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as an aggrieved employee, and on behalf of all other aggrieved employees

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

FOR THE COUNTY OF NAPA

LEODEGARIO GARCIA DE LAS NIEVES,
as an aggrieved employee, and on behalf of all
other aggrieved employees under the Labor
Code Private Attorneys' General Act of 2004,

Plaintiff,

v.

ESSENTIAL VEGETATION
MANAGEMENT SERVICES, LLC, a
California limited liability company;
SYNERGY HR, LLC, a California limited
liability company; and DOES 1 through 100,
inclusive,

Defendants.

CASE NO.: 24CV001143

REPRESENTATIVE ACTION

**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**

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

[Amount in Controversy Greater Than
\$35,000.00]

Plaintiff LEODEGARIO GARCIA DE LAS NIEVES, as an aggrieved employee, and on
behalf of all other aggrieved employees under the Labor Code Private Attorneys' General Act of
2004, alleges as follows:

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1 violations set forth herein. Accordingly, Plaintiff seeks to recover civil penalties, as the term “civil
2 penalty” is defined under *ZB N.A. v. Superior Court* (2019) 8 Cal.5th 175, under the Labor Code
3 Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, codified at Labor Code section 2698, *et seq.* (“PAGA”) plus
4 reasonable attorneys’ fees and costs, for Plaintiff and all other aggrieved current and former
5 employees of Defendants during the Civil Penalty Period.

6 5. Specifically, Plaintiff seeks to recover PAGA civil penalties through a representative
7 action permitted by PAGA and the California Supreme Court in, among other authorities, *Arias v.*
8 *Superior Court* (2009) 46 Cal.4th 969. According to the same authorities, class certification of the
9 PAGA allegations described herein is not required.

10 6. During the period beginning one (1) year preceding the provision of notice to the
11 LWDA regarding the herein-described Labor Code violations (the “Civil Penalty Period”),
12 Defendants violated, *inter alia*, Labor Code sections 96, 98.6, 200, 201, 201.3, 202, 203, 204, 210,
13 212, 213, 221, 223, 226, 226.3, 226.7, 227.3, 232, 232.5, 245, 246, 404, 432, 432.3, 432.5, 432.7,
14 432.8, 510, 512, 558, 1102.5, 1174, 1174.5, 11821.12, 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1197.5, 1198.5, 1527,
15 2699, 2802, 2810.3, 2810.5, 3366, 3457, and 8397.4, among others, California Code of Regulations,
16 Title 8, Section 3395, Business and Professions Code sections 16600, 16700, and 17200,
17 Government Code section 12952, as well as applicable Wage Orders.

18 7. Labor Code section 2699, subdivisions (a) and (g), authorizes aggrieved employees
19 such as Plaintiff, on behalf of Plaintiff and all other aggrieved current and former employees within
20 the statutory period, to bring a civil action to recover civil penalties pursuant to the procedures
21 specified in Labor Code section 2699.3.

22 8. On or around March 25, 2024, Plaintiff provided written notice pursuant to Labor
23 Code section 2699.3 online and by certified mail, with return receipt requested, of Defendants’
24 violation of various, including the herein-described, provisions of the Labor Code, to the LWDA,
25 as well as by certified mail, with return receipt requested to Defendants, and each of them.

26 9. Plaintiff also provided Defendants, and each of them, with notice under Labor Code
27 section 2810.3, subdivision (d) that Plaintiff would seek to hold them liable for each other’s wage
28 and hour violations under Labor Code section 2810.3 on March 25, 2024 by certified mail with

1 return receipt requested.

2 10. Pursuant to Labor Code section 2699.3, subdivision (a)(2)(A), the LWDA did not
3 provide notice of its intention to investigate Defendants' alleged violations within sixty-five (65)
4 calendar days of the March 25, 2024 postmarked date of the herein-described notice sent by Plaintiff
5 to the LWDA and Defendants.

