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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

ANNABELLE CRUZ, an individual,
on behalf of herself, and on behalf of
all persons similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

vs.

GT INDEPENDENCE SERVICES,
LLC, a Limited Liability Company;
and DOES 1 through 50, inclusive,

Defendants

CASE No. **37-2024-00014402-CU-OE-CTL**

**MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND
AUTHORITIES IN SUPPORT OF MOTION
FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF CLASS
SETTLEMENT AND AWARD OF
ATTORNEYS' FEES, COSTS AND SERVICE
AWARD (UNOPPOSED)**

Hearing Date: July 18, 2025

Hearing Time: 1:30 p.m.

*[Hearing scheduled by Order dated February 21,
2025]*

Judge: Hon. Katherine Bacal
Dept.: 63

Date Action Filed: March 27, 2024

Trial Date: Not set

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1 **I. INTRODUCTION**

2 The parties to this action have reached a Settlement and the Court preliminarily approved the
3 Class Action and PAGA Settlement Agreement (the “Agreement”), a true and correct copy of which
4 is attached as Exhibit #2 to the Declaration of Norman Blumenthal (“Blumenthal Decl.”).¹ In
5 accordance with the Preliminary Approval Order dated February 21, 2025 (“Preliminary Approval
6 Order”) and the Order Re Class Period End Date dated March 19, 2025 (“Class Period Order”), the
7 approved Class Notice has been disseminated to the Class.²

8 The purpose of this hearing is to determine whether the proposed settlement of the litigation
9 should be finally approved. Plaintiff Annabelle Cruz (“Plaintiff”) respectfully moves for final approval,
10 including attorneys’ fees, costs and the service award, and the proposed entry of the Final Approval
11 Order and Judgment, submitted herewith. The settlement represents an excellent result for the Class and
12 avoids the delays, risks, and costs of further litigation. After disseminating the notice to the 2,267
13 members of the Class, there were **no objections and only three requests for exclusion**, which means
14 that nearly the entire Class (99.87%) has elected to participate in the Settlement. Blumenthal Decl. ¶4.
15 This is a positive response from the Class evidencing their collective approval of the settlement. As
16 a result, Plaintiff respectfully submits that the class settlement should be finally approved for the same
17 reasons that the Court preliminarily approved the settlement as fair, reasonable, and adequate.

18 **II. THE SETTLEMENT BEFORE THE COURT**

19 As consideration for this Settlement, the Gross Settlement Amount to be paid by Defendant GT
20 Independence Services, LLC (“Defendant”) is Two Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars
21 (\$2,500,000) (the “Gross Settlement Amount”). (Agreement at ¶¶ 1.22 and 3.1.) Under the Settlement,
22 the Gross Settlement Amount consists of the following elements: (1) payment of the Individual Class
23 Payments to the Participating Class Members; (2) Class Counsel Fees Payment and Class Counsel
24

25 ¹ Capitalized terms are defined in the Agreement.

26 ² The “Class” is defined as “all individuals who were employed by Defendant in California and
27 classified as a non-exempt employee at any time during the Class Period.” (Preliminary Approval Order
28 at ¶ 5. The “Class Period” is defined as “March 27, 2020 through November 2, 2024. (Preliminary
Approval Order at ¶ 5; Class Period Order at ¶¶ 1-2.)

1 Litigation Expenses Payment; (3) Administration Expenses Payment; (4) the Class Representative
2 Service Payments to the Plaintiffs; and (5) the PAGA Penalties payment. (Agreement at ¶ 1.22.)
3 Blumenthal Decl. ¶3(a). The Gross Settlement Amount does not include Defendant's share of payroll
4 taxes. (Agreement at ¶ 3.1.) The Gross Settlement Amount shall be all-in with no reversion to
5 Defendant. (Agreement at ¶ 3.1.) Blumenthal Decl. ¶3(b). The following is a table of the key financial
6 terms of the Settlement and the proposed deductions:

7 **\$2,500,000 (Gross Settlement Amount)**

- 8 - \$10,000 (Plaintiff's proposed service award not to exceed amount)
- 9 - \$35,000 (Class Counsel Litigation Expenses Payment - not to exceed amount)
- 10 - \$833,333 (Class Counsel Fees Payment - not to exceed 1/3 of settlement)
- 11 - \$50,000 (PAGA Payment - 75% to LWDA / 25% to Aggrieved Employees)
- 12 - \$19,950 (Administration Expenses Payment - not to exceed amount)

13 **\$1,551,717 (Net Settlement Amount)**

14 The specific details of the Settlement were discussed in the Motion for Preliminary Approval and are
15 set forth again in the Declaration of Blumenthal at ¶¶ 3(c)-3(i).

