

1 Karen I. Gold (State Bar No. 258360)
kgold@blackstonepc.com
2 Marissa A. Mayhood (State Bar No. 334376)
mmayhood@blackstonepc.com
3 Alexandra Rose (State Bar No. 329407)
arose@blackstonepc.com
4 James S. Winn Jr. (State Bar No. 349690)
jwinn@blackstonepc.com
5 **BLACKSTONE LAW, APC**
6 8383 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 745
7 Beverly Hills, California 90211
Tel: (310) 622-4278 / Fax: (855) 786-6356

8 Attorneys for Plaintiff JOSE RAMIREZ,
9 individually, and on behalf of Aggrieved
10 Employees pursuant to the California
Private Attorneys General Act

11 **SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**
12 **FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO**

13 JOSE RAMIREZ, individually, and on behalf
14 of Aggrieved Employees pursuant to the
California Private Attorneys General Act,

15 Plaintiff,

16 vs.

17 A.J. KIRKWOOD & ASSOCIATES, INC.;
18 and DOES 1 through 25, inclusive,

19 Defendants.
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

Case No. 24CU012580C

Honorable Wendy M. Behan
Department C-66

**DECLARATION OF JAMES S. WINN JR. IN
SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR
APPROVAL OF PAGA SETTLEMENT AND
AWARD OF ATTORNEYS' FEES AND
COSTS, SERVICE AWARD, AND
SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION COSTS**

Date: April 24, 2026
Time: 10:15 a.m.
Department: C-66

Complaint Filed: September 23, 2024
Trial Date: Not Set

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- 26
- 27
- 28

I, James S. Winn Jr., declare and state as follows:

1. I am an attorney admitted to practice in all Courts of the State of California. I am a member of Blackstone Law, APC (“Plaintiff’s Counsel”), attorneys of record for Plaintiff Jose Ramirez (“Plaintiff”). I submit this declaration in support of Plaintiff’s Motion for Approval of PAGA Settlement and Award of Attorneys’ Fees and Costs, Service Award, and Settlement Administration Costs (“Motion”). I have personal knowledge of the facts contained herein, and, if called to testify, I could and would competently do so.

Procedural History

2. Defendant A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc. (“Defendant”) provides comprehensive facilities services ranging from mechanical maintenance and operations to energy-efficiency upgrades and interior/exterior maintenance for electrical, construction, and systems technologies. Defendant employed Plaintiff as an hourly-paid, non-exempt employee from approximately June 2017 to approximately September 2023 in the positions of Journeyman and then Foreman Electrician.

3. On July 17, 2024, Plaintiff provided written notice by electronic submission to the California and Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”) and by U.S. Certified Mail to Defendant, pursuant to California Labor Code § 2699.3, of the specific provisions of the California Labor Code alleged to have been violated (“LWDA Notice”). A true and correct copy of the LWDA Notice is attached hereto as **Exhibit 1**.

4. On July 19, 2024, Plaintiff filed a Class Action Complaint in the action entitled *Jose Ramirez v. A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc.*, San Diego County Superior Court Case No. 24CU002090C (“Class Action”), thereby commencing a putative class action against Defendant.

5. On September 23, 2024, Plaintiff filed a Complaint for Enforcement Action Under the Private Attorneys General Act, Cal. Labor Code §§ 2698 *Et Seq.* (“Operative Complaint”) in the action entitled *Jose Ramirez v. A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc.*, San Diego County Superior Court Case No 24CU012580C (“Action”). The Operative Complaint asserts a single cause of action for civil penalties under the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, California Labor Code section 2698, *et seq.* (“PAGA”) for violations of multiple provisions of the California Labor Code and the applicable

1 Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Orders.

2 6. On April 2, 2025, pursuant to the joint stipulation of the Parties, Plaintiff's individual
3 claims in the Class Action were ordered to arbitration and the class claims in the Class Action were
4 dismissed without prejudice.

5 7. On June 24, 2025, Plaintiff and Defendant (together, the "Parties") participated in a
6 formal mediation conducted by Tagore Subramaniam, Esq., a neutral and respected mediator with
7 extensive experience in complex wage and hour matters, which did not result in a settlement at that
8 time.

9 8. On June 25, 2025, Plaintiff propounded formal written discovery onto Defendant
10 (specifically, Special Interrogatories (Set One) and Requests for Production of Documents (Set One))
11 and served a proposed Belaire-West notice.

12 9. On July 21, 2025, the Parties were ultimately able to reach an agreement to resolve the
13 Action in its entirety.

14 10. On February 27, 2026, the Private Attorneys General Act Settlement Agreement and
15 Release ("Settlement," "Agreement," or "Settlement Agreement") was fully executed by the Parties.
16 A true and correct copy of the Settlement Agreement is attached hereto as **Exhibit 2**.

17 11. During the course of informal discovery in the Action, Plaintiff's Counsel conducted
18 an intense investigation into the facts of the Action. This included obtaining data, information, and
19 documents relating to the underlying alleged violations, including, but not limited to, Plaintiff's
20 employee file, a sampling of Aggrieved Employees' time and payroll data, relevant wage and hour
21 policies, and Aggrieved Employees' data points so that Plaintiff could assess the number of alleged
22 potential violations and value of the recoverable penalties, as well as evaluate the strengths and
23 weakness of his claims.

24 12. Based on the data, information, and documents received, as well as thorough
25 discussions with Defendant's counsel, Plaintiff's Counsel was able to (i) determine the total number
26 of distinct individuals falling within the definition of "Aggrieved Employees" for the relevant statutory
27 period, (ii) the number of affected pay periods at issue among them, and (iii) construct a damages
28 model that calculated the maximum realistic amount of PAGA penalties that could be levied against

1 Defendant within the relevant statutory period. Defendant, however, disputed Plaintiff's claims and
2 disputed both the existence of and extent of liability as alleged by Plaintiff, which allowed Plaintiff's
3 Counsel to further assess the strength of Plaintiff's claims. Plaintiff's Counsel's experience in
4 litigating similar representative wage and hour claims, the degree of investigation that was conducted
5 here, and the amount of data, information, and documents that was obtained, was sufficient to
6 determine the potential value of the PAGA claims, and to evaluate the strength of these claims for
7 purposes of settlement.

8 13. The Parties believe the Settlement Agreement is fair, reasonable, and adequate. The
9 Parties understand, acknowledge, and agree that the Settlement Agreement constitutes a compromise
10 of Plaintiff's PAGA claims, and that it is the desire and intention of the Parties to affect a final and
11 complete resolution of the Action.

12 14. Defendant denies all of the claims in the Action, and does not waive, but rather
13 expressly reserves, all rights to challenge all such claims and allegations upon all legal, procedural,
14 and factual grounds should the Settlement Agreement not become final. The Settlement Agreement
15 reflects a compromise reached to end litigation in the Action. Following significant investigation and
16 extensive settlement negotiations, Plaintiff now seeks approval of the proposed Settlement Agreement,
17 which will resolve all representative claims alleged in the Action.

18 **Notice to the LWDA**

19 15. In accordance with California Labor Code sections 2699 *et. seq.*, on March 16, 2026, a
20 copy of the proposed Settlement Agreement was submitted to the LWDA via online submission
21 through the LWDA's website. A true and correct copy of the email from the LWDA confirming
22 receipt is attached hereto as **Exhibit 3**.

23 **Summary of the Terms of the Settlement Agreement**

24 16. For purposes of settlement only, the Parties have agreed that the "Aggrieved
25 Employees" shall be defined as "all current and former hourly-paid and/or non-exempt employees
26 who worked for Defendant in the State of California at any time during the PAGA Period." The
27 "PAGA Period" is the period from July 17, 2023 through August 23, 2025. There are approximately
28 Four Hundred Fourteen (414) Aggrieved Employees who worked approximately Fifteen Thousand

Four Hundred Thirty-One (15,431) pay periods for Defendant during the PAGA Period (“Pay Periods”).¹

17. The Parties have agreed to settle the PAGA claims at issue in the Action for a non-reversionary Gross Settlement Amount of Two Hundred Thirty-Five Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$235,000.00) plus an additional Six Thousand Sixteen Dollars and Zero Cents (\$6,016.00) per the terms of the escalator clause in the Settlement Agreement. The Gross Settlement Amount is a common fund and therefore includes all requested costs, fees, and other allocations. The escalated Gross Settlement Amount includes: (1) counsel’s fees in the amount of thirty-five (35%) of the escalated Gross Settlement Amount (i.e., \$84,355.60); (2) counsel’s actual litigation costs and expenses in the amount of Eighteen Thousand Four Hundred Thirty-Four Dollars and Eighty-Six Cents (\$18,434.86); (3) Service Award in the amount of Five Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$5,000.00) to Plaintiff; and (4) Settlement Administration Costs, not to exceed Five Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$5,000.00).

18. After the above-estimated amounts are deducted from the escalated Gross Settlement Amount, the Net Settlement Amount will amount to One Hundred Twenty-Eight Thousand Two Hundred Twenty-Five Dollars and Fifty-Four Cents (\$128,225.54), of which sixty-five percent (65%), or Eighty-Three Thousand Three Hundred Forty-Six Dollars and Sixty Cents (\$83,346.60), will be paid to the LWDA (“LWDA Payment”), and thirty-five percent (35%), or Forty-Four Thousand Eight Hundred Seventy-Eight Dollars and Ninety-Four Cents (\$44,878.94), will be distributed and paid to Aggrieved Employees (“Employees’ Portion”) on a *pro rata* basis based upon their number of Pay Periods.

19. Since it was determined that the total number of Pay Periods worked by the Aggrieved Employees during the PAGA Period actually exceeds 13,709 by more than 10% (i.e., if the Pay Periods exceed 15,080), the Gross Settlement Amount will be increased proportionally by the Pay Periods in

¹ At the time of mediation, Defendant represented that there were 13,709 Pay Periods. Accordingly, the escalator clause in Section 4(a)(6) of the Settlement Agreement has been triggered by 351 Pay Periods or 2.56% above the 10% threshold. Defendant has opted to increase the Gross Settlement Amount proportionally by the Pay Periods in excess of the 10% threshold for an additional amount of \$6,016 as verified by the proposed administrator ILYM Group, Inc.

1 excess of the 10% threshold.² In this instance, the number of Pay Periods increased by 12.56% through
2 the PAGA Period, and therefore the Gross Settlement Amount shall increase by 2.56% or Six
3 Thousand Sixteen Dollars and Zero Cents (\$6,016.00).

4 20. No later than seven (7) calendar days after the Court's order granting approval of the
5 Settlement, Defendant will diligently and in good faith compile from its records and provide the
6 Settlement Administrator a list of all Aggrieved Employees containing the following information for
7 each Aggrieved Employee: (i) first and last name; (ii) last known address; (iii) last known telephone
8 number; (iv) Social Security number; (v) start and end dates of employment; and (vi) number of Pay
9 Periods (collectively, "PAGA List").

10 21. No later than seven (7) calendar days of receiving the PAGA List and escalated Gross
11 Settlement Amount, the Settlement Administrator will distribute the Individual PAGA Payments along
12 with the Cover Letter to Aggrieved Employees, the LWDA Payment to the LWDA, the Service Award
13 to Plaintiff, the Attorneys' Fees and Costs to Plaintiff's Counsel, and the Settlement Administration
14 Costs to itself.

15 22. The Individual PAGA Payment checks issued to Aggrieved Employees shall remain
16 valid for one hundred eighty (180) calendar days, and thereafter, shall be canceled. Funds associated
17 with such canceled checks shall be transmitted to the State Controller's Office Unclaimed Property
18 Division in the name of the Aggrieved Employee(s) at issue and in the amount of their respective
19 Individual PAGA Payment(s).

20 **The Agreement is Fair and Reasonable and Took Into Consideration the Strengths and**
21 **Weaknesses of Plaintiff's Claims and the Defenses thereto, as well as the Risks and Benefits of**
22 **the Agreement**

23 23. Here, the Agreement is presumptively fair because: (1) it occurred after counsel for the
24 Parties engaged in significant investigation to evaluate the strength and potential value of the PAGA
25 claims, and the risks of litigating these claims through trial; and (2) it was negotiated at great length
26 and effort by counsel with significant experience in similar complex labor and employment matters.

27 _____
28 ² See n.1.

1 24. This case and settlement address important employee protections embodied in the
2 California Labor Code. Plaintiff's core allegations are that Defendant systematically violated the
3 California Labor Code by, *inter alia*, failing to properly pay wages for all hours worked, failing to pay
4 overtime at the correct rate, failing to provide compliant meal and rest periods, failing to pay premiums
5 at the correct rate of pay, failing to timely pay wages during employment and upon termination, failing
6 to maintain accurate payroll records, failing to provide accurate wage statements, and failing to
7 reimburse necessary business expenses.

