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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

GREGORIO PINEDA, individually and on behalf of others similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

vs.

ORTHOPAEDIC HOSPITAL dba ORTHOPAEDIC INSTITUTE FOR CHILDREN AND LUSKIN ORTHOPAEDIC INSTITUTE FOR CHILDREN, a California Nonprofit Corporation; ORTHOPAEDIC HOSPITAL MEDICAL GROUP, INC., a California Corporation; ORTHOPAEDIC INSTITUTE FOR CHILDREN AMBULATORY SURGERY CENTER, LLC, a California Limited Liability Company; ORTHOPAEDIC INSTITUTE FOR CHILDREN FOUNDATION, a California Nonprofit Corporation; and DOES 1 through 25, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No. 24STCV01618
[Related to Case Nos. 24STCV07307, 24STCV03460, and 24STCV10042]

Honorable Elihu M. Berle
Department 6

NOTICE OF MOTION AND MOTION FOR PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF CLASS ACTION AND PAGA SETTLEMENT; MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES IN SUPPORT THEREOF

Date:	November 19, 2025
Time:	10:00 a.m.
Dept.:	6
Complaint Filed:	January 19, 2024
Trial Date:	Not Set

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Attorneys for Plaintiff CHARLES WILKINS, on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated

TO ALL PARTIES AND THEIR ATTORNEYS OF RECORD:

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE THAT on **November 19, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.** in Department 6 of the above-captioned Court located at Spring Street Courthouse, 312 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, California 90012, pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure section 382 and Rule 3.769 of the California Rules of Court, Plaintiffs Gregorio Pineda ("Plaintiff Pineda") and Charles Wilkins ("Plaintiff Wilkins") (together, "Plaintiffs") will and hereby do move the Court for an Order granting preliminary approval of the proposed class action and PAGA settlement between Plaintiffs and Defendants Orthopaedic Hospital dba Orthopaedic Institute for Children and Luskin Orthopaedic Institute for Children; Orthopaedic Hospital Medical Group, Inc.; Orthopaedic Institute for Children Ambulatory Surgery Center, LLC; and Orthopaedic Institute for Children Foundation (collectively, "Defendants").

Plaintiffs request that the Court enter an Order:

1. Preliminarily approving the Joint Stipulation of Class Action and PAGA Settlement ("Settlement" or "Settlement Agreement") attached as Exhibit 4 to the Declaration of Alexandra Rose in Support of Plaintiffs' Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Action and PAGA Settlement ("Rose Decl.");

2. Certifying the Class for Settlement purposes;

3. Appointing Plaintiffs as the Class Representatives for Settlement purposes;

4. Appointing Jonathan M. Genish, Karen I. Gold, Marissa A. Mayhood, Noam Y. Reiffman, Alexandra Rose, and Jasmine Y. Kianfard of Blackstone Law, APC as Class Counsel for Settlement purposes;

5. Approving the proposed Notice of Class Action Settlement ("Class Notice"), attached as Exhibit A to the Settlement Agreement, to be mailed to the Class;

6. Approving the opt-out and objection procedures provided in the Settlement Agreement and set forth in the Class Notice;

7. For each Class Member, directing Defendants to furnish their full name, last known mailing address, Social Security number, dates worked for Defendants during the Class Period, and such other information as is necessary for the Settlement Administrator to calculate Workweeks and Pay Periods to the Settlement Administrator within fourteen (14) calendar days after entry of the order

granting preliminary approval of the Settlement;

8. Approving the proposed deadlines for the settlement administration process; and

9. Setting a Final Approval Hearing.

Pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699(1)(2), on September 12, 2025, a copy of the Settlement was submitted to the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency ("LWDA") via online submission through the LWDA's website. (Rose Decl., ¶ 56 and Exh. 5).

This Motion is based upon this Notice, the attached Memorandum of Points and Authorities, the Declaration of Alexandra Rose, Declaration of Vedang Patel, the Declaration of Plaintiff Pineda, the Declaration of Plaintiff Wilkins, the Declaration of Aaron Shimizu, the Declaration of the Settlement Administrator (Lisa Mullins of ILYM Group, Inc.), the pleadings and other records on file with the Court in this matter, and any other further evidence or argument that the Court may properly receive at or before the hearing.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: October 16, 2025

BLACKSTONE LAW, APC

By: ______________________
Alexandra Rose
Attorneys for Plaintiff Pineda

Dated: October 16, 2025

BIBIYAN LAW GROUP, P.C.

By: */s/ Vedang Patel*
Vedang Patel
Attorneys for Plaintiff Wilkins

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

Cases

Statutes

Other Authorities

Rules

MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES

I. INTRODUCTION

Plaintiffs Gregorio Pineda ("Plaintiff Pineda") and Charles Wilkins ("Plaintiff Wilkins") seek preliminary approval of the Joint Stipulation of Class Action and PAGA Settlement ("Settlement" or "Settlement Agreement") entered into between Plaintiffs and Defendants Orthopaedic Hospital dba Orthopaedic Institute for Children and Luskin Orthopaedic Institute for Children; Orthopaedic Hospital Medical Group, Inc.; Orthopaedic Institute for Children Ambulatory Surgery Center, LLC; and Orthopaedic Institute for Children Foundation (collectively, "Defendants") (collectively, with Plaintiffs, the "Parties"). (Declaration of Alexandra Rose in Support of Plaintiffs' Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Action and PAGA Settlement ["Rose Decl."], Exh. 4). The Settlement terms are outlined as follows:

- Class Size: Approximately Three Hundred Eighty-Four (384) individuals.
- Gross Settlement Amount: One Million Nine Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents ($1,950,000.00).
- Attorneys' Fees and Costs: Attorneys' fees of thirty-five percent (35%) of the Gross Settlement Amount ($682,500.00 if the Gross Settlement Amount is $1,950,000.00) plus actual litigation costs and expenses not to exceed Forty Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents ($40,000.00), to be paid from the Gross Settlement Amount.
- Enhancement Payments: Ten Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents ($10,000.00) to each of the Plaintiffs (total, $20,000.00), to be paid from the Gross Settlement Amount.
- Settlement Administration Costs: Not to exceed Ten Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents ($10,000.00), to be paid from the Gross Settlement Amount.
- PAGA Amount: One Hundred Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents ($100,000.00) from the Gross Settlement Amount, 75% of which will be paid to the Labor and Workforce Development Agency ("LWDA") and the remaining 25% to be paid to the PAGA Employees.
- Estimated Net Settlement Amount: One Million Ninety-Seven Thousand Five Hundred Dollars and Zero Cents ($1,097,500.00) to be distributed to Settlement Class Members.

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As set forth herein, the Settlement is the product of informed discovery and arms-length negotiations, and provides a fair, adequate, and reasonable recovery for the Class. Plaintiffs therefore respectfully request that the Court grant preliminarily approval of the Settlement, conditionally certify the Class, approve the proposed Notice of Class Action Settlement ("Class Notice"), and set a hearing date for final settlement approval, among other requested relief.

II. FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

Defendants operate The Luskin Orthopaedic Institute for Children in Los Angeles, a children's orthopedic clinic, urgent care and ambulatory surgery center, and pharmacy. Plaintiff Pineda was employed by Defendants as an hourly-paid, non-exempt Environmental Services Technician from approximately February 2021 to approximately December 2023. (Declaration of Plaintiff Gregorio Pineda in Support of Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Action and PAGA Settlement ["Pineda Decl."], ¶ 2). Plaintiff Wilkins was employed by Defendants as an hourly-paid, non-exempt lead for janitorial employees from approximately June 2020 to approximately February 2024. (*see generally* Declaration of Plaintiff Wilkins in Support of Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Action and PAGA Settlement ["Wilkins Decl."]).

On January 16, 2024, Plaintiff Pineda provided written notice to the LWDA by online submission and to Defendants by U.S. Certified Mail, pursuant to California Labor Code Section 2699.3, of the specific provisions of the California Labor Code alleged to have been violated by Defendants ("Pineda PAGA Letter"). (Rose Decl., ¶ 10 and Exh. 2).

On January 19, 2024, Plaintiff Pineda filed a Class Action Complaint ("Pineda Class Operative Complaint") in the action entitled *Gregorio Pineda v. Orthopaedic Hospital dba Orthopaedic Institute for Children and Luskin Orthopaedic Institute for Children, et al.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court Case No. 24STCV01618 ("Pineda Class Action"), thereby commencing a putative class action against Defendants. (*Id.*, ¶ 11).

On February 9, 2024, Plaintiff Wilkins provided written notice to the LWDA by online submission and to Defendants by U.S. Certified Mail, pursuant to California Labor Code Section 2699.3, of the specific provisions of the California Labor Code alleged to have been violated by Defendants ("Wilkins PAGA Letter") (together, the Pineda PAGA Letter and Wilkins PAGA Letter are referred to as the “PAGA Letters”). (*Id*., ¶ 12 and Exh. 3).

On February 9, 2024, Plaintiff Wilkins filed a Class Action Complaint for Damages (“Wilkins Class Operative Complaint”) in the action entitled *Charles Wilkins v. Orthopaedic Hospital dba Orthopaedic Institute for Children and Luskin Orthopaedic Institute for Children, et al.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court Case No. 24STCV03460 (“Wilkins Class Action”), thereby commencing a putative class action against Defendants. (*Id*., ¶ 13).

On March 22, 2024, Plaintiff Pineda filed a Complaint for Enforcement Action Under the Private Attorneys General Act, Cal. Labor Code §§ 2698 *Et Seq*. (“Pineda PAGA Operative Complaint”) in the action entitled *Gregorio Pineda v. Orthopaedic Hospital dba Orthopaedic Institute for Children and Luskin Orthopaedic Institute for Children, et al.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court Case No. 24STCV07307 (“Pineda PAGA Action”), which alleged one cause of action under the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004 pursuant to California Labor Code Section 2698 *et seq*. (“PAGA”) against Defendants. (*Id*., ¶ 14).

On April 22, 2024, Plaintiff Wilkins filed a Complaint Under the Labor Code Private Attorneys’ General Act of 2004 for Civil Penalties Under Labor Code Sections 210, 226.3, 558, 1174.5, 1197.1 and 2699 (“Wilkins PAGA Operative Complaint) in the action entitled *Charles Wilkins v. Orthopaedic Hospital dba Orthopaedic Institute for Children and Luskin Orthopaedic Institute for Children,* Los Angeles County Superior Court Case No. 24STCV10042 (“Wilkins PAGA Action”), which alleged one cause of action under PAGA against Defendants. (*Id*., ¶ 15).

On May 24, 2024, Defendants filed a Motion to Compel Arbitration and supporting documents in the Pineda Class Action. (*Id*., ¶ 16). On July 16, 2025, Plaintiff Pineda filed an Opposition to Defendants’ Motion to Compel Arbitration and supporting documents. (Ibid). On July 30, 2024, Defendants filed a Reply to Plaintiff Pineda’s Opposition and supporting documents. (Ibid). On August 5, 2024, August 6, 2024, and August 21, 2024, Plaintiff Pineda filed additional documents in support of his Opposition. (Ibid). On October 1, 2024, the Court entered an Order, which denied Defendants’ Motion to Compel Arbitration. (Ibid).

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On June 27, 2024, Defendants filed a Motion to Compel Arbitration of the Individual PAGA Claim and to Stay the Remainder of the Action ("Motion to Compel PAGA") and supporting documents in the Pineda PAGA Action. (*Id.*, ¶ 17). On September 11, 2024, Plaintiff Pineda filed an Opposition to Defendants' Motion to Compel PAGA and supporting documents. (Ibid). On September 17, 2024, Defendants filed a Reply to Plaintiff Pineda's Opposition and supporting documents. (Ibid). On October 3, 2024, the Court entered an Order, which related the Pineda Class Action and Pineda PAGA Action and took all of the Pineda PAGA Action's hearings off calendar. (Ibid).

On October 17, 2024, the Court ruled the Pineda Class Action, Pineda PAGA Action, Wilkins Class Action, and Wilkins PAGA Action related (collectively, the "Actions"). (*Id.*, ¶ 18).

The Pineda Class Operative Complaint, Wilkins Class Operative Complaint (together, "Class Operative Complaints"), Pineda PAGA Operative Complaint, and Wilkins PAGA Operative Complaint (together, "PAGA Operative Complaints") (collectively, the Class Operative Complaints and PAGA Operative Complaints are referred to as the "Operative Complaints") allege causes of action for violations of the California Labor Code for failure to pay minimum wages, failure to pay overtime wages, failure to provide compliant meal periods and premium payments in lieu thereof, failure to provide compliant rest periods and premium payments in lieu thereof, failure to timely pay wages during employment, failure to provide compliant wage statements, failure to timely pay wages upon termination, and failure to reimburse necessary business expenses, for violations of California Business & Professions Code Section 17200, *et seq*. based on the aforementioned California Labor Code violations, and for civil penalties under PAGA based on the aforementioned California Labor Code violations. (*Id.*, ¶ 19).

On January 27, 2025, Plaintiff Pineda propounded written formal discovery onto Defendants (specifically, Special Interrogatories (Set One)). (*Id.*, ¶ 20).

On June 30, 2025, the Parties participated in a formal mediation conducted by Monique Ngo-Bonnici, Esq. ("Mediator"), a neutral and respected mediator with extensive experience in complex wage and hour matters, and with the assistance of the Mediator's evaluations, the Parties were able to reach an agreement to resolve this dispute on a class and representative basis. (*Id.*, ¶ 21). The Parties then worked diligently to negotiate and memorialize the terms in a long form settlement agreement. (Ibid).

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On September 5, 2025, the Parties executed the Settlement Agreement. (*Id.*, ¶ 22 and Exh. 4).

On October 16, 2025, Plaintiffs filed a joint stipulation seeking to consolidate the Actions. (*Id.*, ¶ 23).

