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**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**

CARLTON McGEE and RICARDO
WENDELL, on behalf of the State of California
and other aggrieved persons,

Plaintiffs,

v.

DOTHAN SECURITY, INC., a corporation;
and DOES 1 through 10, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.: **24PSCV01630**

**PAGA REPRESENTATIVE ACTION
COMPLAINT:**

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

1 Plaintiffs Carlton McGee and Ricardo Wendell (“Plaintiffs”), based upon facts that either
2 have evidentiary support or are likely to have evidentiary support after a reasonable opportunity
3 for further investigation and discovery, alleges as follows:

4 **INTRODUCTION & PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

5 1. Plaintiffs brings this action against Defendant DOTHAN SECURITY, INC. and
6 DOES 1 through 10 (collectively referred to as “Defendants”) for civil penalties under the Private
7 Attorneys General Act of 2004, California Labor Code §§ 2698 *et seq.* (“PAGA”) stemming from
8 Defendants’ failure to pay for all hours worked (including minimum wages, straight time wages,
9 and overtime wages), failure to provide meal periods, failure to authorize and permit rest periods,
10 failure to pay all earned wages twice per month, failure to maintain accurate records of hours
11 worked and meal periods, failure to timely pay final wages, failure to furnish accurate wage
12 statements, and failure to indemnify for necessary expenditures or losses.

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 Plaintiff is not seeking general and/or special damages, restitution, or
21 other damages other than civil penalties—California has enacted the 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 statutes of limitations who are or were
24 harmed by Defendants’ illegal practices are “Aggrieved Employees.” The Aggrieved Employees
25 worked for Defendants as hourly-paid or non-exempt employees within the applicable statutory
26 period.

27 4. Plaintiffs brings this action against Defendants seeking only to recover penalties on
28 behalf of all Aggrieved Employees that worked for Defendants, and on behalf of the State of

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

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

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

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

21 **THE PARTIES**

22 **A. Plaintiff**

23 8. Plaintiff Carlton McGee is a California resident who worked for Defendants in Los
24 Angeles County, California as an hourly-paid, non-exempt employee from approximately
25 November 2022 to approximately June 2023.

26 9. Plaintiff Ricardo Wendell is a California resident who worked for Defendants in
27 Los Angeles County, California as an hourly-paid, non-exempt employee from approximately
28 October 2022 to approximately June 2023.

1 **B. Defendants**

2 10. Plaintiffs are informed and believe, and based upon that information and belief
3 alleges, that DOTHAN SECURITY, INC. is, and at all times herein mentioned, was:

4 (a) A corporation qualified to do business and actually conducting business in
5 numerous counties throughout the State of California, including Los Angeles
6 County; and

7 (b) The former employer of Plaintiffs and the current and/or former employer
8 of the Aggrieved Employees because Defendant DOTHAN SECURITY,
9 INC. suffered and permitted Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees to
10 work, and/or controlled their wages, hours, or working conditions.

11 11. Plaintiffs do not know the true names or capacities of the persons or entities sued
12 herein as Does 1-10, inclusive, and therefore sues said Defendants by such fictitious names. Each
13 of the Doe Defendants was in some manner legally responsible for the damages suffered by
14 Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees as alleged herein. Plaintiffs will amend this complaint to
15 set forth the true names and capacities of these Defendants when they have been ascertained,
16 together with appropriate charging allegations, as may be necessary.

17 12. At all times mentioned herein, the Defendants named as Does 1-10, inclusive, and
18 each of them, were residents of, doing business in, availed themselves of the jurisdiction of, and/or
19 injured a significant number of the Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees in the State of
20 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, officer, director, controlling shareholder, subsidiary,
26 affiliate, parent corporation, successor in interest and/or predecessor in interest of some or all of
27 the other Defendants, and was engaged with some or all of the other Defendants in a joint enterprise
28 for profit, and bore such other relationships to some or all of the other Defendants so as to be liable

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

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

6 14. Plaintiff Carlton McGee worked for Defendants in Los Angeles County, California
7 from approximately November 2022 to approximately June 2023. At all times, Defendants paid
8 him an hourly wage and classified him as non-exempt from overtime.