8 25. Defendant maintained several defenses to Plaintiff's theories of liability, which, if
9 successfully argued and proven, had the potential to eliminate or substantially reduce recovery.
10 Throughout this litigation, Defendant maintained, and continues to maintain, that it had, and continues
11 to have, compliant employment policies and practices throughout the time period at issue. Defendant
12 denies that it ever violated any provision of the California Labor Code, including, but not limited to,
13 those sections for which Plaintiff seeks penalties under PAGA. Defendant further denied, and
14 continues to deny, that the lawsuit is appropriate for representative treatment for any purpose other
15 than settlement. Defendant also challenged Plaintiff's standing as an aggrieved employee and denied
16 that any of Defendant's other employees whom Plaintiff seeks to represent are aggrieved. Defendant
17 also argued that an important feature of PAGA is that the Court retains discretion to lower the penalties
18 if, based on the facts and circumstances of the particular case, to do otherwise would result in an award
19 that is "unjust, arbitrary and oppressive, or confiscatory."

20 26. Even if violations of the California Labor Code occurred, which Defendant denies,
21 Defendant contended that said violations would only be considered "initial violations" and thus
22 heightened "subsequent violation" penalties were not warranted.

23 27. Defendant also contended that, with respect to PAGA claims, the Court was unlikely
24 to assess cumulative penalties for the maximum number of possible, separate California Labor Code
25 violations, because it would be unjust, arbitrary, oppressive, and/or confiscatory, especially where
26 certain conduct may be regulated by multiple provisions of the California Labor Code that are
27 interrelated and work in tandem.

28 ///

1 28. Defendant further contended that it took all reasonable steps to be in compliance with
2 all provisions identified in the LWDA Letter pursuant to California Labor Code Section 2699(g) and
3 (h).

4 29. While Plaintiff maintains that his PAGA claims have merit, in reaching the Agreement,
5 Plaintiff and his counsel took into account the strengths and weaknesses of each side's position, and
6 the uncertainty of how the case might have concluded as litigation continued, at trial, and/or upon
7 appeal. The Agreement achieves a sizeable benefit obtained.

8 30. As set forth in the Motion, the California Labor Code does not set forth the criteria by
9 which a PAGA settlement is to be evaluated; it is presumed that a reviewing court may take into
10 consideration some of the factors that courts use when reviewing a class action settlement.³ "[A]
11 PAGA claim asserted on a non-class representative basis...is not considered a class action but a law
12 enforcement action, and therefore does not have to meet the requirements of [a class action]." *Casida*
13 *v. Sears Holdings Corp.*, 2012 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 9302 at *8 (E.D. Cal. Jan. 25, 2012). However, a
14 discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each claim, along with an estimate of the total potential
15 recovery is as follows:

16 *i. Unpaid Wages*

17 31. Plaintiff alleges that Defendant failed to compensate Plaintiff and the Aggrieved
18 Employees at their applicable minimum, regular, and overtime rates for their work, failed to
19 compensate them for all hours that they worked, and engaged in a rounding practice which was entirely
20 in favor of Defendant. For example, Plaintiff alleged that Plaintiff and the other Aggrieved Employees
21 had to work off-the-clock, which included, *inter alia*, arriving at the job site 15 to 30 minutes before
22 the schedule start of their shifts to open the site, preparing for the day, completing paperwork,
23 attending meetings, collecting their tools, and receiving deliveries. Additionally, Plaintiff alleged that
24 Defendant failed to pay overtime compensation at the rate of one and one-half times the regular rate
25 of pay by failing to include all non-discretionary compensation into the regular rate calculation.

26 ///

27 _____
28 ³ As this is not a class action, the *Kullar* factors pertaining to the risk of maintaining class action status through trial and the reaction of class members to the proposed settlement are inapplicable.

32. Defendant denied these claims, arguing that its overtime policies and practices comply with California law. Defendant further contended that its non-exempt employees were responsible for accurately recording their own hours and that it was not aware that any work had been performed off-the-clock. Defendant also argued that its overtime calculations lawfully included all forms of compensation. Defendant also produced payroll data evidencing overtime paid to its employees. Defendant further argued that it eliminated rounding in August 2023.

33. If a violation was found to have occurred in every one of the aggregate pay periods within the relevant time period, the potential maximum exposure for this claim would be \$1,370,900.⁴

ii. Meal Periods

34. Plaintiff asserted that Defendant failed to provide employees with lawful meal periods. For example, as mentioned above, Plaintiff reported that he and the other Aggrieved Employees would have their meal breaks interrupted to attend to tasks such as checking in deliveries.

35. Defendant argued that the Aggrieved Employees were permitted, if not encouraged, to take their meal breaks. Defendant also argued that their written meal break policy was lawful and employees' time records reflected that they took lawful meal periods. Defendant further argued that its timekeeping system automatically assigns meal period premiums for meal period violations. Moreover, litigating the meal period claims would be inherently difficult as it would need to be proven that compliant meal periods were not provided, but time records would not indicate whether or not a meal period was interrupted. Ultimately, Plaintiff's analysis revealed only a 3% violation rate of purported unique meal period violations after offsetting meal period premiums paid.

36. If a violation was found to have occurred in every one of the aggregate pay periods within the relevant time period, the potential maximum exposure for this claim would be \$1,370,900.

iii. Rest Periods

37. Plaintiff argued that Defendant failed to schedule, permit, or authorize compliant rest periods. For example, Plaintiff alleged that he and the other Aggrieved Employees often worked

⁴ While the California Labor Code provides for \$100 for the first violation and up to \$250 for each subsequent violation (depending on the underlying violation), Plaintiff used this simple computation of the total number of aggregate pay periods times a \$100 penalty for analysis purposes only to account for the argument that the imposition of PAGA penalties is discretionary and courts have the power to reduce or assess penalties based on the specifics of each case.

1 through their rest breaks to make sure that the project stayed in the budget and that they were not
2 incurring overtime or delaying the project. Here, Plaintiff faced the challenge of having to prove each
3 alleged rest period violation with only testimony from Aggrieved Employees.

4 38. If a violation was found to have occurred in every one of the aggregate pay periods
5 within the relevant time period, the potential maximum exposure for this claim would be \$1,370,900.

6 *iv. Unreimbursed Business Expenses*

7 39. Plaintiff alleged that Aggrieved Employees incurred necessary business expenses that
8 were never fully reimbursed by Defendant, such as the use of their personal cell phones.

9 40. Defendant contended that it had a policy and practice of reimbursing employees for
10 necessary business-related expenses. Defendant further contended that, with respect to the alleged
11 expenses for which Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees never requested reimbursement from
12 Defendant, it did not know and had no reason to know that alleged business-related expenses had been
13 incurred.

14 41. If a violation was found to have occurred in every one of the aggregate pay periods
15 within the relevant time period, the potential maximum exposure for this claim would be \$1,370,900.

16 *v. Derivative Claims*

17 42. As with all derivative claims, success depends on the success of the underlying claims.
18 Here, Plaintiff's claims for inaccurate wage statements, failure to pay all wages due during
19 employment and upon termination, and failure to keep requisite payroll records would only succeed if
20 the underlying claims for failure to pay wages for off-the-clock work, failure to pay overtime, and
21 failure to pay premiums for all meal and rest periods not lawfully provided were successful. Therefore,
22 these claims were subject to the same risks of failure as discussed above.

23 43. Again, if a violation was found to have occurred in every one of the aggregate pay
24 periods within the relevant time period, the potential maximum exposure for this claim would be
25 \$1,370,900.

26 *vi. Total PAGA Penalties*

27 44. Plaintiff's Counsel considered information obtained through investigations and
28 obtained from Plaintiff and Aggrieved Employees, as well as data provided by Defendant, and created

1 valuation models. Based thereon and assuming that the Court would be satisfied that the PAGA claims
2 were susceptible to being efficiently tried and adjudicated on a representative basis, and that it could
3 be shown that civil penalties under the California Labor Code are owed of one penalty per pay period
4 during the relevant time period, Defendant's estimated total exposure in theory would exceed several
5 million dollars. However, Plaintiff's Counsel considered the fact that, by law, the Court has the
6 discretion to reduce and/or assess lower penalties, that it was not clear that heightened penalties would
7 apply, and that stacking and/or cumulative penalties may not be allowed. Based thereon and the
8 application of one penalty per pay period in the relevant time period, the estimated total exposure was
9 \$1,370,900. Plaintiff's Counsel then considered the defenses asserted, information and evidence
10 obtained, and circumstances in this case, which posed risks to representative adjudication and
11 monetary recovery. Accordingly, a discount of 60% was applied to account for the risks associated
12 with proving the underlying violations and the cost and delay in recovering the alleged potential
13 penalties (bringing the value of this claim closer to \$548,360), and a discount of 50% was applied to
14 account for the risks associated with succeeding on the merits and establishing liability (bringing the
15 value of this claim closer to \$274,180). In light thereof, the escalated Gross Settlement Amount of
16 \$241,016 is a significant settlement.

17 **The Amount in the Settlement Agreement**

18 45. The Net Settlement Amount is currently estimated to be One Hundred Twenty-Eight
19 Thousand Two Hundred Twenty-Five Dollars and Fifty-Four Cents (\$128,225.54). After all
20 deductions from the escalated Gross Settlement Amount are made for the Attorneys' Fees and Costs,
21 Service Award, and Settlement Administration Costs, Eighty-Three Thousand Three Hundred Forty-
22 Six Dollars and Sixty Cents (\$83,346.60) (i.e. 65% of the Net Settlement Amount) will go to the
23 LWDA, and Forty-Four Thousand Eight Hundred Seventy-Eight Dollars and Ninety-Four Cents
24 (\$44,878.94) (i.e. 35% of the Net Settlement Amount) will go to the Aggrieved Employees, as required
25 by California Labor Code § 2699(m) in ("civil penalties recovered by aggrieved employees shall be
26 distributed as follows: 65 percent to the Labor and Workforce Development Agency . . . and 35 percent
27 to the aggrieved employees."). There is no reason to doubt the fairness of the proposed plan of
28 allocation of the Net Settlement Amount as it fully complies with California Labor Code section

1 2699(m).

2 46. The Settlement Agreement is a compromise of highly disputed claims. Plaintiff and
3 his counsel recognize the expense and length of continued proceedings necessary to litigate the matter
4 through trial and any possible appeals. Plaintiff and his counsel have also taken into account the
5 uncertainty and risk of the outcome of further litigation, and the difficulties and delays inherent in
6 such litigation. Plaintiff and his counsel are also aware of the burdens of proof necessary to establish
7 liability, both generally and in response to Defendant's defenses thereto, and the difficulties in
8 establishing Defendant's liability for, and the right to recover, penalties on behalf of Plaintiff, the State
9 of California, and other Aggrieved Employees. Plaintiff and his counsel have also taken into account
10 Defendant's agreement to enter into a settlement that confers significant relief upon the Aggrieved
11 Employees and the State of California. Considering all of the facts in this case, Plaintiff and his counsel
12 have determined that the Agreement represents a fair, adequate, and reasonable resolution of the
13 PAGA claims, and that it is in the best interests of the Aggrieved Employees and the State of
14 California.

15 47. The result achieved in this case is well within the range of what is considered an
16 acceptable settlement under the circumstances, especially when compared to the settlement of PAGA
17 claims in other cases.

18 **The Agreement was Negotiated by Experienced Counsel**

19 48. In the view of Plaintiff's Counsel, the benefits conferred by the Agreement are
20 eminently fair and reasonable, and in the best interests of the State of California and the Aggrieved
21 Employees in light of the risk, delay, and uncertainty of continued litigation and the substantial
22 monetary benefits provided for by the Agreement.

23 49. Here, the extent of informal discovery conducted was sufficient to enable Plaintiff's
24 Counsel to evaluate the strength and value of the PAGA claims for purposes of settlement. The
25 settlement negotiations were conducted by highly capable and experienced counsel. Plaintiff's
26 Counsel are respected members of the bar with strong records of vigorous and effective advocacy, and
27 are experienced in handling complex wage and hour class action litigation. Accordingly, Plaintiff's
28 Counsel had sufficient information and experience to act intelligently in negotiating the Agreement.

The Requested Fees Payment is Fair and Reasonable

50. Plaintiff's Counsel's application for attorneys' fees in light of the facts and circumstances surrounding this matter is well-within the range of reasonableness. Plaintiff's Counsel has vigorously litigated this case since it was commenced, with the very real possibility of an unsuccessful outcome and no fee recovery of any kind.

