Nicol E. Hajjar (SBN 303102)
nicol.hajjar@wilshirelawfirm.com
Rachel J. Vinson (SBN 331434)
rachel.vinson@wilshirelawfirm.com
Giancarlo A. Recinos (SBN 282836)
giancarlo.recinos@wilshirelawfirm.com
WILSHIRE LAW FIRM, PLC
660 S. Figueroa Street, Sky Lobby
Los Angeles, California 90017
Telephone: (213) 381-9988
Facsimile: (213) 381-9989

Attorneys for Plaintiff

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES – SPRING STREET COURTHOUSE

MICHAEL BARCA, individually, and on behalf of all others similarly situated, the State of California, and other aggrieved employees,

Plaintiff,

v.

ICHIMAN-YA CORPORATION DBA KIWAMI, a California corporation; KATSU-YA GROUP, INC., a California corporation; THE IZAKA-YA, INC., a California corporation; and DOES 1 through 10, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.: 24STCV25289

[Assigned for All Purposes to the Honorable Elihu M. Berle, Dept. 6]

PLAINTIFF'S NOTICE OF MOTION AND MOTION FOR PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF CLASS ACTION AND PAGA SETTLEMENT; MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES

Preliminary Approval Hearing:
Date: November 30, 2026
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Dept.: 6

Action Filed: September 30, 2024
Trial date: Not Set

TO ALL PARTIES AND THEIR ATTORNEYS OF RECORD:

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on November 30, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard in Department 6 of the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, located at Spring Street Courthouse, 312 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012, Plaintiff Michael Barca ("Plaintiff") will and hereby does move this Court for an Order:

1. Granting preliminary approval of the proposed Class Action and PAGA Settlement Agreement ("Settlement" or "Settlement Agreement");
2. Conditionally certifying the proposed Class for settlement purposes only;
3. Appointing Plaintiff as the Class Representative;
4. Appointing Wilshire Law Firm, PLC as Class Counsel;
5. Appointing Phoenix Class Action Administrative Solutions as the Administrator; and
6. Setting a final approval hearing date.

Pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure § 382 and California Rules of Court 3.769, *et seq*., this Motion is made on the grounds that the proposed Settlement satisfies all criteria for preliminary approval and falls well within the range of reasonableness. The Settlement was reached through informed, arm's length bargaining between experienced attorneys with the assistance of an experienced neutral, and Plaintiff and Plaintiff's Counsel will fairly and adequately represent the Class.

This Motion is based on this Notice of Motion, the accompanying Memorandum of Points and Authorities ("MPA"), the Declaration of Nicol E. Hajjar, the Declaration of Michael Barca, and on all records and documents on file, together with such oral and documentary evidence that may be presented at the hearing on this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: October 30, 2026

WILSHIRE LAW FIRM, PLC

By: _____

Nicol E. Hajjar
Rachel J. Vinson
Giancarlo A. Recinos
Attorneys for Plaintiff

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MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES

I. INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure § 382 and California Rules of Court 3.769, *et seq*., Plaintiff seeks preliminary approval of a class action settlement of wage and hour claims, including representative claims brought under the Labor Code Private Attorneys General Act of 2004 ("PAGA"), against Defendants Ichiman-Ya Corporation dba Kiwami and The Izaka-Ya, Inc. (collectively, the "Defendants"). The proposed Class is defined as all current and former hourly, non-exempt employees who were employed by Defendants in the State of California ("Class Members") during the period from September 30, 2020, to December 31, 2025 ("Class Period"). The main terms of the Settlement are as follows:

1. A Gross Settlement Amount of $1,050,000.00, from which the Net Settlement Amount will be distributed to approximately 296 Class Members on a pro rata basis according to the total workweeks worked by each Class Member during the Class Period;
2. Attorneys' fees of up to 35% of the Gross Settlement Amount (currently $367,500.00) and up to $25,000.00 in reimbursement of actual litigation expenses incurred by Plaintiff's Counsel;
3. A Class Representative Service Payment of up to $10,000.00 to Plaintiff;
4. Costs of settlement administration of up to $25,000.00; and
5. Allocation of $105,000.00 to PAGA penalties, sixty-five percent (65%) of which ($68,250.00) will be paid to the Labor and Workforce Development Agency ("LWDA"), and thirty-five percent (35%) of which ($36,750.00) will be paid to all current and former hourly, non-exempt employees who worked at least one pay period for Defendants ("PAGA Employees") at any time during the period from June 20, 2023, to December 31, 2025. ("PAGA Period").

