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ASSIGNED FOR ALL PURPOSES

Judge: Jamieson, Stephanie

Attorneys for Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
FOR THE COUNTY OF MERCED**

CARLOS BARAJAS JR., an individual, on  
behalf of himself and the State of California, as a  
private attorney general,

Plaintiff,

v.

KEPT COMPANIES, INC. DBA VALLEY  
FLEET CLEAN, a New Jersey Corporation; and  
DOES 1 TO 50,

Defendants.

Case Number: 25CV-02302

**Representative Action Complaint For:**

1. Penalties Pursuant to the Labor Code Private Attorneys General Act of 2004 ("PAGA") for Violations of California Labor Code Sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 210, 226, 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512, 1174, 1185, 1194, 1194.2, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 1198.5, 1199, 2802, 2804, and Other Provisions of the California Labor Code.

1 Plaintiff Carlos Barajas Jr. ("Plaintiff"), on behalf of himself and the State of California, as a  
2 private attorney general, complains and alleges of defendants Kept Companies, Inc. dba Valley Fleet  
3 Clean and Does 1 to 50 (collectively, "Defendants"), and each of them, as follows:

4 **I. INTRODUCTION**

5 1. This action is a representative action brought pursuant to the California Labor Code  
6 Private Attorneys General Act of 2004 ("PAGA"), codified at California Labor Code sections 2698  
7 through 2699.6.

8 2. The "PAGA Period" as used herein, is defined as the period from November 8, 2023,  
9 and continuing into the present and ongoing.

10 3. This PAGA action is brought on behalf of Plaintiff, the State of California as private  
11 attorney general, and on behalf of the following aggrieved employees: *All individuals who are or were*  
12 *employed by Defendants as non-exempt employees in California during the PAGA Period* (the  
13 "Aggrieved Employees").

14 4. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that the California Industrial  
15 Welfare Commission ("IWC") Wage Orders applicable to the facts of this case are IWC Wage Orders  
16 5-2001, 9-2001, and/or 17-2001 (the "Applicable Wage Orders") and possibly others that may be  
17 applicable. (Cal. Code of Regs., tit. 8, §§ 11080, 11130, 11140.) Plaintiff reserves the right to amend  
18 or modify the definition of "Applicable Wage Orders" with greater specificity or add additional IWC  
19 Wage Orders if additional applicable wage orders are discovered in litigation.

20 **II. JURISDICTION & VENUE**

21 5. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over all causes of action asserted herein  
22 pursuant to Article VI, section 10, of the California Constitution and Code of Civil Procedure section  
23 410.10 because this is a civil action in which the matter in controversy, exclusive of interest, exceeds  
24 \$25,000, and because each cause of action asserted arises under the laws of the State of California or  
25 is subject to adjudication in the courts of the State of California.

26 6. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendants because Defendants have caused  
27 injuries in the County of Merced and the State of California through their acts, and by their violation  
28 of the California Labor Code and California state common law. Defendants transact millions of dollars

1 of business within the State of California. Defendants own, maintain offices, transact business, have an  
2 agent or agents within the County of Merced, and/or otherwise are found within the County of Merced,  
3 and Defendants are within the jurisdiction of this Court for purposes of service of process.

4 7. Venue as to Defendants is proper in this judicial district, pursuant to section 395 of the  
5 Code of Civil Procedure. Defendants operate within California and do business within Merced County,  
6 California. The unlawful acts alleged herein have a direct effect on Plaintiff and all of Defendants'  
7 employees identified above within Merced County and surrounding counties where Defendants may  
8 remotely operate. (See *Crestwood Behavioral Health, Inc. v. Superior Court of Alameda County* (2021)  
9 60 Cal.App.5th 1069, 1075 ["We hold that venue is proper in any county in which an aggrieved  
10 employee worked and Labor Code violations allegedly occurred."].)

### 11 **III. THE PARTIES**

#### 12 **A. PLAINTIFF**

13 8. At all relevant times, Plaintiff, who is over the age of 18, was and currently is a citizen  
14 of California residing in the State of California. Defendants employed Plaintiff as a non-exempt hourly  
15 employee in the County of Merced.

16 9. Plaintiff brings this action on behalf of himself and the State of California, as a private  
17 attorney general, and on behalf of the following group of aggrieved employees: *All individuals who*  
18 *are or were employed by Defendants as non-exempt employees in California during the PAGA Period*  
19 (the "Aggrieved Employees").

20 10. The Aggrieved Employees, at all times pertinent hereto, are or were employees of  
21 Defendants during the relevant statutory period.

#### 22 **B. DEFENDANTS**

23 11. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that Defendants were authorized  
24 to and doing business in Merced County and is and/or was the legal employer of Plaintiff and the other  
25 Aggrieved Employees during the applicable statutory periods. Plaintiff and the other Aggrieved  
26 Employees were, and are, subject to Defendants' policies and/or practices complained of herein and  
27 have been deprived of the rights guaranteed to them by: California Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203,  
28 204, 210, 226, 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512, 1174, 1185, 1194, 1194.2, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 1198.5, 1199,

1 2802, 2804, and others that may be applicable; California Business and Professions Code sections  
2 17200 through 17210 (“UCL”); and the Applicable Wage Orders (Cal. Code of Regs., tit. 8, §§ 11080,  
3 11130, 11140).

4 12. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that during the PAGA  
5 Period, Defendants did (and continue to do) business in the State of California, County of Merced.

