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Superior Court of California,
County of Los Angeles
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David W. Slayton,
Executive Officer/Clerk of Court,
By E. Salcido, Deputy Clerk

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**

ESMERALDA ZARAGOZA, individually,
and on behalf of other aggrieved employees
pursuant to the California Private Attorneys
General Act;

Plaintiff,

vs.

CHILDNET YOUTH AND FAMILY
SERVICES, INC., a California corporation;
and DOES 1 through 100, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.: **25LBCV00137**

**COMPLAINT FOR ENFORCEMENT
UNDER THE PRIVATE ATTORNEYS
GENERAL ACT, CALIFORNIA LABOR
CODE § 2698, ET SEQ.**

Violation of California Labor Code §
2698, et seq. (California Labor Code
Private Attorneys General Act of 2004)

COMES NOW, Plaintiff ESMERALDA ZARAGOZA (“Plaintiff”), individually, and on behalf of other aggrieved employees pursuant to the California Private Attorneys General Act, alleges as follows:

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. This representative action is brought pursuant to the California Labor Code section 2698, et seq. The civil penalties sought by Plaintiff exceed the minimal jurisdiction limits of the Superior Court and will be established according to proof at trial.

2. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to the California Constitution, Article VI, Section 10, which grants the superior court “original jurisdiction in all other causes” except those given by statute to other courts. The statutes under which this action is brought do not specify any other basis for jurisdiction.

3. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendant because, upon information and belief, Defendant is a citizen of California, has sufficient minimum contacts in California, or otherwise intentionally avails itself of the California market so as to render the exercise of jurisdiction over it by the California courts consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

4. Venue is proper in this Court because, upon information and belief, Defendant maintains offices, has agents, and/or transacts business in the State of California, including the County of Los Angeles. The majority of the acts and omissions alleged herein relating to Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees took place in the State of California, including the County of Los Angeles. At all relevant times, Defendant maintained its headquarters/“nerve center” within the State of California, County of Los Angeles.

PARTIES

5. Plaintiff ESMERALDA ZARAGOZA is an individual residing in the State of California, County of Los Angeles.

6. Defendant CHILDNET YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES, INC. at all times herein mentioned, was and is, upon information and belief, a California corporation

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1 and an employer whose employees are engaged throughout the State of California, including
2 the County of Los Angeles.

3 7. At all relevant times, CHILDNET YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES, INC.
4 was the “employer” of Plaintiff within the meaning of all applicable state laws and statutes.

5 8. At all times herein relevant, CHILDNET YOUTH AND FAMILY
6 SERVICES, INC. and DOES 1 through 100, and each of them, were the agents, partners,
7 joint venturers, joint employers, representatives, servants, employees, successors-in-interest,
8 co-conspirators, and assigns, each of the other, and at all times relevant hereto, were acting
9 within the course and scope of their authority as such agents, partners, joint venturers,
10 representatives, servants, employees, successors, co-conspirators, and/or assigns, and all acts
11 or omissions alleged herein were duly committed with the ratification, knowledge,
12 permission, encouragement, authorization, and/or consent of each defendant designated as a
13 DOE herein.

14 9. The true names and capacities, whether corporate, associate, individual, or
15 otherwise, of defendants DOES 1 through 100, inclusive, are unknown to Plaintiff who sues
16 said defendants by such fictitious names. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based on
17 that information and belief, alleges that each of the defendants designated as a DOE is legally
18 responsible for the events and happenings referred to in this Complaint and unlawfully
19 caused the injuries and damages to Plaintiff as alleged in this Complaint. Plaintiff will seek
20 leave of court to amend this Complaint to show the true names and capacities when the same
21 have been ascertained.

22 10. CHILDNET YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES, INC. and DOES 1 through
23 100 will hereinafter collectively be referred to as “Defendants.”

24 11. Plaintiff further alleges that Defendants, including the unknown defendants
25 identified as DOES, directly or indirectly controlled or affected the working conditions,
26 wages, working hours, and conditions of employment of Plaintiff and the other aggrieved
27 employees so as to make each of said Defendants employers and employers liable under the
28 statutory provisions set forth herein.

PAGA ALLEGATIONS

12. At all times herein set forth, California Private Attorneys General Act (“PAGA”) was applicable to Plaintiff’s employment by Defendants.

13. At all times herein set forth, PAGA provides that any provision of law under the California Labor Code that provides for a civil penalty to be assessed and collected by the Labor and Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”) for violations of the California Labor Code may, as an alternative, be recovered through a civil action brought by an aggrieved employee on behalf of herself and other current or former employees pursuant to procedures outlined in California Labor Code section 2699.3.