9 15. Plaintiff Ricardo Wendell worked for Defendants in Los Angeles County, California
10 from approximately October 2022 to approximately July 2023. At all times, Defendants paid him
11 an hourly wage and classified him as non-exempt from overtime.

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

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

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

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

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

28 20. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants maintained a policy and practice of not

1 paying Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees for all hours worked, including minimum, straight
2 time, and overtime wages. Defendants required Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees to work
3 “off-the-clock”, uncompensated, by, for example, requiring Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved
4 Employees to perform work during legally required meals periods and after their work shifts
5 ended. Some of this unpaid work should have been paid at the overtime rate. In failing to pay for
6 all hours worked, Defendants also failed to maintain accurate records of the hours Plaintiffs and
7 the Aggrieved Employees worked.

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

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

15 22. Despite these legal requirements, Defendants wrongfully failed to provide Plaintiffs
16 and the Aggrieved Employees with their legally mandated 30-minute, uninterrupted, and duty-free
17 meal period. Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees routinely worked through meal periods “off-
18 the-clock,” and Defendants frequently paid Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees less than all
19 their work time. Much of this unpaid work should have been paid at the overtime rate. In failing
20 to pay for all hours worked, Defendants also failed to maintain accurate records of the hours
21 Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees worked. Defendants also regularly, but not always,
22 required Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees to work in excess of five consecutive hours a day
23 without providing a 30-minute, uninterrupted, and duty-free meal period for every five hours of
24 work, or without compensating Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees for meal periods that were
25 not provided by the end of the fifth hour of work or tenth hour of work. Instead, Defendants
26 continued to assert control over Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees by requiring, pressuring,
27 or encouraging them to perform work tasks which could not be completed without working in lieu
28 of taking mandatory meal periods, or by denying Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees

1 permission to take a meal period. Defendants also never informed Plaintiffs of his right to, nor
2 permitted him to take, a second meal period when Plaintiffs worked at least ten hours of work in a
3 workday. Accordingly, Defendants' policy and practice was not to provide meal periods to
4 Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees in compliance with California law.

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

9 **C. Failure to Authorize and Permit Rest Periods**

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

15 25. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants wrongfully failed to authorize and
16 permit Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees to take legally compliant rest periods. Defendants
17 regularly required Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees to work in excess of four consecutive
18 hours a day without Defendants authorizing and permitting them to take a 10-minute,
19 uninterrupted, duty-free rest period for every four hours of work (or major fraction of four hours),
20 or without compensating Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees for rest periods that were not
21 authorized or permitted. Instead, Defendants continued to assert control over Plaintiff and the
22 Aggrieved Employees by requiring, pressuring, or encouraging them to perform work tasks which
23 could not be completed without working in lieu of taking mandatory rest periods, or by denying
24 Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees permission to take a rest period. Accordingly, Defendants'
25 policy and practice was to not authorize and permit Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees to take
26 rest periods in compliance with California law.

27 26. Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees are thus entitled to be paid one hour of
28 additional wages for each workday he or she was not authorized and permitted to take all required

1 rest periods. Defendants, however, regularly failed to pay Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees
2 the additional wages to which they were entitled for rest periods and that they were not authorized
3 and permitted to take.

4 **D. Failure to Pay All Earned Wages Twice Per Month**

5 27. Based on its failure to pay Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees for all wages as
6 discussed above, Defendants also violated Labor Code § 204.