The Settlement meets all criteria for preliminary approval and falls within the range of reasonableness given the risks and expenses of further litigation. The Settlement was reached through informed, arm's length bargaining between experienced attorneys with the assistance of

an experienced neutral. As such, Plaintiff requests that the Court grant preliminary approval of the Settlement, conditionally certify the Class for settlement purposes only, appoint Plaintiff as the Class Representative, appoint Plaintiff's Counsel as Class Counsel, appoint Phoenix Class Action Administrative Solutions ("Phoenix") as the Administrator, authorize the Administrator to administer notice of the Settlement to the Class, and set a final approval hearing date.

II. PROCEDURAL HISTORY

On June 20, 2024, Plaintiff provided written notice to the LWDA and Defendants of the specific provisions of the Labor Code alleged to have been violated, including the facts and theories in support. Declaration of Nicol E. Hajjar in Support of Plaintiff's Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Action and PAGA Settlement ("Hajjar Decl.") at ¶ 3, Exhibit 1. The LWDA did not notify Plaintiff that it intended to investigate within 65 days of this written notice. *Id*.

On September 30, 2024, Plaintiff filed this putative class action against Defendants alleging: (1) failure to pay minimum and straight time wages; (2) failure to pay overtime wages; (3) failure to provide meal periods; (4) failure to authorize and permit rest periods; (5) failure to timely pay final wages at termination; (6) failure to provide accurate itemized wage statements; (7) failure to indemnify employees for expenditures; (8) unfair business practices; and (9) civil penalties under PAGA ("Operative Complaint"). Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 4. On August 24, 2026, the Court dismissed Defendant Katsu-Ya Group, Inc. without prejudice. *Id.* at ¶ 5.

On October 4, 2025, the Parties participated in a private mediation with Monica Ngo-Bonnici. *Id.* at ¶ 6. Shortly thereafter, the Parties accepted a mediator's settlement proposal on October 7, 2025, thereby reaching a complete resolution of all claims, including those arising under PAGA. *Id.* The Parties negotiated the terms of the Settlement which was finalized on September 8, 2026. *Id.* at ¶ 7, Exhibit 2. On September 9, 2026, Plaintiff submitted a copy of the Settlement Agreement to the LWDA. *Id.* at ¶ 8, Exhibit 3.

III. SUMMARY OF THE SETTLEMENT TERMS

A. Terms of the Proposed Settlement

The Parties have agreed to settle the claims alleged in this case for a Gross Settlement Amount of $1,050,000.00. Settlement Agreement at § 3.1. Subject to Court approval, the following

payments will be deducted from the Gross Settlement Amount: (1) a Class Representative Service Payment of up to $10,000.00 to Plaintiff; (2) attorneys' fees of up to 35% of the Gross Settlement Amount (currently estimated to be $367,500.00) and reimbursement of litigation costs of up to $25,000.00 to Plaintiff's Counsel; (3) costs of settlement administration of up to $25,000.00 to Phoenix; (4) Individual Class Payments to Class Members; and (5) PAGA Penalties in the amount of $105,000.00, which will be allocated 65% to the LWDA ($68,250.00) and 35% to PAGA Employees ($36,750.00). *Id.* at § 3.2 *et seq*. After all requested deductions are made, the remaining Net Settlement Amount is currently estimated to be $517,500.00.

Individual Class Payments will be calculated by (a) dividing the Net Settlement Amount by the total number of Workweeks worked by all Participating Class Members during the Class Period and (b) multiplying the result by each Participating Class Member's Workweeks. *Id*. at § 3.2.4. For tax purposes, the Individual Class Payments will be allocated 15% to wages and 85% to interest and statutory penalties. *Id*. at § 3.2.4.1. Defendants will separately pay employer payroll taxes owed on the wage portions of the individual class payments separate from the Gross Settlement Amount. *Id*. at § 3.1.

Individual PAGA Payments to PAGA Employees will be calculated by (a) dividing the amount of the PAGA Employees' 35% share of PAGA Penalties ($36,750.00) by the total number of PAGA Period Pay Periods worked by all PAGA Employees during the PAGA Period, and (b) multiplying the result by each individual PAGA Employee's PAGA Pay Periods. *Id*. at § 3.2.5.1. For tax purposes, the individual PAGA payments will be allocated 100% to penalties. *Id*.

Any deductions not approved by the Court will be retained by the Settlement Administrator in the Net Settlement Amount. *Id.* at §§ 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.2.5. For any Class Member whose Individual Class Payment check is uncashed and cancelled after the void date, the Administrator shall transmit the funds represented by such a check to the California Controller's Unclaimed Property Fund in the name of the Class Member thereby leaving no "unpaid residue" subject to the requirements of California Code of Civil Procedure Section 384, subd. (b) and the orders of the Court. *Id.* at § 4.4.3. None of the Gross Settlement Amount will revert to Defendants. *Id*. at § 3.1.