6 **PAGA REPRESENTATIVE ALLEGATIONS**

7 11. At all relevant times mentioned herein, Defendants had and have a policy or practice
8 of failing to pay overtime wages to Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees in the State of
9 California in violation of California state wage and hour laws as a result of, without limitation,
10 Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees working over eight (8) hours per day, forty (40) hours per
11 week, and/or seven (7) straight workdays in a workweek without paying them proper overtime
12 wages, as a result of, without limitation, failing to accurately track and/or pay for all minutes actually
13 worked; engaging, suffering, or permitting employees to work off the clock, including, without
14 limitation, by requiring employees: to remain on-call, to suffer under Defendants' control to
15 complete pre-shift tasks before clocking in and post-shift tasks after clocking out, to clock out for
16 meal periods and continue working, to don and doff uniforms and/or safety equipment off the clock,
17 to attend company meetings off the clock; failing to include all forms of remuneration, including
18 non-discretionary bonuses, incentive pay, meal allowances, and other forms of remuneration into
19 the regular rate of pay for the pay periods where overtime was worked and the additional
20 compensation was earned for the purpose of calculating the overtime rate of pay; detrimental
21 rounding of employee time entries, editing and/or manipulation of time entries to show less hours
22 than actually worked, for paying straight pay instead of overtime pay, and by attempting but failing
23 to properly implement an alternative workweek schedule ("AWS") (including, without limitation,
24 by failing to implement a written agreement designating the regularly scheduled alternative
25 workweek in which the specified number of work days and work hours are regularly recurring;
26 failing to adopt the AWS in a secret ballot election, before the performance of work, by at least a
27 two-thirds (2/3) vote of the affected employees in the work unit; failing to follow the
28 notice/disclosures procedures prior to any AWS election; and/or failing to register an AWS election

1 with the State of California, as required by Labor Code section 511 and applicable Wage Orders)
2 to the detriment of Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees.

3 12. At all relevant times mentioned herein, Defendants had and have a practice or policy
4 of failing to compensate Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees with minimum wages for all hours
5 worked or otherwise under Defendants' control as a result of, without limitation, failing to
6 accurately track and/or pay for all minutes actually worked; by requiring Aggrieved Employees: to
7 remain on-call; to suffer under Defendants' control to complete pre-shift tasks before clocking in
8 and post-shift tasks after clocking out, to clock out for meal periods and continue working, to don
9 and doff uniforms and/or safety equipment off the clock, to attend company meetings off the clock,;
10 detrimental rounding of employee time entries, editing and/or manipulation of time entries to show
11 less hours than actually worked; failing to pay reporting time pay; paid time off and vacation time
12 owed; failing to pay split shift premiums to the detriment of Plaintiff and other Aggrieved
13 Employees.

14 13. At all relevant times mentioned herein, Defendants had and have a policy or practice
15 of failing to provide Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees a thirty (30) minute uninterrupted,
16 timely, and complete meal period for days on which the employee worked in excess of five (5) and
17 ten (10) hours per day without being afforded uninterrupted, timely, and complete 30-minute meal
18 periods or compensation in lieu thereof including, without limitation, by interrupting meal periods;
19 not providing timely meal periods; failing to provide first and second meal periods; providing short
20 meal periods; requiring that employees carry cellular telephones or walkie-talkies during meal
21 periods; not permitting employees to leave the premises; otherwise requiring on-duty/on-call meal
22 periods; and/or auto-deducting meal periods that could not be auto-deducted by law or during which
23 employees worked as required by California wage and hour laws.

24 14. At all relevant times mentioned herein, Defendants had and have a policy or practice
25 of failing to provide Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees paid, uninterrupted, timely, and
26 complete rest periods of at least ten (10) minutes per four (4) hours worked or major fractions
27 thereof, or compensation in lieu thereof, including, without limitation, by failing to provide rest
28 periods all together; requiring that they be bundled together and/or with meal periods; interrupting

1 them; requiring that employees carry cellular telephones or walkie-talkies during rest periods not
2 providing them in a timely fashion; and not permitting employees to leave the premises; and/or
3 otherwise requiring on-duty/on-call rest periods as required by California wage and hour laws.

4 15. At all times relevant hereto, Defendants had and have a policy or practice of failing
5 to permit Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees from taking cooldown rest periods as required under
6 California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Section 3395, and have failed to pay premium pay in lieu
7 thereof under Labor Code section 226.7.

8 16. At all times relevant hereto, Defendants had and have a policy or practice of failing
9 to pay premium payments under Labor Code section 226.7 to Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees
10 for non-compliant meal periods and rest periods, as well as the failure to provide cooldown periods,
11 at the proper regular rate of pay in violation of Labor Code sections 512, 226.7, and applicable wage
12 orders.

13 17. At all times mentioned herein, Defendants had and have a policy or practice of
14 issuing payment of wages due, or to become due, or as an advance on wages to be earned: (1) an
15 order, check, draft, note, memorandum, gift card, or other acknowledgment of indebtedness, which
16 was not negotiable and payable in cash, on demand, without discount, at some established place of
17 business in the state; and/or upon which the name and address did not appear on the instrument;
18 and/or at the time of its issuance and for a reasonable time thereafter, which must be at least 30 days,
19 the maker or drawer did not have sufficient funds in, or credit, arrangement, or understanding with
20 the drawee for its payment and/or (2) any scrip, coupon, or other thing redeemable, in merchandise,
21 or purporting to be payable or redeemable otherwise than in money. Plaintiff is further informed
22 and believes, and based thereon alleges that such wages were not compensated at the “regular rate”
23 of compensation as provided under Labor Code sections 226.7 and 510, subsection (a).

