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*Attorneys for Plaintiff TRAVIS SANFORD, individually,
and on behalf of other similarly situated employees and
aggrieved employees pursuant to the California Private
Attorneys General Act*

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ**

TRAVIS SANFORD, individually, and on
behalf of other similarly situated employees
and aggrieved employees pursuant to the
California Private Attorneys General Act,

Plaintiff,

vs.

SANTA CRUZ SEASIDE COMPANY, a
California corporation; and DOES 1 through
25, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No. 23CV01762

Honorable Syda K. Cogliati
Department 5

**DECLARATION OF KAREN I. GOLD IN
SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR
FINAL APPROVAL OF CLASS ACTION AND
PAGA SETTLEMENT, ATTORNEYS' FEES
AND COSTS, ENHANCEMENT PAYMENT,
AND SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION
COSTS**

Date: January 30, 2025
Time: 8:30 a.m.
Dept.: 5

Complaint Filed: July 25, 2023
FAC Filed: August 5, 2024
Trial Date: Not Set

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1. I am an attorney duly licensed to practice law in all Courts of the State of California. I am a Senior Trial Attorney & Team Lead with Blackstone Law, APC (“Blackstone”), attorneys of record for Plaintiff Travis Sanford (“Plaintiff”). I have personal knowledge of the facts contained herein, and if called to testify, I could and would competently do so.

Proposed Class Counsel

3. I graduated *cum laude* from UCLA in 2005 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Cognitive Science and a Specialization in Computing. I received my law degree from Boston University School of Law and was admitted to the California State Bar in 2008.

5. Throughout my career, I have managed and/or are currently managing over one hundred complex litigation cases, ranging from employment matters to corporate and general business litigation matters. On many of those cases, I was the only or primary attorney managing the case and thus obtained extensive experience overseeing these types of actions. In that capacity, I was often the primary contact for clients; took and defended many depositions; propounded and responded to discovery; prepared and opposed pleadings and motions, including dispositive and class certification motions; strategized on all cases; attended hearings; attended mediations; coordinated with class action administrators; prepared and worked with experts; participated in trial prep and trials; and engaged in all other intricate facets of litigation. Super Lawyers honored me as a Southern California Rising Star from 2015 through 2018.

1 6. As a Senior Trial Attorney and Team Lead at Blackstone Law, I currently oversee and
2 handle over 100 wage-and-hour putative class actions and/or representative actions under PAGA
3 seeking relief on behalf of California employees and the State of California.

4 7. My billable rate is \$985. I am informed and believe that this is within the range of
5 reasonable prevailing rates for attorneys with my education and experience in this area of law in
6 Southern California

7 8. The attorneys at Blackstone Law possess combined extensive experience litigating
8 wage and hour and other complex litigation matters. In that regard, I refer first to the Declaration of
9 Jonathan M. Genish, founder and owner of Blackstone Law, filed concurrently with the motion for
10 final approval as evidence of his experience and credentials in support of this matter. His billable rate
11 is \$1,150.

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

20 10. Junior attorneys, a paralegal and various staff members assisted with numerous discreet
21 tasks related to this case on an as-needed basis. Their time is not included in the lodestar amount
22 provided below as only those attorneys tasked with overseeing this litigation were included below.

23 ***Work Performed by Plaintiff's Counsel/ Lodestar***

24 11. My team is somewhat unique in our approach to mediations. We treat early mediations
25 as "practice trials" of sorts, and spend extensive time gathering evidence, interviewing witnesses,
26 researching legal issues, and developing our legal and factual theories in advance of the mediation.
27 We believe that investing substantial time, energy and money up front often results in far better results
28 at mediation, and saves the plaintiffs, putative class members, and the firm years of potential delay

1 and additional costs should the case not settle at early mediation. Consistent with this approach, my
2 team extensively worked-up this case informally prior to mediation, which I am informed and believe
3 was a substantial contributing factor in obtaining the strong result achieved at mediation.