14. Pursuant to PAGA, a civil action under PAGA may be brought by an “aggrieved employee,” who is any person that was employed by the alleged violator and against whom the alleged violations were committed.

15. Plaintiff was employed by Defendants and the alleged violations were committed against her during her time of employment, and she is, therefore, an aggrieved employee. Plaintiff and the other employees are “aggrieved employees” as defined by California Labor Code section 2699(c) in that they are all current or former employees of Defendants, and the alleged violations were committed against them.

16. Pursuant to California Labor Code sections 2699.3 and 2699.5, an aggrieved employee, including Plaintiff, may pursue a civil action arising under PAGA after the following requirements have been met:

- a. The aggrieved employee shall give written notice by online submission (hereinafter, “Employee’s Notice”) to the LWDA and by U.S. Certified Mail to the employer of the specific provisions of the California Labor Code alleged to have been violated, including the facts and theories to support the alleged violations.
- b. The LWDA shall provide notice (hereinafter, “LWDA Notice”) to the employer and the aggrieved employee by certified mail that it does not intend to investigate the alleged violations within sixty (60) calendar

1 days of the postmark date of the Employee's Notice. Upon receipt of
2 the LWDA Notice, or if the LWDA Notice is not provided within
3 sixty-five (65) calendar days of the postmark date of the Employee's
4 Notice, the aggrieved employee may commence a civil action pursuant
5 to California Labor Code section 2699 to recover civil penalties, in
6 addition to any other penalties to which the employee may be entitled.

7 17. On November 15, 2024, Plaintiff provided written notice by online submission
8 to the LWDA and by U.S. Certified Mail to Defendant CHILDNET YOUTH AND FAMILY
9 SERVICES, INC. of the specific provisions of the California Labor Code alleged to have
10 been violated, including the facts and theories to support the alleged violations. Plaintiff has
11 not received an LWDA Notice within sixty-five (65) calendar days of the date of Plaintiff's
12 notice. Plaintiff also has not received any notice of Defendant's intention to cure the alleged
13 violations.

14 18. Therefore, Plaintiff has satisfied the administrative prerequisites under
15 California Labor Code section 2699.3(a) to recover civil penalties against Defendants for
16 violations of California Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 226(a), 226.7, 510, 512(a),
17 558, 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2800 and 2802.

18 **GENERAL ALLEGATIONS**

19 19. At all relevant times set forth herein, Defendants employed Plaintiff and other
20 aggrieved hourly-paid or non-exempt employees who worked for any of the Defendants in
21 the State of California, including but not limited to all current and former hourly-paid or non-
22 exempt employees who worked for any of the Defendants within the State of California who
23 earned shift differentials/non-discretionary bonuses/non-discretionary performance pay
24 which was not used to calculate the correct regular rate of pay used to calculate the overtime
25 rate (hereinafter collectively referred to as the "other aggrieved employees").

26 20. Defendants, jointly and severally, employed Plaintiff as an hourly-paid, non-
27 exempt employee from approximately December 2020 to approximately May 2024 in the
28 State of California, County of Los Angeles.

21. Defendants hired Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees and failed to compensate them for all hours worked, missed meal periods, or missed rest breaks.

22. Defendants had the authority to hire and terminate Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees, to set work rules and conditions governing Plaintiff's and the other aggrieved employees' employment, and to supervise their daily employment activities.

23. Defendants exercised sufficient authority over the terms and conditions of Plaintiff's and the other aggrieved employees' employment for them to be joint employers of Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees.

24. Defendants directly hired and paid wages and benefits to Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees.

25. Defendants continue to employ hourly-paid or non-exempt employees within the State of California.

26. Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees worked over eight (8) hours in a day and/or forty (40) hours in a week during their employment with Defendants.

27. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants engaged in a uniform policy and systematic scheme of wage abuse against their hourly-paid or non-exempt employees. This scheme involved, inter alia, failing to pay them for all hours worked and for missed (short, late, interrupted, and altogether missed) meal periods and rest breaks in violation of California law.

28. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants knew or should have known that Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees were entitled to receive certain wages for overtime compensation and that they were not receiving wages for overtime compensation.

29. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants failed to provide Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees the required rest and meal periods during the relevant time period as required under the Industrial Welfare Commission ("IWC") Wage Orders, and, thus, they are entitled to any and all applicable penalties.

