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

MARHAWIT MELLES and JOHN
RODRIGUES, individually, and on behalf of
all others similarly situated,

Plaintiffs,

v.

HORIZON SERVICES, INCORPORATED, a
California corporation; and DOES 1 through
10, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.: 23CV046524

*[Assigned for all purposes to the Hon. S. Raj
Chatterjee, Dept. 21]*

**DECLARATION OF JOHN RODRIGUES
IN SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFFS' MOTION
FOR PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF
CLASS ACTION AND PAGA
SETTLEMENT**

Preliminary Approval Hearing:

Date: November 10, 2026

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Dept.: 21

Action Filed: October 4, 2023

DECLARATION OF JOHN RODRIGUES

I, John Rodrigues, hereby declare as follows:

1. I have personal knowledge of the facts set forth herein and if called upon to testify, I could and would do so competently under oath. I make this declaration in support of my Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Action and PAGA Settlement.

2. I worked for Horizon Services, Incorporated (“Defendant”) as a Recovery Specialist employee from approximately June 2024 to January 2026. My job duties included monitoring client safety and attending to clients’ needs.

3. Based on my experience and knowledge of Defendant’s wage and hour policies and my familiarity with its employment practices, I worked with my attorneys to bring claims on my own behalf as well as on behalf of other hourly-paid, non-exempt employees of Defendant.

4. I am seeking to become a class representative in this case. I believe my experiences are similar to other hourly-paid, non-exempt employees of Defendant. I believe we were all subject to the same employment policies and practices.

5. I do not have any conflicts with other hourly-paid, non-exempt employees that would interfere with my ability to represent them. I believe I will adequately represent the other hourly-paid, non-exempt employees at Defendant.

6. My interests as a named plaintiff in this case are not adverse to the interests of the other hourly-paid, non-exempt employees. I believe my interests are the same as the other employees because we were all subject to the same policies and practices and were similarly injured by Defendant’s company-wide policies and practices. I am seeking the same recovery on behalf of myself and the other employees, which is to collect unpaid wages, penalties, and interest that are owed to us by Defendant.

Risks, Both Financial and Otherwise, Faced in Bringing the Suit

7. Further, when I decided to become involved in this lawsuit as a class representative on behalf of other employees of Defendant and as a private attorney general for the State of California, I understood that I was not only seeking unpaid wages and penalties on behalf of myself, but also for other employees who worked for Defendant, and that by doing so, I would be delaying

1 more immediate recovery available to me through the Labor Commissioner's office.

2 8. I was also made aware that being a class representative and private attorney general
3 in an action filed on behalf of others would subject me to a stigma that is sometimes associated with
4 those who bring these kinds of lawsuits. I was aware that, as a class representative and private
5 attorney general, I might be responsible for some or all of Defendant's legal costs if the case was not
6 successfully concluded. Even with knowledge of these risks, I was willing to go forward and to act
7 on behalf of the other employees and the State of California, but I was nervous about losing and
8 having a judgment filed against me for costs or losing job opportunities in the future.

9 9. I understood that there were risks involved in class and representative action lawsuits.
10 I understood that the lawsuit could continue for several years and require my services and attention
11 throughout the entire length of the lawsuit. I learned that even if we won at trial, the case could be
12 further delayed by appeals.

13 **Notoriety and Personal Difficulties Encountered**

14 10. As a named plaintiff, I am the face of the litigation. As of the date of this declaration,
15 the class notice will be mailed in this case to approximately 614 current and former employees of
16 Defendant, which will inform them that I filed class and representative actions against Defendant.
17 Exposing myself to this kind of publicity creates a risk for my future career prospects, since current
18 and former employees of Defendant may move to different companies within the industry or may
19 know people at other companies within the industry who may not wish to hire someone who sued
20 his employer. I also understand that having filed this lawsuit in court means that there is now a
21 permanent public record of this lawsuit available to the general public. Given this additional
22 exposure, there is further risk to my future career prospects.

23 **Amount of Time and Effort Spent and Duration of the Litigation**

24 11. I have always kept the best interests of the other hourly-paid, non-exempt employees
25 in mind while performing my duties as the named plaintiff in this case. I have been committed
26 throughout the course of this case to vigorously prosecuting this case on behalf of myself and the
27 other employees. I believe that I have demonstrated my ability to advocate for the interests of the
28 other hourly-paid non-exempt employees by initiating these lawsuits and have spent a substantial

1 amount of time and effort on this litigation. My work on this case has specifically included, among
2 other things, searching for and gathering my employment documents to provide to my attorneys,
3 providing information to my attorneys regarding my experiences working for Defendant, keeping in
4 regular contact with my attorneys regarding the status of the case, helping my attorneys prepare for
5 mediation, being on-call for my attorneys on the date of mediation in case questions or concerns
6 arose during mediation, and participating in settlement discussions. After mediation, I remained
7 actively involved by reviewing the settlement papers and contacting my counsel for updates. I
8 estimate that since I retained my counsel in January 2026, I have spent approximately 15 hours on
9 the activities described above. And I estimate that I will spend an additional 1-3 hours assisting my
10 attorneys through the approval process and staying up to date with the case through disbursement of
11 the settlement checks.

12 **Personal Benefit Received as a Result of the Litigation**

13 12. Absent the requested service payment, the personal benefit I will receive is the same
14 as all other employees. But unlike the other employees, who are only releasing the wage and hour
15 claims asserted in the lawsuit, I have signed a general release of claims as to Defendant.

16 13. I will continue to actively participate in this lawsuit as necessary and will continue to
17 make myself available to assist in this case moving forward as needed.

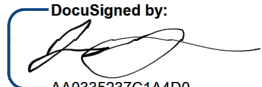
18 **No Conflicts**

19 14. I do not have any actual or potential conflicts of interest with Class Members or the
20 proposed Settlement Administrator, Apex Class Action Administration.

21 15. I have no interest or relationship, financial or otherwise, with the proposed Cy Pres
22 Recipient, Legal Aid at Work.

23 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing
24 is true and correct.

25 Executed on 9/30/2026, at Magalia, California.

26
27 
28 AA0335237C1A4D0...

John Rodriguez