51. In the present case, Plaintiff's Counsel has borne all of the risks and costs of litigation and will not receive any compensation until recovery is obtained. Plaintiff's Counsel is experienced in complex wage-and-hour litigation and used that experience to obtain a favorable result for Plaintiff, the Aggrieved Employees, and the State of California. Considering the amount of fees requested, work performed, risks incurred, and experience of Plaintiff's Counsel in handling similar matters, Plaintiff maintains that the requested attorneys' fees of thirty-five (35%) of the escalated Gross Settlement Amount (i.e., \$84,355.60) is reasonable and should be awarded.

52. The effectiveness of Plaintiff's Counsel's prosecution of this matter has translated into tangible monetary benefits for the Aggrieved Employees as follows: (1) Aggrieved Employees will obtain monetary recovery over a relatively short period of time, as opposed to waiting additional years for the same, or potentially worse, result; (2) a guaranteed result that compares favorably with other representative PAGA actions of this type, given the strengths and weaknesses of the case; and (3) significant savings in Plaintiff's Counsel's fees and/or costs that would have only increased significantly had the case progressed through trial and/or appeals.

53. Plaintiff's Counsel is experienced in complex representative and class action wage-and-hour litigation. Blackstone Law, APC ("Blackstone") has been counsel of record on several class and PAGA actions that have since been resolved, the most recent of which are attached hereto as **Exhibit 4**. The attorneys who worked on the Action are all experienced in litigating wage and hour matters as follows:

a. Jonathan M. Genish is the founder of Blackstone. He received his law degree from Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law and was admitted to the California State Bar in 2008. During law school, he clerked at the litigation firm Oved & Oved, LLP and was published several times in various small publications. Upon graduation, he was rehired by Freedman & Taitelman, LLP as an

1 associate and remained employed there from September 2008 through August 2015. During his
2 tenure, he managed hundreds (perhaps thousands) of complex litigation cases, ranging from
3 employment, corporate, entertainment, and general business litigation matters, though his primary area
4 of expertise was employment, both single plaintiff and representative actions. On the vast majority of
5 those cases, he was the only or primary attorney managing the case and thus obtained extensive
6 experience. In that capacity, he conducted wage and hour and wrongful termination labor and
7 employment intakes; was the primary contact for all clients; took and defended hundreds (if not
8 thousands) of depositions; propounded and responded to all discovery; prepared and opposed all
9 motions and pleadings, including dispositive and certification motions; strategized on all cases;
10 attended all hearings; attended all mediations; coordinated with class action administrators; prepared
11 and worked with experts; first and second chaired multiple trials and arbitrations; and engaged in all
12 other intricate facets of litigation. During that time, he represented a wide range of clients from sole
13 proprietorships to Fortune 500 companies in state, federal, complex, and appellate courts. Many of
14 the cases he managed were highly publicized, with articles written about them in the Los Angeles
15 Times, Deadline, The Hollywood Reporter, Business Insider, Law360, and others. Super Lawyers has
16 regularly honored him as a Southern California Rising Star since 2012. He is currently the managing
17 partner of Blackstone overseeing roughly 500 labor and employment cases, approximately 80% of
18 which include a wage and hour component. The majority of those cases are wage-and-hour putative
19 class actions or representative PAGA actions seeking relief on behalf of thousands of California
20 employees. His billable rate is \$1,295, which is well within the prevailing rate for attorneys with his
21 experience in this area of practice in Southern California.

22 b. Karen I. Gold graduated *cum laude* from UCLA in 2005 with a Bachelor of Science
23 degree in Cognitive Science and a Specialization in Computing. She received her law degree from
24 Boston University School of Law and was admitted to the California State Bar in 2008. Upon
25 graduation, she joined Cox Castle & Nicholson, LLP, and worked there for approximately a decade as
26 a general litigation attorney focused primarily on high-stakes sophisticated cases including class action
27 defense matters. Thereafter, she spent approximately five years working for Marlin & Saltzman, LLP,
28 which is a well-known plaintiff-side wage and hour law firm in Los Angeles, before transitioning over

1 to Blackstone Law as a Senior Trial Attorney and Team Lead. Karen I. Gold has managed over one
2 hundred complex litigation cases, ranging from employment matters to corporate and general business
3 litigation matters. On many of those cases, she was the only or primary attorney managing in the case
4 and thus obtained extensive experience overseeing these types of actions. In that capacity, she was
5 the primary contact for clients; took and defended many depositions; propounded and responded to
6 discovery; prepared and opposed motions and pleadings, including dispositive and certification
7 motions; strategized on all cases; attended hearings; attended mediations; coordinated with class action
8 administrators; prepared and worked with experts; participated in trial prep and trials; and engaged in
9 all other intricate facets of litigation. Super Lawyers honored her as a Southern California Rising Star
10 from 2015 through 2018. As a Senior Trial Attorney and Team Lead, she oversees and handles over
11 100 wage-and-hour putative class actions and/or representative actions under PAGA seeking relief on
12 behalf of California employees. She has considerable experience in handling class and representative
13 action lawsuits throughout her career and has been approved as counsel in a number of cases. Her
14 billable rate is \$985, which is well within the prevailing rate for attorneys with her experience in this
15 area of practice in Southern California.

16 c. Marissa A. Mayhood is a Senior Associate Attorney at Blackstone. She graduated from
17 Pepperdine University School of Law with a Juris Doctorate and a certificate in dispute resolution
18 from Pepperdine's Straus Institute. Ms. Mayhood spent approximately five years working for Marlin
19 & Saltzman, LLP, which is a well-known plaintiff-side wage and hour law firm in Los Angeles. While
20 working for Marlin & Saltzman, LLP, she litigated and helped settle a \$72.5 million case, *Utne v.*
21 *Home Depot U.S.A., Inc.*, United States District Court for the Northern District of California, Case
22 No. 3:16-cv-01854-RS, and was approved as class counsel. Her hourly rate of \$750 is reasonable
23 based on her education and experience and is in line with the market rate

24 d. Ashley H. Cruz is a former attorney at Blackstone. She received her Bachelor of Arts
25 degree from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2011, where she majored in International
26 Development Studies and minored in Political Science and French. In 2014, she graduated from the
27 Loyola University Chicago School of Law with honors. She was admitted to the State Bar of
28 California in December of 2015. Her hourly rate of \$750 is reasonable based on her education and

1 experience and is in line with the market rate at the time she worked in this case.

2 e. Alexandra Rose joined Blackstone from a highly reputable employment law firm. She
3 graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 2016 and
4 from New England Law | Boston with a Juris Doctor degree in 2019. She was admitted to the State
5 Bar of California in December of 2019 and the State Bars of New York and New Jersey in 2023. She
6 is additionally licensed in all federal district courts of California. She has worked on many wage and
7 hour class action and PAGA representative matters, and her work has included, *inter alia*, researching
8 and drafting pleadings, administrative notice exhaustion, drafting, negotiating, and finalizing
9 stipulations and settlement agreements, engaging in motion practice, claims evaluation and analysis,
10 and making court appearances. She manages the post-settlement department at Blackstone. In that
11 capacity, she oversees and handles over 100 wage-and-hour putative class actions and/or
12 representative actions under PAGA that are in settlement. Her hourly rate of \$750 is reasonable based
13 on her education and experience and is in line with the market rate.

14 f. I joined Blackstone Law, APC after working at a respected employment and personal
15 injury plaintiff-side law firm where I handled cases from intake to post settlement. I graduated from
16 the University of California, Santa Barbara with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science with a
17 Minor in Professional Writing in 2018. I received my Juris Doctorate Degree in 2022 from University
18 of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law. I was admitted to the State Bar of California in May 2023.
19 I have worked on many wage and hour class action and PAGA representative matters, and my work
20 has included, *inter alia*, conducting legal research, drafting pleadings, stipulations, memorandums of
21 understanding, and settlement agreements, negotiating settlement terms, engaging in motion practice,
22 and making court appearances. My hourly rate of \$550 is reasonable based on my education and
23 experience and is in line with the market rate.

24 54. Blackstone Law, APC has spent approximately 220.50 total hours litigating this matter.
25 To date, our total fees incurred amount to \$187,221. Each attorney who worked on this matter engaged
26 in a multitude of tasks, including communicating with the client and defense counsel; investigating
27 the facts and researching applicable legal issues; drafting pleadings and the mediation brief; reviewing
28 documents; preparing for and attending mediation; and facilitating the settlement by drafting and

negotiating the settlement documents and drafting the documents for obtaining settlement approval.

A summary of Blackstone's lodestar for each attorney who worked on this matter is as follows:

<u>Attorney</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Total</u>
Jonathan M. Genish	Managing Partner	23.40	\$1,295	\$30,303
Karen I. Gold.	Senior Counsel	67.80	\$985	\$66,783
Marissa A. Mayhood	Senior Associate	56.70	\$750	\$42,525
Ashley H. Cruz	Senior Associate	18.30	\$750	\$13,725
Alexandra Rose	Senior Associate	20.10	\$750	\$15,075
James S. Winn Jr	Associate	34.20	\$550	\$18,810

55. We expect to spend an additional 10 hours (\$5,500) in connection with finalizing the Motion, preparing for the approval hearing, and managing the Agreement through its conclusion, including anticipated communications with defense counsel, the Settlement Administrator, and our client. Based thereon, the total amount of Plaintiff's Counsel's fees through closure of this matter are estimated to be approximately \$192,721.

The Requested Litigation Expenses Payment is Fair and Reasonable

56. The Agreement provides for reimbursement of Plaintiffs Counsel's litigation costs and expenses of up to Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$25,000.00). However, Plaintiff's Counsel seeks reimbursement of a total of Eighteen Thousand Four Hundred Thirty-Four Dollars and Eighty-Six Cents (\$18,434.86) in litigation costs and expenses. A true and correct itemized list of Blackstone's litigation costs and expenses is attached hereto as **Exhibit 5**. This amount was reasonable and necessary in the prosecution of this matter.

The Settlement Administration Costs are Fair and Reasonable

57. As set forth in the Settlement Agreement, the Parties have agreed to retain, subject to approval by the Court, ILYM Group, Inc., to handle the administration of the Agreement. The fees and expenses of the Settlement Administrator are estimated not to exceed Five Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$5,000.00). These costs include, but are not limited to, expenses for preparing, printing, and mailing the Cover Letter and Individual PAGA Payment checks to the Aggrieved Employees, re-

1 mailing the returned Individual PAGA Payment checks to any new addresses obtained, and handling
2 inquiries from Aggrieved Employees regarding the Agreement, among other things. Accordingly, the
3 Court should grant approval of the Settlement Administration Costs in the amount of *up to* Five
4 Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$5,000.00) to ILYM Group, Inc., a necessary third-party for
5 handling the settlement process.

6 **The Service Award Is Fair and Reasonable**

7 58. As part of the Settlement Agreement, Plaintiff respectfully requests a reasonable
8 Service Award of Five Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$5,000.00) to Plaintiff. This Service Award
9 is eminently reasonable given the time and effort Plaintiff spent on this matter and his services on
10 behalf of the State of California and the Aggrieved Employees.

11 59. By initiating and pursuing the Action, Plaintiff stepped into the shoes of the State of
12 California and undertook the responsibilities of serving in a representative capacity. Plaintiff was
13 available whenever Plaintiff's Counsel needed him and actively tried to obtain information that would
14 benefit the prosecution of the Action.

15 60. Accordingly, Plaintiff respectfully submits that it is appropriate and just for Plaintiff to
16 receive a Service Award in the amount of Five Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$5,000.00) in
17 addition to the Individual PAGA Payment he will receive as an Aggrieved Employee, for his services
18 on behalf of the State of California and the other Aggrieved Employees.

19 **Pending Actions**

20 61. Neither I nor Plaintiff are aware of any other pending matter or action asserting claims
21 that will be extinguished or adversely affected by the Agreement.

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

24 Executed on March 23, 2026, at Tustin, California.

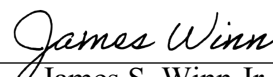
25
26 
27 James S. Winn Jr.
28

EXHIBIT 1



8383 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 745
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
Phone: (310) 622-4278
Fax: (855) 786-6356

Karen Gold, Esq.
kgold@blackstonepc.com

July 17, 2024

PAGA Claim Notice Via Online Electronic Submission

California Labor & Workforce Development Agency

800 Capitol Mall, Suite 5000 (MIC-55)

Sacramento, CA 95814

<https://www.dir.ca.gov/Private-Attorneys-General-Act/Private-Attorneys-General-Act.html>

RE: *Jose Ramirez v. A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc.*

To Whom It May Concern:

This office represents Jose Ramirez (“Claimant”) with respect to their claims under the California Labor Code against A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc. (including all affiliates, subsidiaries, parents, directors, and officers) (collectively referred to herein as “Employers”). This letter is being sent simultaneously to Employers by certified mail.