/ / /

B. Proposed Settlement Administration

The Parties' proposed Class Notice complies with the requirements of California Rules of Court, Rule 3.766(d). *See* Exhibit A to Settlement Agreement. It provides information regarding the nature of this lawsuit, a summary of the settlement terms, the formula used for calculating individual class and PAGA payments and instructions to dispute the calculations, instructions on how to opt-out of or object to the Settlement, the date, time, and location of the final approval hearing, and the amounts sought for the class representative service payment, attorneys' fees and litigation costs, and administration costs. *See generally, id.* The Class Notice also notifies Class Members that they do not need to submit a claim in order to participate in the Settlement and receive a payment. *See id.* The Settlement Administrator will mail Class Members the Class Notice by first-class mail in English and in Spanish. Settlement Agreement at § 7.4.3.

Not later than five (5) calendar days after the Administrator's receipt of any Class Notice returned by the USPS as undelivered, the Administrator shall re-mail the Class Notice using any forwarding address provided by the USPS. Settlement Agreement at § 7.4.4. If the USPS does not provide a forwarding address, the Administrator shall conduct a Class Member Address Search, and re-mail the Class Notice to the most current address obtained. *Id.* The deadline to opt-out of the Settlement or to submit an objection or dispute will be extended by fourteen (14) calendar days for all Class Members whose Class Notice was remailed. *Id*. at § 7.4.5.

C. Proposed Release

Effective on the date when Defendants have fully funded the entire Gross Settlement Amount and funds all employer payroll taxes owed on the Wage Portion of the Individual Class Payments, Plaintiff, Class Members, PAGA Employees, and Class Counsel will release claims against all Released Parties as follows:

Release by Participating Class Members:

> All Participating Class Members, on behalf of themselves and their respective former and present representatives, agents, attorneys, heirs, administrators, successors, and assigns, release the Released Parties from all claims that were alleged, or reasonably could have been alleged, based on the facts and allegations in the Operative Complaint during the Class Period including ("Released Class Claims"):
>
> (i) failure to properly calculate and pay minimum wages, contractual straight-time

wages, and wages at the proper regular rate of pay for all work performed; (ii) failure to pay wages for off-the-clock work; (iii) failure to pay all overtime and double time wages (including failure to pay overtime, double time, meal/rest premiums, and/or sick time wages at the correct regular rate of pay); (iv) failure to provide for compliant meal periods; (v) failure to provide for compliant rest periods; (vi) failure to pay premiums (or correct premiums) for non-compliant meal and rest periods; (vii) failure to properly provide for and/or calculate and pay paid sick leave benefit pay; (viii) failure to include bonuses or other incentive compensation in the regular rate of pay calculation or to weight wage rates properly when calculating the regular rate of pay, bonus, and incentive pay; (ix) failure timely to pay wages due at termination and during employment; (x) failure to provide accurate, itemized wage statements; (xi) failure to pay employees two times per month or timely during employment; and (xii) all claims under Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 210, 221, 226, 226(a), 226(b), 226(e), 226(h), 226.3, 226.7, 227.3, 246, 510, 512, 512(a), 551, 552, 558, 1030, 1031, 1032, 1033, 1034, 1174(d), 1174.5, 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2800, 2801, and 2802, as well as claims for unfair competition/unfair business practices under the Unfair Competition Laws, Business & Professions Code sections 17200, et seq. based on any of the foregoing alleged failures/claims. ("Released Class Claims")

Except as set forth in Section 5.3 of this Agreement, Participating Class Members do not release any other claims, including claims for vested benefits, wrongful termination, violation of the Fair Employment and Housing Act, unemployment insurance, disability, social security, or workers' compensation or claims based on events occurring outside the Class Period.

Settlement Agreement at § 5.2, 5.2.1, 5.2.2.

Release by PAGA Employees:

All PAGA Employees, including Non-Participating Class Members who are PAGA Employees, are deemed to release, on behalf of themselves and their respective former and present representatives, agents, attorneys, administrators, successors, and assigns, the Released Parties from all claims for civil penalties under the California Private Attorneys General Act of 2004 ("PAGA"), Labor Code sections 2698 et seq., arising during the PAGA Period that were alleged, or reasonably could have been alleged, based on the facts and allegations in the Operative Complaint and the PAGA Notice ("Released PAGA Claims"):