24 18. At all relevant times mentioned herein, Defendants had and have a policy or practice
25 of failing to comply with Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a) by intentionally failing to furnish
26 Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees with itemized wage statements that accurately reflect gross
27 wages earned; total hours worked by the employee; net wages earned; all deductions; all applicable
28 hourly rates in effect during the pay period and the corresponding number of hours worked at each

1 hourly rate by the employee; the legal name of the employer and/or the name and address of the
2 legal entity securing the employer's services if the employer is a farm labor contractor; and other
3 such information as required by Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a).

4 19. At all relevant times mentioned herein, Defendants had and have a policy or practice
5 of failing to comply with Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a) by intentionally failing to furnish
6 Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees with documents signed to obtain or hold employment
7 under Labor Code section 432, personnel records under Labor Code section 1198.5, and time records
8 under Labor Code section 1174, making it difficult for Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees to
9 calculate their unpaid wages and/or premium payments, to the detriment of Plaintiff and other
10 Aggrieved Employees.

11 20. At all relevant times mentioned herein, Defendants had and have a policy or practice
12 of failing to timely pay Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees, among other wages, all wages
13 owed as a result of Defendants' practice or policy of failing to pay, among other wages, overtime
14 wages at the regular rate of pay, minimum wages, premium wages at the regular rate of pay, paid
15 time off, paid sick leave, and vacation time owed as required by Labor Code sections 201, 202, and
16 203.

17 21. At all relevant times herein, Defendants had and have a policy or practice of failing
18 to pay Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees their paid time off and vacation time owed upon
19 separation of employment as wages at their final rate of pay in violation of Labor Code section 227.3
20 and applicable Wage Orders.

21 22. At all relevant times mentioned herein, Defendants have had a policy or practice of
22 failing and refusing, and continue to fail and refuse, to reimburse employees, including, without
23 limitation, Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees, with their costs incurred for driving personal
24 vehicles (*i.e.*, mileage and gas), purchasing uniforms, including, without limitation, for steel-toe
25 boots, non-slip shoes, and other safety and/or personal protective equipment ("PPE"), providing
26 uniform and other deposits, separately laundering mandatory uniforms, for the purchase of tools, ,
27 in direct consequence of the discharge of their duties, or of their obedience to the directions of
28 Defendants, as required by Labor Code 2802.

1 23. At all relevant times mentioned herein, Defendants have had a policy or practice of
2 failing to comply with the notice requirements of Labor Code section 2810.5 (*i.e.*, the Wage Theft
3 Protection Act of 2011) by, among other things, failing to provide Plaintiff and other Aggrieved
4 Employees with the rates of pay and overtime rates of pay applicable to their employment;
5 allowances claimed as part of the minimum wage; the regular payday designated by Defendants; the
6 name, address, and telephone number of the workers' compensation insurance carrier; information
7 regarding paid sick leave; and other pertinent information required to be disclosed by Defendants
8 under Labor Code section 2810.5.

9 24. At all relevant times mentioned herein, Defendants failed to provide Plaintiff and
10 other Aggrieved Employees with the amount of paid sick leave required to be provided pursuant to
11 California law (including, without limitation Labor Code section 245, *et seq.*), and also did not
12 permit its use upon request as contemplated under California laws, to the detriment of Plaintiff and
13 all other Aggrieved Employees.

14 25. At all relevant times mentioned herein, Defendants had or have a policy or practice
15 of failing to reimburse deposits made, including uniform deposits, together with all interest owed at
16 the separation of employment in violation of Labor Code section 404.

17 26. At all relevant times mentioned herein, Defendants have had a policy or practice of
18 failing to pay Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees their wages in accordance with Labor Code
19 Section 204, which requires that: "[l]abor performed between the 1st and 15th days, inclusive, of
20 any calendar month shall be paid for between the 16th and 26th day of the month during which the
21 labor was performed, and labor performed between the 16th and the last day, inclusive of any
22 calendar month, shall be paid for between the 1st and 10th day of the following month."

23 27. At all times mentioned herein, Defendants have had, and continue to have, a policy
24 of failing to provide all working employees with suitable seats when the nature of the work
25 reasonably permits the use of seats. Defendants have also failed to place an adequate number of
26 seats in reasonable proximity to the work area and/or permitted employees to use such seats when
27 it does not interfere with the performance of their duties and employees are not engaged in the active
28 duties of their employment, and the nature of their work requires standing.

