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Attorneys for Plaintiff

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

ESPARANZA RUIZ-SANTIAGO, individually,
and on behalf of all others similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

v.

JESSE AND EVAN, INC., a California
corporation; and DOES 1 through 10, inclusive,

Defendants.

ELECTRONICALLY FILED

Superior Court of California,
County of Monterey

01/22/2026 at 11:44:45 AM

By: Keith Habicht, Deputy Clerk

Case No.: 24CV002683

*Assigned for All Purposes to:
Hon. Thomas W. Wills
Dept. 15*

**DECLARATION OF ESPARANZA RUIZ-
SANTIAGO IN SUPPORT OF MOTION
FOR PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF
CLASS ACTION AND PAGA
SETTLEMENT**

PRELIMINARY APPROVAL HEARING:

Date: February 6, 2026

Time: 8:30 a.m.

Dept.: 15

I, Esparanza Ruiz-Santiago, hereby declare as follows:

1. I have personal knowledge of the facts set forth in this declaration and could and would competently testify to them under oath if called as a witness. I submit this declaration in support of my Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Action and PAGA Settlement.

2. I worked for defendant Jesse and Evan, Inc. (“Defendant”) as an hourly-paid, non-exempt baker/cook from around September 2023 to February 2024. My job duties included, without limitation, food preparation, cooking, baking and other kitchen duties.

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 hourly-paid, non-exempt employees of 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 the 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 688 current and former employees of
16 Defendant, which will inform them that I filed a class and representative action 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 her 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 this lawsuit 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/gathering and providing my payroll records and other documents and
3 information to my attorneys, propounding written discovery on Defendant, discussing potential
4 witnesses, keeping in regular contact with my attorneys regarding the status of the case, assisting my
5 attorneys prepare for mediation (i.e., reviewing discovery information and data (if needed),
6 discussing my claims and experience), being on-call for my attorneys on the date of mediation in
7 case questions or concerns arose during mediation, and participating in settlement discussions. After
8 mediation, I remained actively involved by reviewing the settlement papers and contacting my
9 counsel for updates. I estimate that since I retained my counsel in March 2024, I have spent
10 approximately 40-45 hours on the activities described above. And I estimate that I will spend an
11 additional 1-5 hours assisting my attorneys through the approval process and staying up to date with
12 the case through disbursement of the settlement checks.

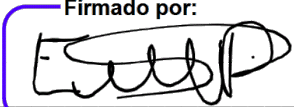
13 **Personal Benefit Received as a Result of the Litigation**

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

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

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

21 Executed on 1/21/2026, at Salinas, California.

22 Firmado por:
23 
24 862E597529A5473
Esparanza Ruiz-Santiago