(i) failure to properly calculate and pay minimum wages, contractual straight-time wages, and wages at the proper regular rate of pay for all work performed; (ii) failure to pay wages for off-the-clock work; (iii) failure to pay all overtime and double time wages (including failure to pay overtime, double time, meal/rest premiums, and/or sick time wages at the correct regular rate of pay); (iv) failure to provide for compliant meal periods; (v) failure to provide for compliant rest periods; (vi) failure to pay premiums (or correct premiums) for non-compliant meal and rest periods; (vii) failure to provide for and/or calculate and pay paid sick leave pay; (viii) failure to include bonuses or other incentive compensation in the regular rate of pay calculation or to weight wage rates properly when calculating the regular rate of pay, bonus, and incentive pay; (ix) failure timely to pay wages due at termination and during employment; (x) failure to provide accurate, itemized wage statements; (xi) failure to pay employees two times per month or timely during employment;

and (xii) all claims under Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 210, 221, 226, 226(a), 226(b), 226(e), 226(h), 226.3, 226.7, 227.3, 246, 510, 512, 512(a), 551, 552, 558, 1030, 1031, 1032, 1033, 1034, 1174(d), 1174.5, 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2800, 2801, 2802, and 2699.

Settlement Agreement at § 5.3, 5.3.1.

Only Plaintiff will agree to a general release and a waiver of Civil Code § 1542. Settlement Agreement at §§ 5.1, 5.1.1.

IV. THE PROPOSED SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT MEETS ALL CRITERIA FOR PRELIMINARY APPROVAL

A. Provisional Certification of the Class is Appropriate

Class certification is appropriate when there is: (1) an ascertainable and sufficiently numerous class; (2) a well-defined community of interest among class members; and (3) substantial benefits from certification that render proceeding as a class superior to the alternatives. *Brinker Restaurant Corp. v. Superior Court*, 53 Cal.4th 1004, 1021 (2012). Although courts still need to review and consider each element for certification, a lesser standard can be used to provisionally certify a settlement class. *Global Minerals & Metals Corp. v. Superior Court*, 113 Cal.App.4th 836, 859 (2003).

1. The Proposed Class is Numerous and Ascertainable

"Ascertainability" is determined by examining the class definition and the size of the class and may also involve examining the means available to identify class members. *Noel v. Thrifty Payless, Inc.*, 7 Cal.5th 955, 980-981, 985-986 (2019). As the settlement eliminates the need for trial, "the case management issues inherent in the ascertainable class determination need not be confronted." *Global Minerals*, 113 Cal.App.4th at 859. Further, under California law, there is no minimum number of class members for maintenance of a class action. *Hendershot v. Ready to Roll Transp., Inc.*, 228 Cal.App.4th 1213, 1222 (2014). Class sizes as small as 10 have been permitted. *Rose v. City of Hayward*, 126 Cal.App.3d 926, 934 (1981), disapproved on other grounds by *Noel*, 7 Cal.5th at 986.

The Class here consists of all current and former hourly, non-exempt employees who were employed by Defendants in the State of California during the Class Period. *See* Settlement

Agreement at § 1.5, 1.13. The Class is also readily ascertainable from Defendants' business records, because all Class Members are or were employees of Defendants. *Id*. Defendants' records show there are approximately 296 Class Members, making joinder of all Class Members impracticable. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 10.

2. A Well-Defined Community of Interest Exists

The community of interest requirement embodies three factors: (1) predominant common questions of law or fact; (2) class representatives with claims or defenses typical of the class; and (3) class representatives who can adequately represent the class. *Brinker*, 53 Cal.4th at 1021.

a. Common Questions Predominate

In determining whether common issues "predominate," courts consider both plaintiff's legal theories and defendant's affirmative defenses. *Duran v. U.S. Bank Nat'l Ass'n*, 59 Cal.4th 1, 28-29 (2014). The "predominate common questions" factor does not require that all class members have identical claims. *Ayala v. Antelope Valley Newspapers, Inc.*, 59 Cal.4th 522, 530 (2014). Rather, the focus is on whether issues shared by the class members are sufficiently uniform to permit class-wide assessment, and whether individual variations in proof on those issues are manageable. *Id.*

Plaintiff has alleged that Defendants maintained common employment policies and/or practices that unlawfully deprived Class Members of wages, meal periods, rest periods, reimbursements for business expenses, accurate wage statements, and timely payment of wages upon separation of employment. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 11. These allegations present common factual and legal questions of, *inter alia*, whether Defendants applied the same scheduling, timekeeping, pay, meal period, rest period, and reimbursement policies to all Class Members, whether these policies and practices resulted in Labor Code violations, whether Defendants' conduct was intentional, and whether Class Members are entitled to damages and/or penalties. *Id*. These common questions could be resolved using Class Members' time records, payroll records, testimony from Defendants' designated representative(s), and Class Members' testimony. *Id*. Therefore, the Court can and should exercise its discretion to grant conditional class certification for settlement purposes.