1 28. At all times mentioned herein, Defendants have had, and continue to have, a policy
2 of failing to provide all temporary workers with owed wages weekly by not later than the regular
3 payday of the following week.

4 29. At all times mentioned herein, Defendants have had, and continue to have, a policy
5 of failing to provide adequate and readily accessible sanitation facilities; a regular schedule for
6 servicing, cleaning, and supplying each facility to ensure it is maintained in a clean, sanitary and
7 serviceable condition; an adequate supply of suitable cleansing agents, water, single-use towels or
8 blowers; and a sufficient number of toilets to be used by each sex of employee.

9 30. At all times mentioned herein, Defendants have had, and continue to have, a policy
10 of conducting unlawful background checks on prospective and current employees prior to making
11 a conditional offer. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants
12 violated applicable laws by, without limitation: requiring job applicants and employees to disclose
13 their conviction history before Defendants made a conditional offer of employment; inquiring into
14 or considering the conviction history of applicants before Defendants made any conditional offers
15 of employment; considering, distributing, or disseminating information about arrests not followed
16 by conviction, referrals to or participation in a pretrial or posttrial diversion program, convictions
17 that have been sealed, dismissed, expunged, or statutorily eradicated pursuant to law, or any
18 conviction for which the convicted person has received a full pardon or has been issued a certificate
19 of rehabilitation, while conducting conviction history background checks in connection with any
20 applications for employment; intending to deny an applicant a position of employment solely or in
21 part because of the applicant's conviction history; and asking applicants for employment to disclose,
22 through any written form or verbally, information concerning or related to an arrest, detention,
23 processing, diversion, supervision, adjudication, or court disposition that occurred while the person
24 was subject to the process and jurisdiction of the juvenile court, to the detriment of Plaintiff and
25 other Aggrieved Employees

26 31. At all times mentioned herein, Defendants have had, and continue to have, a practice
27 or policy of relying on the salary history information of an applicant for employment as a factor in
28 determining whether to offer employment to an applicant or what salary to offer the applicant in

1 violation of Labor Code section 432.3 by including, on Defendants' application for employment, an
2 inquiry regarding current and/or former salary history information, including, without limitation,
3 compensation and benefits of the applicant for employment.

4 32. At all times mentioned herein, Defendants have had, and continue to have, a practice
5 or policy of requiring Aggrieved Employees to agree in writing to confidentiality policies that
6 unlawfully restrain trade by prohibiting Employees from speaking with prospective employers about
7 their work with Defendants, including but not limited to their wages and working conditions.
8 Defendants also required Aggrieved Employees to inform prospective employers of Defendants'
9 restrictions of Aggrieved Employees' freedom to work.

10 33. At all relevant times mentioned herein, Defendants had and have a policy or practice
11 of preventing Plaintiff and/or Aggrieved Employees from using or disclosing the skills, knowledge
12 and experience they obtained at Defendants for purposes of competing with Defendants, including,
13 without limitation, preventing Aggrieved Employees from disclosing their wages in negotiating a
14 new job with a prospective employer, and from disclosing who else works at Defendants and under
15 what circumstances that they might be receptive to an offer from a rival employer. Plaintiff is
16 informed and believes that this policy and/or practice violates Business and Professions Code
17 sections 17200, 16600 and 16700, and, by virtue thereof, various provisions of the Labor Code,
18 including Labor Code sections 232, 232.5, and 1197.5, subdivision (k).

19 34. Defendants had and have a policy or practice of preventing Plaintiff and/or other
20 Aggrieved Employees from disclosing violations of state and federal law, either within Defendants
21 to their managers or outside to private attorneys or government officials, among others, in violation
22 of Business and Professions Code section 17200, and, thus, in violation of Labor Code section
23 1102.5. In addition, Plaintiff is informed and believes that Defendants' herein-described policies
24 and/or practices prevent Plaintiff and/or other Aggrieved Employees from disclosing information
25 about unsafe or discriminatory working conditions, or about wage and hour violations in violation
26 of Labor Code section 232 and 232.5.

27 35. Defendants had and have a policy or practice of preventing Plaintiff and/or other
28 Aggrieved Employees from engaging in lawful conduct during non-work hours, thus violating state

1 statutes entitling employees to disclose wages, working conditions, and illegal conduct, including,
2 without limitation, Labor Code sections 96, subdivision (k), 98.6, 232, 232.5, and 1197.5,
3 subdivision (k). Plaintiff is informed and believes that this lawful conduct includes the exercise of
4 Plaintiff's and/or other Aggrieved Employee's constitutional rights of freedom of speech and
5 economic liberty.

