

October 8, 2024

VIA ONLINE SUBMISSION

Stewart Knox, Secretary
California Labor & Workforce
Development Agency
800 Capitol Mall, Suite 5000 (MIC-55)
Sacramento, CA 95814

VIA CERTIFIED MAIL

SMG Ontario, LLC
Attn: Legal Department
4000 Ontario Center
Ontario, CA 91764

SMG Ontario, LLC
Attn: Legal Department
2000 E. Convention Center Way
Ontario, CA 91764

SMG Ontario Arena, LLC
Attn: Legal Department
2000 E. Convention Center Way
Ontario, CA 91764

Toyota Arena LLC
Attn: Legal Department
2000 E. Convention Center Way
Ontario, CA 91764

**NOTICE OF LABOR CODE VIOLATIONS PURSUANT TO CALIFORNIA LABOR
CODE SECTION 2698, ET SEQ.**

To: The California Labor and Workforce Development Agency; Toyota Arena LLC;
SMG Ontario Arena, LLC; SMG Ontario, LLC

From: Ms. Tonya Benenati, on behalf of herself and all other current and former hourly
nonexempt employees for violations of the California Labor Code

To Whom It May Concern:

Abramson Labor Group has been retained by former employee Ms. Tonya Benenati (“Ms. Benenati”) to seek compensation and all other available relief, including civil penalties on her behalf and on the behalf of all those similarly aggrieved (collectively with Ms. Benenati, “Claimants”) who have been injured by Toyota Arena LLC; SMG Ontario Arena, LLC; and SMG Ontario, LLC’s (collectively, “SMG”) violations of the California Labor Code. Ms. Benenati, on behalf of herself and all other similarly aggrieved current and former hourly nonexempt employees

of SMG, intends to seek civil penalties, attorneys' fees, costs, and other available relief for violations of the California Labor Code, which are recoverable under sections 2698, *et seq.* of the Labor Code Private Attorneys General Act of 2004 ("PAGA").

Factual Statement:

SMG operates two arena-sized event spaces in Southern California, with both locations in Ontario, California known as the Toyota Arena and the Ontario Convention Center. The types of events accommodate thousands of attendees of sports matches; ceremonies; performances including musicians, stand-up comedians, et cetera; conferences, conventions, and exhibitions.

Claimant Ms. Benenati worked for SMG at both the Toyota Arena and the Ontario Convention Center as an hourly, nonexempt employee in the position of Security Officer, earning \$20.00 per hour from approximately April 24, 2021 through approximately October 27, 2023. Ms. Benenati, on behalf of herself and all other similarly aggrieved current and former employees in California in various positions, are or were engaged in providing a variety of event-related services to attendees at one of SMG's event spaces, Claimant and other hourly, nonexempt employees, collectively, "hourly nonexempt employees," are or were assigned to and required to suffer and permitted to work—some without pay—while performing tasks collectively including, but not limited to, security-related functions; food-service; ushering; janitorial; ticketing; and merchandise sales.

Claimant Ms. Benenati regularly worked five (5) days per week for 8 hours or more hours per day. During the entire course of her employment, SMG failed to provide Ms. Benenati and continues to fail to provide those similarly aggrieved with some overtime pay and compliant meal periods and rest breaks. SMG has also failed to pay minimum wages to Ms. Benenati and other hourly, nonexempt employees in violation of Labor Code sections 510, 1194, 1197, and 1182.12, and section 4 of IWC Wage Order No. 10-2001. As a consequence, SMG has failed to comply with Labor Code sections 226.7, 510, and 512, and sections 3, 11, and 12 of all applicable Industrial Welfare Commission ("IWC") Wage Orders, including but not limited to, IWC Wage Order No. 10-2001. In violation of Labor Code sections 510, 1194, 1197, and 1182.12, SMG has failed to compensate Claimants at a rate of one and one-half (1.5) times their regular rate for all hours worked over eight (8) hours per workday and the first eight (8) hours worked on the seventh day of a workweek and at two (2) times their regular rate for hours worked over twelve (12) hours per workday and eight (8) hours on the seventh day of a workweek.