b. *Plaintiff is Typical of the Class*

Typicality does not require that the representative plaintiff's claims and those of the class members be identical or perfectly aligned. *Wershba v. Apple Computer, Inc.*, 91 Cal.App.4th 224, 228 (2001), disapproved on other grounds by *Hernandez v. Restoration Hardware, Inc.*, 4 Cal.5th 260 (2018). Typicality does not require that a plaintiff's claims be identical to those of other class members, only that their claims and the defenses applicable to them are sufficiently similar to those of other class members that a named plaintiff is able to adequately represent the class and focus on common issues. *Medrazo v. Honda of North Hollywood*, 166 Cal.App.4th 89, 99 (2008).

Plaintiff has alleged that he and Class Members were employed by the same Defendants and injured by Defendants' common wage and hour policies and practices, including Defendants' scheduling, timekeeping, pay, meal period, rest period, and reimbursement policies. *See* Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 11. Through informal discovery, Plaintiff confirmed that these challenged policies and practices applied to Plaintiff and Class Members alike. *See id.* at ¶ 9. Therefore, Plaintiff's claims and Class Members' claims arise from the same challenged employment policies and practices and are based on the same legal theories.

c. *Plaintiff and Plaintiff's Counsel Will Adequately Represent the Class*

Certification requires adequacy of both the proposed class representative and of the proposed class counsel. Cal. Code Civ. Proc. § 382. "Only a conflict that goes to the very subject matter of the litigation will defeat a party's claim of representative status." *Richmond v. Dart Industries*, 29 Cal.3d 462, 470 (1981). Only conflicts that are "irreconcilable" can defeat adequacy. *Nat'l Solar Equip. Owners' Ass'n v. Grumman Corp.*, 235 Cal.App.3d 1273, 1286 (1991). The proposed representative Plaintiff and proposed Class Counsel present no such conflict.

Plaintiff's interests are coextensive with Class Members' interests. Declaration of Michael Barca in Support of Plaintiff's MPA ("Barca Decl.") at ¶ 6. Plaintiff has demonstrated an ability to advocate for the interests of Class Members by initiating this lawsuit, providing information to his attorneys, meeting with his attorneys regarding the claims, making himself available the day of mediation to answer questions, and reviewing the proposed Settlement. *Id.* at ¶ 11.

Likewise, Wilshire Law Firm has expended considerable time and effort on this case and

will continue to do so through final approval. *See generally*, Hajjar Decl. Therefore, Plaintiff should be appointed Class Representative, and his counsel should be appointed Class Counsel.

3. A Class Action is Superior to a Multitude of Individual Lawsuits

Courts have held that class treatment of wage and hour claims is clearly "superior to the other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the controversy." *Dean Witter Reynolds, Inc. v. Superior Court*, 211 Cal.App.3d 758, 772-773 (1989). This is so because "[p]ublic policy has long favored the 'full and prompt payment of wages due an employee.'" *Sav-On Drug Stores, Inc. v. Superior Court*, 34 Cal.4th 319, 340 (2004). Here, a class action is superior to a multitude of individual lawsuits. Given the size and amount of each Class Member's claim, Class Members have little incentive to litigate their claims on an individual basis because the out-of-pocket expenses and personal commitment necessary to litigate each claim likely outweigh any potential recovery. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 10. Therefore, a class action is the superior method for seeking relief.

B. The Settlement Meets the Standards for Preliminary Approval

The moving party must demonstrate that "the settlement is fair, adequate and reasonable." *Kullar v. Foot Locker Retail, Inc.*, 168 Cal.App.4th 116, 126 (2008). "In determining whether a class settlement is fair, adequate, and reasonable, the trial court should consider relevant factors, such as 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." *Wershba*, 91 Cal.App.4th at 244-245 (internal quotations and citations omitted).

1. The Settlement is Entitled to a Presumption of Fairness

A settlement is entitled to "a presumption of fairness . . . 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." *Dunk v. Ford Motor Co.*, 48 Cal.App.4th 1794, 1801 (1996).