6 36. Plaintiff, in Plaintiff's representative capacity, seeks civil penalties under Labor
7 Code sections 210, 226.3, 558, 1174.5, 1197.1, and 2699 for the herein-described acts, which violate
8 the California Labor Code as described above, including on behalf of Plaintiff and other Aggrieved
9 Employees pursuant to PAGA.

10 **PARTIES**

11 **A. Plaintiff**

12 37. Plaintiff is a resident of the State of California. At all relevant times herein, Plaintiff
13 Leodegario Garcia de las Nieves is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that
14 Defendants employed Plaintiff as a non-exempt employee, with duties that included, but were not
15 limited to, maintenance services. Plaintiff is informed and believes that Plaintiff worked for
16 Defendants from approximately May of 2023 through the present.

17 **B. Defendants**

18 38. Plaintiff is informed and believes and based thereon alleges that Defendant Essential
19 is, and at all times relevant hereto was, a limited liability company organized and existing under and
20 by virtue of the laws of the State of California and doing business in the County of Lake, State of
21 California.

22 39. Plaintiff is informed and believes and based thereon alleges that Defendant Synergy
23 is, and at all times relevant hereto was, a limited liability company organized and existing under and
24 by virtue of the laws of the State of California and doing business in the State of California.

25 40. The true names and capacities, whether individual, corporate, associate, or otherwise,
26 of defendants sued herein as DOES 1 through 100, inclusive, are currently unknown to Plaintiff,
27 who therefore sues defendants by such fictitious names under Code of Civil Procedure section 474.
28 Plaintiff is informed and believes and based thereon alleges that each of the defendants designated

1 herein as DOE is legally responsible in some manner for the unlawful acts referred to herein.
2 Plaintiff will seek leave of court to amend this Complaint to reflect the true names and capacities of
3 the defendants designated hereinafter as DOES when such identities become known. Plaintiff is
4 informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that each defendant acted in all respects pertinent
5 to this action, as the agent of the other defendant(s), carried out a joint scheme, business plan or
6 policy in all respects pertinent hereto, and the acts of each defendant are legally attributable to the
7 other defendants. Whenever, heretofore or hereinafter, reference is made to “Defendants,” it shall
8 include Essential, Synergy, and any of their parent, subsidiary, or affiliated companies within the
9 State of California, as well as DOES 1 through 100 identified herein.

10 **JOINT LIABILITY ALLEGATIONS**

11 41. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that at all times
12 mentioned herein, each of the defendants was the agent, principal, employee, employer,
13 representative, joint venture or co-conspirator of each of the other defendants, either actually or
14 ostensibly, and in doing the things alleged herein acted within the course and scope of such agency,
15 employment, joint venture, and conspiracy.

16 42. All of the acts and conduct described herein of each and every corporate defendant
17 was duly authorized, ordered, and directed by the respective and collective defendant corporate
18 employers, and the officers and management-level employees of said corporate employers. In
19 addition thereto, said corporate employers participated in the aforementioned acts and conduct of
20 their said employees, agents, and representatives, and each of them; and upon completion of the
21 aforesaid acts and conduct of said corporate employees, agents, and representatives, the defendant
22 corporation respectively and collectively ratified, accepted the benefits of, condoned, lauded,
23 acquiesced, authorized, and otherwise approved of each and all of the said acts and conduct of the
24 aforementioned corporate employees, agents and representatives.

25 43. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that despite the
26 formation of the purported corporate existence of Essential, Synergy, and DOES 1 through 50,
27 inclusive (the “Alter Ego Defendants”), they, and each of them, are one and the same with DOES
28 51 through 100 (“Individual Defendants”), and each of them, due to, but not limited to, the following

1 reasons:

2 a. The Alter Ego Defendants are completely dominated and controlled by the
3 Individual Defendants who personally committed the wrongful and illegal acts and violated the laws
4 as set forth in this Complaint, and who have hidden and currently hide behind the Alter Ego
5 Defendants to perpetrate frauds, circumvent statutes, or accomplish some other wrongful or
6 inequitable purpose;

7 b. The Individual Defendants derive actual and significant monetary benefits by
8 and through the Alter Ego Defendants' unlawful conduct, and by using the Alter Ego Defendants as
9 the funding source for the Individual Defendants' own personal expenditures;

10 c. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges, that the Individual
11 Defendants and the Alter Ego Defendants, while really one and the same, were segregated to appear
12 as though separate and distinct for purposes of perpetrating a fraud, circumventing a statute, or
13 accomplishing some other wrongful or inequitable purpose;