16 The Settlement is fair, adequate and reasonable to the class and should be finally approved for
17 the same reasons the Court granted preliminary approval of the Settlement, agreeing that the settlement
18 is "fair, adequate, and reasonable." (Preliminary Approval Order at ¶ 3.) In sum, the Settlement valued
19 at \$2,500,000 is an excellent result for the Class. This result is particularly favorable in light of the fact
20 that liability and class certification in this case were far from certain in light of the defenses asserted
21 by Defendant. Given the complexities of this case, the defenses asserted, the uncertainty of class
22 certification, along with the uncertainties of proof at trial and appeal, the proposed settlement is fair,
23 reasonable and adequate, and should be finally approved. Blumenthal Decl. ¶3(j).

24 **III. GENERAL STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO JUDICIAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL**
25 **OF CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENTS**

26 Settlements of disputed claims are favored by the courts. *Huens v. Tatum*, 52 Cal.App.4th 259,
27 265 (1997). In evaluating settlements, the courts have long recognized that compromise is particularly
28 appropriate since such litigation is difficult and notoriously uncertain. *7-Eleven Owners for Fair Fran.*
v. Southland Corp., 85 Cal.App.4th 1135, 1151 (2000) ("[V]oluntary conciliation and settlement are
the preferred means of dispute resolution. This is especially true in complex class action litigation.")

The court must decide whether the proposed settlement falls within the range of reasonable

1 settlements, taking into account that settlements are compromises between the parties reflecting
2 subjective, unquantifiable judgments concerning the risks and possible outcomes of litigation. *See*
3 *Wershba v. Apple Computer*, 91 Cal. App. 4th 224, 246 (2001) (“The proposed settlement is not to be
4 judged against a hypothetical or speculative measure of what might have been achieved had plaintiffs
5 prevailed at trial.”) In *Wershba*, the Court explained that “the merits of the underlying class claims are
6 not a basis for upsetting the settlement of a class action.” *Id.*; *see also 7-Eleven, supra*, at 1150.

7 In these cases, courts have repeatedly emphasized that there is a strong initial presumption that
8 the compromise is fair and reasonable. *Wershba*, 91 Cal. App. 4th at 245. Courts should not substitute
9 their judgment for that of the parties who negotiated the settlement. *Id.* at 246. The presumption of
10 fairness exists where: (1) investigation and discovery are sufficient to allow counsel and the court to
11 act intelligently; (2) the settlement is reached through arm's-length bargaining; (3) counsel is
12 experienced in similar litigation; and (4) the percentage of objectors is small. *Dunk v. Ford Motor Co.*,
13 48 Cal. App. 4th 1794, 1801 (1996). Here, the facts and circumstances compel the conclusion that the
14 proposed settlement satisfies that standard and the presumption applies.

15 **IV. THE SETTLEMENT IS FAIR, REASONABLE AND ADEQUATE**

16 The Court must determine whether the settlement is fair, adequate, and reasonable. *Dunk v. Ford*
17 *Motor Co.*, 48 Cal.App.4th 1794, 1801 (1996); *see also Officers for Justice v. Civil Service Com'n*, 688
18 F.2d 615, 625 (9th Cir. 1982). The trial court has broad discretion to determine whether the settlement
19 is fair. *Cellphone Termination Fee Cases*, 180 Cal.App.4th 1110, 1117 (2009). “The well-recognized
20 factors that the trial court should consider in evaluating the reasonableness of a class action settlement
21 agreement include 'the strength of plaintiffs' case, the risk, expense, complexity and likely duration of
22 further litigation, the risk of maintaining class action status through trial, the amount offered in
23 settlement, the extent of discovery completed and the stage of the proceedings, the experience and views
24 of counsel, the presence of a governmental participant, and the reaction of the class members to the
25 proposed settlement.” *Kullar v. Foot Locker Retail, Inc.*, 168 Cal.App.4th 116, 128 (2008); *see also*
26 *Munoz v. BCI Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of L. A.*, 186 Cal.App.4th 399, 408 (2010).

27 The list of factors is not exhaustive and should be tailored to each case. *Dunk, supra*, at 1801.
28 Due regard should be given to what is otherwise a private consensual agreement between the parties.

1 *Id.* The inquiry “must be limited to the extent necessary to reach a reasoned judgment that the
2 agreement is not the product of fraud or overreaching by, or collusion between, the negotiating parties,
3 and that the settlement, taken as a whole, is fair, reasonable and adequate to all concerned.” *Id.*
4 “Ultimately, the [trial] court's determination is nothing more than 'an amalgam of delicate balancing,
5 gross approximations and rough justice.' [Citation omitted.]” *Id.*

6 These factors are analyzed seriatim below, and all support final approval of the class action
7 settlement before this Court, consistent with this Court’s Preliminary Approval Order.

8 **A. The Settlement Satisfies the California Test for Fairness**

9 1. The Investigation and Analysis of Documents are Sufficient to Allow Counsel
10 and the Court to Act Intelligently

11 Over the course of more than a year of litigation, the Parties engaged in the investigation of the
12 claims, including the production of documents, class data, and other information, allowing for the full
13 and complete analysis of liabilities and defenses to the claims in this Action. The procedural history and
14 investigation performed was detailed at length in support of the motion for preliminary approval. The
15 Settlement was the product of one arms-length mediation and contentious negotiations, both during and
16 after mediation, presided over by mediator David Rotman, Esq. The details of the litigation are set forth
17 in the Blumenthal Decl. at ¶¶ 6(a)-6(g).