III. THE SETTLEMENT TERMS

A. Class Definition

For purposes of settlement only, the Parties have agreed that the Class shall be defined as "all current and former hourly-paid and/or non-exempt employees who worked for Defendants in the State of California at any time during the Class Period" ("Class" or Class Member(s)"). (Rose Decl., ¶ 24; Settlement Agreement, ¶ 15.b). The Class Period is defined as the period from January 19, 2020 through August 31, 2025, subject to Paragraph 22 of the Settlement Agreement. (Rose Decl., ¶ 24; Settlement Agreement, ¶ 15.f). Based on information provided by Defendants, it is estimated that there are a total of Three Hundred Eighty-Four (384) Class Members who worked a total of Forty-One Thousand Four Hundred Twenty-Two (41,422) weeks for Defendants as hourly-paid and/or non-exempt employees in California during the Class Period ("Workweeks") and Two Hundred Sixty-Nine (269) PAGA Employees who worked a total of Ten Thousand One Hundred Sixteen (10,116) pay periods for Defendants as hourly-paid and/or non-exempt employees in California during the PAGA Period ("Pay Periods"). (Rose Decl., ¶ 24; Settlement Agreement, ¶¶ 15.cc and 15.nn).

B. Escalator Clause

Defendants have represented that the Class Members worked a total of 41,422 workweeks during the period January 19, 2020 to June 30, 2025. (Rose Decl., ¶ 25; Settlement Agreement, ¶ 22). If it is determined by the Settlement Administrator that the total number of Workweeks worked by the Class Members during the Class Period actually exceeds 41,422 by more than 10% (i.e., if the Workweeks exceed 45,564), then Defendants shall have the option of: (i) increasing the Gross Settlement Amount on a *pro rata* basis equal to the percentage increase in the number of Workweeks worked by the Class Members above 10% (e.g., if the number of Workweeks increases by 11% to 45,978 Workweeks, then the Gross Settlement Amount will increase by 1%); or (ii) rolling back the end of the Class Period and PAGA Period to the date in which 45,564 Workweeks is met. (Rose Decl., ¶ 25; Settlement Agreement, ¶ 22). As provided above, it is estimated that the Class Members worked 41,422 Workweeks during the

Class Period. (Rose Decl., ¶ 25). Accordingly, it is believed that the Escalator Clause has not been triggered. (Ibid). Pursuant to ILYM Group, Inc.'s ("ILYM" or "Settlement Administrator") duties, the Settlement Administrator will calculate and verify the number of Workweeks once they are in receipt of the Class List, which occurs after the Court grants preliminary approval of the Settlement. (Rose Decl., ¶ 25; Settlement Agreement, ¶¶ 15.kk and 15.nn).

C. Amount of Settlement

The Parties have agreed to settle the class and PAGA claims at issue in the Operative Complaints for a non-reversionary Gross Settlement Amount of One Million Nine Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents ($1,950,000.00), exclusive of employer-side payroll taxes. (Rose Decl., ¶ 26; Settlement Agreement, ¶ 15.q).

D. Allocation and Funding of the Gross Settlement Amount

The Gross Settlement Amount is a common fund and therefore includes all requested costs, fees, and other allocations. (Rose Decl., ¶ 26; Settlement Agreement, ¶ 15.q). The Gross Settlement Amount includes: (1) Class Counsel's fees in the amount of thirty-five percent (35%) of the Gross Settlement Amount (i.e., $682,500.00 if the Gross Settlement Amount is $1,950,000.00); (2) Class Counsel's actual litigation costs and expenses, not to exceed Forty Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents ($40,000.00); (3) Settlement Administration Costs, not to exceed Ten Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents ($10,000.00); (4) Enhancement Payments in the aggregate amount of Twenty Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents ($20,000.00); and (5) PAGA Amount of One Hundred Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents ($100,000.00). (Rose Decl., ¶ 26; Settlement Agreement, ¶¶ 15.q, 18, 19, 20, and 21). After the above-estimated amounts are deducted from the Gross Settlement Amount, the Net Settlement Amount that will be available for Class Members is currently estimated to be One Million Ninety-Seven Thousand Five Hundred Dollars and Zero Cents ($1,097,500.00). (Rose Decl., ¶ 26). Additionally, 25% of the PAGA Amount ("PAGA Employee Amount"), which is $25,000.00 out of $100,000.00, will be fully distributed to the PAGA Employees. (Rose Decl., ¶ 26; Settlement Agreement, ¶¶ 15.z and 20).

The Net Settlement Amount will be distributed and paid to all Class Members who do not submit a timely and valid Request for Exclusion ("Settlement Class Member(s)") on a *pro rata* basis based on their number of Workweeks. (Rose Decl., ¶ 27; Settlement Agreement, ¶¶ 15.mm and 23). The *pro rata* share of the Net Settlement Amount that a Class Member may be eligible to receive under the Class Settlement ("Individual Settlement Share") will be calculated by the Settlement Administrator, in accordance with the Settlement Agreement. (Rose Decl., ¶ 27; Settlement Agreement, ¶¶ 15.t and 23).

The PAGA Employee Amount will be distributed and paid to all PAGA Employees on a *pro rata* basis based on their number of Pay Periods. (Rose Decl., ¶ 28; Settlement Agreement, ¶ 24). The *pro rata* share of the PAGA Employee Amount that a PAGA Employee may be eligible to receive under the PAGA Settlement ("Individual PAGA Payment") will be calculated by the Settlement Administrator, in accordance with the Settlement Agreement. (Rose Decl., ¶ 28; Settlement Agreement, ¶¶ 15.r and 24).

Each Individual Settlement Share will be allocated as twenty percent (20%) wages and eighty percent (80%) penalties, interest, and non-wage damages. (Rose Decl., ¶ 29; Settlement Agreement, ¶ 25). The portion allocated to wages will be reported on an IRS Form W-2 and the portions allocated to penalties, interest, and non-wage damages will be reported on an IRS Form 1099 (if applicable) by the Settlement Administrator. (Rose Decl., ¶ 29; Settlement Agreement, ¶ 25). The Settlement Administrator will withhold the employee's share of taxes and withholdings with respect to the wages portion of the Individual Settlement Shares, and issue checks to Settlement Class Members for their net payment of their Individual Settlement Share ("Individual Settlement Payment"). (Rose Decl., ¶ 29; Settlement Agreement, ¶¶ 15.s and 25). The employers' share of taxes and contributions in connection with the wages portion of Individual Settlement Shares will be paid by Defendants separately and in addition to the Gross Settlement Amount. (Rose Decl., ¶ 29; Settlement Agreement, ¶¶ 15.q and 25). Each Individual PAGA Payment will be allocated as one hundred percent (100%) penalties and will be reported on an IRS Form 1099 (if applicable) by the Settlement Administrator. (Rose Decl., ¶ 29; Settlement Agreement, ¶ 25).

The Settlement Agreement is a non-reversionary and non-claims made settlement. (Rose Decl., ¶ 30; Settlement Agreement, ¶¶ 15.q and 43). The Net Settlement Amount will be fully distributed to Settlement Class Members and the PAGA Amount will be fully distributed to the LWDA and PAGA Employees, in accordance with the Settlement Agreement. (Rose Decl., ¶ 30; Settlement Agreement, ¶¶ 23 and 24). No money will revert to Defendants. (Rose Decl., ¶ 30; Settlement Agreement, ¶ 15.q).