Employers employed Jose Ramirez from approximately June 2017 to September 2023 as a non-exempt, hourly-paid employee. Jose Ramirez worked as an Installer for Employers and was based out of Employers’ facility located at 4300 N Harbor Blvd, Fullerton, CA 92835.

Claimant intends to bring a representative action seeking penalties for violations of the California Labor Code which are recoverable under the Labor Code Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, California Labor Code sections 2698, *et seq.* (“PAGA”). Claimant is seeking penalties on behalf of his or herself and in a representative capacity on behalf of the State of California and all current and former hourly-paid and/or non-exempt employees who worked for Employers in the State of California during the relevant statutory period (“Aggrieved Employees”). This letter is being sent in compliance with California Labor Code section 2699.3 and shall serve as Claimant’s notice of the provisions of the California Labor Code alleged to have been violated, including the facts and theories in support thereof.

As detailed below, Employers violated several of California’s wage and hour laws during Claimant’s employment, including but not limited to California Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 226(a), 226.7, 510, 512(a), 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2800, 2802, and the applicable Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Order (“IWC Wage Order”).

The claims made on behalf of Claimant and Aggrieved Employees are based upon the

following facts and theories:

1. FAILURE TO PAY FOR ALL TIME WORKED AT CORRECT RATES OF PAY, INCLUDING MINIMUM WAGES, STRAIGHT TIME WAGES, AND OVERTIME COMPENSATION

Employers engaged in numerous unlawful practices which resulted in the failure to pay Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees for all time worked at the correct rates of pay, including minimum wages, straight time wages, and overtime compensation.

California Labor Code sections 1194, 1197, and 1197.1 and the applicable IWC Wage Order require employers to pay at least the legal minimum wage to their employees. California Labor Code sections 510 and 1198 and the applicable IWC Wage Order further require employers to pay no less than one and one-half times an employee's regular rate of pay for hours worked in excess of eight (8) hours in one workday, for hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours in one workweek, and for the first eight (8) hours worked on the seventh day of work in any one workweek, and to pay no less than twice an employee's regular rate of pay of the employee for hours worked in excess of twelve (12) hours in one workday and for any work in excess of eight (8) hours on any seventh day of a workweek.

Throughout the relevant time, Employers regularly required Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees to perform work off-the-clock prior to clocking-in and/or after clocking-out for their shifts. Employers failed to compensate Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees for any of this off-the-clock work, in violation of California law.

This uncompensated work often resulted in the total number of hours worked by Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees exceeding the daily and/or weekly triggers for overtime wages, yet Employers failed to pay Claimant and Aggrieved Employees applicable overtime rate(s) for these hours.

Employers also failed to accurately record the actual time worked by Claimant and Aggrieved Employees.

Employers also failed to pay overtime to Claimant and Aggrieved Employees for all overtime hours worked based on regular rates of pay correctly calculated to include all applicable remuneration, including non-discretionary commissions, non-discretionary bonuses, and non-discretionary performance pay.

As a result of the foregoing practices, Employers failed to pay Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees for all wages earned at the correct rates of pay, including minimum wages, straight time wages, and overtime compensation. Accordingly, Employers violated the applicable IWC Wage Order and California Labor Code sections 204, 510, 1194, 1197, 1197.1 and 1198.

Claimant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699; penalties pursuant to the applicable IWC Wage Orders; penalties pursuant to California Labor Code sections 558, 1197.1, and 1199; and attorneys' fees

and costs.

2. MEAL BREAK VIOLATIONS

California law requires employers to provide employees with an opportunity to take an uninterrupted meal period of no less than thirty (30) minutes before the end of the fifth hour of work when an employee works more than five (5) hours in a day. Cal. Lab. Code §§ 226.7 & 512(a). Employers must provide a second meal period of no less than thirty (30) minutes before the end of the tenth hour of work when an employee works more than ten (10) hours in a day. *Id.* For each day that an employer fails to provide compliant meal period(s), the employer must pay the employee a meal penalty equal to one hour of pay at the employee's regular rate of compensation. *Id.*

During the relevant time period, Employers failed to provide Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees with legally compliant 30-minute meal periods. Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees were required by Employers to work more than five (5) hours per day but were not provided with uninterrupted 30-minute meal periods. Further, Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees were not provided with a second uninterrupted 30-minute meal period when they worked over ten (10) hours per day. Employers regularly required Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees to work through their first and second meal periods, to take their first meal period after their fifth (5th) hour of work, and/or to take their second meal periods after their tenth (10th) hour of work. Meal breaks, when provided, were oftentimes interrupted and/or cut short.

Employers' policies, practices, and procedures were responsible for the violations alleged above and prevented Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees from taking timely, complete and duty-free meal periods because, amongst other reasons: (1) Employers did not have legally-compliant policies regarding the provision and timing of meal periods or systematically disregarded their own purported meal period policies; (2) Employers' management at various levels failed and refused to implement and enforce legally compliant meal period policies and practices; (3) Employers failed to adequately inform and train Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees regarding their right to take timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free meal periods; (4) Employers failed to adequately inform and train Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees about their right to premium wages for non-compliant meal periods; (5) Employers failed to ensure that there was adequate staffing to allow Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees to take timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free meal periods; (6) Employers required Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees to respond to work-related requests at all times, including during meal periods; and (7) Employers' policy and culture prevented Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees from taking timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free meal periods because of the priority placed on maximizing profits over employees' right to receive timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free meal periods.

Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees did not receive an extra hour of wages at their regular rate of pay for each day a compliant meal period was not provided to them in compliance with California law.

Accordingly, Employers violated the applicable IWC Wage Order and California Labor

Code sections 226.7, 512(a) and 1198.

Claimant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699; penalties pursuant to penalties paragraph of the applicable IWC Wage Orders; penalties pursuant to California Labor Code sections 558 and 1199; and attorneys' fees and costs.

3. REST BREAK VIOLATIONS

California law requires employers to authorize and permit employees to take an uninterrupted rest period of no less than ten (10) minutes for every four (4) hours, or major fraction thereof, worked. Cal. Lab. Code § 226.7. For each day that an employer fails to authorize and permit a compliant rest period, the employer owes the employee one hour of pay at the employee's regular rate of compensation. Cal. Lab. Code § 226.7(c).

Employers failed to authorize and permit Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees to take compliant 10-minute rest periods. Employers required Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees to work through rest periods. Claimant and Aggrieved Employees were not provided with uninterrupted, duty-free rest periods when they worked more than four (4) hours or a major fraction thereof. Further, Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees were not provided with a second uninterrupted, duty-free rest period when they worked more than six (6) hours in a day, or a third uninterrupted, duty-free rest period after working more than ten (10) hours in day. In the rare event that a rest period was taken, it was frequently interrupted or cut short. Moreover, Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees were not completely relieved of duty as required by *Augustus v. ABM Security Services, Inc.*, 2 Cal.5th 257 (2016).

Employers' policies, practices, and procedures were responsible for the violations alleged above and prevented Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees from taking timely and complete rest periods because, amongst other reasons: (1) Employers did not have legally-compliant policies regarding the provision and timing of rest periods or systematically disregarded its own purported rest period policies; (2) Employers' management at various levels failed and refused to implement and enforce legally compliant rest period policies and practices; (3) Employers failed to adequately inform and train Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees regarding their right to take timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free rest periods; (4) Employers failed to adequately inform and train Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees about their right to premium wages for non-compliant rest periods; (5) Employers failed to ensure that there was adequate staffing to allow Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees to take timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free rest periods; (6) Employers required Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees to respond to work-related requests at all times, including during rest periods; and (7) Employers' policy and culture prevented Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees from taking timely, uninterrupted, and duty-free rest periods because of the priority placed on completing job requirements over employees' right to receive rest periods.

Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees did not receive an extra hour of wages at their regular rate of pay for each day a rest period was not provided to them in compliance with California law. Accordingly, Employers violated the applicable IWC Wage Order and California

Labor Code sections 226.7 and 1198.

Claimant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699; penalties pursuant to the applicable IWC Wage Orders; Labor Code sections 558 and 1199 penalties; and attorneys' fees and costs.

4. FAILURE TO TIMELY PAY WAGES DURING EMPLOYMENT

California Labor Code section 204 requires that all wages earned by any person in any employment between the 1st and the 15th days, inclusive, of any calendar month, other than those wages due upon termination of an employee, are due and payable between the 16th and the 26th day of the month during which the labor was performed, and that all wages earned by any person in any employment between the 16th and the last day, inclusive, of any calendar month, other than those wages due upon termination of an employee, are due and payable between the 1st and the 10th day of the following month.

California Labor Code section 204 also requires that all wages earned for labor in excess of the normal work period shall be paid no later than the payday for the next regular payroll period. During the relevant time period, Employers failed to timely pay all wages earned because Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees were not paid all the wages they were owed including, *inter alia*, overtime compensation, straight time wages, minimum wages, and meal and rest period premiums. Accordingly, Employers violated California Labor Code section 204(a).

Claimant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties pursuant to Labor Code section 2699; penalties pursuant to California Labor Code sections 210 and 1199; and attorneys' fees and costs.

5. FAILURE TO PROVIDE ACCURATE ITEMIZED WAGE STATEMENTS

California Labor Code section 226(a) requires an employer semimonthly or at the time of each payment of wages to furnish wage statements to its employees setting forth, *inter alia*, (1) gross wages earned, (2) total hours worked by the employee, (3) the number of piece-rate units earned and any applicable piece rate if the employee is paid on a piece-rate basis, (4) all deductions, provided that all deductions made on written orders of the employee may be aggregated and shown as one item, (5) net wages earned, (6) the inclusive dates of the period for which the employee is paid, (7) the name of the employee and only the last four digits of his or her social security number or an employee identification number other than a social security number, and (8) the name and address of the legal entity that is the employer.

As a result of the practices described above, the wage statements provided to Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees failed to include the actual hours worked (including time spent working off-the-clock), the actual gross wages earned (including wages owed for time spent working off the clock and meal and rest period premiums), and the correct rates of pay. Accordingly, Employers violated California Labor Code section 226(a).

Claimant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties; penalties

pursuant to California Labor Code section 226.3; and attorneys' fees and costs.

6. FAILURE TO MAINTAIN ACCURATE RECORDS

California Labor Code section 1174(d) requires an employer to keep, at a central location in the state or at the plants or establishments at which employees are employed, payroll records showing the hours worked daily by and the wages paid to, and the number of piece-rate units earned by and any applicable piece rate paid to, employees employed at the respective plants or establishments. These records shall be kept with rules established for this purpose by the commission, but in any case, shall be kept on file for not less than three years. During the relevant time period, Employers have failed to maintain accurate records relating to Claimant and other Aggrieved Employees' work periods, meal periods, total daily hours worked, and total hours worked per payroll period. Accordingly, Employers violated the applicable IWC Wage Order and California Labor Code sections 1198.5 and 1174(d).

Claimant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699; penalties pursuant to paragraph of the applicable IWC Wage Orders; California Labor Code section 1174.5 penalties; and attorneys' fees and costs.

7. FAILURE TO REIMBURSE NECESSARY EXPENDITURES

California Labor Code sections 2800 and 2802 require an employer to reimburse its employees for all necessary expenditures incurred by the employee in direct consequence of the discharge of his or her job duties or in direct consequence of his or her obedience to the directions of the employer. The applicable IWC Wage Order requires employers to provide employees with the tools or equipment necessary for the performance of their job. During the relevant time period, Claimant and Aggrieved Employees incurred necessary business-related expenses and costs that were not fully reimbursed by Employers.

Accordingly, Employers violated the applicable IWC Order and California Labor Code sections 2800 and 2802. Claimant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699; penalties pursuant to paragraph of the applicable IWC Wage Orders; and attorneys' fees and costs.

8. FAILURE TO TIMELY PAY ALL WAGES UPON TERMINATION

California Labor Code sections 201 and 202 provide that if an employer discharges an employee, the wages earned and unpaid at the time of discharge are due and payable immediately, and if an employee quits his or her employment, his or her wages shall become due and payable not later than seventy-two (72) hours thereafter, unless the employee has given seventy-two (72) hours' notice of his or her intention to quit, in which case the employee is entitled to his or her wages at the time of quitting.