6 13. Plaintiff does not know the true names or capacities, whether individual, partner, or  
7 corporate, of the defendants sued herein as Does 1 to 50, inclusive, and for that reason, said defendants  
8 are sued under such fictitious names, and Plaintiff will seek leave from this Court to amend this  
9 complaint when such true names and capacities are discovered. Plaintiff is informed, and believes, and  
10 thereon alleges, that each of said fictitious defendants, whether individual, partners, or corporate, were  
11 responsible in some manner for the acts and omissions alleged herein, and proximately caused Plaintiff  
12 and the other Aggrieved Employees to be subject to the unlawful employment practices, wrongs,  
13 injuries, and damages complained of herein.

14 14. Plaintiff is informed, and believes, and thereon alleges, that at all times mentioned  
15 herein, Defendants were and/or are the employers of Plaintiff and the other Aggrieved Employees. At  
16 all times herein mentioned, each of said Defendants participated in the doing of the acts hereinafter  
17 alleged to have been done by the named Defendants. Furthermore, the Defendants, and each of them,  
18 were the agents, representatives, and employees of each and every one of the other Defendants, and at  
19 all times herein mentioned were acting within the course and scope of said agency, representation, and  
20 employment. Defendants, and each of them, approved of, condoned, or otherwise ratified every one of  
21 the acts or omissions complained of herein.

22 15. Plaintiff is further informed, and believes, and thereon alleges, that at all times  
23 mentioned herein, that Defendants, and each of them, are the alter egos of one another and that there  
24 existed and now exists a unity of interest and ownership between them such that the individuality and  
25 separateness of each of them has ceased. Plaintiff is further informed, and believes, and thereon alleges,  
26 that at all times mentioned herein, that Defendants, and each of them, have been and now are mere  
27 shells and naked frameworks that their principal uses for the conduct of that Defendant’s own business,  
28

1 property, and affairs, for which Defendants, and each of them, have concealed and misrepresented their  
2 identities as the entities responsible for their ownership, management, and financial interests.

3 16. Plaintiff is further informed, and believes, and thereon alleges, that at all times  
4 mentioned herein, Defendants, and each of them, were members of and engaged in a joint venture,  
5 partnership, and common enterprise, and acting within the course and scope of and in pursuance of said  
6 joint venture, partnership, and common enterprise. Further, Plaintiff is informed, and believes, and  
7 thereon alleges, that all Defendants were joint employers for all purposes of Plaintiff and the other  
8 Aggrieved Employees.

9 **IV. COMMON FACTS & ALLEGATIONS**

10 17. Plaintiff and the other Aggrieved Employees (collectively, the “Aggrieved Employees”)  
11 are, and were at all relevant times, employed by the Defendants within the State of California.

12 18. The Aggrieved Employees are, and were, at all relevant times, non-exempt employees  
13 for the purposes of minimum wages, overtime, rest breaks, meal periods, and the other claims alleged  
14 in this complaint.

15 19. Specifically, Plaintiff was employed by Defendants within the statutory PAGA Period,  
16 working as an hourly, non-exempt carpenter for Defendants. Plaintiff’s duties included operating a  
17 pressure washer to clean different surfaces and vehicles, transferring cleaning equipment and  
18 chemicals, and driving to different locations.

19 **A. MINIMUM WAGE VIOLATIONS**

20 20. Labor Code section 1197 requires employees to be paid at least the minimum wage fixed  
21 by the IWC, and any payment of less than the minimum wage is unlawful. Likewise, the Applicable  
22 Wage Orders also obligate employers to pay each employee minimum wages for all hours worked.  
23 (Cal. Code of Regs., tit. 8, §§ 11080, 11130, 11140.) Labor Code section 1198 makes unlawful the  
24 employment of an employee under conditions that the IWC Wage Orders prohibit.

25 21. These minimum wage standards apply to each hour that employees work. Therefore, an  
26 employer’s failure to pay for any particular time worked by an employee is unlawful, even if averaging  
27 an employee’s total pay over all hours worked, paid or not, results in an average hourly wage above  
28 minimum wage. (*Armenta v. Osmose, Inc.* (2005) 135 Cal.App.4th 314, 324.)

1           22.     Here, Defendants failed to fully conform their pay practices to the requirements of the  
2 law during the relevant statutory periods. The Aggrieved Employees were not compensated for all  
3 hours worked including, but not limited to, all hours they were subject to the control of Defendants  
4 and/or suffered or permitted to work under the California Labor Code and the Applicable Wage Orders.  
5 Among other violations, the Aggrieved Employees were subject to the control of Defendants while off-  
6 the-clock and did not receive minimum wage for each hour worked.

7           23.     Additionally, the Aggrieved Employees were not paid all wages for all hours worked  
8 due to Defendants' uniform payroll policies and practices that unfairly rounded employees' wages to  
9 the detriment of the Aggrieved Employees. This rounding policy routinely failed to capture the entirety  
10 of the hours the Aggrieved Employees worked and was structured in a way that in favored  
11 underpayment. (See *See's Candy Shops, Inc. v. Superior Court* (2012) 210 Cal.App.4th 889, 907.) As  
12 a result, the Aggrieved Employees suffered periodic shortages in the hours for which they were  
13 compensated. This uncompensated time violated California's requirement that employees be  
14 compensated for all hours worked. As a result of this practice, the Aggrieved Employees were not  
15 compensated their minimum wages for all hours worked.