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Each Individual Settlement Payment and Individual PAGA Payment check will be valid and negotiable for one hundred and eighty (180) calendar days from the date the checks are issued, and thereafter, shall be canceled. (Rose Decl., ¶ 31; Settlement Agreement, ¶ 43). Any funds associated with such canceled checks will be distributed by the Settlement Administrator to the State of California's Unclaimed Property Division in the name of the Settlement Class Member and/or PAGA Employee. (Rose Decl., ¶ 31; Settlement Agreement, ¶ 43).

E. Released Claims

Upon the Effective Date and full funding of the Gross Settlement Amount, Plaintiffs and all Settlement Class Members will be deemed to have fully, finally, and forever released, settled, compromised, relinquished, and discharged the Released Parties of all Released Class Claims. (Settlement Agreement, ¶ 44).

Upon the Effective Date and full funding of the Gross Settlement Amount, Plaintiffs, the State of California with respect to all PAGA Employees, and all PAGA Employees will be deemed to have fully, finally, and forever released, settled, compromised, relinquished, and discharged the Released Parties of all Released PAGA Claims. (*Id*., ¶ 45).

"Released Class Claims" means any and all claims which were alleged or which could have been reasonably alleged based on the factual allegations in the Class Operative Complaints, arising during the Class Period, which shall specifically include claims for Defendants' alleged failure to pay overtime and minimum wages, provide compliant meal and rest periods and associated premium payments, timely pay wages during employment and upon termination, provide accurate wage statements, and reimburse necessary business-related expenses in violation of California Labor Code Sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 210, 226(a), 226.7, 510, 512(a), 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2800, and 2802, the applicable Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Order, and California Business and Professions Code sections 17200, *et seq*. (*Id*., ¶ 15.ff).

"Released PAGA Claims" any and all claims arising from any of the factual allegations in the PAGA Letters and the PAGA Operative Complaints, arising during the PAGA Period, for civil penalties under the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, California Labor Code Sections 2698 *et seq*., which shall specifically include claims for Defendants' alleged failure to pay overtime and minimum wages, provide compliant meal and rest periods and associated premium payments, timely pay wages during employment and upon termination, provide compliant wage statements, maintain complete and accurate payroll records, and reimburse necessary business-related expenses in violation of California Labor Code Sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 210, 226(a), 226.7, 510, 512(a), 558, 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2800, and 2802, and the applicable Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Order. (*Id.*, ¶ 15.gg).

"Released Parties" means Defendants and their current and former officers, directors, members, insurers, shareholders, subsidiaries, affiliates, predecessors, successors, and assigns. (*Id.*, ¶ 15.hh).

IV. STANDARD OF REVIEW FOR PRELIMINARY APPROVAL

The settlement of a class action requires court approval. (*See Dunk v. Ford Motor Co.*, 48 Cal. App. 4th 1794 (1996)). "In general, questions whether a settlement was fair and reasonable, whether notice to the class was adequate, whether certification of the class was proper, and whether the attorney fee award was proper are matters addressed to the trial court's broad discretion." (*Wershba v. Apple Computer, Inc.*, 91 Cal.App.4th 224, 234-35 (2001) (disapproved on other grounds)).

The review and approval of a proposed class action settlement involves a two-step process. (*See* Cal. Rules of Court, Rule 3.769(c)). First, counsel submit the proposed terms of the settlement and the Court makes a preliminary assessment of whether the settlement appears to be sufficiently within the range of a fair settlement to justify providing notice of the proposed settlement to class members. After notice is provided to the class, the Court must conduct a second inquiry into whether the proposed settlement is fair, reasonable, and adequate. (Ibid).

The initial evaluation of the settlement at the preliminary approval step "is not a fairness hearing." (*Armstrong v. Board of School Directors of City of Milwaukee*, 616 F.2d 305, 314 (7th Cir. 1980)). Rather, the limited purpose of this initial inquiry is to determine, at a threshold level, only whether the proposed settlement is within the range of possible approval and, as a result, "whether there is any reason to notify the class members of the proposed settlement and to proceed with a fairness hearing." A presumption of fairness exists where: (1) the settlement is reached through arm's length bargaining; (2) investigation and discovery are sufficient to allow counsel and the court to act intelligently; (3) counsel is experienced in similar litigation; and (4) the percentage of objectors is small. (*See In re Microsoft I-V Cases*, 135 Cal. App. 4th 706, 723 (2006)).

Preliminary approval does not require a court to make a final determination that the settlement is fair, reasonable, and adequate. Rather, that decision is made only at the final approval stage, after notice of the settlement has been given to the class members and they have had an opportunity to object or exclude themselves from the settlement. (*See* Cal. Rules of Court, Rule 3.769(g)). In considering a potential class settlement, the court need not reach any ultimate conclusions on the issues of fact and law which underlie the merits of the dispute and need not engage in a trial on the merits. (*See Officers for Justice v. Civil Service Commission*, 688 F.2d 615, 625 (9th Cir. 1982)).

V. THE SETTLEMENT IS PRESUMED FAIR

A. The Settlement Was Reached as a Result of Arm's-Length Bargaining

California courts recognize that "a presumption of fairness exists where . . . [a] settlement is reached through arm's-length bargaining." (*Wershba*, 91 Cal.App.4th at 245; *see also Clark v. Am. Residential Servs. LLC*, 175 Cal.App.4th 785, 799 (2009)). Here, the Parties' settlement negotiations were at all times made at arm's-length and were adversarial. (Rose Decl., ¶ 32). The Settlement was reached following a full day of mediation with a highly respected mediator with substantial experience mediating wage and hour cases. (Ibid). At all times, Plaintiffs were willing and prepared to litigate this matter through class certification and trial if the Parties had been unable to reach a favorable resolution. (*Id.*, ¶ 53).

B. Sufficient Investigation and Discovery by Experienced Class Counsel

Courts typically assess the status of discovery in determining whether a class action settlement agreement is fair, reasonable, and adequate. (*Dunk*, 48 Cal.App.4th at 1801). Prior to mediation, Defendants produced a random thirty-three percent (33%) sampling of putative class members' time and pay records as well as Defendants' relevant wage and hour policies, and information regarding the total number of putative class members, the number of current versus former employees, the total workweeks worked by the putative class members, and the average rate of pay for the putative class members. (Rose Decl., ¶ 33).

This allowed Class Counsel to conduct an informed assessment and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the claims and the potential class-wide damages. (*Id.*, ¶ 34). Based on information exchanged, the Parties extensively briefed issues regarding class certification and liability and provided their analyses to the Mediator who helped the Parties debate the strengths and weakness of their respective positions. (*Id.*, ¶ 35). Additionally, settlement negotiations were conducted by highly capable and experienced counsel. (Rose Decl., ¶¶ 1-9; Declaration of David D. Bibiyan in Support of Plaintiffs' Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Action and Representative Action Settlement ["Bibiyan Decl."], ¶¶ 1-8). Accordingly, Class Counsel had sufficient information and experience to act intelligently in negotiating the Settlement.