14 d. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges, that the business affairs
15 of the Individual Defendants and the Alter Ego Defendants are, and at all relevant times mentioned
16 herein were, so mixed and intermingled that the same cannot reasonably be segregated, and the same
17 are inextricable confusion. The Alter Ego Defendants are, and at all relevant times mentioned herein
18 were, used by the Individual Defendants as mere shells and conduits for the conduct of certain of
19 their, and each of their affairs. The Alter Ego Defendants are, and at all relevant times mentioned
20 herein were, the alter egos of the Individual Defendants;

21 e. The recognition of the separate existence of the Individual Defendants from
22 the Alter Ego Defendants would promote injustice insofar that it would permit these defendants to
23 insulate themselves from liability to Plaintiff for violations to the Civil Code, Government Code,
24 and other statutory violations. The corporate existence of these defendants should thus be
25 disregarded in equity and for the ends of justice because such disregard is necessary to avoid fraud
26 and injustice to Plaintiff herein;

27 f. Accordingly, the Alter Ego Defendants constitute the alter ego of the
28 Individual Defendants (and vice versa), and the fiction of their separate corporate existence must be

1 disregarded.

2 44. As a result of the aforementioned facts, Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based
3 thereon alleges that Defendants, and each of them, are joint employers.

4 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

5 **(Civil Penalties Under the Private Attorneys' General Act (2004) – Against All Defendants)**

6 45. Plaintiff re-alleges and incorporates by reference all of the allegations set forth in the
7 preceding paragraphs as though fully set forth hereat.

8 **Civil Penalties Under Labor Code § 210**

9 46. At all relevant times herein, Labor Code section 204, requires and required that:
10 “[l]abor performed between the 1st and 15th days, inclusive, of any calendar month shall be paid for
11 between the 16th and 26th day of the month during which the labor was performed, and labor
12 performed between the 16th and the last day, inclusive, of any calendar month, shall be paid for
13 between the 1st and 10th day of the following month.”

14 47. At all relevant times herein, Labor Code section 210, subdivision (a) states and stated
15 that “[i]n addition to, and entirely independent and apart from, any other penalty provided in this
16 article, every person who fails to pay the wages of each employee as provided in Sections 201.3,
17 204, 204b, 204.1, 205, 205.5, and 1197.5, shall be subject to a civil penalty as follows: (1) For any
18 initial violation, one hundred dollars (\$100) for each failure to pay each employee” and “(2) For
19 each subsequent violation, or any willful or intentional violation, two hundred dollars (\$200) for
20 each failure to pay each employee, plus 25 percent of the amount unlawfully withheld.”

21 48. At all relevant times herein, Defendants have had a consistent policy or practice of
22 failing to pay Plaintiff and/or Aggrieved Employees during their employment on a timely basis as
23 per Labor Code section 204. Thus, pursuant to Labor Code section 210, Plaintiff and other
24 Aggrieved Employees are entitled to recover civil penalties for Defendants’ violations of Labor
25 Code section 204, in the amount of one hundred dollars (\$100) for each Aggrieved Employee for
26 each initial violation per employee, and two hundred dollars (\$200) for each Aggrieved Employee
27 for each subsequent violation in connection with each payment that was made in violation of Labor
28 Code section 204.

Civil Penalties Under Labor Code § 226.3

49. Defendants had and have a policy or practice of failing to comply with Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a) by intentionally failing to furnish Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees with itemized wage statements that accurately reflect gross wages earned; total hours worked; net wages earned; the name and address of each employer with whom they have been placed to work; all applicable hourly rates in effect during the pay period and the corresponding number of hours worked at each hourly rate; the legal name of the employer and/or the name and address of the legal entity securing the employer's services if the employer is a farm labor contractor; and other such information as required by Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a).

50. Labor Code section 226.3 states that "[a]ny employer who violates subdivision (a) of Section 226 shall be subject to a civil penalty in the amount of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) per employee per violation in an initial citation and one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per employee for each violation in a subsequent citation, for which the employer fails to provide the employee a wage deduction statement or fails to keep the records required in subdivision (a) of Section 226."

51. Labor Code section 226.3 further provides that "[t]he civil penalties provided for in this section are in addition to any other penalty provided by law."

52. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants had and have a policy or practice of failing to furnish Aggrieved Employees with itemized wage statements that accurately reflect gross wages earned; total hours worked; net wages earned; all deductions; all applicable hourly rates in effect and the corresponding number of hours worked at each hourly rate in effect during the pay period; the legal name of the employer and/or the name and address of the legal entity securing the employer's services if the employer is a farm labor contractor; and other such information as required by Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a).

53. Pursuant to Labor Code section 226.3, Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees are entitled to recover civil penalties for Defendants' violation of Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a) in the amount of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) for each Aggrieved Employee per pay period for the initial violation, and one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for each Aggrieved Employee per pay period for each subsequent violation.