7 28. Labor Code § 204 requires employers to pay employees all earned wages two times
8 per month. Throughout the statute of limitations period applicable to this cause of action,
9 employees were entitled to be paid twice a month at their regular rates, including all meal period
10 premium wages owed, rest period premium wages owed, and wages owed for overtime hours
11 worked. However, during all such times, Defendants systematically failed and refused to pay the
12 employees all wages due, and failed to pay those wages twice a month, in that employees were not
13 paid all wages for all meal periods not provided by Defendants, all wages for all rest periods not
14 authorized and permitted by Defendants, and all wages for all hours worked. As a result,
15 Defendants owe employees the legally required wages not paid, and Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved
16 Employees suffered damages in those amounts.

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

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

24 30. Defendants, however, failed to maintain accurate records of hours worked and all
25 meal periods taken or missed by Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees.

26 31. Defendants' failure to provide and maintain records required by the California
27 Labor Code and applicable IWC Wage Orders deprived Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees
28 the ability to know, understand and question the accuracy and frequency of meal periods, and the

1 accuracy of their hours worked stated in Defendants' records. Therefore, Plaintiffs and the
2 Aggrieved Employees had no way to dispute the resulting failure to pay wages, all of which
3 resulted in an unjustified economic enrichment to Defendants. As a direct result, Plaintiffs and the
4 Aggrieved Employees have suffered and continue to suffer, substantial losses related to the use
5 and enjoyment of such wages, lost interest on such wages and expenses and attorney's fees in
6 seeking to compel Defendants to fully perform its obligation under state law, all to their respective
7 damage in amounts according to proof at trial. As a result of Defendants' knowing failure to
8 comply with the California Labor Code and applicable IWC Wage Orders, Plaintiffs and the
9 Aggrieved Employees have also suffered an injury in that they were prevented from knowing,
10 understanding, and disputing the wage payments paid to them.

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

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

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

27 34. Defendants' conduct violates Labor Code §§ 201 and 202. Labor Code § 203
28 provides that if an employer willfully fails to pay wages owed, in accordance with sections 201

1 and 202, then the wages of the employee shall continue as a penalty wage from the due date, and
2 at the same rate until paid or until an action is commenced; but the wages shall not continue for
3 more than thirty (30) days.

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

7 **G. Failure to Furnish Accurate Itemized Wage Statements**

8 36. Labor Code § 226(a) provides that every employer shall furnish each of his or her
9 employees an accurate itemized wage statement in writing showing nine pieces of information,
10 including: (1) gross wages earned, (2) total hours worked by the employee, (3) the number of piece-
11 rate units earned and any applicable piece rate if the employee is paid on a piece-rate basis, (4) all
12 deductions, provided that all deductions made on written orders of the employee may be aggregated
13 and shown as one item, (5) net wages earned, (6) the inclusive dates of the period for which the
14 employee is paid, (7) the name of the employee and the last four digits of his or her social security
15 number or an employee identification number other than a social security number, (8) the name
16 and address of the legal entity that is the employer, and (9) all applicable hourly rates in effect
17 during the pay period and the corresponding number of hours worked at each hourly rate by the
18 employee. An employee is presumed to suffer an injury if this information is missing. (Labor Code
19 § 226(e)(2)(B)(iii).)

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

26 38. Throughout the statutory period, Defendants failed to furnish Plaintiffs and the
27 Aggrieved Employees with accurate, itemized wage statements showing all applicable hourly rates,
28 and all gross and net wages earned (including correct hours worked, correct wages for meal periods

1 that were not provided in accordance with California law, and correct wages for rest periods that
2 were not authorized and permitted to take in accordance with California law).

3 39. Because Defendants violated Labor Code § 226, Plaintiffs and similarly Aggrieved
4 Employees suffered injury and damage to their statutorily protected rights. Accordingly, Plaintiffs
5 and similarly Aggrieved Employees are entitled to recover from Defendants the greater of their
6 actual damages caused by Defendants' failure to comply with Labor Code § 226(a), or an aggregate
7 penalty not exceeding four thousand dollars (\$4,000) dollars per employee.