The Settlement here satisfies the first three factors. Plaintiff will analyze the fourth factor at final approval after Class Members have been notified of the Settlement and provided with an opportunity to object.

a. *The Settlement is the Result of Arm's Length Negotiation*

Courts have recognized that the involvement of a respected mediator provides a high degree of assurance that the settlement is the result of arm's length bargaining. *See Chavez v. Netflix, Inc.*, 162 Cal.App.4th 43, 52-53 (2008). The Settlement in this matter was the product of a full-day mediation session with a respected mediator. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 6. The negotiations were adversarial, conducted at arm's length, and tempered by the efforts of both sides to serve the interests of their clients. *Id.*

b. *Sufficient Investigation and Discovery Have Been Conducted*

Prior to attending mediation, Plaintiff's Counsel thoroughly investigated the claims, applicable law, and potential defenses. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 9. Plaintiff's Counsel assessed the value to the class claims using the data and documents that Defendants produced in informal discovery, including class data providing the number of Class Members, the number of workweeks in the Class Period, and the number of pay periods in the PAGA Period, Plaintiff's personnel file and documents concerning Plaintiff, Defendants' employee handbooks, Defendants' written wage-and-hour policies, job descriptions, and a random sampling of time and payroll records.. *Id.*

c. *Plaintiff's Counsel is Experienced in Similar Litigation*

Plaintiff is represented by Wilshire Law Firm, PLC. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 22. Plaintiff's Counsel has extensive experience litigating wage and hour class actions on behalf of employees. *See Id.* at ¶¶ 22-29. Plaintiff's Counsel has been involved as counsel in numerous class actions that have resulted in millions of dollars in recovery. *See Id.*

2. The Settlement is Reasonable Given the Strengths of Plaintiff's Claims and the Risks and Expense of Further Litigation

A settlement does not have to provide 100% of the damages sought to be considered fair and reasonable. *See Rebney v. Wells Fargo Bank*, 220 Cal.App.3d 1117, 1139 (1991). Although the exposure Plaintiff's Counsel calculated is substantial, the various risks at succeeding at class

certification and through trial affected the valuation of the claims for settlement purposes. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 12.

Minimum and Overtime Wages: Plaintiff's unpaid minimum and overtime wage claims were based on the allegation that Defendants required Class Members to perform work duties while off the clock, without compensation. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 13. For example, Plaintiff alleged that Defendants required him and other Class Members to lock up after clocking out. *Id*. For purposes of calculating Defendants' liability based on a best-case scenario for Plaintiff and the Class, Plaintiff's Counsel assumed that all unpaid work time should have been paid at the overtime rate of pay and conservatively estimated that Defendants are liable for one (1) hour of unpaid worktime per workweek. *Id*. This results in potential exposure for this claim of approximately $648,754.22 (24,449 workweeks x $17.69 average hourly rate of pay x 1 hour/workweek x 1.5 overtime rate). Because this claim would have relied heavily on Class Member testimony and would not be evidenced in Defendants' time and payroll records, the risk of succeeding at class certification and trial was substantial. Additionally, Defendants contend that their written policies prohibit off the clock work, their practices prohibit off the clock, and they had no knowledge or constructive knowledge of Plaintiff or any other employees working off the clock. Accordingly, Plaintiff's Counsel applied a risk discount based on a 40% chance of succeeding at class certification and a 40% chance of succeeding at trial on the merits, yielding a realistic damage estimate of approximately $162,188.56 ($648,754.22 x 50% x 50%). *Id*.

Meal Periods: Plaintiff's meal period claim was based on the allegation that Defendants failed to provide Class Members with legally compliant meal periods or pay meal period premiums in lieu thereof. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 14. For example, Plaintiff alleged that Defendants required him and other Class Members to take short, late, or interrupted meal periods. *Id*. Additionally, Plaintiff's Counsel's consultant determined there was a 39.8% meal period violation rate (for shifts over 5 hours) from the sampling of Defendants' time and payroll records, where meal periods were short, late, or missed. *Id*. Therefore, potential liability for the meal period claim is approximately $558,835.13 (79,373 shifts over 5 hours x $17.69 average hourly rate x 39.8% violation rate). *Id*. After taking into account the difficulty of certifying and proving meal period claims, as well as

Defendants' contentions that the claim lacks merit because the alleged violation rate disregards valid meal waivers signed by Class Members, the majority of the alleged violations were waivable, and meal premiums paid if there was a potential meal violation, Plaintiff's Counsel discounted this figure based on a 50% chance of succeeding at class certification and a 50% chance of succeeding at trial, yielding a realistic damage estimate of approximately $139,708.79 ($558,835.13 x 50% x 50%). *Id*.

