lawsuit on a class wide basis is subject to court
19 approval, and any settlement must be designed in the best interest of the Class as a whole. At all times
20 throughout the course of this litigation I have considered the interests of the Class and put them before
21 my own personal interests.

22 11. I understand that incentive or enhancement awards are discretionary and intended to
23 compensate named plaintiffs for: the quality and quantity of the work done on behalf of the class and
24 other employees, the financial and/or reputational risk undertaken in bringing the class action, and an
25 acknowledgment of the benefits resulting from the representative's actions. I believe my work in this
26 matter is meritorious on these points for the reasons set forth above.

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12. I respectfully request that the Court approve and award me an Enhancement Payment in the amount of \$7,500 for my efforts and active participation in the case and for the broader, general release of all claims that I have or may have against EKC in connection with the settlement. Taking into consideration the time that I dedicated to this case, I believe that this amount is reasonable.

13. I understand that Blackstone Law, APC, Bokhour Law Group, P.C., and Falakassa Law P.C. will share the attorneys' fees in this matter. I agreed to this in writing. I understand that the amount of attorneys' fees will not increase as a result of this fee sharing.

14. I am not related to anyone associated with Blackstone Law, APC, Bokhour Law Group, P.C., or Falakassa Law P.C.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on 05/22/2025, at Bakersfield, California.

Francisco Balbuena

Francisco Balbuena