C. The Settlement is Fair and Reasonable in Light of the Parties' Respective Legal Positions and Recovery Risks

A settlement is not judged against what might have been recovered had a plaintiff prevailed at trial, nor does the settlement have to obtain 100% of the damages sought to be fair and reasonable. (*Wershba*, 91 Cal.App.4th at 246, 250). In evaluating the reasonableness of a settlement, a trial court must consider "the strength of plaintiffs' case, the risk, expense, complexity and likely duration of further litigation, the risk of maintaining class action status through trial, the amount offered in settlement, the extent of discovery completed and the stage of the proceedings, the experience and views of counsel, the presence of a governmental participant, and the reaction of the class members to the proposed settlement." (*Kullar v. Foot Locker Retail, Inc.*, 168 Cal.App.4th 116, 128 (2008)).

Here, the reasonableness of the Settlement is underscored by the fact that Defendants have legal and factual grounds for defending the Actions. Based upon Class Counsel's experience litigating similar complex matters, Plaintiffs reasonably expected a vigorous and lengthy defense to both class certification and the merits of the Actions absent a settlement.

1. Class Counsel's Analysis of the Maximum Available Liability and Damages

Class Counsel analyzed all available data and estimated Defendants' maximum potential exposure to be approximately $10,616,655, assuming the litigation was successful at trial on all claims at issue and every employee had a violation for each claim on every shift worked. (Rose Decl., ¶ 36). This maximum potential analysis was then reduced based on the challenges facing the likelihood of obtaining class certification, prevailing at trial, and other attendant risks. (Ibid). This estimate is based off an estimated maximum liability for all claims at issue and the total aggregate workweeks during the relevant time period, less interest, and based on the analysis of the data which was extrapolated out for all class members across the entire putative class period, which included: $189,398 for meal period violations (less meal period premiums paid); $4,562,851 for rest period violations at a 100% violation rate; $3,129,341 for unpaid off-the-clock work for 30 minutes per shift of off-the-clock work; $18,456 for unpaid wages due to rounding; $7,037 for unpaid overtime wages at the required regular rate of pay; $520,125 for unreimbursed business expenses; $1,292,897 for waiting time penalties; and $896,550 for wage statement penalties. (Ibid). Plaintiffs further estimated that Defendants faced an additional exposure of $910,000 in potential, non-stacked (i.e., one penalty, per employee, per pay period during the PAGA statutory period) PAGA penalties. (Ibid). Together with the PAGA penalties, Defendants' maximum potential exposure totaled $11,526,655 in damages. (Ibid).

2. Class Counsel's Risk-Based Analysis and Risk-Based Adjustments

While Plaintiffs believe that Defendants faced significant exposure, substantial barriers to a recovery existed. Defendants contended that Plaintiffs' claims are not suitable for class certification because individual issues and affirmative defenses would predominate should these cases go to trial. (Rose Decl., ¶ 39; *See Brinker Restaurant Corp. v. Superior Court*, 53 Cal.4th 1004 (2012); *Duran v. U.S. Bank Nat. Assn.*, 59 Cal.4th 1, 35-36 (2014); *Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. v. Dukes*, 131 S.Ct. 2541, 2551 (2011)). While Plaintiffs and Class Counsel disagree with Defendants' predictions, they also recognize that there is a significant risk that the Court may deny class certification. (Rose Decl., ¶ 39; *see also*, *Findings of the Study of California Class Action Litigation*, 2000-2006, available at http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/class-action-lit-study.pdf (finding that only 21.4% of all class actions were certified either as part of a settlement or as part of a contested certification motion)).

For example, Plaintiffs' meal period claims, which were based on Defendants' alleged failure to provide lawful meal periods, have been increasingly difficult to certify in recent years. (Rose Decl., ¶ 40; *See Brinker*, 53 Cal. 4th at 1034-35). Plaintiffs' theory of liability for meal period violations was based on allegations that Defendants had failed to implement their policies and that their practices failed to allow Class Members to take meal breaks in the manner required under California law. (Rose Decl., ¶ 40; *See Bradley v. Networkers Int'l, LLC,* 211 Cal.App.4th 1129, 1150 (2012) (holding that "the lack of a meal/rest break policy and the uniform failure to authorize such breaks are matters of common proof.")). Defendants contended that their policies and practices at all times during the Class Period were lawful. (Rose Decl., ¶ 40). Indeed, Plaintiffs' analysis revealed only a 4.5% violation rate for purported unique meal period violations after offsetting meal period premiums paid. (Ibid). Defendants further argued that the rate of purported meal period violations reflected in the data would require individualized inquiry and that such inquiry would prohibit a class from being certified. (Ibid). Class Counsel also had to consider the risk that the Court would find validity in an individualized proof defense to certification of Plaintiffs' meal period claim. (Ibid).

Additionally, a large portion of Defendants' overall liability lies in Plaintiffs' rest period allegations. (*Id*., ¶ 41). As with the meal period allegations, Defendants contended that they had a lawful written rest period policy, provided compliant rest breaks, and relieved Class Members of all duties as required under California law. (Ibid). Additionally, this claim was even more uncertain given the difficulties associated with proving the alleged rest period violations, as Defendants were not required to record these breaks. (Ibid). Given the lack of records demonstrating rest period violations, there were legitimate concerns Plaintiffs would not be able to certify these claims or prove substantial damages with requisite certainty, which made the estimated value of this claim subject to much challenge. (Ibid).

Plaintiffs also faced challenges certifying and proving liability for their minimum wage and overtime claims. (*Id*., ¶ 42). These claims were largely based on Defendants' rounding and unrecorded, off-the-clock work performed by the Class Members. (Ibid). Plaintiffs argued that Defendants rounded employees' time in a manner which was entirely in favor of Defendants and to the detriment of the employees. (Ibid). Plaintiffs' off-the-clock claims rested on unrecorded, off-the-clock work performed by the Class Members both during purported meal periods and after their shifts. (Ibid). This alleged off-the-clock work included, amongst other things, requiring the Class Members to clock out at the end of their shift and finish cleaning and storing equipment. (Ibid). However, the individualized nature of why this work was performed and the individualized nature of damages presented substantial concerns regarding the manageability of the cases and the risk the Court could find these issues prevented certification, and the estimated damages for this claim were based on an assumption that all Class Members worked off the clock for at least a half hour per shift. (Ibid). Additionally, Plaintiffs alleged that Defendants failed to pay overtime compensation at the rate of one and one-half times the regular rate of pay by failing to include all non-discretionary compensation into the regular rate calculation. (Ibid).

However, Defendants argued that their overtime calculations lawfully included all forms of compensation. (Ibid).

Plaintiffs also contended that Defendants failed to reimburse Plaintiffs and the other Class Members for necessary business-related expenses, such as the purchase of steel-toed boots, non-slip shoes, and usage of personal cell phones for work-related purposes. (*Id*., ¶ 43). Defendants contended that they had a policy and practice of reimbursing employees for necessary business-related expenses. (Ibid). Defendants further contended that, with respect to the alleged expenses for which Plaintiffs and the other Class Members never requested reimbursement from Defendants, they did not know and had no reason to know that alleged business-related expenses had been incurred. (Ibid). Defendants further contended that the reason for why a Class Member undertook certain expenses, while not others, and failed to receive reimbursement for certain expenses while not others, would raise individual issues that could not be certified. (Ibid).