18 2. The Settlement was Reached Through Arm’s Length Bargaining

19 This settlement is the result of extensive and hard-fought litigation as well as negotiations before
20 an experienced and well-respected mediator. Defendant has expressly denied and continues to deny any
21 wrongdoing or legal liability arising out of the conduct alleged in the Action. Plaintiff and Class
22 Counsel have determined that it is desirable and beneficial to the Class to resolve the Released Class
23 Claims of the Class in accordance with this Settlement, based upon the experience of Class Counsel
24 who has previously litigated similar claims against other employers. Blumenthal Decl. ¶7(a).

25 The Parties attended an arms-length mediation session with David Rotman, Esq., a respected
26 and experienced mediator of wage and hour class actions, in order to reach this Settlement. In
27 preparation for the mediation, Defendant provided Plaintiff and Class Counsel with payroll and
28 employment data and other information regarding the Class Members, various internal documents, and

1 other compensation and employment-related materials. Class Counsel analyzed the data with the
2 assistance of damages expert Berger Consulting and prepared and submitted a mediation brief to the
3 mediator. Defendant also analyzed the data with the assistance of damages expert Resolution
4 Economics and submitted its mediation brief to the mediator. Following the all-day mediation session,
5 with after arms' length negotiations both during and after the mediation, the Parties agreed to this
6 Settlement based upon a mediator's proposal. Blumenthal Decl. ¶7(b).

7 The fact that the settlement was negotiated with the assistance of an experienced mediator
8 supports approval. *Alberto v. GMRI, Inc.*, 252 F.R.D. 652, 666 (E.D. Cal. Jun 24, 2008); *Glass v. UBS*
9 *Fin. Servs.*, 2007 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 8476; 15 Wage & Hour Cas. 2d (BNA) 1330, at *15 (N.D. Cal.
10 2007) ("The settlement was negotiated and approved by experienced counsel on both sides of the
11 litigation, with the assistance of a well-respected mediator with substantial experience in employment
12 litigation[, and] this factor supports approval of the settlement").

13 From October 2024 to January 2025, the settlement agreement and exhibits thereto were
14 finalized and executed. On February 21, 2025, the Court issued its Order granting preliminary approval
15 of the settlement as fair, adequate, and reasonable to the Class. Subsequently, after learning that the
16 Agreement's Escalator Clause was triggered, on March 19, 2025 the Parties filed a Joint Stipulation
17 Regarding Class Period End Date, which the Court granted on March 24, 2025, thereby modifying the
18 Agreement to use November 2, 2024 as the end date for the Class Period. (Class Period Order at ¶¶ 1-2.)
19 Blumenthal Decl. ¶7(c).

20 3. Class Counsel is Experienced in Similar Litigation

21 Class Counsel in this matter has extensive class action experience and has represented thousands
22 of persons in class actions including employment litigation, wage and hour class actions, and complex
23 litigation. Class Counsel has previously litigated wage and hour class actions involving employees and
24 claims similar to this case and have been approved as experienced class counsel during contested
25 motions in state and federal courts throughout California. The experience of counsel and class action
26 cases managed and settled by the Class Counsel in this action is provided to the Court in the Blumenthal
27 Decl. at Exhibit #1. Class Counsel have participated in every aspect of the settlement discussions and
28 have concluded the settlement is fair, adequate and reasonable and in the best interests of the Class.

1 Blumenthal Decl. ¶ 3(j).

2 4. There Are No Objections and Few Requests for Exclusion

3 The reaction of the Class unequivocally supports approval of the Settlement. On March 28,
4 2025, the Administrator mailed the Court-approved Class Notice to the Class Members, which provided
5 each class member with the terms of the Settlement, including notice of the claims at issue and the
6 financial terms of the settlement, including the attorneys' fees, costs, and service award that were being
7 sought, how individual settlement awards would be calculated, and the specific, estimated payment
8 amount to that individual. *See* Declaration of Cassandra Polites ("Polites Decl.") ¶ 7, Exh. A. In
9 disseminating the notice, the Administrator followed the notice procedures authorized by the Court in
10 its Preliminary Approval Order. Significantly, there have been no objections and only three requests
11 for exclusion. Polites Decl. ¶¶ 11-12. As such, nearly the entire Class (99.87%) will participate in the
12 Settlement and will be sent a settlement check. *See* Polites Decl. at ¶ 15; Blumenthal Decl. ¶4.

13 The absence of any objector strongly supports the fairness, reasonableness and adequacy of the
14 Settlement. *See In re Austrian & German Bank Holocaust Litigation*, 80 F.Supp.2d 164, 175 (S.D.N.Y.
15 2000) ("If only a small number of objections are received, that fact can be viewed as indicative of the
16 adequacy of the settlement."); *Stoetznner v. U.S. Steel Corp.*, 897 F.2d 115, 118-119 (3d. Cir. 1990) (29
17 objections out of 281 member class "strongly favors settlement"); *Laskey v. Int'l Union*, 638 F.2d 954
18 (6th Cir. 1981) (The fact that 7 out of 109 class members objected to the proposed settlement should
19 be considered when determining fairness of settlement). Here, where there are no objections, the
20 approval of the class is evident.