16           24.     Labor Code section 1197.1 authorizes employees who are paid less than the minimum  
17 wage fixed by an applicable state or local law, or by an order of the IWC, a civil penalty, among other  
18 damages, as follows:

19                   (1)     "For any initial violation that is intentionally committed, one hundred  
20 dollars (\$100) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for  
21 which the employee is underpaid."

22                   (2)     "For each subsequent violation for the same specific offense, two  
23 hundred fifty dollars (\$250) for each underpaid employee for each pay  
24 period for which the employee is underpaid regardless of whether the  
25 initial violation is intentionally committed." (Lab. Code, § 1197.1, subd.

26                   (a.)

27           25.     As set forth above, Defendants failed to fully compensate the Aggrieved Employees for  
28 all minimum wages. Accordingly, through PAGA and to the extent permitted by law, Plaintiff and the

1 Aggrieved Employees are entitled to recover penalties pursuant to California Labor Code section  
2 1197.1 in addition to any other applicable penalties.

3 **B. OVERTIME VIOLATIONS**

4 26. Labor Code section 510 requires employers to compensate employees who work more  
5 than eight hours in one workday, forty hours in a workweek, and for the first eight hours worked on  
6 the seventh consecutive day no less than one and one-half times the regular rate of pay for an employee.  
7 (Lab. Code, § 510, subd. (a).) Further, Labor Code section 510 obligates employers to compensate  
8 employees at no less than twice the regular rate of pay when an employee works more than twelve  
9 hours in a day or more than eight hours on the seventh consecutive day of work. (Lab. Code, § 510,  
10 subd. (a).) These rules are also reflected in the Applicable Wage Orders.

11 27. IWC Wage Order 14-2001, section 3(A), is similar, but provides in pertinent part:

12 “(1) Such employees shall not be employed more than ten (10) hours in any  
13 one workday or more than six (6) days in any workweek unless the  
14 employee receives one and one-half (1½) times such employee’s regular  
15 rate of pay for all hours worked over ten (10) hours in any workday and  
16 for the first eight (8) hours on the seventh (7th) day of work and double  
17 the employee’s regular rate of pay for all hours worked over eight (8) on  
18 the seventh (7th) day of work in the workweek.

19 “(2) For employers of more than 25 employees:

20 “(a) Starting January 1, 2019, an employee shall not be employed more than  
21 nine and one-half (9½) hours per workday or fifty-five (55) hours per  
22 workweek unless the employee receives one and one-half (1½) times  
23 such employee’s regular rate of pay for all hours worked over nine and  
24 one-half (9½) hours in any one workday or more than fifty-five (55)  
25 hours in any one workweek.

26 “(b) Starting January 1, 2020, an employee shall not be employed more than  
27 nine (9) hours per workday or fifty (50) hours per workweek unless the  
28 employee receives one and one-half (1½) times such employee’s regular

1 rate of pay for all hours worked over nine (9) hours in any one workday  
2 or more than fifty (50) hours in any one workweek.” (Cal. Code of Regs.,  
3 tit. 8, § 11140, subd. 3.)

4 28. In accordance with Labor Code section 1194 and the Applicable Wage Orders, the  
5 Aggrieved Employees could not then agree and cannot now agree to work for a lesser wage than the  
6 amount provided by Labor Code sections 510 or the Applicable Wage Orders.

7 29. Here, Defendants violated their duty to accurately and completely compensate the  
8 Aggrieved Employees for all overtime worked. The Aggrieved Employees periodically worked hours  
9 that entitled them to overtime compensation under the law but were not fully compensated for those  
10 hours.

11 30. These actions were and are in clear violation of California’s overtime laws as set forth  
12 in Labor Code sections 510, 1194, 1199, and the Applicable Wage Orders. (Cal. Code of Regs., tit. 8,  
13 §§ 11080, 11130, 11140.) As a result of Defendants’ faulty policies and practices, the Aggrieved  
14 Employees were not compensated for all hours worked or paid accurate overtime compensation.

15 **C. REST BREAK VIOLATIONS**

16 31. Pursuant to Labor Code section 226.7 and the Applicable Wage Orders, Defendants  
17 were and are required to provide the Aggrieved Employees with compensated, duty-free rest periods  
18 of not less than ten minutes for every major fraction of four hours worked. Under the Applicable Wage  
19 Orders, an employer must authorize and permit all employees to take ten minute duty free rest periods  
20 for every major fraction of four hours worked. (Cal. Code of Regs., tit. 8, §§ 11080, 11130, 11140.)

21 32. Likewise, Labor Code section 226.7 provides that “[a]n employer shall not require an  
22 employee to work during a meal or rest or recovery period mandated pursuant to an applicable statute,  
23 or applicable regulation, standard, or order of the Industrial Welfare Commission . . . .” (Lab. Code, §  
24 226.7, subd. (b).) Labor Code section 226.7 also provides that employers must pay their employees one  
25 additional hour of pay at the employee’s regular rate for each workday that a “meal or rest or recovery  
26 period is not provided.” (Lab. Code, § 226.7, subd. (c).) The “regular rate” for these purposes must  
27 factor in all nondiscretionary payments for work performed by the employee, including non-  
28 discretionary bonuses, commissions, and other forms of wage payments exceeding the employees’ base

1 hourly rate. (*Ferra v. Loews Hollywood Hotel, LLC* (2021) 11 Cal.5th 858, 878.) Thus, the Wage  
2 Orders set when and for how long the rest period must take place and the Labor Code establishes that  
3 violations of the IWC Wage Orders are unlawful and sets forth the premium pay employer must pay  
4 their employees when employers fail to provide rest periods.

