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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

JOEL VELEZ, an individual, on behalf of
himself and on behalf of all persons similarly
situated,

Plaintiff,

vs.

HERBER AIRCRAFT SERVICE, INC., a
California Corporation; and DOES 1 through 50,
inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No. 24STCV12247

**DECLARATION OF JOEL VELEZ IN
SUPPORT OF MOTION FOR
PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF
CLASS SETTLEMENT**

Hearing Date:

Hearing Time:

Judge: Hon. Carolyn B. Kuhl

Dept.: 12

Date Action Filed: May 15, 2024

Trial Date: Not set

1 I, Joel Velez, declare as follows:

2 1. I am over the age of eighteen, a Plaintiff and a proposed Class Representative in the
3 above-entitled matter. I submit this declaration in support of the Motion for Preliminary
4 Approval of Class Settlement and in support of my application for a Class Representative
5 Service Payment.
6

7 2. I have personal knowledge of all the facts stated herein. I could and would competently
8 testify under oath to these facts in court if requested to do so.

9 3. During the class period I worked as a harness technician for the Defendant Herber
10 Aircraft Service Inc. ("Herber" or "Defendant") in California and during that time period I was
11 classified by Herber as a non-exempt employee.
12

13 4. I retained my attorneys who are experienced in both class action and PAGA
14 representative action litigation and claims against employers for violations of the California
15 Labor Code. I have no personal relationship or family ties to my attorneys or any officer of the
16 Court. I am not aware of having any actual or potential conflicts of interest with another class
17 member in this case nor am I aware of having any actual or potential conflicts of interest with
18 Apex Class Action, LLC, the settlement administrator. I am not aware of any other pending
19 matter or action asserting claims that will be extinguished or adversely affected by this
20 settlement.
21

22 5. I decided to pursue this class action lawsuit and be a plaintiff/class representative
23 because I felt that my legal rights as an employee and others like me were violated. For example,
24 I received non-discretionary compensation from time to time, such as bonuses, but these
25 payments during certain pay periods when I worked overtime were not factored into my regular
26 rate. I was underpaid overtime and sick pay as a result. As another example, I often did not
27

1 receive compliant meal and rest breaks which were late, interrupted or missed entirely. I also did
2 not receive all the meal and rest break premiums I was entitled to and when I did receive
3 premium payments they were often an incorrect amount. As to rest breaks in particular, Herber
4 had a policy that did not permit me to leave the premises during my rest breaks. Additionally, I
5 was required to use my personal cellular phone for company business without necessary
6 reimbursements by Herber. I was also required to work off the clock at times, after hours for
7 example, but I was not paid any wages for this time I worked for the company.

9 6. I spoke to my attorneys several times and discussed how Herber implemented its
10 company policies and procedures. I also assisted my attorneys in their investigation into my
11 claims by providing them documents and answering their questions. I reviewed the complaint
12 before it was filed and after it was filed, I was given access to an electronic file sharing program
13 that alerted me via email when important documents were filed so that I could review them and
14 keep up with the developments in the case which I understood was one of my duties as a class
15 representative. I would also contact my attorneys from time to time if I had any questions about
16 the case.

18 7. Even though this action is in the process of settling, I was and remain prepared to
19 perform all the duties of a class representative. I understand that as a class representative I have
20 assumed a fiduciary responsibility to prosecute this class action on behalf of the absent class
21 members. I have understood that as a fiduciary, I have a duty to prosecute this action for the
22 benefit of the class members and surrender any right to compromise the group action for an
23 individual gain.

25 8. I understood that being a plaintiff/class representative in this case meant that I was
26 seeking damages not only for myself but also other current and/or former non-exempt employees
27

1 working for Herber in California who make up the class. I felt that these individuals were not
2 aware of their labor law rights and even if they were they would probably be apprehensive about
3 speaking up or even simply because of the time, effort and risk involved in filing a class action
4 lawsuit.

5
6 9. I understood that being a part of this lawsuit involved risks. For example, my attorneys
7 explained to me that if the case went to trial and we lost, I could be held responsible to pay for all
8 or part of the attorney fees and costs paid by Herber to defend this lawsuit. Also, I knew there
9 was a risk that future employers, if they ever find out about this lawsuit, could hold it against me
10 or downgrade me as a potential hire. As the only named plaintiff in this case, it would not be
11 difficult for a future employer to become aware that I sued my employer for labor law violations.
12 Ultimately, I decided these risks were worth it and decided to fight for my rights and the rights of
13 others regardless of the risks, time and effort I spent on this case.
14

15 10. During the lawsuit I stayed in touch with my attorneys by phone and email. I also kept up
16 to date on important developments by reviewing court filings that were made available to me
17 electronically as I described above.

18 11. A mediation took place on May 12, 2025 with Tagore Subramaniam, a well-respected
19 and experienced mediator of wage and hour class actions. After the mediation, the parties were
20 able to reach an agreement to settle the action. I communicated with my attorneys regarding the
21 terms of the settlement which was reached between the parties and understood that I was
22 representing absent class members and therefore wanted the best possible result to be obtained
23 for the class members and I believe a very positive result was in fact achieved via settlement. I
24 reviewed and signed the Memorandum of Understanding in May of 2025, and when the final
25 settlement papers were ready, I closely reviewed the Settlement Agreement which I signed on
26
27

1 September 11, 2025.

2 12. I have been actively involved with this lawsuit performing the duties described above.
3 Although I did not keep time records, I was in regular contact with my attorneys, reviewed court
4 filings, and spent a significant amount of time on the issues presented during the lawsuit and in
5 the settlement process. I estimate that I spent approximately 30-40 hours working on this case
6 up until this point. I believe I have been diligent and have done what is expected of a named
7 plaintiff and a proposed class representative to date and will continue to do so. I have and always
8 will maintain the best interests of the class members.
9

10 13. My attorneys explained to me that the settlement process involves a two-step review by
11 the Court to determine whether the settlement is fair before approving the settlement. I know
12 this process also involves notifying all class members of the settlement terms and of their rights
13 to make a claim for their settlement share, to opt out of the settlement or to object to the
14 settlement.
15

16 14. I believe I did the right thing by filing this case on behalf of the class members who,
17 subject to court approval, are in line to receive monetary payments as a result of this case and
18 settlement. This is money they may never have ever gotten if I did not pursue this action on their
19 behalf. I feel significant personal satisfaction to know that I played a role in the class members
20 being entitled to monetary payments as a result of the filing of this lawsuit. I also believe that
21 the requested Class Representative Service Payment of \$12,500 from the settlement is fair
22 compensation for the work I performed and the risks I undertook.
23

24 15. As part of the settlement, it was necessary for me to sign a general release of all claims I
25 may have against Herber. I believe the Class Representative Service Payment I have requested
26 provides me with some compensation for this agreed release.
27

16. In light of all the time and effort I have spent on this case, the risk I undertook by suing my employer, the exposure to being responsible for paying Defendant's costs in the event we did not win the case, and the reputational risk that future employers may hold this lawsuit against me, the general release and in light of the size of the settlement, I believe the request for \$12,500 as a Class Representative service payment is fair and reasonable.

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

Executed on 10/14/2025, at El Segundo, CA.
(city, state)


Joel Velez (Oct 14, 2025 05:39:15 GMT+2)
Joel Velez