21 5. The Strength of Plaintiffs' Case

22 The Action generally alleges that Plaintiff and other Class Members were not properly paid all
23 overtime wages for hours worked and at the correct rate of pay, were not provided meal and rest periods
24 or paid premiums at the correct rate of pay in lieu thereof, were not timely paid earned wages, were not
25 provided reimbursement for required expenses, were not paid accrued and used sick pay at the correct
26 rate of pay, were not provided accurate itemized wage statements, and were not paid all wages at the
27 time of termination. The Action seeks unpaid wages, penalties, attorney fees, litigation costs, and any
28 other equitable or legal relief allegedly due and owing to Plaintiff and the other Class Members by

1 virtue of the foregoing claims. Blumenthal Decl. ¶5.

2 Where both sides face significant uncertainty, the attendant risks favor settlement. *Hanlon v.*
3 *Chrysler Corp.*, 150 F.3d 1011, 1026 (9th Cir. 1998). Here, a number of defenses asserted by Defendant
4 present serious threats to the claims of the Plaintiff and the other Class Members. Defendant contended
5 that it is not the legal employer or joint employer of Plaintiff or the other Class Members. Defendant
6 asserted that Defendant's practices complied with all applicable state and federal labor laws. Defendant
7 argued that Class Members were paid for all time worked and that work time was properly recorded.
8 Defendant maintained there was no miscalculation of the regular rate when sick wages to the Plaintiff
9 and the Class. Defendant contends that its meal and rest period policies fully complied with California
10 law and that Defendant did not fail to provide the opportunity for legally required meal and rest breaks.
11 Defendant contends that there was no failure to pay for business expenses and any cell phone usage was
12 merely convenient and voluntary such that reimbursement was not legally required. Defendant contends
13 that there was no failure to provide suitable seating as legally required. Defendant also has an argument
14 that the Supreme Court decision in *Brinker v. Superior Court*, 53 Cal. 4th 1004 (2012) weakened
15 Plaintiff's claims, on liability, value, and class certifiability as to the meal and rest period claims.
16 Defendant also argues that based on its facially lawful practices, Defendant acted in good faith and
17 without willfulness, which if accepted would negate the claims for waiting time penalties and/or
18 inaccurate wage statements. *See e.g. Naranjo v. Spectrum Sec. Servs., Inc.*, 15 Cal. 5th 1056, 1065
19 (2024) ("if an employer reasonably and in good faith believed it was providing a complete and accurate
20 wage statement in compliance with the requirements of section 226, then it has not knowingly and
21 intentionally failed to comply with the wage statement law.") Defendant also contends that at least
22 some members of the class are classified as "personal attendants" and/or family members under the
23 applicable California Wage Order and the Domestic Worker Bill of Rights and are accordingly exempt
24 from certain state wage and hour protections, including but not limited to overtime requirements and
25 meal and rest break law. If successful, Defendant's defenses could eliminate or substantially reduce
26 any recovery to the Class. While Plaintiff believes that these defenses could be overcome, Defendant
27 maintains these defenses have merit and therefore present a serious risk to recovery by the Class.
28 Blumenthal Decl. ¶8(a).

1 In a similar wage and hour case, the federal district court in *Hopson v. Hanesbrands Inc.*, 2009
2 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 33900 (N.D. Cal. 2009), explained in approving an overtime class action settlement:

3 Plaintiffs may have a strong case, but the risks inherent in continued litigation are great.
4 Defendants strongly deny liability for Plaintiffs' principal claim... [...T]he gross
5 settlement amount and the Class Members' expected net recovery, after fees and other
costs are deducted, appear to be a reasonable compromise, in light of the risks of
litigation.

6 2009 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 33900 at *19-20 (N.D. Cal. 2009); *see also Browning v. Yahoo!, Inc.*, 2007
7 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 86266, at *30 (N.D. Cal. 2007) (“In considering the strength of Plaintiff's case, legal
uncertainties at the time of settlement - particularly those which go to fundamental legal issues - favor
approval.”).

8 As recognized in a federal decision approving settlement of an overtime wage class action:

9 The potential complexity and possible duration of trial also weigh in favor of granting
10 final approval. Plaintiffs acknowledge the difficulties of proving damages, recognize the
uncertainty of outcome, and believe defendant would appeal in the event of adverse
11 judgment. A post-judgment appeal would require many years to resolve and delay
payment to class members. Plaintiffs believe the benefits of a guaranteed recovery today
12 outweigh an uncertain future result. Accordingly, plaintiffs argue, and the Court agrees,
the actual recovery confers substantial benefits on the class that outweigh the potential
13 recovery through full adjudication.