There are also substantial risks associated with Plaintiffs' waiting time penalties and wage statement claims. (*Id*., ¶ 44). First, these claims were derivative of Plaintiffs' claims for unpaid meal period premiums, unpaid rest period premiums, unpaid minimum wages, and unpaid overtime wages, and if certification was denied on those underlying claims, these derivative claims for penalties would also likely fail. (Ibid). Further, even if Plaintiffs prevailed on their underlying claims, they would still be required to demonstrate that Defendants' violations of California Labor Code section 203 were *willful* violations. (Rose Decl., ¶ 44; *See, e.g*., *Choate v. Celite Corp*., 215 Cal App. 4th 1460, 1468 (2013) (holding that "an employer's reasonable, good faith belief that wages are not owed may negate a finding of willfulness")). Wage statement claims have also seen varying treatment at the appellate level because such claims have an element of discretion attached to them rather than a pure calculation of damages after liability is proven. (Rose Decl. ¶ 44; *Jaimez v. DAIOHS USA, Inc*., 181 Cal.App.4th 1286 (2010) *with Price v. Starbucks Corp*., 192 Cal.App.4th 1136 (2011)). Accordingly, these derivative claims, which comprised a substantial portion of Defendants' estimated liability, were therefore uncertain. (Rose Decl., ¶ 44).

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Class Counsel also recognized that, even if Plaintiffs prevailed at class certification, proving the amount of wages due to Class Members would be an expensive, time-consuming, and uncertain proposition. (*Id*., ¶ 45). In order to prove liability and damages, Class Counsel will need to request and analyze thousands of pages of documents, obtain the Class Members' contact information, contact them, and obtain their declarations at great expense. (Ibid). Obtaining the cooperation of current employees would also be difficult, given the likely reluctance to aid prosecution of a lawsuit against a current employer. (Ibid). On the other hand, Defendants would likely be able to obtain the cooperation of their employees. (Ibid). Moreover, even if Plaintiffs prevailed at class certification and trial, possible appeals would substantially delay any recovery by the Class. (Ibid).

Therefore, taking into account how each of the above risks potentially effected Plaintiffs' ability to first obtain class certification, and then prove the underlying violations, plus the cost and delay in recovering the alleged potential damages, Class Counsel discounted Defendants' estimated liability based on the challenges facing their ability to succeed on class certification by 60% to $4,610,662. (*Id*., ¶ 46). The merits-based risk factors further reduced Defendants' estimated liability by an additional 50%. (Ibid). This resulted in an adjusted estimated liability of $2,305,331. (Ibid). In light thereof, the settlement amount of $1,950,000 is a significant settlement. (Ibid).

Class Counsel also contemplated the risks of proceeding with the PAGA claims and potential liability Defendants could face from these claims as part of the global resolution. (*Id*., ¶ 47). Existing case law makes PAGA claims subject to the same defenses and risks as Plaintiffs' underlying wage claims. (Rose Decl., ¶ 47; see, *Elliot v. Spherion Pac. Work, LLC*, 572 F.Supp.2d 1169, 1181-82 (C.D. Cal. 2008) ("Plaintiff's claim under [PAGA] is wholly dependent upon her other claims. Because all of Plaintiff's other claims fail as a matter of law, so does her PAGA claim")). Class Counsel also anticipated that even if successful on the merits at trial, the imposition of cumulative civil penalties based on the alleged wage and hour violations could be considered unjust, arbitrary and oppressive, or confiscatory, and that Defendants would argue that they made a good faith attempt to comply with their legal obligations warranting a reduction in penalties. (Rose Decl., ¶ 47).[1] Class Counsel also anticipated

[1] See, e.g., *Thurman v. Bayshore Transit Management, Inc.*, 203 Cal.App.4th 1112, 1131 (2012) (imposition of both statutory and civil penalties for same conduct is impermissible double recovery) (disapproved on other grounds); *Aguirre v. Genesis*

Defendants would argue that the violations per pay period were low, warranting an additional reduction in civil penalties. (Ibid). Finally, Class Counsel were also mindful of the fact that PAGA is fundamentally not intended to be compensatory in nature but is instead intended to facilitate enforcement of California's labor laws by financing state activities and educating and deterring non-compliance. (Ibid).

Therefore, after considering this multitude of factors, Plaintiffs and Class Counsel concluded that it was in the best interest of the State of California and the PAGA Employees to enter into the Settlement, and to allocate One Hundred Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents ($100,000.00) of the Gross Settlement Amount towards the PAGA claims, which represents approximately 5.13% of the Gross Settlement Amount. (*Id*., ¶ 48). This percentage of the settlement is well within the range of wage and hour settlements regularly approved in both state and federal court for cases that include both a class and PAGA action. (Ibid). Typically, such hybrid cases allocate only 1% of the gross settlement value to resolve PAGA claims, and, indeed, settlements allocations as little as 0.22% of the gross settlement amount have been approved as reasonable by courts. (Ibid). Moreover, the overall relief obtained by the Settlement is significant, not only from a monetary perspective, but also because it fulfills the public policy objectives of PAGA—to promote enforcement of California's labor laws, provide funds to the state, and deter future non-compliance by the employer. (Ibid).

The Settlement is in the best interest of the Class Members, the PAGA Employees, and the State of California and is within the accepted range of recoveries for this type of litigation given the inherent risk of litigation, the risk of obtaining and maintaining class certification, and the costs of further litigation. (*Id*., ¶ 49).

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Logistics, 2013 WL 10936035, at *3 (C.D. Cal. 2013) ("duplicative effect" of penalties is a factor in favor of "reducing ...the PAGA penalty"); *Smith v. Lux Retail North America, Inc.*, 2013 WL 2932243, at *3 (N.D. Cal. June 13, 2013) (declining to stack penalties based on the same conduct); *Castillo v. ADT, LLC*, 2017 WL 363108, at *4 (E.D. Cal. Jan. 25, 2017); *Sanchez v. McDonalds Restaurants of California, Inc.*, 2017 WL 4620746 (LA Super. Ct. July 6, 2017) (declining to stack penalties arising out of the same conduct); *Fleming v. Covidien, Inc.*, 2011 WL 756304718, at *4 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 12, 2011) (reducing PAGA penalties by 80%); *Cotter v. Lyft, Inc.*, 193 F.Supp.3d 1030 (N.D. Cal. 2016) (indicating that a substantial reduction is warranted where good faith dispute exists in legal obligations); *Carrington v. Starbucks Corp*., 30 Cal.App.5th 504, 529 (2018) (approving reduction in penalties from $50 per pay period to $5 per pay period based on good faith attempts to comply with obligations and minimal violations).

VI. CERTIFICATION FOR SETTLEMENT PURPOSES IS WARRANTED

Code of Civil Procedure Section 382 provides that three basic requirements must be met in order to sustain any class action: (1) there must be an ascertainable class; (2) there must be a well-defined community of interest in the question of law or fact affecting the parties to be represented; and (3) certification will provide substantial benefits to litigants and the courts, i.e., proceeding as a class action is superior to other methods. (*See Dunk*, 48 Cal.App.4th at 1806). Plaintiffs contend that the Actions, which are based upon Defendants' wage and hour policies and practices, satisfy the class certification requirements under California Code of Civil Procedure section 382. Defendants deny Plaintiffs' allegations, but for purposes of the Settlement only, Defendants have stipulated to certification of the Class.