5 33. The California Supreme Court has held that, during required rest periods, “employers  
6 must relieve their employees of all duties and relinquish any control over how employees spend their  
7 break time.” (*Augustus v. ABM Security Services, Inc.* (2016) 2 Cal.5th 257, 260.) Relinquishing  
8 control over employees during rest periods requires that employees be “free to leave the employer’s  
9 premises” and be “permitted to attend to personal business.” (*Id.* at p. 275.) The *Brinker* Court  
10 explained in the context of rest breaks that employer liability attaches from adopting an unlawful  
11 policy:

12 “An employer is required to authorize and permit the amount of rest break time  
13 called for under the wage order for its industry. If it does not—if, for example,  
14 it adopts a uniform policy authorizing and permitting only one rest break for  
15 employees working a seven-hour shift when two are required—it has violated  
16 the wage order and is liable.” (*Brinker Rest. Corp. v. Superior Court* (2012) 53  
17 Cal.4th 1004, 1033.)

18 34. Here, Defendants periodically did not permit the Aggrieved Employees to take  
19 compliant duty-free rest breaks, free from Defendants’ control as required by Labor Code section  
20 226.7, the Applicable Wage Orders, and applicable precedent. (See *Augustus v. ABM Security Services,*  
21 *Inc.* (2016) 2 Cal.5th 257, 269 [concluding that “during rest periods employers must relieve employees  
22 of all duties and relinquish control over how employees spend their time.”].) At all relevant times, the  
23 Aggrieved Employees were periodically not provided with legally-compliant and timely rest periods  
24 of at least ten minutes for each four hour work period, or major fraction thereof due to Defendants’  
25 unlawful rest period policies/practices. The Aggrieved Employees were often expected and required to  
26 continue working through rest periods to meet the expectations Defendants and finish the workday. In  
27 some cases when the Aggrieved Employees worked more than ten hours in a shift, Defendants failed  
28

1 to authorize and/or permit a third mandated rest period. As a result, the Aggrieved Employees were  
2 periodically unable to take compliant rest periods.

3 35. In such cases where Defendants did not offer the Aggrieved Employees the opportunity  
4 to receive a compliant off-duty rest period, “the court may not conclude employees voluntarily chose  
5 to skip those breaks.” (*Alberts v. Aurora Behavioral Health Care* (2015) 241 Cal.App.4th 388, 410  
6 (2015) [“If an employer fails to provide legally compliant meal or rest breaks, the court may not  
7 conclude employees voluntarily chose to skip those breaks.”]; *Brinker Rest. Corp. v. Superior Court*,  
8 *supra*, 53 Cal.4th at p. 1033 [“No issue of waiver ever arises for a rest break that was required by law  
9 but never authorized; if a break is not authorized, an employee has no opportunity to decline to take  
10 it.”].)

11 36. In addition to failing to authorize and permit compliant rest periods, the Aggrieved  
12 Employees were not compensated with one hour’s worth of pay at their regular rate of compensation  
13 when they were not provided with a compliant rest period in accordance with Labor Code section  
14 226.7, subdivision (c). Thus, Defendants have violated Labor Code section 226.7 and the Applicable  
15 Wage Orders.

16 **D. MEAL BREAK VIOLATIONS**

17 37. Labor Code section 512 and the Applicable Wage Orders require employers to provide  
18 employees with a thirty-minute uninterrupted and duty-free meal period within the first five hours of  
19 work. (Lab. Code, § 512, subd. (a) [“An employer shall not employ an employee for a work period of  
20 more than five hours per day without providing the employee with a meal period of not less than 30  
21 minutes . . . .”]; Cal. Code of Regs., tit. 8, §§ 11080, 11130, 11140 [“No employer shall employ any  
22 person for a work period of more than five (5) hours without a meal period of not less than 30  
23 minutes . . . .”].) Additionally, an employee who works more than ten hours per day is entitled to  
24 receive a second thirty-minute uninterrupted and duty-free meal period. (Lab. Code, § 512, subd. (a)  
25 [“An employer shall not employ an employee for a work period of more than 10 hours per day without  
26 providing the employee with a second meal period of not less than 30 minutes . . . .”].)

27 38. “An on-duty meal period is permitted only when the nature of the work prevents an  
28 employee from being relieved of all duty and the parties agree in writing to an on-duty paid meal

1 break.” (*Lubin v. The Wackenhut Corp.* (2016) 5 Cal.App.5th 926, 932.) The written agreement must  
2 include a provision allowing the employee to revoke it at any time. (*Ibid.*) Generally, the California  
3 Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (“DLSE”) and courts  
4 have “found that the nature of the work exception applies: (1) where the work has some particular  
5 external force that requires the employee to be on duty at all times, and (2) where the employee is the  
6 sole employee of a particular employer.” (*Id.* at p. 945, internal quotation marks omitted; *Abdullah v.*  
7 *U.S. Security Associates, Inc.* (9th Cir. 2013) 731 F.3d 952, 958–959.) “[I]t is the employer’s obligation  
8 to determine whether the nature of the work prevents an employee from being relieved before requiring  
9 an employee to take an on-duty meal period.” (*Lubin v. The Wackenhut Corp.*, *supra*, 5 Cal.App.5th at  
10 p. 946.)