14 *Barcia v. Contain-A-Way, Inc.*, 2009 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 17118, *9 (S.D. Cal. 2009); *see also Louie v.*
15 *Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc.*, 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 78314, *14 (S.D. Cal. 2008).

16 There was also a significant risk that, if the Action was not settled, Plaintiff would be unable
17 to obtain a certified class and maintain the certified class through trial, and thereby not recover on behalf
of any employees other than themselves. At the time of the mediation, Defendant forcefully opposed
18 the propriety of class certification, arguing that individual issues precluded class certification. Further,
19 as demonstrated by the California Supreme Court decision in *Duran v. U.S. Bank National Assn.*, 59
20 Cal. 4th 1 (2014), there are significant hurdles to overcome for a class-wide recovery even where the
21 class has been certified. While other cases have approved class certification in wage and hour claims,
22 class certification in this action was hotly disputed and the maintenance of a certified class through trial
23 was by no means a foregone conclusion. Blumenthal Decl. ¶8(b).

24 In sum, the Settlement is a fair and reasonable result, and provides the Class with a significant
25 recovery, particularly when viewed in light of the fact that the Defendant asserted serious and
26 substantial defenses both to liability and to class certification. The maximum and average class member
27 allocation (in addition to their Individual PAGA Payment) are \$3,060.77 and \$685.39, respectively.
28

1 See Polites Decl. ¶16. Given the complexities of this case, the defenses, along with the uncertainties of
2 proof and appeal, the proposed Settlement is fair, reasonable and adequate, and should be finally
3 approved. Blumenthal Decl. at ¶8(e).

4 6. The Risk, Expense, Complexity, and Likely Duration of Further Litigation

5 As demonstrated by the decision in *Duran*, the complexities and duration of further litigation
6 cannot be overstated. There is little doubt that Defendant would post a bond and appeal in the event of
7 an adverse judgment. A post-judgment appeal by Defendant would have required many more years to
8 resolve, assuming the judgment was affirmed. If the judgment was not affirmed in total, then the case
9 could have dragged on for years after the appeal. The benefits of a guaranteed recovery today outweigh
10 an uncertain result three or more years in the future. Blumenthal Decl. ¶8(c).

11 Plaintiff and Class Counsel recognize the expense and length of a trial against Defendant
12 through possible appeals which could take at least another two or three years. Class Counsel also have
13 taken into account the uncertain outcome, the risk of litigation, especially in complex actions such as
14 this one. Class Counsel are also mindful of and recognize the inherent problems of proof under, and
15 alleged defenses to, the claims asserted in the Action. Moreover, post-trial motions and appeals would
16 have been inevitable. Costs would have mounted and recovery would have been delayed if not denied,
17 thereby reducing the benefits of an ultimate victory. The Settlement confers substantial benefits upon
18 the Class. Based upon their evaluation, Plaintiff and Class Counsel have determined that the Settlement
19 set forth in the Agreement is in the best interest of the Class. Blumenthal Decl. ¶8(c).

20 Although Plaintiff and Class Counsel believe that their case has merit, which Defendant
21 continue to vigorously deny, they recognized the potential risks both sides would face if litigation of
22 the Action continued. As the federal court held in *Glass*, where the parties faced uncertainties similar
23 to those in this litigation:

24 In light of the above-referenced uncertainty in the law, the risk, expense, complexity,
25 and likely duration of further litigation likewise favors the settlement. Regardless of how
26 this Court might have ruled on the merits of the legal issues, the losing party likely
27 would have appealed, and the parties would have faced the expense and uncertainty of
28 litigating an appeal. "The expense and possible duration of the litigation should be
considered in evaluating the reasonableness of [a] settlement."

Id. at *12.

1 7. The Amount Offered in Settlement

2 The Settlement in this case is fair, reasonable and adequate considering Defendant's defenses
3 to Plaintiff's claims. As set forth in the Declaration of Nordrehaug in support of preliminary approval
4 which discussed the value of the class claims in detail, the Gross Settlement Amount compares
5 favorably to the value of the claims. Based upon 2,264 Class Members who collectively worked an
6 estimated 101,901 workweeks, the Gross Settlement Amount provides an average value of \$1,104 per
7 Class Member and \$24 per workweek and, after deductions, the Net Settlement Amount provides an
8 average recovery of \$685.39 per Class Member and a recovery of \$15.23 per workweek. Blumenthal
9 Decl. at ¶8(d).