4 12. Accordingly, Blackstone Law has spent a considerable number of hours litigating this
5 matter. Attorneys who worked on this matter to date engaged in a multitude of tasks including, *inter*
6 *alia*: (1) communicating with the client; (2) performing preliminary legal research, (3) drafting the
7 operative class action complaint, (4) drafting the PAGA notice, (5) drafting the PAGA complaint, (6)
8 locating and interviewing witnesses, (7) negotiating with defense counsel to schedule the mediation
9 and obtain the necessary informal discovery documents sufficiently in advance of mediation; (8) hiring
10 and interfacing with a damages expert to calculate a damages model for use at mediation and multiple
11 revisions and iterations of the same; (9) reviewing and analyzing all documents produced by
12 Defendant; (10) thoroughly researching the legal and factual theories and investigating additional
13 potential avenues of liability; (11) drafting a comprehensive mediation brief; (12) preparing for and
14 attending mediation; (12) following-up on conversations and negotiations with the mediator and
15 opposing counsel; (13) negotiating the terms of the long form settlement agreement and Class Notice
16 documents; (14) obtaining administrative quotes from potential Settlement Administrators; (15)
17 researching and drafting a Motion for Preliminary Approval and all supporting documents; (16)
18 preparing for and attending the hearing on the Motion for Preliminary Approval; (17) interfacing with
19 opposing counsel and the Settlement Administrator as necessary to effectuate the disbursement of
20 class notice; (18) responding to questions from class members; and (19) drafting and reviewing the
21 Motion for Final Approval and all supporting documents.

22 13. A summary of Blackstone's estimated lodestar to-date to complete these tasks is as
23 follows:

<u>Attorney</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Total</u>
Jonathan M. Genish	Managing Partner	53.80	\$1,150	\$61,870
Karen I. Gold	Senior Counsel	143.60	\$985	\$141,446
Marissa Mayhood	Senior Associate	268.70	\$750	\$201,525

1 14. I expect my team to spend an additional 35 hours at a blended rate for myself and Ms.
2 Mayhood of \$867.50, resulting in an additional \$30,362.50 in attorneys' fees to be incurred finalizing
3 the motion for final approval and supporting documents, preparing for and attending the Final
4 Approval Hearing, managing the Settlement through its conclusion, including anticipated
5 communications with defense counsel, the Settlement Administrator, our client, and Class Members,
6 as well as any additional procedural issues that require attention. Based thereon, the total amount of
7 Blackstone's estimated lodestar fees through closure of this case are approximately **\$435,203.50**.

8 15. One difficulty in determining the hourly rate of attorneys of similar skill and experience
9 in the relevant community is the scarcity of hourly fee-paying clients in class action litigation. As a
10 practical matter, few if any employees or consumers pay attorneys' fees on an hourly basis for such
11 litigation, and thus retainer agreements in such cases are based on a stepped-up contingency fee (with
12 the percentage increasing from one third to forty-five – and sometimes even fifty percent, which in
13 my experience is on par with personal injury contingency fee agreements – if the case goes to trial).
14 Therefore, based on my experience, there really is no customary hourly billing rate for work that is
15 routinely based on a contingent fee relationship, but the nature of class action work and the contingency
16 relationship should be strongly considered by the Court.

17 16. Wage and hour work presents a specialized, challenging and complex area of law that
18 is not within the knowledge of many lawyers. This kind of class action work requires specialized
19 learning and the willingness to take large risks, particularly in light of the very real possibility that
20 some portion of the cases accepted will result in little to no recovery, and therefore no fees to the firm.

21 17. As with all contingency cases, I understand that my firm had to consider its workload
22 when agreeing to pursue this litigation. Specifically, the firm had to be mindful of its attorneys'
23 caseload when it took on this matter, and necessarily had to forgo other cases when it decided to do
24 so, as my team and the other class action teams are currently at or near capacity.

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

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4 Executed on January 7, 2025, at Westlake Village, California.

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