11 39. Here, the Aggrieved Employees were never asked to sign any enforceable document  
12 agreeing to an on-duty meal period. Moreover, nothing in the nature of their work involved the kind of  
13 “external force” that might justify on-duty meal breaks. (*Lubin v. The Wackenhut Corp.*, *supra*, 5  
14 Cal.App.5th at p. 945.) Nevertheless, Defendants periodically did not provide compliant off-duty meal  
15 periods within the first five hours of work for the Aggrieved Employees.

16 40. As with rest breaks, meal breaks must be duty-free. (*Brinker Restaurant Corp. v.*  
17 *Superior Court* (2012) 53 Cal.4th 1004, 1035 [“The IWC’s wage orders have long made a meal period’s  
18 duty-free nature its defining characteristic.”].) Relinquishing control over employees during meal  
19 periods requires that employees be “free to leave the employer’s premises” and be “permitted to attend  
20 to personal business.” (*Augustus v. ABM Security Services, Inc.*, *supra*, 2 Cal.5th at p. 275.) Under  
21 Labor Code section 512, if an employer maintains a uniform policy that does not authorize and permit  
22 the amount of meal time called for under the law (as specified in the Labor Code and/or applicable  
23 IWC Wage Order), “it has violated the wage order and is liable.” (*Brinker Restaurant Corp. v. Superior*  
24 *Court*, *supra*, 53 Cal.4th at p. 1033.)

25 41. During the applicable statutory periods here, the Aggrieved Employees were  
26 periodically denied legally-compliant and timely off-duty meal periods of at least thirty minutes due to  
27 Defendants’ unlawful meal period policy and practices. As a result of Defendants’ uniform meal period  
28 policies and practices, the Aggrieved Employees were often not permitted to take compliant first meal

1 periods before the end of the fifth hour of work. The Aggrieved Employees were also periodically not  
2 permitted to take second meal periods for shifts in excess of ten hours. Defendants thus violated Labor  
3 Code section 512 and the Applicable Wage Orders by failing to advise, authorize, or permit the  
4 Aggrieved Employees to receive thirty-minute, off-duty meal periods within the first five hours of their  
5 shifts.

6 42. Labor Code section 226.7 provides that “[a]n employer shall not require an employee  
7 to work during a meal or rest or recovery period mandated pursuant to an applicable statute, or  
8 applicable regulation, standard, or order of the Industrial Welfare Commission.” (Lab. Code, § 226.7,  
9 subd. (b).) Labor Code section 226.7, subdivision (c), and the Applicable Wage Orders further obligate  
10 employers to pay employees one additional hour of pay at the employee’s regular rate of compensation  
11 for each workday that the meal period is not provided. (Lab. Code, § 226.7, subd. (c); Cal. Code of  
12 Regs., tit. 8, §§ 11080, 11130, 11140 [“If an employer fails to provide an employee a meal period in  
13 accordance with the applicable provisions of this order, the employer shall pay the employee one (1)  
14 hour of pay at the employee’s regular rate of compensation for each workday that the meal period is  
15 not provided.”].) The “regular rate” for these purposes must factor in all nondiscretionary payments for  
16 work performed by the employee, including non-discretionary bonuses, commissions, and other forms  
17 of wage payments exceeding the employees’ base hourly rate. (*Ferra v. Loews Hollywood Hotel, LLC*  
18 (2021) 11 Cal.5th 858, 878.)

19 43. Accordingly, for each day that the Aggrieved Employees did not receive compliant meal  
20 periods, they were and are entitled to receive meal period premiums pursuant to Labor Code section  
21 226.7 and the Applicable Wage Orders. Defendants, however, failed to pay the Aggrieved Employees  
22 applicable meal period premiums for many workdays that the employees did not receive a compliant  
23 meal period. Thus, Defendants have violated Labor Code section 226.7 and the Applicable Wage  
24 Orders.

25 **E. UNTIMELY WAGES DURING EMPLOYMENT**

26 44. Labor Code section 204 expressly requires employers who pay employees on a weekly,  
27 biweekly, or semimonthly basis to pay all wages “not more than seven calendar days following the  
28

1 close of the payroll period.” Labor Code section 210, subdivision (a), makes employers who violate  
2 Labor Code section 204 subject to a penalty of:

3 “(1) For any initial violation, one hundred dollars (\$100) for each failure to  
4 pay each employee.

5 “(2) For each subsequent violation, or any willful or intentional violation, two  
6 hundred dollars (\$200) for each failure to pay each employee, plus 25  
7 percent of the amount unlawfully withheld.” (Lab. Code, § 210, subd.  
8 (a).)

9 45. Notably, the penalty provided by Labor Code section 210 is “[i]n addition to, and  
10 entirely independent and apart from, any other penalty provided in this article . . .” (Lab. Code, § 210,  
11 subd. (a).)

12 46. Due to Defendants’ failure to pay the Aggrieved Employees the wages described above,  
13 along with rest and meal break premiums, Defendants failed to timely pay the Aggrieved Employees  
14 within seven calendar days following the close of payroll in accordance with Labor Code section 204  
15 on a regular and consistent basis. (See *Parson v. Golden State FC, LLC* (N.D. Cal., May 2, 2016, No.  
16 16-CV-00405-JST) 2016 WL 1734010, at p. \*3–5, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 58299 [finding that a failure  
17 to pay rest period premiums can support claims under Labor Code sections 203 and 204].)