SMG has also failed and continues to fail to pay all wages owed every pay period in violation of Labor Code section 204. Likewise, SMG has failed and continues to fail to provide timely, accurate wage statements to Ms. Benenati and other aggrieved persons in violation of Labor Code section 226(a). With regard to those no longer employed by SMG, including Ms. Benenati, SMG has violated Labor Code section 203 by failing to pay all wages due upon separation. SMG has failed and continues to fail to fully reimburse Claimants for all necessary, business-related expenses and losses they incurred, including, but not limited to, all costs incurred for (1) cell phone expenses; (2) uniform laundering expenses, and (3) mileage expenses for travel from one arena to the other, in violation of Labor Code section 2802. Ms. Benenati is informed and believes that such violations are ongoing, systematic, and continuous. Ms. Benenati intends to bring an action

against SMG under the Private Attorneys General Act (“PAGA”) to recover wages and penalties as provided by California law.¹

Theories of Labor Code Violations and Remedies:

Claimant Ms. Benenati was employed by SMG from approximately April 24, 2021 through approximately October 27, 2023 as a Security Officer. For a period of at least four (4) years prior to October 2024, but for our purposes here, one (1) year prior, SMG has violated and continues to violate the California Labor Code sections as detailed below.

Claimants also were at all times entitled to payment of **minimum wages**. SMG has failed and continues to fail to pay Claimants minimum wages for all hours worked as required by Labor Code sections 510, 1194, and 1194.2 and section 4 of IWC Wage Order No. 10-2001. First, Defendant Claimants worked a substantial amount of time while off-the-clock—meaning they were not punched in for work—and therefore, those working hours were not recorded and then compensated. This off-the-clock time primarily occurred because Claimants were required to submit to personal searches both before entering and upon exiting the arena, all times of which they were not clocked in for work. Claimants’ off-the-clock time was never subsequently added and, therefore, uncompensated. Accordingly, Claimants were not paid for that time spent working off the clock. Second, Defendant enforces practices that effectively require Claimants to perform work during their meal periods (assuming SMG auto-deducts time for meal periods) and rest breaks, the effects of which Defendant could have mitigated by increasing staff to at least provide coverage for other employees. However, Defendant instead chose to instruct Claimants to remain on call, and therefore on-duty, during their meal periods and rest breaks and to work through their rest breaks when staff were in demand. In effect, these policies and practices cause Claimants to remain on-duty during meal periods and rest breaks, and therefore, constitute a failure on SMG’s part to provide compliant meal periods and rest breaks. With that, SMG’s corresponding failure to provide premium pay at the correct regular rate, if any premiums were paid at all, in lieu of compliant meal periods and rest breaks constitutes SMG’s failure to pay minimum wages and all hours worked every pay period and upon separation in violation of Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 226(a), 510, 1182.12, 1194, and 1197. SMG’s failure to pay Claimants their meal period and rest break premiums for noncompliant meal periods and rest breaks, as explained in further

¹ Without limitation, Ms. Benenati, if permitted, will seek any and all penalties otherwise capable of being collected by the Commission. This includes each provision as set forth in Labor Code section 2699.5 as follows:

The provisions of subdivision (a) of Section 2699.3 apply to any alleged violation of the following provisions: subdivision (k) of Section 96, Sections 98.6, 201, 201.3, 201.5, 201.7, 202, 203, 203.1, 203.5, 204, 204a, 204b, 204.1, 204.2, 205, 205.5, 206, 206.5, 208, 209, and 212, subdivision (d) of Section 213, Sections 221, 222, 222.5, 223, and 224, subdivision (a) of Section 226, Sections 226.7, 227, 227.3, 230, 230.1, 230.2, 230.3, 230A, 230.7, 230.8, and 231, subdivision (c) of Section 232, subdivision (c) of Section 232.5, Sections 233, 234, 351, 353, and 403, subdivision (b) of Section 404, Sections 432.2, 432.5, 432.7, 435, 450, 510, 511, 512, 513, 551, 552, 601, 602, 603, 604, 750, 751.8, 800, 850, 851, 851.5, 852, 921, 922, 923, 970, 973, 976, 1021, 1021.5, 1025, 1026, 1101, 1102, 1102.5, and 1153, subdivisions (c) and (d) of Section 1174, Sections 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1197.5, and 1198, subdivision (b) of Section 1198.3, Sections 1199, 1199.5, 1290, 1292, 1293, 1293.1, 1294, 1294.1, 1294.5, 1296, 1297, 1298, 1301, 1308, 1308.1, 1308.7, 1309, 1309.5, 1391, 1391.1, 1391.2, 1392, 1683, and 1695, subdivision (a) of Section 1695.5, Sections 1695.55, 1695.6, 1695.7, 1695.8, 1695.9, 1696, 1696.5, 1696.6, 1697.1, 1700.25, 1700.26, 1700.31, 1700.32, 1700.40, and 1700.47, paragraphs (1), (2), and (3) of subdivision (a) of, and subdivision (e) of, Section 1701.4, subdivision (a) of Section 1701.5, Sections 1701.8, 1701.10, 1701.12, 1735, 1771, 1774, 1776, 1777.5, 1811, 1815, 2651., and 2673, subdivision (a) of Section 2673.1, Sections 2695.2, 2800, 2801, 2802, 2806, and 2810, subdivision (b) of Section 2929, and Sections 3095, 6310, 6311, and 6399.7.