During the relevant time period, upon the termination of employment (including but not limited to when they were temporarily laid off, laid off, discharged, and/or resigned), Employers failed to pay all wages due to their employees within twenty-four (24) hours of termination or even

within seventy-two (72) hours for those who resigned. Specifically, as a result of Employers' practices of requiring Claimant and Aggrieved Employees to work off-the-clock without compensation, failing to pay proper overtime compensation, failure to properly calculate regular rates, and failure to accurately record all hours actually worked, Employers failed to pay Claimant and Aggrieved Employees for all straight time wage, minimum wages and overtime compensation owed to them upon termination of their employment. Employers also failed to pay Claimant and Aggrieved Employees for meal period premiums and rest period premiums they were owed, amongst other wages. Accordingly, Employers violated California Labor Code sections 201 and 202.

Claimant and Aggrieved Employees will therefore seek PAGA default penalties pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699; penalties pursuant to California Labor Code sections 203 and 1199; and attorneys' fees and costs.

9. EMPLOYER'S OTHER VIOLATIONS OF THE CALIFORNIA LABOR CODE

Finally, pursuant to *Huff v. Securitas Security Services USA, Inc.* (2018) 25 Cal.App.5th 745 ("*Huff*"), as an Aggrieved Employee, Claimant has standing, and intends to pursue civil penalties on behalf of the LWDA against Employers for any and all other Labor Code violations committed by Employers. In *Huff*, the California Court of Appeals held that an employee alleging a single violation of the Labor Code under PAGA may also bring PAGA claims against Employer for all other alleged Labor Code violations, even those suffered by other employees of the same employer. According to the *Huff* decision, Claimant, as an "aggrieved" employee affected by at least one Labor Code violation may, and hereby does, pursue penalties on behalf of LWDA for all Labor Code violations by Employer.

Employers are in direct violation of numerous California wage and hour laws including but not limited to said sections stated above. Claimant hereby provides notice to the LWDA under the California Labor Code Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, California Labor Code Sections 2698, *et seq.*, and specifically asks for an investigation, or if the agency does not intend to investigate the alleged violations, a letter confirming the same so that Claimant may allege a cause of action under PAGA against Employers for the violations discussed in this letter.

This letter is sent in compliance with the reporting requirements of California Labor Code section 2699.3. By law, an employee alleging a violation of one of the above referenced sections must notify his or her employer and the Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA) before he or she can invoke the provisions of Sections 2699, *et seq.*, by seeking redress in court. Cal. Lab. Code § 2699.3(a)(1). The LWDA must then notify the employer and the employee within 60 calendar days regarding whether it intends to investigate the alleged violation. Cal. Lab. Code § 2699.3(a)(2)(B). If the LWDA advises it will not investigate, or if no notice is provided within 65 calendar days, the employee may file a lawsuit invoking the provisions under Labor Code § 2699. Cal. Lab. Code § 2699.3(a)(2)(A). It is Claimant's intention to file a civil complaint and to bring the appropriate claims under California Labor Code § 2699 on behalf of themselves, the State of California and all Aggrieved Employees should your office not address Employers' alleged violations within this timeframe.



BLACKSTONE
LAW

8383 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 745
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
Phone: (310) 622-4278
Fax: (855) 786-6356

If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact my office. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

BLACKSTONE LAW

Karen Gold, Esq.

cc: By U.S. Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested

A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc.
Agent for Service, James Michael Hewson
4300 N. Harbor Blvd
Fullerton, CA 92835

EXHIBIT 2

**PRIVATE ATTORNEYS GENERAL ACT SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT AND
RELEASE**

This Private Attorneys General Act Settlement Agreement and Release (“Settlement Agreement,” “Agreement,” or “Settlement”) is entered into by and between Jose Ramirez (“Plaintiff”), individually and as a representative of the State of California and the Aggrieved Employees (as defined in Section 1(c) below) and A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc. (“Defendant”), subject to approval by the Court. The term “Party” or “Parties” as used herein shall refer to Plaintiff, Defendant, or both, as may be appropriate.

1. **Definitions.** In addition to the other terms defined in this Settlement Agreement, the terms below have the following meaning:

- (a) **Action.** The representative action and Complaint for Enforcement under the Private Attorneys General Act, Cal. Labor Code Sections 2698, *Et Seq.*, filed by Plaintiff against Defendant on September 23, 2024 entitled *Jose Ramirez, individually, and on behalf of Aggrieved Employees pursuant to the California Private Attorneys General Act v. A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc.*, in San Diego Superior Court, Case No. 24CU012580C.
- (b) **Agreement, Settlement Agreement, or Settlement.** This document titled the Private Attorneys General Act Settlement Agreement and Release.
- (c) **Aggrieved Employees.** All current and former hourly-paid and/or non-exempt employees who worked for Defendant in the State of California at any time during the PAGA Period.
- (d) **Attorneys’ Fees and Costs.** The amounts allocated to Plaintiff’s Counsel for reasonable attorneys’ fees and expenses, respectively, incurred to prosecute the Action.
- (e) **Court.** The Court means the Superior Court of California, County of San Diego.
- (f) **Defendant.** A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc.
- (g) **Defense Counsel.** Christine Baran and Samantha E. Cardarelli of Fisher and Phillips LLP.
- (h) **Effective Date.** The term “Effective Date” means when all of the following events have occurred: (1) the Settlement Agreement has been executed by all Parties, Plaintiff’s Counsel, and Defense Counsel; (2) Notice of the Settlement has been sent to the LWDA; (3) the Court has given approval of the Settlement; and (4) the Court has entered the Court’s Order and Judgment.
- (i) **Gross Settlement Amount.** The Gross Settlement amount means Two Hundred Thirty-Five Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$235,000.00) which is the total amount Defendant must pay under the Settlement, subject to Section 4(a)(6). The Gross

Settlement Amount will be used to pay the Service Award, the Attorneys' Fees and Costs, and the Settlement Administration Costs.

- (j) **LWDA Notice.** The written notice submitted on behalf of Plaintiff to the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency against Defendant, dated July 17, 2024, LWDA-CM-1040176-24.
- (k) **Net Settlement Amount or NSA.** The Net Settlement Amount means the amount remaining from the Gross Settlement Amount after deducting the Attorneys' Fees and Costs, Service Award, and Settlement Administration Costs. The Net Settlement Amount shall be used to satisfy the claims for civil penalties arising under PAGA asserted on behalf of the Aggrieved Employees and the LWDA. Thirty-five (35%) of the NSA shall be allocated to the Aggrieved Employees ("Employees' Portion") and distributed based on the pro rata number of Pay Periods worked by each Aggrieved Employee during the PAGA Period. Sixty-Five percent (65%) of the NSA shall be paid to the LWDA ("LWDA Payment").
- (l) **Operative Complaint.** The governing Complaint for Enforcement Action Under the Private Attorneys General Act, Cal. Labor Code §§ 2698 *Et Seq.* filed in the Action.
- (m) **PAGA Released Claims.** Plaintiff, the State of California with respect to the Aggrieved Employees, and Aggrieved Employees will be deemed to have fully, finally, and forever released, settled, compromised, relinquished, and discharged Defendant and the Released Parties of any and all claims for civil penalties under the PAGA, arising during the PAGA Period, alleged in the Operative Complaint and LWDA Notice or that could have reasonably been alleged in the Operative Complaint and LWDA Notice based on the facts and allegations set forth therein, including but not limited to claims for failure to pay overtime wages; failure to pay minimum wages; any claims for additional wages owed due to "off the clock" work; rounding and/or any other theory alleged in the Operative Complaint and LWDA Notice; failure to provide meal periods or compensation in lieu thereof; failure to provide rest periods or compensation in lieu thereof; failure to timely pay all wages due; waiting time penalties; failure to pay timely wages during employment; wage statement violations; failure to keep and maintain accurate payroll records; failure to reimburse expenses; violation of California Labor Code §§ 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 210, 226(a), 226.3, 226.7, 227.3, 510, 512, 558, 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 1198.5, 1199, 2699, 2800, and 2802, and the applicable Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Order.
- (n) **PAGA List.** The term "PAGA List" means a complete list of all Aggrieved Employees through the PAGA Period that Defendant will diligently and in good faith compile from its records and provide the Settlement Administrator containing the following information for each Aggrieved Employee: (i) first and last name; (ii) last known address; (iii) last known telephone number; (iv) Social Security number; (v) start and end dates of employment; and (vi) number of Pay Periods.
- (o) **PAGA Period.** The period July 17, 2023 through August 23, 2025.

(p) **Plaintiff.** “Plaintiff” means Jose Ramirez.

(q) **Plaintiff’s Counsel.** Blackstone Law, APC.

(r) **Released Parties.** Defendant and all of its past, present, and future parents, predecessors, successors, and their current and former officers, directors, members, employees, and agents.

(s) **Service Award.** The amount to be paid to Plaintiff, in recognition of his efforts and work in prosecuting the Action and LWDA Notice on behalf of the Aggrieved Employees.

(r) **Settlement Administration Costs.** The amount to be paid to the Settlement Administrator for the costs of administration of the Settlement from the Gross Settlement Amount not to exceed the estimate provided by the Settlement Administrator.

(s) **Settlement Administrator.** The third-party administrator agreed upon by the Parties to administer this Settlement is ILYM Group, Inc.

2. **Recitals.** This Settlement Agreement is made with reference to the following facts:

(a) Plaintiff is a former employee of Defendant. Plaintiff was employed by Defendant from approximately August 8, 2016 to August 4, 2023.

(b) On July 17, 2024, Blackstone Law, APC (“Plaintiff’s Counsel”) submitted a letter on behalf of Plaintiff to the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”) and Defendant to notify the LWDA and Defendant pursuant to the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, Labor Code section 2698, *et seq.* (“PAGA”), of Plaintiff’s intent to seek civil penalties under PAGA for Defendant’s alleged violations of the California Labor Code and the applicable Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Orders, thereby initiating LWDA Case Number LWDA-CM-1040176-24 (“LWDA Notice”);

(c) On July 19, 2024, Plaintiff filed a class action complaint against Defendant for alleged violations of the California Labor Code and other claims, entitled *Jose Ramirez individually, and on behalf of other similarly situated employees v. A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc.*, in San Diego Superior Court, Case No. 24CU002090C where class claims were dismissed and the matter stayed pending arbitration of Plaintiff’s individual claims (the “Individual Action”);

(d) On September 23, 2024, Plaintiff filed a Complaint for Enforcement Action Under the Private Attorneys General Act, Cal. Labor Code §§ 2698 *Et Seq.* (“Operative Complaint”), commencing a representative action under PAGA against Defendant, entitled *Jose Ramirez v. A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc.*, San Diego County Superior Court Case No. 24CU012580C (“Action”). The Operative Complaint asserts a single cause of action for civil

penalties under PAGA for violations of multiple provisions of the California Labor Code and the applicable Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Orders;

(e) On June 24, 2025, the Parties mediated the Action as defined above in the Definitions above, with Tagore Subramaniam, Esq. and, with the aid of the mediator's evaluation, the Parties ultimately reached the Settlement described herein to resolve the Action in its entirety;

(f) There has been no determination on the merits of the Action but, in order to avoid additional cost and the uncertainty of litigation, the Parties desire to resolve the Action and PAGA Released Claims (as defined above).

3. **No Admission of Liability or Representative Manageability for Other Purposes.** This Agreement represents a compromise and settlement of highly disputed claims. Nothing in this Agreement is intended or should be construed as an admission by Defendant that any of the allegations in the Action have merit or that Defendant has any liability for any claims asserted; nor should it be intended or construed as an admission by Plaintiff that Defendant's defenses in the Action have merit. Defendant generally and specifically denies any and all liability or wrongdoing with any of the claims alleged in the Action or that it has violated any federal, state, or local law; violated any regulations or guidelines promulgated pursuant to any statute or any other applicable laws, regulations, or legal requirements; breached any contract; violated or breached any duty; engaged in any misrepresentation or deception; or engaged in any other unlawful conduct with respect to its employees. Defendant further makes no concessions or admissions of liability of any sort, and contends that for any purpose other than settlement, the Action is not appropriate for representative treatment. Defendant asserts several defenses to the claims and has denied any wrongdoing or liability arising out of any of the alleged facts or conduct in the Action. Neither this Agreement, nor any document referred to or contemplated herein, nor any action taken to carry out this Agreement, is or may be construed as, or may be used as an admission, concession, or indication by or against Defendant or any of the Released Parties of any fault, wrongdoing, or liability whatsoever. There has been no final determination by any court as to the merits of the claims asserted. Except as necessary in a proceeding to enforce the terms of this Settlement, this Agreement and its terms and provisions shall not be offered or received as evidence in any action or proceeding to establish any liability or admission on the part of Defendant or to establish the existence of any condition constituting a violation of, or a non-compliance with, federal, state, local or other applicable law. Nor shall anything in this Agreement be construed or deemed an admission that the Action was properly brought. Finally, nothing in this Agreement or in the Court's approval of the Settlement and/or Order and Judgment shall be deemed a waiver of Defendant's right to enforce the arbitration agreements of Aggrieved Employees in the future.