A. An Ascertainable Class Exists Which is So Numerous That Joinder of All Members is Impracticable

Whether an ascertainable class exists turns on three factors: (1) the class definition, (2) the size of the class, and (3) the means of identifying the class members. (*See Miller v. Woods*, 148 Cal.App.3d 862, 873 (1983)). In this case, all three considerations strongly favor class certification. Here, the Class is defined as "all current and former hourly-paid and/or non-exempt employees who worked for Defendants in the State of California at any time during the Class Period." (Rose Decl., ¶ 24; Settlement Agreement, ¶ 15.b). This provides a clear and definite scope for the proposed class.

Next, the Class is sufficiently numerous. There is no magic number that satisfies the numerosity requirement. Courts have certified classes with as few as ten or twenty-eight class members. (*Rose v. City of Hayward*, 126 Cal.App.3d 926, 934 (1981); *Bowles v. Superior Court*, 44 Cal. 2d 574 (1995); *Hebbard v. Colgrove*, 28 Cal.App.3d 1017, 1030 (1972)). Here, the estimated Class size of Three Hundred Eighty-Four (384) individuals meets the numerosity requirement.

Finally, the question of whether class members are easily identifiable turns on whether a plaintiff can establish "the existence of an ascertainable class." (*Daar v. Yellow Cab Co.*, 67 Cal.2d 695 at 706 (1967)). The existence of an ascertainable class in this case can be established through Defendants' payroll records, and the Class definition is sufficiently specific to enable the Parties, Class Members, and the Court to determine the parameters of the Class. (*See Clothesrigger, Inc. v. GTE Corp.*, 191

Cal.App.3d 605, 617 (1987)).

B. The Class Shares a Well-Defined Community of Interest

The community of interest requirement embodies three factors: (1) predominant questions of law and fact; (2) class representatives with claims or defenses typical of the class; and (3) class representatives who can adequately represent the class. (*Dunk*, 48 Cal.App.4th at 1806). Here, all three requirements are easily satisfied.

The commonality criterion requires the existence of common question of law or fact and is generally established with the issues of predominance and typicality. (*See Daar*, 67 Cal.2d 695, 706). What is required is that a common question of fact or law exists which predominates over issues unique to individual plaintiffs. The existence of individual issues or facts—generally present in any case arising from employment—is not a bar to class certification as long as they do not render class litigation unmanageable or predominate over the common issues. (*See B.W.I. Custom Kitchen v. Owens-Illinois, Inc.*, 191 Cal.App.3d 1341, 1354 (1987)).

Here, Plaintiffs' claims present common issues of law and fact that predominate and warrant class certification. Plaintiffs allege that Defendants denied compliant meal and rest periods to employees, required employees to perform work off-the-clock, and failed to fully compensate employees for all time actually worked. These policies and practices meant that Defendants allegedly failed to pay minimum and overtime wages, and other related claims. Plaintiffs allege that Defendants' policies and practices were uniform as to all Class Members. Thus, class treatment is appropriate.

To satisfy the typicality requirement, California law does not require that plaintiffs' claims be identical to the other class members. Rather, the test of typicality for a class representative is whether other members have the same or similar injury, whether the action is based on conduct which is not unique to the named plaintiff, and whether other class members have been injured by the same course of conduct. (*See Seastrom v. Neways, Inc.*, 149 Cal.App.4th 1496, 1502 (2007)). The typicality requirement for a class representative refers to the nature of the claim or defense of the representative, and not to the specific facts from which it arose or the relief sought. (*See* Ibid).

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Here, Plaintiffs allege that their claims are similar to that of the other Class Members and that Plaintiffs' claims arise out of the same alleged course of conduct giving rise to the claims of the other Class Members. Because Plaintiffs' claims are based upon the same alleged conduct and business practices as those of Class Members, the typicality requirement has been satisfied.

Finally, the question of adequacy of representation "depends on whether the plaintiff's attorney is qualified to conduct the proposed litigation and the plaintiff's interests are not antagonistic to the interests of the class." (*McGee v. Bank of America*, 60 Cal.App.3d 442, 450 (1976)). Here, these considerations are satisfied. Class Counsel is well-regarded and is qualified and experienced in employment-related, class-action litigation. (Rose Decl., ¶¶ 1-9; Bibiyan Decl., ¶¶ 1-8). Plaintiffs will vigorously, adequately, and fairly represent the interests of the Class. Plaintiffs have, at all times, throughout the course of the litigation considered the interests of the Class and understood that they must take steps to adequately represent the Class and their interests. (Pineda Decl., ¶ 10; *see generally* Wilkins Decl.). Because Plaintiffs' claims are typical of other Class Members and are not based on unique circumstances, there is no antagonism between the interests of Plaintiffs and the Class.

C. A Class Action is Superior to a Multiplicity of Litigation

Under the circumstances, proceeding as a class action is a superior means of resolving this dispute, as the Class Members and the Court will derive substantial benefits. Class certification would serve as the only means to deter and redress the alleged violations. (*See Linder v. Thrifty Oil Co.*, 23 Cal.4th 429, 434 (2000) (relevant considerations include the probability that each class member will come forward to prove his or her separate claim and whether the class approach would actually serve to deter and redress the alleged wrongdoing)). Further, individual actions arising out of the same operative facts would unduly burden the courts and could result in inconsistent results. Therefore, class action proceedings are superior to individual litigation.

VII. THE REQUESTED ENHANCEMENT PAYMENTS ARE REASONABLE

Plaintiffs in class action lawsuits are eligible for reasonable incentive payments as compensation "for the expense or risk they have incurred in conferring a benefit on other members of the class." (*Munoz v. BCI Coca-Cola Bottling Co.*, 186 Cal.App.4th 399, 412 (2010)). Courts routinely grant approval of class action settlement agreements containing enhancements for the class representative, which are necessary to provide incentive to represent the class and are appropriate given the benefit the class representatives help to bring about for the class. (*See In re Online DVD Rental*, 779 F.3d 934, 947-948 (9th Cir. 2014) (approving incentive award 417 times larger than individual payments where incentive award made up a mere .17% of the settlement); *Gaudin v. Saxon Mortgage Servs., Inc.*, 2015 WL 7454183, at *10 (N.D. Cal. Nov. 23, 2015) (finding service award of $15,000 to be "fair and reasonable")).

Plaintiffs initiated this litigation on behalf of their former co-workers who will now be entitled to receive payment from the Settlement. Plaintiffs invested substantial time and effort into litigation, including their own research, reviewing documents, and extensive discussions with Class Counsel. (Pineda Decl., ¶¶ 3-5; *see generally* Wilkins Decl.). Further, the requested amounts for Plaintiffs are also reasonable given the average award and the benefit gained by other Class Members. For these reasons, Plaintiffs request that Enhancement Payments of Ten Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents ($10,000.00) each to Plaintiffs (total, $20,000.00) be preliminarily approved by the Court. (Rose Decl., ¶ 50; Pineda Decl., ¶ 12; *see generally* Wilkins Decl.).