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

9 40. Labor Code § 2802(a) provides that employers shall indemnify his or her employees
10 for all necessary business expenditures or losses that have been incurred by the employees in direct
11 discharge of his or her duties. Throughout the statute of limitations period applicable to this cause
12 of action, Defendants wrongfully required Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees to pay expenses
13 that they incurred in direct discharge of their duties for Defendants. Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved
14 Employees regularly paid out-of-pocket for necessary business expenses, including, without
15 limitation, the use of personal cell phones and gas mileage. Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved
16 Employees incurred substantial expenses as a direct result of performing their job duties for
17 Defendants, but Defendants failed to indemnify Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees for these
18 employment-related expenses.

19 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

20 **(Against all Defendants for Civil Penalties Under the**

21 **Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, Cal. Lab. Code § 2698 et seq.)**

22 41. Plaintiffs incorporate by reference and re-alleges all preceding paragraphs as though
23 fully set forth herein.

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

26 43. California Labor Code § 2699(a) specifically provides for a private right of action
27 to recover penalties for violations of the Labor Code: "Notwithstanding any other provision of law,
28 any provision of this code that provides for a civil penalty to be assessed and collected by the Labor

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

5 44. Plaintiffs have exhausted their administrative remedies pursuant to California Labor
6 Code § 2699.3. On January 16, 2024, Plaintiffs gave written notice by online filing the Labor and
7 Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”) and by certified mail to Defendants of the specific
8 provisions of the Labor Code that Defendants have violated against Plaintiffs and current and
9 former Aggrieved Employees, including the facts and theories to support the violations. Plaintiffs
10 also paid the filing fee on January 16, 2024. Plaintiff’s PAGA case number is LWDA-CM-
11 1005266-24 (*Carlton McGee, et al. v. DSIS Managed Security Services, Inc., et al.*).

12 45. The statute of limitations is tolled while a plaintiff exhausts his administrative
13 remedies with California’s LWDA prior to suit, which is required by the statute. (*See* Labor Code
14 § 2699.3(d).)

15 46. More than sixty-five (65) days has elapsed since Plaintiff provided notice, and the
16 LWDA has not indicated that it intends to investigate Defendants’ Labor Code violations discussed
17 in the notice, Plaintiffs may proceed with this civil action to recover penalties under Labor Code §
18 2699 pursuant to § 2699.3 for the violations of the Labor Code described in this Complaint. These
19 penalties include, but are not limited to, penalties under California Labor Code §§ 210, 226.3,
20 1174.5, 1197.1, and 2699(f)(2).

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

25 48. In addition, Plaintiffs seeks an award of reasonable attorney’s fees and costs
26 pursuant to Labor Code § 2699(g)(1), which states, “Any employee who prevails in any action
27 shall be entitled to an award of reasonable attorney’s fees and costs.”
28

1 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

2 Plaintiffs, on behalf of all similarly aggrieved employees, prays for relief and judgment
3 against Defendants, jointly and severally, as follows:

4 1. That the Court declare, adjudge and decree that Defendants violated the California
5 Labor Code by failing to pay for all hours worked (minimum wages, straight time wages, and
6 overtime wages), failing to provide meal periods, failing to authorize and permit rest periods,
7 failing to pay all earned wages twice per month, failing to maintain accurate records of hours
8 worked and meal periods, failing to timely pay final wages, failing to furnish accurate wage
9 statements, and failing to indemnify for necessary expenditures;

10 2. An award of civil penalties on behalf of himself and all similarly aggrieved
11 employees pursuant to PAGA;

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

13 4. Attorneys' fees and costs reasonably incurred;

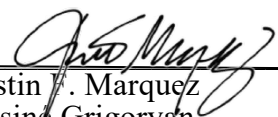
14 5. Injunctive and declaratory relief to the extent allowed by PAGA; and,

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

16
17 Respectfully submitted,

18 Dated: May 20, 2024

WILSHIRE LAW FIRM

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20 By:  _____

Justin F. Marquez
Arsine Grigoryan

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22 Attorneys for Plaintiff
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