10 The calculations to compensate for the amount due for the Class at the time of the mediation
11 were calculated by Berger Consulting, Plaintiff's damage expert. As to the Class whose claims are at
12 issue in this Action, Plaintiff used the expert to analyze the data and determine the potential unpaid
13 wages for the employees. For the Class, maximum potential damages were calculated to be \$1,093,310
14 for alleged underpaid overtime wages, \$3,717,045 for the alleged unpaid wages for off-the-clock work
15 at one hour per week, \$8,195 for alleged unpaid sick pay due to the alleged miscalculation of the result
16 rate, \$4,223,049 for alleged meal period damages based upon a 94% potential violation rate for all shifts
17 worked observed in the time records, \$4,223,049 for alleged rest period damages based upon the same
18 potential number of violations for shifts worked that was observed for meal period records, \$154,035
19 for alleged unreimbursed cell-phone expenses at \$5 per month. As a result, the total damage valuation
20 was calculated such that Defendant was subject to a maximum damage claim in the amount of
21 \$13,418,684. As to potential penalties, Plaintiff calculated that potential waiting time penalties were
22 a maximum of between \$19,713 and \$2,370,470, depending on the predicate violation, and potential
23 maximum wage statement penalties were \$5,996,200.³ Defendant vigorously disputed Plaintiff's
24

25 ³ While Plaintiff alleged claims for statutory penalties pursuant to Labor Code Sections 203 and 226,
26 at mediation these claims are subject to additional, separate defenses asserted by Defendant, including,
27 a good faith dispute defense as to whether any wages were owed given Defendant's position that
28 Plaintiff and Class Members were properly compensated. *See Nordstrom Commission Cases*, 186 Cal.
App. 4th 576, 584 (2010) ("There is no willful failure to pay wages if the employer and employee have
a good faith dispute as to whether and when the wages were due.").

1 calculations and exposure theories. Blumenthal Decl. ¶8(d).

2 Consequently, the Gross Settlement Amount of \$2,500,000 represents more than 18.6% of the
3 maximum value of the alleged damages at issue in this case at the time this Settlement was negotiated.⁴
4 Importantly, the recent decision that good faith belief of compliance by the employer in *Naranjo v.*
5 *Spectrum Sec. Servs., Inc.*, 15 Cal. 5th 1056, 1065 (2024), could completely negate the claims for
6 waiting time and wage statement penalties, even if wages were owed to the Class. The above maximum
7 calculations should then be realistically risk-adjusted in consideration for both the risk of class
8 certification and the risk of establishing class-wide liability on all claims. Given the amount of the
9 settlement as compared to the potential value of claims in this case and the defenses asserted by
10 Defendant, this settlement is fair and reasonable.⁵ Clearly, the goal of this litigation has been met.
11 Blumenthal Decl. ¶8(d).

12 **V. THE REQUESTED ATTORNEYS' FEES, COSTS AND SERVICE AWARD SHOULD**
13 **BE APPROVED**

14 **A. The Attorneys' Fees are Reasonable and Supported by the Percentage of the Fund**
15 **Method**

16 Class Counsel seeks a fee award calculated at one-third (1/3) of the total value of the settlement
17 for the successful prosecution and resolution of this action. California state and federal courts have
18 recognized that an appropriate method for determining award of attorneys' fees is based on a percentage
19 of the total value of benefits to class members by the settlement. *Wershba v. Apple Computer, Inc.*, 91

20
21 ⁴ Because the PAGA claim is not a class claim and primarily is paid to the State of California,
22 Plaintiff did not included the PAGA claim in this discussion of the value of the class claims. The PAGA
23 claim was addressed in the Declaration of Kyle Nordrehaug at ¶33 filed in support of Plaintiff's Motion
24 for Preliminary Approval.

25 ⁵ See *Glass v. UBS Fin. Servs.*, 2007 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 8476 (N.D. Cal. 2007) (approving a
26 settlement where the settlement amount constituted approximately 25% of the estimated overtime
27 damages for the class); *Stovall-Gusman v. W.W. Granger, Inc.*, 2015 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 78671, at *12
28 (N.D. Cal. 2015) (granting final approval where "the proposed Total Settlement Amount represents
approximately 10% of what class might have been awarded had they succeeded at trial."); *Viceral v.*
Mistras Grp., Inc., 2016 WL 5907869 (N.D. Cal. 2016) (approving wage and hour class action
settlement amounting to 8.1% of full value); *Ma v. Covidien Holding, Inc.*, 2014 WL 2472316, (C.D.
Cal. 2014) (approving wage and hour class action settlement worth "somewhere between 9% and 18%"
of maximum valuation).

1 Cal.App.4th 224, 254 (2001); *Serrano v. Priest*, 20 Cal.3d 25, 34 (1977); *Boeing Co. v. Van Gemert*, 444
2 U.S. 472, 478 (1980); *Vincent v. Hughes Air West, Inc.*, 557 F.2d 759, 769 (9th Cir. 1997). The purpose
3 of this equitable doctrine is to avoid unjust enrichment to the Class and to “spread litigation costs
4 proportionally among all the beneficiaries so that the active beneficiary does not bear the entire burden
5 alone.” *Vincent*, 557 F.2d at 769.