4. **Consideration.**

(a) Subject to the terms and conditions of this Agreement, the maximum Gross Settlement Amount that Defendant is obligated to pay under this Settlement Agreement is Two Hundred Thirty-Five Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$235,000.00), subject to Section 4(a)(6), to resolve the Action and the PAGA Released Claims (as defined above), which will be paid as follows:

(1) Attorneys' fees in the amount of thirty-five (35%) of the Gross Settlement Amount, (i.e., \$82,250.00 if the Gross Settlement Amount is \$235,000.00), and reimbursement of litigation costs and expenses in the amount of up to Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$25,000.00) (collectively, "Attorneys' Fees and Costs") to Plaintiff's Counsel, which Defendant will not contest. If the Attorneys' Fees and Costs are not approved and/or reduced by the Court, any amount not approved and/or reduced by the Court will increase the Net Settlement Amount by that amount.

(2) A service award of up to the amount of Five Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$5,000.00) ("Service Award") to Plaintiff, which Defendant will not contest. If the Service Award is not approved and/or reduced by the Court, any amount not approved and/or reduced by the Court will increase the Net Settlement Amount by that amount.

(3) Settlement administration costs up to the amount of Five Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$5,000.00) ("Settlement Administration Costs") to the Settlement Administrator. Any portion of the estimated, designated, and/or awarded Settlement Administration Costs which are not in fact required to fulfill payment to the Settlement Administrator to undertake the required settlement administration duties shall be relocated to the Net Settlement Amount.

(4) The amounts stated in Sections 4(a)(1) – 4(a)(3) above, once approved by the Court, shall be paid from the Gross Settlement Amount. The balance remaining after these deductions is referred to as the "Net Settlement Amount."

(5) Sixty-five percent (65%) of the Net Settlement Amount will be distributed to the LWDA ("LWDA Payment"); and the remaining thirty-five percent (35%) will be distributed to Aggrieved Employees. The thirty-five percent (35%) portion of the Net Settlement Amount payable to the Aggrieved Employees is referred to as the "Employees' Portion."

(6) Defendant represents that the Aggrieved Employees worked approximately 13,709 applicable pay periods during the period July 17, 2023 to June 24, 2025, the date of mediation. If it is determined that the total number of Pay Periods worked by the Aggrieved Employees during the PAGA Period actually exceeds 13,709 by more than 10% (i.e., if the Pay Periods exceed 15,080), then Defendant shall at its option, either (a) increase the Gross Settlement Amount proportionally by the Pay Periods in excess of the 10% threshold; or (b) elect to change the PAGA Period end date to the date in which the number of Pay Periods reaches but does not exceed 10%. Under option (a) an increase by more than 10% shall mean should the number of Pay Periods increase by more than 10% through the PAGA Period, this will increase the Gross Settlement Amount proportionally over the 10% increase. For example, if the number of Pay Periods increase by 11% through the PAGA Period, and Defendant elects option (a) set forth above, then the Gross Settlement Amount shall increase by 1%. To avoid any uncertainty as to the PAGA Period end date, the Parties and/or the Settlement Administrator must verify the Pay Period total and confirm the end date of the PAGA Period prior to the filing of the motion for approval. For clarity, Defendant may only choose option (b) prior to the filing of the motion for approval. Should it be found, after the filing of the motion for approval, that the number of Pay Periods increased by more

than 10% through the PAGA Period, then the Gross Settlement Amount will increase proportionally over the 10% increase (i.e., option (b) would not be available).

(b) Because this is a settlement of PAGA claims for civil penalties only, no portion of the Settlement is allocated to unpaid wages. One hundred percent (100%) of the payments for Attorneys' Fees and Costs, Service Award, and the Net Settlement Amount to be paid to the LWDA and Aggrieved Employees as described in Section 4(a)(1-5) above will be treated and reported for tax purposes as non-wage payments and the Settlement Administrator will be responsible for issuing IRS Forms 1099, as required.

5. Approval and Implementation of the PAGA Settlement.

(a) The Parties are aware that some courts have approved a PAGA settlement and entered an order approving the settlement and judgment and thereafter closed the case, while others have approved a PAGA settlement and entered only an order approving the settlement with later instructions to file a request for dismissal of the action. The Parties agree to cooperate and take any and all steps required by the Court in the Action to implement the settlement and terminate the Action pursuant to settlement (i.e., to terminate the Action by way of judgment or dismissal).

(b) The Parties further agree to cooperate in the drafting and/or filing of any further documents and/or filings reasonably necessary to be prepared and/or filed, and to take all steps that may be requested by the Court in order to obtain approval and implementation of this Settlement Agreement, and the payments described in Section 4(a)(1-5) above.

(c) The Parties shall seek to obtain Court approval of this Settlement Agreement by way of an unopposed motion to be filed by Plaintiff's Counsel. Plaintiff's Counsel shall provide a draft of all documents to be submitted in connection with the motion to approve this Settlement Agreement to Defense Counsel for review. Defense Counsel will be given an opportunity to comment on the papers prior to their being filed with the Court, and such comments will be implemented to the extent reasonable.

(d) The Parties expressly acknowledge that the Court's approval of the Settlement Agreement is a condition precedent to any payments described in this Settlement Agreement. Therefore, the Parties further acknowledge that, should the Court not grant approval of this Settlement Agreement and/or should the Court refuse to grant judgment or dismissal of the Action and close the Action based on the Settlement, the entirety of this Settlement Agreement shall be null and void, and the Parties will have no obligations under it. The sum of the Attorneys' Fees and Costs, Service Award, and Settlement Administration Costs shall be determined by the Court. The Court's approval or denial of any amount requested for these items is not a condition of this Agreement and shall be considered separate and apart from the fairness, reasonableness, and adequacy of this Agreement. Any order or proceeding relating to an application for the Attorneys' Fees and Costs, Service Award, or Settlement Administration Costs shall not operate to terminate or cancel this Agreement.

(e) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Settlement Agreement, each of the Parties shall retain the right, in the exercise of their sole discretion, to unilaterally withdraw

from and terminate the Settlement if the Court makes or orders material changes to the Basic Settlement Terms. For purposes of this provision, Basic Settlement Terms include: the Gross Settlement Amount (excluding any potential increase pursuant to the Escalator Clause), the Escalator Clause and/or the PAGA Period and associated PAGA Released Claims. Should the Court initially deny approval and/or require supplemental briefing, and/or require material changes to the Basic Settlement Terms, the Parties will first attempt, in good faith to resolve such issues, prior to terminating the Settlement. If however, the Parties cannot come to a mutual agreement in relation to the Court's ruling, then the Parties shall retain the right, in the exercise of their sole discretion, to unilaterally withdraw from and terminate the Settlement.

6. Payment of the Gross Settlement Amount / Notice to Recipients.

(a) Subject to Court approval of this Settlement Agreement, payment of the sums described in Section 4(a)(1-5) above shall be made by Defendant by transmitting the Gross Settlement Amount to a qualified settlement account established by the Settlement Administrator for administration of this Settlement, within thirty (30) calendar days of the Court's order granting approval of this Settlement Agreement. If the date by which payment by Defendant is due falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday in the State of California, then the due date shall be extended to the next following day which is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday in the State of California.

(b) Each Aggrieved Employee will be entitled to a *pro rata* share of 35% of the Net Settlement Agreement (i.e., the Employees' Portion) based upon the number of pay periods they each worked during the PAGA Period ("Pay Periods"), based on Defendant's payroll records. Specifically, to calculate each Aggrieved Employee's share of the Employees' Portion ("Individual PAGA Payment"), the Settlement Administrator shall: (i) for each Aggrieved Employee, divide the number of Pay Periods the Aggrieved Employee worked by the total aggregate number of Pay Periods worked by all Aggrieved Employees, and then (ii) multiply this amount by the Employees' Portion to arrive at each Aggrieved Employee's Individual PAGA Payment.

(1) One hundred percent (100%) of all Individual PAGA Payments are to be considered penalties and the Settlement Administrator will not undertake any deductions, withholding, or remittances for local, state, or federal taxes. Aggrieved Employees' Individual PAGA Payments will be reported on an IRS Form 1099, as required.

(c) The Settlement Administrator shall distribute each Individual PAGA Payment by way of check, along with a cover letter ("Cover Letter") agreed to by the Parties and approved by the Court, in substantially the form attached hereto as "**Exhibit A**," in the following manner:

(1) No later than seven (7) calendar days after the Court's order granting approval of the Settlement, Defendant shall provide the Settlement Administrator the PAGA List as defined above.

(2) The Settlement Administrator shall conduct one (1) National Change of Address ("NCOA") search for all individuals identified on the PAGA List.

(3) No later than seven (7) calendar days after the Settlement Administrator receives the PAGA List and Gross Settlement Amount, the Settlement Administrator shall mail the agreed-upon Cover Letter and Individual PAGA Payment checks (together, the “PAGA Settlement Package”) to all Aggrieved Employees by First-Class United States mail. For each PAGA Settlement Package that is returned undeliverable within thirty (30) calendar days of the initial mailing, the Settlement Administrator shall promptly attempt to locate an alternative, updated address for the Aggrieved Employee at issue, by using a skip-trace search and shall attempt one (1) re-mailing of the PAGA Settlement Package.

(4) The Individual PAGA Payment checks issued to Aggrieved Employees shall remain valid for one hundred eighty (180) calendar days, and thereafter, shall be canceled. Funds associated with such canceled checks shall be transmitted to the State Controller’s Office Unclaimed Property Division in the name of the Aggrieved Employee(s) at issue and in the amount of their respective Individual PAGA Payment(s).

(5) No later than seven (7) calendar days after the Settlement Administrator receives the PAGA List and Gross Settlement Amount, the Settlement Administrator shall transmit the LWDA Payment to the LWDA.

(6) No later than seven (7) calendar days after the Settlement Administrator receives the PAGA List and Gross Settlement Amount, the Settlement Administrator shall transmit the Service Award to Plaintiff.

(7) No later than seven (7) calendar days after the Settlement Administrator receives the PAGA List and Gross Settlement Amount, the Settlement Administrator shall transmit the Attorneys’ Fees and Costs to Plaintiff’s Counsel.

(8) No later than seven (7) calendar days after the Settlement Administrator receives the PAGA List and Gross Settlement Amount, the Settlement Administrator shall transmit the Settlement Administration Costs to itself.

7. Release of Claims by Plaintiff, the State of California, and the Aggrieved Employees.

(a) **PAGA Released Claims.** As of the Effective Date and the full funding of the Gross Settlement Amount, Plaintiff, the State of California with respect to the Aggrieved Employees, and Aggrieved Employees shall fully and finally release and discharge Released Parties from the PAGA Released Claims.

(b) **Separate Non-PAGA Settlement Agreement.** The Parties have separately entered into a confidential settlement agreement regarding the Individual Action and Plaintiff’s non-PAGA claims arising out of Plaintiff’s employment with Defendant, wages paid during that employment and the termination of that employment. Nothing in this Agreement shall be construed to limit the Parties’ rights under the separate agreement. Payment under this separate non-PAGA settlement shall result in Plaintiff filing a dismissal of the Individual Action, with prejudice.

8. **Governing Law and Interpretation.**

(a) This Settlement Agreement shall be governed and conformed in accordance with the laws of the State of California. Should any non-material provision of this Settlement Agreement be declared illegal or unenforceable by any court of competent jurisdiction and said provision cannot be modified to be enforceable, that provision immediately shall become null and void, leaving the remainder of this Settlement Agreement in full force and effect.

(b) In the event of a breach of any provision of this Settlement Agreement, any Party reserves the right to institute an action specifically to enforce any term or terms of this Settlement Agreement or seek damages for breach. In an action to enforce any term or terms of this Settlement Agreement or to seek damages for breach of this Settlement Agreement, the prevailing Party in that action shall be entitled to recover reasonable attorneys' fees and costs from the non-prevailing Party.