detail below, also constitutes a failure to pay minimum wages to Claimants. Therefore, Claimants are entitled to recover wages and/or penalties as provided by Labor Code section 1197.1 and section 20 of IWC Wage Order No. 10-2001.

Claimants were at all times entitled to unpaid off-duty, uninterrupted **meal periods**. As explained in the preceding paragraph, SMG failed to authorize and permit timely, full-length meal periods for Ms. Benenati and all other similarly aggrieved employees as required by Labor Code sections 226.7 and 512 and section 11 of IWC Wage Order No. 10-2001. Ms. Benenati and Claimants simply were not able to take their meal periods, which was because there was too few staff to be able to provide such relief. As a result, SMG did not compensate Claimants with an extra hour of pay at the regular rate for noncompliant meal periods for each workday on which they occurred. Claimants also worked 12 hours without a second meal period despite not signing valid second-meal period waivers. Nonetheless, SMG did not compensate Claimants with an extra hour of pay at the regular rate for noncompliant meal periods for each workday on which they occurred. Accordingly, since SMG required Ms. Benenati and others similarly situated to work during their meal periods in violation of Labor Code sections 226.7(a) and 512, Claimants seek all available penalties as set forth in Labor Code sections 558, section 20 of IWC Wage Order No. 10-2001, and 2699(f).

Claimants were at all times entitled to take paid, off duty 10-minute **rest breaks**. However, for the same reasons cited in the preceding paragraph regarding meal periods, SMG likewise failed to authorize and permit Ms. Benenati and all other similarly aggrieved employees to take full-length, off-duty rest breaks as required by Labor Code sections 226.7 and section 12 of IWC Wage Order No. 10-2001. Claimants were both not able to take their requisite number of 10-minutes rest breaks based on their shift duration; in these instances, Claimants regularly worked through their rest breaks as a standard practice and direction from SMG. SMG did not compensate Claimants with an extra hour of pay at the regular rate for noncompliant rest breaks for each workday on which they occurred. Therefore, Claimants are entitled to recover wages and/or penalties as provided by Labor Code section 558 and section 20 of IWC Wage Order No. 10-2001. Furthermore, since SMG required their hourly nonexempt employees to perform work during rest periods in violation of Labor Code section 226.7(b), Claimants seek all available penalties set forth in Labor Code sections 558 and 2699.

At all times relevant herein, Claimants were entitled to the payment of **overtime**. That is, pursuant to Labor Code sections 510, 1194, 1197, and 1182.12, SMG was required to compensate Claimants at a rate of one-and-one-half (1.5) times their regular rate for all hours worked over eight (8) hours per workday and the first eight (8) hours worked on the seventh day of a workweek and at two (2) times their regular rate for hours worked over twelve (12) hours per workday and eight (8) hours on the seventh day of a workweek. Ms. Benenati and Claimants regularly worked overtime hours. SMG has failed to and continues to fail to pay Claimants overtime wages owed for off-the-clock time worked that should have been compensated as overtime, yet regularly required them to work these overtime hours without premium pay under Labor Code section 1194. In short, during the entire course of their employment, SMG failed to provide Ms. Benenati and continues to fail to provide all others similarly situated with all overtime pay in violation of 226.7, 510, and 512 and all applicable IWC Wage Orders, including but not limited to IWC Wage Order 10-2001, section 3.