6 The California Supreme Court has provided guidance regarding the award of attorneys’ fees in
7 wage and hour class action settlements. Under California law, the award of attorneys’ fees in common
8 fund wage and hour class action settlements should start with the percentage method. *See Laffitte v.*
9 *Robert Half Int’l*, 1 Cal. 5th 480, 503 (2016) (“We join the overwhelming majority of federal and state
10 courts in holding that when class action litigation establishes a monetary fund for the benefit of the class
11 members, and the trial court in its equitable powers awards class counsel a fee out of that fund, the court
12 may determine the amount of a reasonable fee by choosing an appropriate percentage of the fund
13 created”). Under the percentage of the fund method, a court’s objective remains to “mimic the market”
14 in fixing a reasonable fee. *See Gaskill v. Gordon*, 160 F.3d 361, 363 (7th Cir. 1998).

15 First, the fee award representing one-third of the fund clearly falls within that range and is
16 consistent with other rulings of other courts and comprehensive surveys of class action settlements and
17 fee awards. Attorneys’ fees awards of one-third of the fund are within the expected range in the market
18 in legal services. *See Fitzpatrick, An Empirical Study of Class Action Settlements and Their Fee Award*,
19 7 J. Empirical Leg. Stud. 811, 833 (2010) (analyzing 444 cases between 2006-2007 and concluding that
20 “[m]ost fee awards were between 25 percent and 35 percent”). In *Laffitte*, the Court expressly approved
21 of a one-third fee award. Such similar awards by other Courts are set forth in the Blumenthal Decl. ¶11.

22 Second, the results delivered by Class Counsel also support the requested percentage of the fund.
23 Here, Plaintiff and her counsel secured a \$2,500,000 settlement for the benefit of the Class, and not one
24 Class Member objected. The Settlement was possible because Defendant recognized the risks that
25 Plaintiff could potentially prevail on any or all of the contested issues regarding liability, and obtain
26 class certification. Blumenthal Decl. ¶10(f). In successfully navigating these hurdles Class Counsel
27 displayed the necessary skills in both wage and hour and class action litigation. Moreover, as discussed
28 above, there were significant risks to the contingent litigation. *See Barbosa v. Cargill Meat Solutions*

1 *Corp.*, 297 F.R.D. 431, 449 (E.D. Cal. 2013) (“**Like this case, where recovery is uncertain, an award**
2 **of one-third of the common fund as attorneys' fees has been found to be appropriate.**”)

3 Third, “the response of the class members to attorneys’ fee notice, though not decisive, is
4 relevant to the ... reasonable determination” regarding fees. *Swedish Hospital v. Shalala*, 1 F.3d 1261,
5 1272 (D.C. Cir. 1993). A positive response rate tends to suggest that the court’s “approximation of the
6 market” for fees is well supported. *Id.* at 1269. Here, the Class Notice specifically notified the Class that
7 Class Counsel would be seeking a one-third fee award. Again, there were no objections.

8 Fourth, it is recognized that one of the primary factors justifying an enhanced attorney’s fees
9 reward is the attendant risks inherent in the litigation. Here, it is clear that a settlement fund of
10 \$2,500,000 has been created. For Class Counsel, the fees here were wholly contingent in nature and the
11 case presented far more risk than the usual contingent fee case. Among the risks was the cost inherent
12 in class action litigation, as well as a long battle with a corporate Defendant who had retained a premier
13 and highly experienced defense firm. **Counsel retained on a contingency fee basis, whether in**
14 **private matters or in class action litigation, is entitled to a premium above their hourly rate in**
15 **order to compensate for both the risks and the delay in payment.** *See e.g. Stanger v. China Elec.*
16 *Motor, Inc.*, 812 F.3d 734, 741 (9th Cir. 2016) (courts “must” apply a risk enhancement); *Stetson v.*
17 *Grissom*, 821 F.3d 1157, 1166 (9th Cir. 2016) (abuse of discretion not to apply risk multiplier).

18 Fifth, the requested fee award is supported by the lodestar cross-check. The reasonableness of
19 the requested attorneys’ fee of one-third equal to \$833,333 is also established by reference to Class
20 Counsel’s lodestar in this matter. **The contemporaneous billing records for Class Counsel evidence**
21 **that through June 23, 2025, Class Counsel’s total lodestar is \$192,212.50, with significant**
22 **additional fees still to be incurred to complete final approval and the settlement process.**
23 Blumenthal Decl. at ¶12 and Exhibit #3. The requested fee award is therefore currently equivalent to
24 Class Counsel’s total lodestar with a reasonable multiplier cross-check, and there will be additional
25 lodestar incurred by Class Counsel to complete the settlement process and manage the settlement
26 distribution and reports. Blumenthal Decl. at ¶12. Such a cross-check is supported by the range of
27
28

1 positive multipliers approved in other cases such as *Vizcaino v. Microsoft Corp.*, 290 F.3d 1043, 1051
2 (9th Cir. 2002).⁶

3 For such reasons, Class Counsel's request for attorneys' fees in the amount of one-third of the
4 common fund is fair and reasonable, and should be approved.