9. **Confidentiality.** Plaintiff agrees that Plaintiff or Plaintiff's Counsel have not and will not publish details about the Settlement, apart from required Court filings and LWDA reporting. In response to any inquiries, Plaintiff will state that "the case was resolved". Plaintiff's Counsel shall not report the Settlement in any medium or in any publication, shall not post or report anything regarding the claims of Plaintiff or the Settlement on their website, and shall not contact any reporters or media regarding the Settlement. Despite this provision, Plaintiff's Counsel can discuss the Settlement with Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees, and in any filings with the Court. Nothing herein will restrict Plaintiff's Counsel from including publicly available information regarding the Settlement in future judicial submissions regarding Plaintiff's Counsel's qualifications and experience.

10. **Amendment.** This Settlement Agreement may not be modified, altered, or changed except in writing and signed by both Parties' counsel, subject to approval by the Court.

11. **Miscellaneous.**

(a) The Parties agree to stay all proceedings in the Action, including with respect to California Code of Civil Procedure section 583.310, except such proceedings necessary to implement and complete the Settlement, pending approval of the Settlement.

(b) The Parties agree that the Court shall retain continuing jurisdiction over the Action under CCP 664.6 to ensure the continuing implementation of the provisions of this Settlement.

(c) This Settlement Agreement may be signed in counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, but all of which, taken together shall constitute the same instrument. A signature made on a faxed or electronically transmitted copy of the Settlement Agreement or a signature transmitted by facsimile or electronic mail shall have the same effect as the original signature.

(d) The section headings used in this Settlement Agreement are intended solely for convenience of reference and shall not in any manner amplify, limit, modify, or otherwise be used in the interpretation of any of the provisions hereof.

(e) This Settlement Agreement was the result of negotiations between the Parties and their respective counsel under the auspices of mediator Tagore Subramaniam, Esq. In the event of vagueness, ambiguity, or uncertainty, this Settlement Agreement shall not be construed against the Party preparing it but shall be construed as if both Parties prepared it jointly, and the Parties may present their disputes to the mediator to resolve any vagueness, ambiguity, or uncertainty.

(f) If Plaintiff or Defendant fail to enforce this Settlement Agreement or to insist on performance of any term, that failure does not mean a waiver of that term or of the Settlement Agreement. This Settlement Agreement remains in full force and effect anyway.

(g) Plaintiff represents that prior to or at the same time he files a Motion for Approval of the Settlement, he will give notice of this Agreement and proposed Settlement to the LWDA as required by California Labor Code section 2699(1)(2).

(h) As of the Effective Date and full funding of the Gross Settlement Amount, this Settlement shall serve to preclude Plaintiff, the LWDA, and any other representative, proxy, or agent thereof, including but not limited to, any and all Aggrieved Employees during the PAGA Period, from pursuing or obtaining civil penalties under the California Labor Code §§ 2698, *et seq.*, against the Released Parties based on the PAGA Released Claims.

HAVING ELECTED TO EXECUTE THIS SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT, TO FULFILL THE PROMISES, AND TO RECEIVE THE CONSIDERATION SET FORTH ABOVE, PLAINTIFF AND DEFENDANT, FREELY AND KNOWINGLY, AND AFTER DUE CONSIDERATION, ENTER INTO THIS SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties hereto knowingly and voluntarily executed this Settlement Agreement as of the date set forth below:

PLAINTIFF JOSE RAMIREZ

Dated: 02/26/2026



Jose Ramirez

**DEFENDANT A.J. KIRKWOOD &
ASSOCIATES, INC**

Dated: 02/27/2026

Leah J. Zappia

Digitally signed by Leah J. Zappia
DN: C=US, E=leah.zappia@ajk-a.com,
CN=Leah J. Zappia
Contact Info: leah.zappia@ajk-a.com
Date: 2026.02.27 10:33:34 -08'00'

Full Name: Leah J. Zappia

Title: _____
On behalf of A.J. Kirkwood & Associates,
Inc

APPROVED AS TO FORM ONLY:

Dated: 02/26/2026

BLACKSTONE LAW, APC



Alexandra Rose
Attorneys for Plaintiff Jose Ramirez

Dated: 02/27/2026

FISHER & PHILLIPS LLP



Christine D. Baran
Samantha E. Cardarelli
*Attorneys for Defendant A.J. Kirkwood &
Associates, Inc*

Exhibit A

To: <<First Name>><<Last Name>>
<<Street Address>>
<<City>><<State>><<Zip>>

Re: Settlement Payment from *Jose Ramirez v. A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc.*, San Diego County Superior Court Case No. 24CU012580C

Dear <<First Name>><<Last Name>>:

Please find enclosed a check in the amount of <<amount of payment>> (“Individual PAGA Payment”). This check is your payment from the settlement in the lawsuit entitled *Jose Ramirez v. A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc.*, San Diego County Superior Court Case No. 24CU012580C (“Action”).

The lawsuit was filed on September 23, 2024 by Jose Ramirez (“Plaintiff”) against his former employer A.J. Kirkwood & Associates, Inc. (“Defendant”), on behalf of the State of California, with respect to himself and other alleged aggrieved employees, to seek recovery of civil penalties pursuant to the Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, California Labor Code § 2698, *et seq.* (“PAGA”), for multiple alleged violations of the California Labor Code and Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Orders. Prior to initiating the lawsuit, on July 17, 2024, Plaintiff submitted a letter to the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”), pursuant to PAGA, to provide notice of his intent to seek civil penalties under PAGA for Defendant’s alleged violations of the California Labor Code and the applicable Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Orders, thereby initiating LWDA Case Number LWDA-CM-1040176-24 (“LWDA Notice”).

Defendant denies all of Plaintiff’s allegations and denies any wrongdoing of any kind associated with Plaintiff’s allegations. A settlement was reached between Plaintiff and Defendant.

On <<Date>>, the settlement was approved by the Court, with a portion to be paid to the LWDA and a portion to be paid to all current and former hourly-paid and/or non-exempt employees who worked for Defendant in the State of California at any time during the PAGA Period (“Aggrieved Employees”). The period July 17, 2023 through August 23, 2025 is the “PAGA Period.”

You are receiving a portion of the settlement (the enclosed Individual PAGA Payment) because you have been identified as an Aggrieved Employee. Your Individual PAGA Payment is based on the total number of pay periods that you worked for Defendant in California during the PAGA Period. The Individual PAGA Payment is considered to be 100% penalties, which will be reported on an IRS Form 1099 (if applicable). You are responsible for paying any and all taxes that may be due as a result of any payment issued to you under the settlement and should consult a tax advisor regarding the tax consequences of such payment.

Under the settlement, as of <<date of full funding of the Gross Settlement Amount and entry of the Order and Judgment>>, the Released Parties were fully, finally, and forever released, settled, compromised, relinquished, and discharged from the PAGA Released Claims.

“Released Parties” means Defendant and all of its past, present, and future parents, predecessors, successors, and their current and former officers, directors, members, employees, and agents.

“PAGA Released Claims” means Plaintiff, the State of California with respect to the Aggrieved Employees, and Aggrieved Employees will be deemed to have fully, finally, and forever released, settled, compromised, relinquished, and discharged Defendant and the Released Parties of any and all claims for civil penalties under PAGA, arising during the PAGA Period, alleged in the Operative Complaint and LWDA Notice or that could have reasonably been alleged in the Operative Complaint and LWDA Notice based on the facts and allegations

COVER LETTER

set forth therein, including but not limited to claims for failure to pay overtime wages; failure to pay minimum wages; any claims for additional wages owed due to “off the clock” work; rounding and/or any other theory alleged in the Operative Complaint and LWDA Notice; failure to provide meal periods or compensation in lieu thereof; failure to provide rest periods or compensation in lieu thereof; failure to timely pay all wages due; waiting time penalties; failure to pay timely wages during employment; wage statement violation; failure to keep and maintain accurate payroll records; failure to reimburse expenses; violation of California Labor Code §§ 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 210, 226(a), 226.3, 226.7, 227.3, 510, 512, 558, 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 1198.5, 1199, 2699, 2800, and 2802, and the applicable Industrial Welfare Commission Wage Order.

The enclosed check is valid for 180 calendar days from the original date of issuance and mailing, and if it is not cashed, deposited, or otherwise negotiated within the 180-day timeframe, it will be canceled, and the funds associated with the canceled check will be transmitted to the State Controller’s Office Unclaimed Property Division in your name and in the amount of your Individual PAGA Payment.

Do not call or write the Court, Office of the Clerk of the Court, Defendant, or Defendant’s counsel to ask questions about the settlement or to ask tax-related questions. If you have any such questions, you may contact [Settlement Administrator] at [toll-free phone number].

EXHIBIT 3



Thank you for your Proposed Settlement Submission

From no-reply@formassembly.com <no-reply@formassembly.com>

Date Mon 3/16/2026 4:59 PM

To Ana Turcios <aturcios@blackstonepc.com>

[External Email].

03/16/2026 04:58:57 PM

Thank you for your submission to the Labor and Workforce Development Agency.

Item submitted: Proposed Settlement

On 03/16/2026 04:58:57 PM your Proposed Settlement was successfully processed for case number LWDA-CM-1040176-24

If you have questions or concerns regarding this submission or your case, please send an email to pagainfo@dir.ca.gov.

DIR PAGA Unit on behalf of
Labor and Workforce Development Agency

Website: [http://labor.ca.gov/Private Attorneys General Act.htm](http://labor.ca.gov/Private_Attorneys_General_Act.htm)

EXHIBIT 4

- *Vivian Huynh v. Technical Safety Services, LLC*, Alameda County Superior Court, Case No. 23CV053505, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action
- *Connor Brown v. Bi-Rite Management Services LLC, et al.*, San Francisco County Superior Court, Case No. CGC-24-611385, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Joshua Gilmore v. Golden Bolt, LLC*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 24STCV11281, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Tony Jones v. Saddle Creek Corporation dba Saddle Creek Logistics Services*, Orange County Superior Court Case No. 30-2024-01379065-CU-OE-CXC, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Armida Burton v. Mercury Mission Systems, LLC*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 24STCV02628, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Triada Pallidou v. TJB Geary's, LLC dba Geary's Beverly Hills*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 24STCV15627, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Joey Ruiz, et al. v. Southern Tire Mart, LLC*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 24STCV12037, approved as counsel, in association with other counsel, in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action
- *Salomon Garcia, et al. v. Atlas Freight Forwarding, Inc.*, San Diego County Superior Court, Case No. 37-2022-00039724-CU-OE-CTL, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Chardriana Jean v. Woodruff-Sawyer & Co.*, Alameda County Superior Court, Case No. 24CV102594, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.

- *Stephanie Leon v. Fulgent Therapeutics, LLC, et al.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 24STCV14168, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Emma Romero v. Charles Abbott Associates, Inc.*, San Bernardino County Superior Court, Case No. CIVSB2322374, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Karen Hartstein v. Hyatt Corporation*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 20STCV15895, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Michael Casas, et al. v. Encorr Sheets, LLC*, San Bernardino County Superior Court, Case No. CIVSB2319925, approved as counsel, in association with other counsel, in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Quincy O'Neal v. Included Health, Inc., formerly known as Grand Rounds Health, Inc.*, San Francisco County Superior Court, Case No. CGC-23-608391, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Javario Datrail Luna v. A-Check America, Inc., et al.*, Riverside County Superior Court, Case No. CVRI2306180, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Kevin Werner, et al. v. Greystar Management Services, LP, et al.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV08498, approved as counsel, in association with other counsel, in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Jully Mullings v. Antelope Ambulance Service*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV30241, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Maria Martina Aleman v. Holding Hands OPCO LLC dba Holding Hands, Inc.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 24STCV25240, approved as counsel in

settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.

- *Jesus Herrera v. Reeve Store Equipment Company*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 22STCV04239, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Vanessa Vazquez v. Cliffs Resort LLC*, San Luis Obispo County Superior Court, Case No. 24CV-0025, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Javier Hernandez, Jr. v. DGDG I, LLC, et al.*, Santa Clara County Superior Court, Case No. 23CV416770, approved as counsel, in association with other counsel, in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Juan Manuel Munoz v. MGA Entertainment, Inc.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV06386, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Mayra Campos Molina, et al. v. Harbor Hotels, LLC*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV10683, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *William Sykes, IV, et al. v. Wente Bros.*, Alameda County Superior Court, Case No. 23CV048758, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Jose Padilla, et al. v. WEHO Hospitality Sunset, LLC*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV01072, approved as counsel, in association with other counsel, in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Marvin Morales v. Skurka Aerospace, Inc.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 24STCV12893, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Tyler Krug, et al. v. EKC Enterprises, Inc.*, Kern County Superior Court, Case No. BCV-23-103975, approved as counsel, in association with other counsel, in final

settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.