Pursuant to Labor Code sections 201–203, Claimants who have since separated from SMG, including Ms. Benenati, were entitled to be paid all **wages owed upon separation** within the statutorily allotted time—immediately (resignation with notice and termination) or within seventy-two (72) hours (resignation without notice). Claimants, including Ms. Benenati, did not receive her final pay of all wages within the requisite time based on the circumstances of her separation nor did she receive the wages SMG did pay based on SMG’s prior failings to pay all wages owed every pay period, including but not limited to minimum wage, overtime, and meal and rest premiums owed and for all hours worked, as explained above. SMG paid Ms. Benenati her final wages at least a week after her resignation, not within 72 hours of resigning.

Claimants were at all times entitled to be provided timely and accurate **wage statements** from SMG pursuant to Labor Code section 226. First, Ms. Benenati’s wage statements read “SMG Toyota Arena” rather than providing the correct legal name of Defendant—Toyota Arena LLC. Second, because SMG failed to pay Claimants all of their meal period and rest break premiums for noncompliant meal periods and rest breaks and failed to pay Claimants minimum wages for all hours worked before, during, and after their shifts and for all overtime wages due, Claimants’ wage statements were inaccurate in reflecting meal period and rest break premiums owed, overtime and minimum wages, and all hours worked every pay period. As a consequence, Claimants’ wage statements also do not reflect the accurate amount of net and gross wages owed. Accordingly, Claimants seek all available penalties as set forth in Labor Code sections 226(e) and 2699.

Finally, Claimants were entitled to be reimbursed by SMG for all necessary, **business-related expenses** they incurred in executing their duties for SMG. California Labor Code section 2802 provides that “An employer shall indemnify her or her employee for all necessary expenditures or losses incurred by the employee in direct consequence of the discharge of her or her duties, or of her or her obedience to the directions of the employer, even though unlawful, unless the employee, at the time of obeying the directions, believed them to be unlawful.” SMG, however, has failed to fully reimburse Ms. Benenati and Claimants for all necessary, business-related expenses and losses they incurred, including, but not limited to, all costs incurred for the expenses associated with (1) the use of their personal cell phones, which were required to remain in contact with supervisors and coworkers during their shifts; (2) uniform laundering expenses because Claimants were provided too few uniform shirts to last throughout the workweek without requiring extra loads of laundry; and (3) mileage expenses for travel from one arena to the other. Accordingly, Claimants are entitled to recover their unreimbursed expenditures and losses pursuant to Labor Code section 2802.

SMG’s uniform failure to pay minimum and overtime wages, failure to authorize and permit full-length, off-duty meal periods and rest breaks or pay Claimants adequate premium compensation in lieu thereof, failure to keep accurate time records, failure to furnish timely and accurate wage statements, failure to reimburse all necessary, business-related expenses, and failure to pay all wages owed upon separation all violate Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 226(a), 226.7, 510, 512, 1182.12, 1194, 1197, and 2802 and as such, penalties are recoverable as set forth in Labor Code sections 210, 1194, *et seq.*, and 2699.

Claimants are entitled to recover unpaid wages, with interest, and are entitled to an award of attorneys’ fees as permitted by Labor Code section 1194, other penalties as permitted by Labor Code sections 210 and 2699, and waiting time penalties for former employees pursuant to Labor Code section 203.

Accordingly, Claimants seek the remedies set forth in the above-referenced Labor Code sections for themselves, the State of California, and all other aggrieved employees. Specifically, pursuant to PAGA, and in particular California Labor Code sections 2699(a), 2699.3(a), 2699.3(c), and 2699.5, Ms. Benenati, acting in the public interest as a private attorney general, seeks assessment and collection of civil penalties for themselves, all other aggrieved employees, and the State of California against SMG for violations of California Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 226(a), 226.7, 510, 512(a), 1174(d), 1182.12, 1194, 1197, 1197.1, and 2802.

Should you require any additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

ABRAMSON LABOR GROUP

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Cheryl Kenner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cheryl A. Kenner