5 **B. The Reimbursement of Litigation Expenses**

6 The Agreement provides at paragraph 3.2(b), that Class Counsel may seek a "Class Counsel
7 Litigation Expenses Payment of not more than \$35,000." Class Counsel requests reimbursement for
8 incurred litigation expenses and costs in the amount of \$25,922.71 based upon counsel's billing records,
9 which is less than the "not to exceed" amount of \$35,000. These litigation expenses include filing fees,
10 mediation expenses, expert expenses (Berger Consulting), and attorney service charges (OneLegal), and
11 research charges (LexisNexis), all of which are costs normally billed to the client.⁷ The details of the
12 litigation expenses incurred are set forth the Blumenthal Decl. at ¶13 and Exhibit #3. These costs were
13 reasonably incurred in the prosecution of the Action. Blumenthal Decl. at ¶13. Because these costs
14 were necessary to the successful prosecution of these claims, the request should be granted.

15 **C. The Service Award Is Reasonable and Should be Approved**

16 Plaintiff respectfully submits that for her service as the class representatives, Plaintiff should
17 be awarded the agreed service award of \$10,000, in accordance with the Agreement for her time, risk
18 and effort expended on behalf of the Class as the class representatives. (Agreement at ¶ 3.2(a).)
19 Defendant has agreed to this payment and there have been no objections to the requested service award.

21 ⁶ See *Laffitte, supra*, 1 Cal.5th at 487 (approving 1/3 fee award with 2.13 multiplier); *Vizcaino*
22 *supra*, at 1051(3.65 multiplier approved); *Pellegrino v. Robert Half Intern., Inc.*, 182 Cal.App.4th 278
23 (2010) (in class actions reasonable multipliers of 2.0 to 4.0 are often applied); *Wershba*, 91 Cal. App.
24 4th at 255 ("multipliers can range from 2 to 4 or even higher."); *In re Sutter Health Uninsured Pricing*
25 *Cases*, 171 Cal.App.4th 495, 512 (2009) (affirming 2.52 multiplier as "fair and reasonable"); *Chavez*
v. Netflix, Inc., 162 Cal.App.4th 43, 66 (2008) (affirming 2.53 multiplier as well within the approved
range of 2 to 4).

26 ⁷ Nontaxable costs are properly awarded where authorized by the parties' agreement. *Stetson*, 821
27 F.3d at 1165. Accordingly, "[e]xpenses such as reimbursement for travel, meals, lodging, photocopying,
28 long-distance telephone calls, computer legal research, postage, courier service, mediation, exhibits,
documents scanning, and visual equipment are typically recoverable." *Rutti v. Lojack Corp., Inc.*, 2012
WL 3151077, at *12 (C.D. Cal. 2012).

1 The Blumenthal Decl., at ¶14, provides a long list of equivalent service awards approved in California
2 in similar cases, which further supports the request in this case. Plaintiff's Declaration is submitted in
3 support of this request and is attached as Exhibits #5 to the Blumenthal Decl.

4 As the sole representative of the Class, Plaintiff performed her duties to the Class admirably and
5 without exception. Plaintiff worked extensively with Class Counsel during the course of the litigation,
6 responding to numerous requests, searching for documents, working with counsel, and reviewing the
7 settlement documentation. Blumenthal Decl. at ¶ 14. Plaintiff's Declarations detail the involvement,
8 stress and risks they undertook as a result of this Action. Plaintiff also assumed the serious risk that she
9 might possibly be liable for costs and fees to Defendant, as well as the reputational risk of being
10 "blacklisted" by other future employers for having filed a class action on behalf of employees.
11 Blumenthal Decl. at ¶15. Without Plaintiff's participation, cooperation and information, no other
12 employees would be receiving any benefit. Blumenthal Decl. at ¶¶ 15-16.

13 The payment of service awards to successful class representatives is appropriate and the amount
14 of \$10,000 is well within the currently awarded range for similar settlements. *See, e.g., Andrews v.*
15 *Plains All Am. Pipeline L.P.*, 2022 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 172183, at *11 (C.D. Cal. 2022) (finding that the
16 requested service awards of \$15,000 each are appropriate); *Reynolds v. Direct Flow Med., Inc.*, 2019
17 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 149865, at *19 (N.D. Cal. 2019) (granting request for \$12,500 service award);
18 *Mathein v. Pier 1 Imps. (U.S.), Inc.*, 2018 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 71386 (E.D. Cal. 2018) (awarding \$12,500
19 where average class member payment was \$351); *Louie v. Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc.*, 2008
20 WL 4473183, *7 (S.D. Cal. 2008) (awarding \$25,000 service award to each of six plaintiffs in overtime
21 class action); *Glass v. UBS Fin. Servs.*, 2007 WL 221862, *16-17 (N.D. Cal. 2007) (awarding \$25,000
22 service award in overtime class action).

23 **VI. CONCLUSION**

24 Plaintiff respectfully requests that the proposed settlement be finally approved as fair, reasonable
25 and adequate and requests entry of the Final Approval Order and Judgment, submitted herewith.

26 Respectfully submitted,

27 Dated: June 23, 2025

BLUMENTHAL NORDREHAUG BHOWMIK DE BLOUW LLP

By: /s/ Kyle Nordrehaug

Kyle R. Nordrehaug, Attorneys for Plaintiffs