- *Joseph Amyot v. Silverthorn Resort, Inc.*, Shasta County Superior Court, Case No. 23CV-0203487, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Marissa Hartman v. Napa LP Hospitality Corporation*, Napa County Superior Court, Case No. 23CV00116, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Lesly Arreguin, et al. v. Intercare Therapy, Inc.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV27972, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Alma Lopez, et al. v. Advanced Manufacturing and Development, Inc.*, Mendocino County Superior, Case No. 23CV000673, approved as counsel, in association with other counsel, in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Brittini Aghedo, et al. v. Villa Esperanza Services*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV27362, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Robin Jennings v. Mizuho Orthopedic Systems, Inc. dba Mizuho OSI*, Alameda County Superior Court, Case No. 24CV070891, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Jonathan Martin v. Atlas Digital, LLC*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV30498, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Cynthia Molt v. Los Angeles Film School, LLC*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV30757, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *William Ramirez v. Employer Solutions Staffing Group LLC*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV24735, approved as counsel in final settlement of

wage and hour class and PAGA action.

- *Anu Verma v. SingerLewak LLC*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 24STCV11344, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Toby Lanzarin, et al. v. Building Material Distributors, Inc.*, Sacramento County Superior Court, Case No. 34-2022-00330343-CU-OE-GDS, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Kassandra Herndon, et al. v. Agreeya Solutions, Inc.*, San Joaquin County Superior Court, Case No. STK-CV-UOE-2023-0002783, approved as counsel, in association with other counsel, in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Damon Siler, et al. v. Call-The-Car dba Call the Car*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 24STCV07514, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Daniel Ochoa-Lopez v. CorTech West Staffing, LLC, et al.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV19480, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA
- *Juan Escobedo v. Block Tops, Inc.*, Orange County Superior Court, Case No. 30-2023-01356309-CU-OE-CXC, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Antonio Quintero v. Weyerhaeuser NR Company*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV02624, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Cristo Hernandez v. Eldorado National (California), Inc.*, Riverside County Superior Court, Case No. CVRI2201056, approved as counsel, in association with other counsel, in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Rigoberto Tecaliz v. National Restaurant Inc. dba Black Bear Diner*, San Diego County Superior Court, Case No. 37-2023-00046906-CU-OE-CTL, approved as

counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.

- *Cecilia Estrada v. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Los Angeles*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 24STCV07184, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Alexander Davis v. JAJ Roofing dba Citadel Roofing and Solar*, Sacramento County Superior Court, Case No. 23CV011004, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Aurelio Aguilar v. Supreme Car Wash, Inc.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 21STCV29696, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Aaron Coffey v. Catalina Channel Express, Inc.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 21STCV41396, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Djuana Shanella Hale, et al. v. Welbe Health, LLC, et al.*, San Joaquin County Superior Court, Case No. STK-CV-UOE-2023-0006866, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Mario Fosados v. Drew Chain Security Corp.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 24STCV00519, approved as counsel in in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Jose Manuel Amaro Bernal v. Joseph Holt Plastering, Inc.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 24STCV15637, approved as counsel in in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Brandon Geston v. FRTO LLC, et al.*, Fresno County Superior Court, Case No. 24CECG01292, approved as counsel in in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Alfonso Herrera v. W.L. Butler Construction, Inc., et al.*, Orange County Superior Court, Case No. 30-2023-01335445-CU-OE-CXC, approved as counsel in final

settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.

- *Marcos Ojendiz, et al. v. Jonathan Louis International*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 21STCV35253, approved as counsel in in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Emmanuel Caldera v. Zeb's World Famous Boathouse Inc. dba Goat Hill Tavern*, Orange County Superior Court, Case No. 30-2023-01310801-CU-OE-CXC, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Alex Javier Nakamoto v. Skydio, Inc.*, Alameda County Superior Court, Case No. 24CV062913, approved as counsel in in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Jason McEntee v. Roche Molecular Systems, Inc.*, Alameda County Superior Court, Case No. 23CV041360, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Alexzander Roberts, et al. v. Lemonade Restaurant Group*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 22STCV38302, approved as counsel, in association with other counsel, in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Halla Knotts v. Launch Technical Workforce Solutions, LLC*, San Bernardino County Superior Court, Case No. CIVSB2332568, approved as counsel, in association with other counsel, in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Armando Gastelum v. Premier Trailer Manufacturing, Inc.*, Tulare County Superior Court, Case No. VCU300333, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Tiffany Patterson v. Black Mountain Healthcare, LLC., d/b/a Seaport Home Health & Hospice*, San Diego County Superior Court, Case No. 37-2023-00037563-CU-OE-CTL, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.

- *Angel Rodriguez v. American Textile Maintenance*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 22STCV17855, approved as counsel, in association with other counsel, in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Rita Ray v. Families Together of Orange County*, Orange County Superior Court, Case No. 30-2023-01324555-CU-OE-CXC, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Ly Hai v. Sunroad HS Auto, Inc.*, San Diego County Superior Court, Case No. 37-2022-00025788-CU-OE-CTL, approved as counsel, in association with other counsel, in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Anabel Perez v. Eureka Specialties, Inc.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 22STCV35940, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Jose Luis Galicia v. Virco, Inc., et al.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV29425, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Rene Umana v. Columbus Technologies*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 22STCV16432, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Sitara Nayabkhil v. San Francisco SPCA (dba SFSPCA), a California 501(c)(3) non-profit organization*, San Francisco County Superior Court, Case No. CGC-23-609950, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Fernando Solis v. Tuff Shed, Inc.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 24VECV00368, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Tyler Emery v. Santa Cruz Bicycles, LLC*, Santa Cruz Superior Court, Case No. 24CV00244, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and

PAGA action.

- *Odalys Montejo v. Team Nissan LLC*, Ventura County Superior Court, Case No. 2023CUOE017853, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA
- *Vanessa Cortes v. Giti Tire (USA) LTD*, San Bernardino County Superior Court, Case No. CIVSB2332578, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Travis Sanford v. Santa Cruz Seaside Company*, Santa Cruz County Superior Court, Case No. 23CV01762, approved as counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Jered Ortega v. YMCA of San Diego County*, San Diego County Superior Court, Case No. 37-2023-00043645-CU-OE-CTL, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Corina Martinez v. Stagnaro Bros. Seafood, Inc.*, Santa Cruz County Superior Court, Case No. 24CV00082, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Alejandra Jimenez v. ClearFreight, Inc.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV28938, approved as counsel, in association with other counsel, in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Jazzmin Cortez v. Millard Mall Services, Inc.*, Riverside County Superior Court, Case No. CVRI2104010, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Christa Morton, et al. v. PSI Services, LLC*, Fresno County Superior Court, Case No. 24CECG00039, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Michael Bravo v. Michels Pacific Energy, Inc.*, Santa Clara County Superior Court, Case No. 22CV403427, approved as class counsel in final settlement of wage and

hour class and PAGA action.

- *Daniel Rodriguez v. Republique, LLC*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV14521, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Theresa Bendorf, et al. v. Sea World LLC, et al.*, San Diego County Superior Court, Case No. 37-2021-00034922-CU-OE-CTL, approved as class counsel, in association with other counsel, in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Victor De La Cruz v. Northwest Pipe Company*, San Bernardino County Superior Court, Case No. CIVSB2211140, approved as class counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Bobby Birdi v. Lucid USA, Inc.*, Alameda County Superior Court, Case No. 21CV003541, approved as class counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Jose Trujillo, et al. v. Producers Dairy Foods, Inc.*, Sacramento County Superior Court, Case No. 34-2022-00313753, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *David Williams v. Rancho Nicasio, LLC*, Marin County Superior Court, Case No. CIV2203067, approved as class counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Alexander Jackson v. Lifecare Assurance Company*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 23STCV26579, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Alexis Cardoza v. BHFC Operating LLC*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 21STCV34040, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Maria Ayala, et al. v. SDH Services West, LLC*, Kern County Superior Court, Case

No. BCV-21-101933, approved as class counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class action.

- *Alfredo Sanchez v. Greenworld, Inc.*, Riverside County Superior Court, Case No. CVRI2105756, approved as class counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Oscar Bryant v. Midwest Construction Services, Inc. dba Trillium*, San Bernardino County Superior Court, Case No. CIVSB2121529, approved as class counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class action.
- *Matthew Savattieri v. AMI Expeditionary Healthcare, LLC, et al.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 21STCV33372, approved as class counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Lexy Barajas, et al. v. H. W. Hunter, Inc.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 22STCV01892, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Alejandro Valdez v. C.H.I. Automart, Inc.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 21STCV40168, approved as class counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Sheizan Bawa v. Meathead Movers, Inc.*, Orange County Superior Court, Case No. 30-2021-01211895-CU-OE-CXC, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Tanisha Lopez, et al. v. Restorix Health, Inc.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 21STCV33067, approved as class counsel, in association with other counsel, in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Perla Soto, et al. v. Nippon Express U.S.A., Inc.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 21STCV24902, approved as class counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Angel Garcia, et al. v. J&B Investments, Inc., et al.*, San Bernardino County Superior

Court, Case No. CIVSB2208601, approved as class counsel, in association with other counsel, in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.

- *Sindy Aviles, et al. v. Freeway Insurance Services America, LLC*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 21STCV34864, approved as counsel, in association with other counsel, in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Alexander Gnaedig, et al. v. Favorite Healthcare Staffing, Inc.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 21STCV20904, approved as class counsel, in association with other counsel, in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Richard Evans v. My Paint Stop, LLC, et al.*, Contra Costa County Superior Court, Case No. MSC21-01812, approved as class counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Jose Luis Parada George v. Main Electric Supply Company, LLC, et al.*, Orange County Superior Court, Case No. 30-2021-01220136-CU-OE-CXC, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.
- *Samia Salazar Yunis v. Sharif Jewelers*, Sacramento County Superior Court, Case No. 34-2020-00290080, approved as class counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Daniel Analco v. Felix Chevrolet, LP, et al.*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 21STCV36654, approved as class counsel in final settlement of wage and hour class and PAGA action.
- *Sasha Aiono v. Benefit Cosmetics*, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. 21STCV33719, approved as counsel in settlement of representative wage and hour action pursuant to PAGA.

EXHIBIT 5

Date	Type of Expense	Description of Expense	Amount
6/24/2024	Other	Wizzy- Marketing Cost	\$214.00
7/17/2024	Mailing	Mailing Cost: PAGA Letter to Defendant AJ Kirkwood & Associates, Inc. (Certified Mail)	\$8.69
7/17/2024	Other	PAGA Letter Submission Fee	\$75.00
7/17/2024	Mailing	Mailing Cost: Plaintiff Jesse Ramirez's Record Request to Defendant AJ Kirkwood & Associates, Inc. (Certified Mail)	\$9.64
7/17/2024	Mailing	Mailing Cost: Plaintiff Jesse Ramirez's Record Request to Defendant AJ Kirkwood & Associates, Inc. (2nd address) (Certified Mail)	\$9.64
7/17/2025	Mailing	Mailing Cost: Plaintiff Jesse Ramirez's Record Request to Defendant AJ Kirkwood & Associates, Inc. (3rd address) (Certified Mail)	\$9.64
7/24/2024	Filing	Fee to Steno: Class Complaint Packet and Complex Fee (Class)	\$1,997.20
7/30/2024	Service	Fee to Steno: Personal Service on Defendant AJ Kirkwood & Associates, Inc (Class)	\$219.00
9/25/2024	Filing	Fee to Steno: Complaint Packet (PAGA)	\$647.20
11/7/2024	Other	Payment to Momentum ADR	\$9,250.00
2/24/2025	Filing	Fee to Steno: Case Management Statement (PAGA)	\$59.95
3/7/2025	Filing	Fee to Steno: Joint Initial Status Conference Statement (PAGA)	\$674.20
7/2/2025	Other	San Diego Court invoice - Document Purchase	\$5.00
7/22/2025	Mediation	Payment to Damage Analysis Consultant, Berger Consulting Group	\$4,815.00
11/7/2025	Filing	Fee to Steno: Case Management Statement (Class)	\$59.95
11/21/2025	Filing	Fee to Steno: Case Management Statement (PAGA)	\$59.95
11/27/2025	Filing	Fee to Steno: Notice of Remote Appearance (PAGA)	\$59.95
	Filing	Future Cost - Steno: Plaintiff's Motion for Preliminary Approval; Decl. & Proposed Order	\$140.95
	Filing	Future Cost - Steno: Notice of Entry (M4PAGA Order)	\$59.95
	Filing	Future Cost - Steno: Administrator's Decl. Re Disbursement	\$59.95
Total:			\$18,434.86