Rest Periods: Plaintiff's rest period claim was based on the allegation that Defendants failed to provide Class Members with legally compliant rest periods or pay rest period premiums in lieu thereof. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 15. For example, Plaintiff alleged that Defendants required him and other Class Members to take short, late, or interrupted rest periods. *Id*. Based on Plaintiff's allegations and Plaintiff's and other Class Members' experience working for Defendants, Plaintiff's Counsel applied a 63.4% violation rate to all qualifying shifts during the Class Period. Therefore, Defendants' potential liability for the rest period claim is approximately $1,088,516.47 (97,055 shifts of 3.5 hours or longer x $17.69 average hourly rate x 63.4% violation rate). However, Plaintiff's Counsel discounted this figure to account for the difficulty of certifying and proving rest period claims, and to account for the possibility of Class Members voluntarily choosing to forego a rest period. *Id*. Because this claim would have relied exclusively on Class Member testimony, Plaintiff's Counsel discounted this claim based on a 60% chance of succeeding at class certification and a 50% chance of succeeding at trial, yielding a realistic damage estimate of approximately $326,554.94 ($1,088,516.47 x 60% x 50%). *Id*.

In sum, Plaintiff's Counsel estimated that Plaintiff's maximum recovery for the off-the-clock claim, meal period violations, and rest period violations (i.e., the wage claims) is approximately $2,296,105.82. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 16. However, after factoring in the risk and uncertainty of prevailing at certification and trial, Plaintiff's Counsel estimates that Plaintiff's realistic estimated recovery for these non-penalty wage claims is approximately $628,452.29. *Id*.

Reimbursements: Plaintiff's reimbursement claim was based on the allegation that Defendants failed to indemnify Class Members for expenses incurred as a direct result of performing their job duties for Defendants, such as mandatory use of personal cell phones for work

purposes. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 16. For purposes of calculating Defendants' liability based on a best-case scenario for Plaintiff and the Class, Plaintiff's Counsel estimated that Defendants were liable to each Class Member for $12.50 per workweek in unreimbursed expenses, for a total amount of approximately $305,612.50 ($12.50 x 24,449 workweeks). *Id*. However, Defendants argued that these expenses were not required by Defendants, and that it could not have known that these expenses were being incurred. *Id*. Accordingly, Plaintiff's Counsel discounted this claim based on a 50% chance of succeeding at class certification and a 50% chance of succeeding at trial, yielding a realistic damage estimate of approximately $76,403.13 ($305,612.50 x 50% x 50%). *Id*.

Derivative Penalties: Plaintiff alleged that as a result of Defendants' failure to pay all wages owed, Defendants owed waiting time penalties and wage statement penalties. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 18. With respect to Plaintiff's derivative claims for statutory penalties, Plaintiff's Counsel estimated that Defendants' maximum potential liability is approximately $1,250.699.91. *Id*. Defendants' maximum potential liability for waiting time penalties is approximately $690,599.91 ([169 employees x $17.69 average hourly rate of pay x 7.6 hours/day x 30 days] based on approximately 169 formerly employed Class Members during the 3-year statute of limitations period and an average shift length of 7.6 hours. *Id*. Defendants' maximum potential liability for inaccurate wage statements is approximately $560,100.00 ([184employees x 1 initial violation/employee x $50 for an initial violation] + [5,693 pay periods - 184 initial violations) x $100 for each subsequent violation]). *Id*. In light of the foregoing, Plaintiff's Counsel believes that it would be unrealistic to expect the Court to award the full $1,250.699.91 in statutory penalties given Defendants' defenses, the contested nature of Plaintiff's claims, the challenges of establishing willfulness as applicable, and the discretionary nature of penalties. *Id*. Considering that the underlying wage claims are realistically estimated to be approximately $628,452.29, such a disproportionate award would also raise due process concerns. *Id*. As such, Plaintiff's counsel discounted these figures to account for the risk and uncertainty of obtaining class certification and prevailing at trial, resulting in a realistic evaluation of approximately $172,649.98 for waiting time penalty claims ($690,599.91 x 50% x 50%), and approximately $140,025.00 for wage statement penalty claims ($560,100.00 x 50% x 50%), or approximately $312,674.98 total for statutory penalties. *Id.*

PAGA: For the PAGA claim, Plaintiff's Counsel determined that Defendants' potential exposure could reach $569,300.00, assuming the initial $100 penalty would apply for each of the 5,693 pay periods in the PAGA Period. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 19. However, even assuming success on the merits of each claim, PAGA gives the Court discretion to reduce penalties for a variety of reasons, including where to do otherwise would result in an award that is unjust, arbitrary and oppressive, or confiscatory. *Id*. As such, Plaintiff's counsel discounted this figure to account for the risk and uncertainty of prevailing at trial, resulting in a realistic evaluation of approximately $56,930.00 for PAGA penalties ($569,300.00 x 10%). *Id*. The settlement allocates $105,000.00 of the Gross Settlement Amount to PAGA. Therefore, the PAGA allocation amounts to 10% of the Gross Settlement Amount and approximately 184% of the realistic PAGA allocation estimate for PAGA penalties ($105,000.00 / $56,930.00). *Id.*

Using these estimated figures, Plaintiff's Counsel predicted that the realistic maximum recovery for all claims, including penalties, would be approximately $1,074,460.40. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 20. This means that the gross settlement amount represents approximately 98% of the realistic maximum recovery ($1,050,000.00/ $1,074,460.40). *Id*. Considering the risk and uncertainty of prevailing at class certification and at trial, this is an excellent result for the Class. *Id*. Indeed, because of the proposed Settlement, Class Members will receive timely, guaranteed relief and will avoid the risk of an unfavorable judgment. *Id*.