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1 30. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants
2 knew or should have known that Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees were entitled to
3 receive all meal periods or payment of one additional hour of pay at Plaintiff's and the other
4 aggrieved employees' regular rate of pay when a meal period was missed, and they did not
5 receive all meal periods or payment of one additional hour of pay at Plaintiff's and the other
6 aggrieved employees' regular rate of pay when a meal period was missed.

7 31. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants
8 knew or should have known that Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees were entitled to
9 receive all rest periods or payment of one additional hour of pay at Plaintiff's and the other
10 aggrieved employees' regular rate of pay when a rest period was missed, and they did not
11 receive all rest periods or payment of one additional hour of pay at Plaintiff's and the other
12 aggrieved employees' regular rate of pay when a rest period was missed.

13 32. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants
14 knew or should have known that Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees were entitled to
15 receive at least minimum wages for compensation and that they were not receiving at least
16 minimum wages for all hours worked.

17 33. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants
18 knew or should have known that Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees were entitled to
19 receive all wages owed to them upon discharge or resignation, including overtime and
20 minimum wages and meal and rest period premiums, and they did not receive all such wages
21 owed to them at the time of their discharge.

22 34. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants
23 knew or should have known that Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees were entitled to
24 receive all wages owed to them during their employment. Plaintiff and the other aggrieved
25 employees did not receive payment of all wages, including overtime and minimum wages
26 and meal and rest period premiums, within any time permissible under California Labor
27 Code section 204.

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35. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants knew or should have known that Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees were entitled to receive complete and accurate wage statements in accordance with California law, but they did not receive complete and accurate wage statements from Defendants. The deficiencies included, inter alia, the failure to include the total number of hours worked by Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees.

36. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants knew or should have known that Defendants had to keep complete and accurate payroll records for Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees in accordance with California law, but they did not keep complete and accurate payroll records.

37. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants knew or should have known that Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees were entitled to reimbursement for necessary business-related expenses and costs.

38. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that Defendants knew or should have known that they had a duty to compensate Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees pursuant to California law, and that Defendants had the financial ability to pay such compensation, but willfully, knowingly, and intentionally failed to do so and falsely represented to Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees that they were properly denied wages, all in order to increase Defendants' profits.

39. At all material times set forth herein, Defendants failed to pay overtime wages to Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees. Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees were required to work more than eight (8) hours per day and/or forty (40) hours per week without overtime compensation.

40. At all material times set forth herein, Defendants failed to provide uninterrupted meal and rest periods to Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees.

41. At all material times set forth herein, Defendants failed to pay Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees at least minimum wages for all hours worked.

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42. At all material times set forth herein, Defendants failed to pay Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees all wages owed to them upon discharge or resignation.

43. At all material times set forth herein, Defendants failed to pay Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees' wages within any time permissible under California law, including, inter alia, California Labor Code section 204.

44. At all material times set forth herein, Defendants failed to provide complete and accurate wage statements to Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees.

45. At all material times set forth herein, Defendants failed to keep complete and accurate payroll records for Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees.

46. At all material times set forth herein, Defendants failed to reimburse Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees for necessary business-related expenses and costs.

47. At all material times set forth herein, Defendants failed to properly compensate Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees pursuant to California law in order to increase Defendants' profits.

48. California Labor Code section 218 states that noting in Article 1 of the Labor Code shall limit the right of any wage claimant to "sue directly . . . for any wages or penalty due to him [or her] under this article."

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

Violation of California Labor Code § 2698, et seq.

(Against CHILDNET YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES, INC.

and DOES 1 through 100)

49. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 48, and each and every part thereof with the same force and effect as though fully set forth herein.

50. PAGA expressly establishes that any provision of the California Labor Code, which provides for a civil penalty to be assessed and collected by the LWDA or any of its departments, divisions, commissions, boards, agencies, or employees for a violation of the
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California Labor Code, may be recovered through a civil action brought by an aggrieved employee on behalf of himself or herself and other current or former employees.

51. Whenever the LWDA or any of its departments, divisions, commissions, boards, agencies, or employees has discretion to assess a civil penalty, a court in a civil action is authorized to exercise the same discretion, subject to the same limitations and conditions, to assess a civil penalty.

52. Plaintiff and the other hourly-paid or non-exempt employees are “aggrieved employees” as defined by California Labor Code section 2699(c) in that they are all current or former employees of Defendants, and the alleged violations were committed against them.