18 **F. UNTIMELY WAGES AT SEPARATION**

19 47. Labor Code section 203 provides “if an employer willfully fails to pay . . . any wages  
20 of an employee who is discharged or who quits, the wages of the employee shall continue as a penalty”  
21 for up to thirty days. (Lab. Code § 203; *Mamika v. Barca* (1998) 68 Cal.App.4th 487, 492.) As a result  
22 of Defendants’ failure to pay the Aggrieved Employees for the wages described above, along with rest  
23 and meal break premiums, Defendants violated and continue to violate Labor Code section 203.

24 48. Due to Defendants’ faulty pay policies, those Aggrieved Employees whose employment  
25 with Defendants concluded were not compensated for each and every hour worked at the appropriate  
26 rate. Defendants have failed to pay formerly-employed Aggrieved Employees whose sums were certain  
27 at the time of termination within at least seventy-two hours of their resignation and have failed to pay  
28 those sums for thirty days thereafter.

1           **G.       FAILURE TO REIMBURSE BUSINESS EXPENSES**

2           49.     At all relevant times herein, Defendants were subject to Labor Code section 2802, which  
3 states that “an employer shall indemnify his or her employees for all necessary expenditures or losses  
4 incurred by the employee in direct consequence of the discharge of his or her duties, or of his or her  
5 obedience to the directions of the employer.” The purpose of this section is to “prevent employers from  
6 passing along their operating expenses onto their employees.” (*Gattuso v. Harte-Hanks Shoppers, Inc.*  
7 (2007) 42 Cal.4th 554, 562.)

8           50.     At all relevant times herein, Defendants were subject to Labor Code section 2804, which  
9 states that “any contract or agreement, express or implied, made by any employee to waive the benefits  
10 of this article or any part thereof, is null and void, and this article shall not deprive any employee or his  
11 personal representative of any right or remedy to which he is entitled under the laws of this State.”

12          51.     Thus, the Aggrieved Employees were and are entitled to reimbursement for the expenses  
13 they incurred during the course of their duties. The duty to reimburse even extends to the use of  
14 equipment the employee may already own and would be required to pay for anyway. (*Cochran v.*  
15 *Schwan’s Home Serv., Inc.* (2014) 228 Cal.App.4th 1137, 1144 [“The threshold question in this case  
16 is this: Does an employer always have to reimburse an employee for the reasonable expense of the  
17 mandatory use of a personal cell phone, or is the reimbursement obligation limited to the situation in  
18 which the employee incurred an extra expense that he or she would not have otherwise incurred absent  
19 the job? The answer is that reimbursement is always required. Otherwise, the employer would receive  
20 a windfall because it would be passing its operating expenses on to the employee.”].)

21          52.     Here, Defendants failed to fully reimburse the Aggrieved Employees for necessary  
22 expenditures incurred as a direct consequence and requirement of performing their job duties, including  
23 the costs associated with their personal cell phone they required to perform their work. Consequently,  
24 Defendants failed to comply with Labor Code section 2802.

25           **H.       WAGE STATEMENT VIOLATIONS**

26          53.     Defendants also failed to provide accurate itemized wage statements in accordance with  
27 Labor Code sections 226, subdivisions (a)(1), (2), (5), and (9). Labor Code section 226, subdivision  
28

1 (a), obligates employers, semi-monthly or at the time of each payment to furnish an itemized wage  
2 statement in writing showing:

- 3 (1) The gross wages earned;
- 4 (2) The total hours worked by the employee;
- 5 (3) The number of piece-rate units earned and any applicable piece rate if  
6 the employee is paid on a piece rate basis;
- 7 (4) All deductions, provided that all deductions made on written orders of  
8 the employee may be aggregated and shown as one item;
- 9 (5) The net wages earned;
- 10 (6) The inclusive dates of the period for which the employee is paid;
- 11 (7) The name of the employee and only the last four digits of his or her social  
12 security number or an employee identification number other than a social  
13 security number;
- 14 (8) The name and address of the legal entity that is the employer; and
- 15 (9) All applicable hourly rates in effect during the pay period and the  
16 corresponding number of hours worked at each hourly rate by the  
17 employee.

18 54. Due to Defendants' failure to pay the Aggrieved Employees properly as described  
19 above, the wage statements issued do not indicate the correct amount of gross wages earned, total hours  
20 worked, or the net wages earned, or the applicable hourly rates in effect during the pay period and the  
21 corresponding number of hours worked at each hourly rate. Thus, Defendants have violated Labor  
22 Code section 226, subdivisions (a)(1), (2), (5), and (9).

23 55. In addition to Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a), Defendants also knowingly and  
24 intentionally failed to provide the Aggrieved Employees with accurate itemized wage statements in  
25 violation of Labor Code section 226, subdivision (e). Defendants knew that they were not providing  
26 the Aggrieved Employees with wage statements required by California law but nevertheless failed to  
27 correct their unlawful practices and policies. (See *Garnett v. ADT LLC* (E.D. Cal. 2015) 139 F.Supp.3d  
28 1121, 1134 [finding the defendant knowingly and intentionally violated Labor Code section 226

1 because the “[d]efendant knew that it was not providing total hours worked to plaintiff or other  
2 employees paid on commission” even though it believed that employees paid solely on commission or  
3 commission and salary “are exempt and therefore we do not record hours on a wage statement.”].)