1 Violation of Labor Code § 558

2 54. Pursuant to Labor Code section 558, subdivision (a): “Any employer or other person
3 acting on behalf of an employer who violates, or causes to be violated . . . any provision regulating
4 hours and days of work in any of the Industrial Welfare Commission” shall be subject to a civil
5 penalty as follows:

6 (1) For any initial violation, fifty dollars (\$50) for each underpaid employee and for each
7 pay period for which the employee was underpaid in addition to an amount sufficient
8 to recover underpaid wages;

9 (2) For each subsequent violation, one hundred dollars (\$100) for each underpaid
10 employee for each pay period for which the employee was underpaid in addition to
11 an amount sufficient to recover underpaid wages;

12 (3) Wages recovered pursuant to this section shall be paid to the affected employee.”

13 55. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants, and
14 each of them, violated, or caused to be violated, the Labor Code sections described herein, including
15 causing Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees not to: be paid with the rates of pay and overtime
16 rates of pay applicable to their employment, allowances claimed as part of the minimum wage, the
17 regular payday designated by employer, the name of the employer, including any “doing business
18 as” names used, the name, address, and telephone number of the workers’ compensation insurance
19 carrier, information regarding paid sick leave, and other pertinent information.

20 56. As a direct and proximate result of the herein-described Labor Code violations,
21 pursuant to Labor Code section 558, Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees are entitled to recover
22 civil penalties for Defendants’ herein-described Labor Code violations in the amount fifty dollars
23 (\$50) for each Aggrieved Employee per pay period for the initial violation, and one hundred dollars
24 (\$100) for each Aggrieved Employee per pay period for each subsequent violation.

25 Violation of Labor Code § 1174.5

26 57. At all times mentioned herein, Labor Code section 1174, subdivision (b) has required
27 every person employing labor in California to “[a]llow any member of the commission or the
28 employees of the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement free access to the place of business or

1 employment of the person to secure any information or make any investigation that they are
2 authorized by this chapter to ascertain or make. The commission may inspect or make excerpts,
3 relating to the employment of employees, from the books, reports, contracts, payrolls, documents,
4 or papers of the person.”

5 58. At all times mentioned herein, Labor Code section 1174, subdivision (c) has required
6 every person employing labor in California to “[k]eep a record showing the names and addresses of
7 all employees employed and the ages of all minors.”

8 59. At all times mentioned herein, Labor Code section 1174, subdivision (d) has required
9 every person employing labor in California to “[k]eep, at a central location in the state or at the
10 plants or establishments at which employees are employed, payroll records showing the hours
11 worked daily by and the wages paid to, and the number of piece-rate units earned by and applicable
12 piece rate paid to, employees employed at the respective plants or establishments. These records
13 shall be kept in accordance with rules established for this purpose by the commission, but in any
14 case, shall be kept on file for not less than three years. An employer shall not prohibit an employee
15 from maintaining a personal record of hours worked, or, if paid on a piece-rate basis, piece-rate units
16 earned.”

17 60. Pursuant to Labor Code section 1174.5, “[a]ny person employing labor who willfully
18 fails to maintain the records required by subdivision (c) of [Labor Code] Section 1174 or accurate
19 and complete records required by subdivision (d) of [Labor Code] Section 1174, or to allow any
20 member of the commission or employees of the division to inspect records pursuant to subdivision
21 (b) of [Labor Code] Section 1174, shall be subject to a civil penalty of five hundred dollars (\$500).

22 61. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants have
23 willfully failed to keep adequate or accurate time records including wage statements and similar
24 payroll documents under Labor Code section 226, documents signed to obtain or hold employment
25 under Labor Code section 432, personnel records under Labor Code section 1198.5, and time records
26 under Labor Code section 1174.

27 62. As a direct and proximate result of the herein-described Labor Code violations,
28 pursuant to Labor Code section 1174.5, Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees are entitled to

1 recover civil penalties for Defendants' herein-described Labor Code violations in the amount of five
2 hundred dollars (\$500) per violation per Aggrieved Employee.

3 Violation of Labor Code § 1197.1

4 63. Pursuant to Labor Code section 1197.1, subdivision (a): "Any employer or other
5 person acting either individually or as an officer, agent, or employee of another person, who pays
6 or causes to be paid to any employee a wage less than the minimum fixed by an applicable state or
7 local law, or by an order of the commission shall be subject to a civil penalty, restitution of wages,
8 liquidated damages payable to the employee, and any applicable penalties imposed pursuant to
9 Section 203 as follows:

10 (1) For any initial violation that is intentionally committed, one hundred dollars
11 (\$100) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which the
12 employee is underpaid. This amount shall be in addition to an amount
13 sufficient to recover underpaid wages, liquidated damages pursuant to Section
14 1194.2, and any applicable penalties imposed pursuant to Section 203.