Failure to Pay Overtime

53. Defendants’ failure to pay legally required overtime wages to Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees is in violation of the IWC Wage Orders and constitutes a violation of California Labor Code sections 510 and 1198.

Failure to Provide Meal Periods

54. Defendants’ failure to provide legally required meal periods to Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees is in violation of the IWC Wage Orders and constitutes a violation of California Labor Code sections 226.7 and 512(a).

Failure to Provide Rest Periods

55. Defendants’ failure to provide legally required rest periods to Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees is in violation of the IWC Wage Orders and constitutes a violation of California Labor Code section 226.7.

Failure to Pay Minimum Wages

56. Defendants’ failure to pay legally required minimum wages to Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees is in violation of the IWC Wage Orders and constitutes a violation of California Labor Code sections 1194, 1197 and 1197.1.

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Failure to Timely Pay Wages Upon Termination

57. Defendants' failure to timely pay wages to Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees upon termination in accordance with Labor Code sections 201 and 202 constitutes a violation of California Labor Code sections 201 and 202.

Failure to Timely Pay Wages During Employment

58. Defendants' failure to timely pay wages to Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees during employment in accordance with Labor Code section 204 constitutes a violation of California Labor Code section 204.

Failure to Provide Complete and Accurate Wage Statements

59. Defendants' failure to provide complete and accurate wage statements to Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees in accordance with Labor Code section 226(a) constitutes a violation of California Labor Code section 226(a).

Failure to Keep Complete and Accurate Payroll Records

60. Defendants' failure to keep complete and accurate payroll records relating to Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees in accordance with California Labor Code section 1174(d) constitutes a violation of California Labor Code section 1174(d).

Failure to Reimburse Necessary Business-Related Expenses and Costs

61. Defendants' failure to reimburse Plaintiff and the other aggrieved employees for necessary business-related expenses and costs in accordance with California Labor Code sections 2800 and 2802 constitutes a violation of California Labor Code sections 2800 and 2802.

62. Pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699, Plaintiff, individually, and on behalf of all aggrieved employees, requests and is entitled to recover from Defendants and each of them, attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to California Labor Code section 218.5, as well as all penalties pursuant to PAGA against Defendants, and each of them, including but not limited to:

- a. Penalties under California Labor Code section 2699(f) in the amount of one hundred dollars (\$100) for each aggrieved employee per pay period

1 or two hundred dollars (\$200) for each aggrieved employee per pay
2 period for each violation where there has been a prior finding or
3 determination that Defendants' policies or practices were unlawful or
4 where Defendants' conduct was malicious, fraudulent, or oppressive;

- 5 b. Penalties under California Code of Regulations Title 8 section 11010 et
6 seq. in the amount of fifty dollars (\$50) for each aggrieved employee per
7 pay period for the initial violation, and one hundred dollars (\$100) for
8 each aggrieved employee per pay period for each subsequent violation;
- 9 c. Penalties under California Labor Code section 210 in addition to, and
10 entirely independent and apart from, any other penalty provided in the
11 California Labor Code in the amount of one hundred dollars (\$100) for
12 each aggrieved employee per pay period for the initial violation, and two
13 hundred dollars (\$200) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for
14 each subsequent violation; and
- 15 d. Any and all additional penalties and sums as provided by the California
16 Labor Code and/or other statutes.

17 63. Pursuant to California Labor Code section 2699(m), civil penalties recovered
18 by aggrieved employees shall be distributed as follows: sixty-five percent (65%) to the
19 LWDA for the enforcement of labor laws and education of employers and employees about
20 their rights and responsibilities and thirty-five percent (35%) to the aggrieved employees.

21 64. Further, Plaintiff is entitled to seek and recover reasonable attorneys' fees and
22 costs pursuant to California Labor Code sections 210, 218.5, 2699, and any other applicable
23 statute.

24 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

25 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, individually, and on behalf of other aggrieved employees
26 pursuant to the Private Attorneys General Act, prays for relief and judgment against
27 Defendants, jointly and severally, in excess of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000):

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As to the First Cause of Action

1. For civil penalties pursuant to California Labor Code sections 2699(a), (f), (k) and 558, plus costs/expenses, and attorneys' fees for violation of California Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 226(a), 226.7, 510, 512(a), 1174(d), 1194, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 2800, and 2802; and

2. For such other and further relief as the Court may deem equitable and appropriate.

DATED: January 21, 2025

LAWYERS for JUSTICE, PC

By: 
Arby Aiwanian
Attorneys for Plaintiff