4 **I. RECORDKEEPING VIOLATIONS**

5 56. Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a), requires employers to keep an accurate record  
6 of, among other things, all hours worked by employees. Labor Code section 226.3 provides, in pertinent  
7 part, as follows:

8 “Any employer who violates subdivision (a) of Section 226 shall be subject to a  
9 civil penalty in the amount of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) per employee per  
10 violation in an initial citation and one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per employee  
11 for each violation in a subsequent citation, for which the employer fails to  
12 provide the employee a wage deduction statement or fails to keep the records  
13 required in subdivision (a) of Section 226. The civil penalties provided for in  
14 this section are in addition to any other penalty provided by law.” (Lab. Code, §  
15 226.3, emphasis added.)

16 57. Likewise, Labor Code section 1174, subdivision (d), requires every employer, including  
17 Defendants, to:

18 “Keep, at a central location in the state or at the plants or establishments at which  
19 employees are employed, payroll records showing the hours worked daily by  
20 and the wages paid to, and the number of piece-rate units earned by and any  
21 applicable piece rate paid to, employees employed at the respective plants or  
22 establishments. These records shall be kept in accordance with rules established  
23 for this purpose by the commission, but in any case shall be kept on file for not  
24 less than three years. An employer shall not prohibit an employee from  
25 maintaining a personal record of hours worked, or, if paid on a piece-rate basis,  
26 piece-rate units earned.” (Lab. Code, § 1174, subd. (d), emphasis added.)

27 58. As explained in detail above, Defendants failed to provide the Aggrieved Employees  
28 with accurate itemized wage statements. Defendants did so, in part, because they failed to accurately

1 track hours worked by the Aggrieved Employees. Defendants have thus failed to keep accurate records  
2 of the “total hours worked by the employee[s]” in violation of Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a),  
3 and are therefore subject to the penalties provided by Labor Code section 226.3. These penalties are  
4 “in addition to any other penalty provided by law.” (Lab. Code, § 226.3.)

5 59. The failure to accurately track hours worked also resulted in a failure of Defendants to  
6 keep a record of all “payroll records showing the hours worked daily by” Defendants’ employees,  
7 including Plaintiff, in violation of Labor Code section 1174, subdivision (d).

8 **V. EXHAUSTION OF REMEDIES**

9 60. Plaintiff has fully and completely exhausted administrative remedies under PAGA prior  
10 to proceeding with the PAGA claims stated in this complaint. Plaintiff filed a PAGA notice online with  
11 the Labor Workforce Development Agency (“LWDA”) and sent a letter by certified mail to Defendants  
12 setting forth the facts and theories of the violations alleged against Defendants, as prescribed by PAGA.  
13 (Lab. Code, §§ 2698–2699.6.)

14 61. As required by PAGA, Plaintiff submitted the \$75.00 filing fee with the LWDA by  
15 regular mail. Pursuant to Labor Code section 2699.3, subdivision (a)(2)(A), no notice was received by  
16 Plaintiff from the LWDA evidencing its intention to investigate within sixty-five calendar days of the  
17 postmark date of the PAGA notice. Plaintiff is therefore entitled to commence and proceed with a civil  
18 action pursuant to Labor Code section 2699.

19 **VI. CAUSES OF ACTION**

20 **First Cause of Action**

21 *Penalties Pursuant to PAGA for Violations of Labor Code Sections 201, 202, 203,*  
22 *204, 210, 226, 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512, 1174, 1185, 1194, 1194.2, 1197, 1197.1, 1198,*  
23 *1198.5, 1199, 2802, 2804, and Other Provisions of the California Labor Code*  
24 *(Against All Defendants)*

25 62. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference all previous paragraphs.

26 63. Based on the above allegations incorporated by reference, Defendants violated Labor  
27 Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 210, 226, 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512, 1174, 1185, 1194, 1194.2, 1197,  
28

1 1197.1, 1198, 1198.5, 1199, 2802, 2804, and others that may be applicable; and the Applicable Wage  
2 Orders (Cal. Code of Regs., tit. 8, §§ 11080, 11130, 11140), and others that may be applicable.

3 64. As a result of the acts alleged above, Plaintiff seeks penalties under Labor Code sections  
4 2698 through 2699.6 because of Defendants' violation of Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 210,  
5 226, 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512, 1174, 1185, 1194, 1194.2, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 1198.5, 1199, 2802, 2804,  
6 and others that may be applicable; and the Applicable Wage Orders (Cal. Code of Regs., tit. 8, §§  
7 11080, 11130, 11140), and others that may be applicable.

8 65. Under Labor Code section 2699, subdivision (f)(2), and 2699.5, for each such violation,  
9 Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees are entitled to penalties in an amount to be shown at the time  
10 of trial subject to the following formula:

11 A. \$100 for the initial violation per employee per pay period; and

12 B. \$200 for each subsequent violation per employee per pay period.

13 66. These penalties must be allocated seventy-five percent to the Labor and Workforce  
14 Development Agency ("LWDA") and twenty-five percent to the affected employees. These penalties  
15 may be stacked separately for each of Defendants violations of the California Labor Code. (*Lopez v.*  
16 *Friant & Associates, LLC* (2017) 15 Cal.App.5th 773, 780–781 [citing with approval *Stoddart v.*  
17 *Express Services, Inc.* (E.D. Cal., Sept. 16, 2015, No. 2:12-CV-01054-KJM) 2015 WL 5522142, at \*9,  
18 for the proposition that plaintiff could pursue separate claims for penalties under Labor Code section  
19 226, subdivision (e), and penalties for Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a), violations]; see also  
20 *Hernandez v. Towne Park, Ltd.* (C.D. Cal., June 22, 2012, No. CV 12-02972 MMM JCGX) 2012 WL  
21 2373372, at \*17 fn. 70 [noting that federal courts applying California law have found that "PAGA  
22 penalties can be stacked, i.e., multiple PAGA penalties can be assessed for the same pay period for  
23 different Labor Code violations."], internal quotation marks omitted).