15 (2) For each subsequent violation for the same specific offense, two hundred fifty
16 dollars (\$250) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which the
17 employee is underpaid regardless of whether the initial violation is
18 intentionally committed. This amount shall be in addition to an amount
19 sufficient to recover underpaid wages, liquidated damages pursuant to Section
20 1194.2, and any applicable penalties imposed pursuant to Section 203.

21 (3) Wages, liquidated damages, and any applicable penalties imposed pursuant to
22 Section 203, recovered pursuant to this section shall be paid to the affected
23 employee."

24 64. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants caused
25 Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees not to be paid minimum wages as a result of Defendants, without
26 limitation, routinely failing to pay Plaintiff or other Aggrieved Employees' minimum wages for all
27 hours worked or otherwise under Defendants' control due to, without limitation, routinely failing to
28 accurately track and/or pay for all hours actually worked; detrimental rounding or manipulation of

1 time entries; paying straight pay instead of overtime or otherwise failing to pay overtime hours at
2 the proper overtime rate of pay; engaging, suffering, or permitting employees to work off the clock,
3 entitling Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees to actual and liquidated damages.

4 65. As a direct and proximate result of the herein-described Labor Code violations,
5 pursuant to Labor Code section 1197.1, Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees are entitled to
6 recover civil penalties for Defendants' herein-described Labor Code violations in the amount one
7 hundred dollars (\$100) for each Aggrieved Employee per pay period for the initial violation, and
8 two hundred and fifty dollars (\$250) for each Aggrieved Employee per pay period for each
9 subsequent violation.

10 Civil Penalties Under Labor Code § 2699

11 66. Pursuant to Labor Code section 2699, subdivision (a), notwithstanding any other
12 provision of law, any provision of the Labor Code that provides for a civil penalty to be assessed
13 and collected by the LWDA or any of its departments, divisions, commissions, boards, agencies or
14 employees for a violation of the Labor Code may, as an alternative, be recovered through a civil
15 action brought by an aggrieved employee on behalf of himself or herself and other current or former
16 employees pursuant to the procedures specified in Labor Code section 2699.3.

17 67. Pursuant to Labor Code section 2699, subdivision (f), for all provisions of the Labor
18 Code except those for which a civil penalty is specifically provided, the established civil penalty for
19 a violation of those provisions is as follows: if, at the time of the alleged violation, the person
20 employs one or more employees, the civil penalty is one hundred dollars (\$100) for each aggrieved
21 employee per pay period for the initial violation and two hundred dollars (\$200) for each aggrieved
22 employee per pay period for each subsequent violation.

23 68. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges that Defendants, and
24 each of them, violated the Labor Code sections described herein, including, without limitation, for
25 the failure to: pay the rates of pay and overtime rates of pay applicable to their employment,
26 allowances claimed as part of the minimum wage, the regular payday designated by Defendants, the
27 name of the employer, including "doing business as" names used, the name, address, and telephone
28 number of the workers' compensation insurance carrier, information regarding paid sick leave, and

1 other pertinent information required to be disclosed by Defendants under Labor Code section
2 2810.5, failing to provide Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees with the amount of paid sick
3 leave required to be provided pursuant to California and local laws.

4 69. Moreover, Plaintiff and other Aggrieved Employees within the State of California
5 whom he seeks to represent are entitled to an award of reasonable attorneys' fees and costs in
6 connection with their herein-described claims for civil penalties.

7 **REQUEST FOR JURY TRIAL**

8 70. Plaintiff hereby requests a trial by jury.

9 **PRAYER**

10 **WHEREFORE**, on behalf of Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees, Plaintiff prays for
11 judgment against Defendants as follows:

- 12 A. An award of civil penalties pursuant to Labor Code sections 210, 226.3, 558,
13 1174.5, 1197.1, and 2699;
14 B. An award of reasonable attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to Labor Code sections
15 210, 226.3, 558, 1174.5, 1197.1, and 2699;
16 C. Pre-judgment and post-judgment interest;
17 D. For costs of suit incurred herein; and
18 E. Such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

19
20
21 Dated: July 5, 2024

BIBIYAN LAW GROUP, P.C.

22
23 BY: /s/ Bradley R. Fagnani

24 DAVID D. BIBIYAN

JEFFREY D. KLEIN

BRADLEY R. FAGNANI

25 Attorneys for Plaintiff LEODEGARIO
26 GARCIA DE LAS NIEVES, as an aggrieved
27 employee, and on behalf of all other aggrieved
28 employees under the Labor Code Private
Attorneys' General Act of 2004,