Based on the figures in the Settlement Agreement, the Net Settlement Amount available for class settlement payments is currently estimated to be $517,500.00 for approximately 296 Class Members. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 21. As a result, each Class Member would be eligible to receive an average net benefit of approximately $1,748.31. *Id*. Based on the estimated Net Settlement Amount available for individual class payments and there being approximately 24,449 workweeks in the Class Period, the estimated weekly valuation for Individual Class Payments is $21.17 ($517,500.00/ 24,449 workweeks). *Id*.

C. The Requested Service Payment is Reasonable

Plaintiff seeks a Class Representative Service Payment of up to $10,000.00 for accepting the responsibilities of representing the interests of the Class and potential costs that were not borne

by any other Class Member. Settlement Agreement at § 3.2.1. A named plaintiff is eligible for payment that reasonably compensates the plaintiff for undertaking and fulfilling a fiduciary duty to represent absent class members. *See Cellphone Termination Fee Cases*, 186 Cal.App.4th 1380, 1393 (2010); *Bell v. Farmers Ins. Exch.*, 115 Cal.App.4th 715, 726 (2004).

Throughout this case, Plaintiff assisted counsel in providing information necessary to prosecute the claims, meeting with counsel regarding the claims, maintaining regular contact with counsel, making himself available the day of mediation to answer questions, and reviewing the Settlement to ensure it was fair to the Class. Barca Decl. at ¶ 11. No action would likely have been taken by Class Members individually and no compensation would have been recovered for them, but for Plaintiff's services on behalf of the Class. By actively pursuing this action, Plaintiff furthered the California public policy goal of enforcing the State's wage-and-hour laws. *See Sav-On*, 34 Cal.4th at 340. The requested Class Representative Service Payment is reasonable and should be preliminarily approved. Plaintiff has provided a declaration regarding his work performed to date and will provide additional information as requested or required by the Court at final approval.

D. The Requested Attorneys' Fees and Costs Are Reasonable

The purpose of an attorneys' fee award in class action litigation is to reward counsel who invested in a case despite the risk of non-payment and achieved a substantial positive result for the class. California courts routinely award attorneys' fees equaling one-third or more of the potential value of the common fund. *See Chavez*, 162 Cal.App.4th at 66, fn. 11 ("Empirical studies show that, regardless of whether the percentage method or the lodestar method is used, fee awards in class actions average around one-third of the recovery.").

Plaintiff seeks appointment of Wilshire Law Firm, PLC as Class Counsel. The attorneys performed significant work and expended litigation costs in prosecuting this matter with no guarantee of payment. Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 22. Plaintiff's Counsel seeks preliminary approval for up to 35% of the Gross Settlement Amount in attorneys' fees, currently estimated to be $367,500.00, and up to $25,000.00 in reimbursement of litigation costs. Given the work performed in this matter, the extensive information exchange, and the substantial recovery obtained on behalf of the Class,

Plaintiff's Counsel achieved a settlement through efficient and diligent work. *See generally*, Hajjar Decl. At final approval, Plaintiff's Counsel will fully brief the merits of its request for the award of attorneys' fees and litigation costs.

E. The Administration Costs Are Reasonable

The Parties have agreed to use Phoenix to administer this Settlement. Settlement Agreement at §§ 1.2, 7.1. Plaintiff seeks preliminary approval of $25,000.00 for Phoenix to administer this Settlement pursuant to Phoenix's will-not-exceed bid. *See* Hajjar Decl. at ¶ 32. The services covered by this payment are extensive and necessary to carry out the Settlement administration.

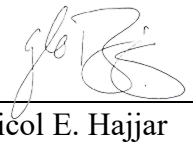
V. CONCLUSION

The Parties have negotiated a fair and reasonable settlement of the class claims in light of the risks presented in this case. Plaintiff has presented the materials and information necessary to demonstrate that the requirements for preliminary approval have been met, and therefore respectfully requests that the Court preliminarily approve the Settlement and schedule a date for the final approval hearing.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: October 30, 2026

WILSHIRE LAW FIRM, PLC

By: 

Nicol E. Hajjar
Rachel J. Vinson
Giancarlo A. Recinos
Attorneys for Plaintiff