24 67. In addition, to the extent permitted by law, Defendants failed to provide Plaintiff and all  
25 Aggrieved Employees with accurate itemized wage statements in compliance with Labor Code section  
26 226, subdivision (a). Plaintiff seeks separate PAGA penalties for Defendants' violations of Labor Code  
27 section 226, subdivisions (a) and (e). (*Lopez v. Friant & Associates, LLC, supra*, 15 Cal.App.5th at pp.  
28 780, 788.)

1           68. For violations of Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a), Plaintiff seeks the default  
2 penalty provided by Labor Code section 226.3. Labor Code section 226.3 provides that “[a]ny  
3 employer who violates subdivision (a) of Section 226 shall be subject to a civil penalty in the amount  
4 of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) per employee per violation in an initial violation and one thousand  
5 dollars (\$1,000) per employee for each violation in a subsequent citation, for which the employer fails  
6 to provide the employee a wage deduction statement or fails to keep the required in subdivision (a) of  
7 Section 226.” Accordingly, through PAGA and to the extent permitted by law Plaintiff and the  
8 Aggrieved Employees are entitled to recover penalties for violations of Labor Code section 226.3 and  
9 seeks default PAGA penalties for each of Defendants’ numerous violations of Labor Code section 226,  
10 subdivision (e).

11           69. Labor Code section 210 provides that “in addition to, an entirely independent and apart  
12 from, any other penalty provided in this article, every person who fails to pay the wages of each  
13 employee as provided in Sections . . . 204 . . . shall be subject to a civil penalty as follows: (1) For any  
14 initial violation, one hundred dollars (\$100) for each failure to pay each employee; (2) For each  
15 subsequent violation, or any willful or intentional violation, two hundred dollars (\$200) for each failure  
16 to pay each employee, plus 25% of the amount unlawfully withheld.” As a result of the faulty  
17 compensation policies and practices, Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees are also entitled to recover  
18 penalties under Labor Code section 210 through PAGA.

19           70. Labor Code section 1197.1 authorizes a civil penalty, restitution of wages, and  
20 liquidated damages, in the amount of: (1) one hundred dollars (\$100) for any initial violation that is  
21 intentionally committed for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which the employee is  
22 underpaid, and (2) two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) for each subsequent violation for the same specific  
23 offense for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which the employee is underpaid  
24 regardless of whether the initial violation is intentionally committed. Accordingly, through PAGA and  
25 to the extent permitted by law, Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees are entitled to recover pursuant  
26 to Labor Code section 1197.1.

27           71. Plaintiff was compelled to retain the services of counsel to file this action to protect his  
28 interests and those of the Aggrieved Employees, and to assess and collect the wages and penalties owed

1 by Defendants. Plaintiff has thereby incurred attorneys' fees and costs, which Plaintiff is also entitled  
2 to recover under Labor Code section 2699, subdivision (g)(1).

3 **VII. PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

4 Plaintiff prays for judgment for himself and for all others on whose behalf this suit is brought  
5 against Defendants, as follows:

- 6 **1.** For the failure to maintain accurate employment records, penalties pursuant to Labor  
7 Code sections 226.3, 1174.5, and others that may be applicable;
- 8 **2.** For the violations of California's Unfair Competition Law, restitution to Plaintiff of all  
9 money and/or property unlawfully acquired by Defendants by means of any acts or  
10 practices declared by this Court to be in violation of Business and Professions Code  
11 sections 17200 through 17210;
- 12 **3.** For the claim of penalties pursuant to PAGA and other provisions of the California  
13 Labor Code, a civil penalty in the amount of \$100 for the initial violation and \$200 for  
14 each subsequent violation as specified in Labor Code section 2699, subdivision (f)(2),  
15 in the representative action brought on behalf of Plaintiff and the Aggrieved Employees  
16 pursuant the Labor Code Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, and for civil penalties  
17 available under Labor Code section 210;
- 18 **4.** Prejudgment interest on all due and unpaid wages pursuant to Labor Code section 218.6  
19 and Civil Code sections 3287 and 3289;
- 20 **5.** On all causes of action for which attorneys' fees may be available, for attorneys' fees  
21 and costs as provided by Labor Code sections 218.5, 226, Code of Civil Procedure  
22 section 1021.5, and others as may be applicable;
- 23 **6.** For an order enjoining Defendants, and each of them, and their agents, servants, and  
24 employees, and all persons acting under, in concert with, or for them, from acting in  
25 derogation of any rights or duties adumbrated in this complaint; and  
26  
27  
28

1           7.       For such other and further relief, this Court may deem just and proper.

2  
3       Dated: April 17, 2025

**MELMED LAW GROUP P.C.**

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5       

**JONATHAN MELMED**

6       Attorneys for Plaintiff and the Aggrieved  
7       Employees