VIII. THE REQUESTED ATTORNEYS' FEES AND COSTS ARE REASONABLE

Trial courts have "wide latitude" in assessing the value of attorneys' fees and their decisions are "not to be disturbed on appeal absent a manifest abuse of discretion." (*Lealao v. Beneficial Cal, Inc.*, 82 Cal.App.4th 19, 41 (2000)). California law provides that attorney fee awards should be equivalent to fees paid in the legal marketplace to compensate for the result achieved and risk incurred. (*Id*. at 46). In cases where class members present claims against a common fund and the defendant agrees to a percentage of the fund as part of the settlement, use of the percentage method is appropriate. (*Id.* at 31).

Here, the requested attorneys' fees of thirty-five percent (35%) of the Gross Settlement Amount (i.e., $682,500.00 if the Gross Settlement Amount is $1,950,000.00) is disclosed to Class Members in the proposed Class Notice. (Settlement Agreement, Exh. A). The requested fee was freely negotiated, is common in the legal marketplace, and is not opposed by Defendants. The Motion for Final Approval will elaborate on the nature of the legal services provided and will also support Class Counsel's request for the reimbursement of litigation costs and expenses not to exceed Forty Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents ($40,000.00). (Rose Decl., ¶¶ 51 and 53). The Attorneys' Fees and Costs that are not ultimately approved by the Court shall instead be included in the Net Settlement Amount to be distributed to Settlement Class Members. (Settlement Agreement, ¶ 18).

IX. THE CLASS NOTICE AND THE OPT-OUT AND OBJECTION PROCESS MEETS DUE PROCESS REQUIREMENTS

The Parties have jointly drafted the Class Notice, which will be mailed to the Class Members. (*Id*., Exh. A). The Class Notice will include information regarding the nature of the Actions, a summary of the terms of the Settlement, the Class definition, information on how to object to and/or opt-out of the Class Settlement and to dispute Workweeks and/or Pay Periods, and the date of the Final Approval Hearing. (Ibid). The Class Notice will list each Class Member's total Workweeks and their estimated Individual Settlement Share and each PAGA Employee's total Pay Periods and their estimated Individual PAGA Payment. (Ibid).

Within fourteen (14) calendar days after entry of the preliminary approval order, Defendants will provide a list in a formatted readable Microsoft Office Excel spreadsheet to the Settlement Administrator containing the following information for each Class Member: full name; last known mailing address; Social Security number; dates worked for Defendants during the Class Period; and such other information as is necessary for the Settlement Administrator to calculate Workweeks and Pay Periods (collectively referred to as the "Class List"). (*Id*., ¶¶ 15.d and 32). Within seven (7) calendar days after receiving the Class List from Defendants, the Settlement Administrator will perform a search based on the National Change of Address Database or other similar services available, such as provided by Experian, for information to update and correct for any known or identifiable address changes, and will mail a Class Notice in English and Spanish to all Class Members via First-Class U.S. Mail, using the most current, known mailing addresses identified by the Settlement Administrator. (*Id*., ¶ 33.a).

In determining whether to approve a settlement of a class action, a trial court has virtually complete discretion as to the manner of giving notice to class members, and review on appeal is governed by the abuse of discretion standard. (*See In re Cellphone Fee Termination Cases*, 186 Cal.App.4th 1380 (2010)). Here, Class Counsel is not aware of an alternative method of providing notice to the Class which would result in a higher likelihood of actual notice. (Rose Decl., ¶ 55). The original source of the mailing addresses is from Class Members, who provided the information to Defendants. (Ibid).

Class Members will have forty-five (45) calendar days from the initial mailing of the Class Notice by the Settlement Administrator to submit a Request for Exclusion, Notice of Objection, and/or Dispute ("Response Deadline"). (Settlement Agreement, ¶ 15.jj).

Any Class Notice returned to the Settlement Administrator as undeliverable on or before the Response Deadline will be sent promptly via First-Class U.S. Mail to the forwarding address affixed thereto and the Settlement Administrator will indicate the date of such re-mailing on the Class Notice. (*Id*., ¶ 33.b). If no forwarding address is provided, the Settlement Administrator will promptly attempt to determine a correct address using a skip-trace or other search, using the name, address, and/or Social Security number of the Class Member, and perform a single re-mailing within five (5) calendar days. (Ibid). In the event that a Class Notice is re-mailed to a Class Member, the Response Deadline for that Class Member shall be extended fifteen (15) calendar days from the original Response Deadline. (*Id*., ¶ 15.jj).

Class Members will have an opportunity to dispute the number of Workweeks and/or Pay Periods to which they have been credited, as reflected in their respective Class Notices, by submitting a timely and valid letter ("Dispute") to the Settlement Administrator, by mail, postmarked on or before the Response Deadline. (*Id*., ¶¶ 15.j and 34). A Dispute must: (a) contain the case name and number of the Pineda Class Action; (b) contain the Class Member's full name, signature, address, telephone number, and the last four (4) digits of the Class Member's Social Security number; (c) clearly state that the Class Member disputes the number of Workweeks and/or Pay Periods credited to that Class Member and what the Class Member contends is the correct number; and (d) be returned by mail to the Settlement Administrator at the specified address, postmarked on or before the Response Deadline. (*Id*., ¶ 15.j).

Any Class Member wishing to be excluded from the Class Settlement must submit a timely and valid letter ("Request for Exclusion") to the Settlement Administrator, by mail, postmarked on or before the Response Deadline. (*Id*., ¶¶ 15.ii and 35). A Request for Exclusion must: (a) contain the case name and number of the Pineda Class Action; (b) contain the Class Member's full name, signature, address, telephone number, and last four (4) digits of the Class Member's Social Security number; (c) clearly state that the Class Member does not wish to be included in the Class Settlement; and (d) be returned by mail to the Settlement Administrator at the specified address, postmarked on or before the Response Deadline.

(*Id.*, ¶ 15.ii). Notwithstanding the above, all PAGA Employees will be bound by the PAGA Settlement and will be issued their Individual PAGA Payment, irrespective of whether they submit a Request for Exclusion. (*Id.*, ¶ 35).

To object to the Class Settlement, Settlement Class Members must submit a timely and complete written objection ("Notice of Objection") to the Settlement Administrator, by mail, postmarked on or before the Response Deadline. (*Id.*, ¶¶ 15.w and 36). A Notice of Objection must: (a) contain the case name and number of the Pineda Class Action; (b) contain the objector's full name, signature, address, telephone number, and the last four (4) digits of the objector's Social Security number; (c) contain a written statement of all grounds for the objection accompanied by any legal support for such objection; (d) contain copies of any papers, briefs, or other documents upon which the objection is based; and (e) be returned by mail to the Settlement Administrator at the specified address, postmarked on or before the Response Deadline. (*Id.*, ¶ 15.w). Settlement Class Members, individually or through counsel, may also present their objection orally at the Final Approval Hearing, regardless of whether they have submitted a Notice of Objection. (*Id.*, ¶ 36).

X. CONCLUSION

For all of the foregoing reasons, Plaintiffs respectfully request that this Court grant Plaintiffs' Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Action and PAGA Settlement and the relief requested herein.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: October 16, 2025

BLACKSTONE LAW, APC

By: ______________________

Alexandra Rose
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Dated: October 16, 2025

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