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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

JOHN WHEELER, an individual, on
behalf of himself and on behalf of all
persons similarly situated,

Plaintiff,

vs.

NEXSTAR BROADCASTING, INC.,
a Corporation; NEXSTAR
BROADCASTING GROUP, INC., a
Corporation; and DOES 1 through 50,
inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No. **CGC-22-600499**

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

Hearing Date: June 26, 2024

Hearing Time: 9:30 a.m.

[Hearing scheduled by Order dated February 15,
2024]

Judge: Hon. Richard B. Ulmer
Dept: 302

Action Filed: July 1, 2022

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 15, 2024 (“Preliminary Approval
6 Order”), the approved Class Notice has been disseminated to the Class.²

7 The purpose of this hearing is to determine whether the proposed settlement of the litigation
8 should be finally approved. Plaintiff John Wheeler (“Plaintiff”) respectfully submits moves for final
9 approval, including attorneys’ fees, costs and the service award, and the proposed entry of the Final
10 Approval Order and Judgment, submitted herewith. The settlement represents an excellent result for
11 the Class and avoids the delays, risks, and costs of further litigation. After disseminating the notice to
12 the members of the Class, there were **no objections and only two (2) requests for exclusion**, which
13 means that nearly the entire Class (99.89%) has elected to participate in the Settlement. Blumenthal
14 Decl. ¶4. This is a positive response from the Class evidencing their collective approval of the
15 settlement. As a result, Plaintiff respectfully submits that the class settlement should be finally
16 approved for the same reasons that the Court preliminarily approved the settlement as fair, reasonable,
17 and adequate.

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

19 As consideration for this Settlement, the Gross Settlement Amount to be paid by Defendants
20 Nexstar Media Inc., f/k/a Nexstar Broadcasting, Inc. and Nexstar Media Group, Inc. f/k/a Nexstar
21 Broadcasting Group, Inc. (“Defendants”) is Three Million Eight Hundred Thousand Dollars
22 (\$3,800,000). (Agreement at ¶¶ 1.22 and 3.1.) Under the Settlement, the Gross Settlement Amount
23 consists of the following elements: (1) payment of the Individual Class Payments to the Participating
24 Class Members; (2) Class Counsel Fees Payment and Class Counsel Litigation Expenses Payment; (3)

25 _____
26 ¹ Capitalized terms are defined in the Agreement.

27 ² The “Class” is defined as “all individuals who were employed by Defendants in California and
28 classified as a non-exempt employee at any time during the Class Period.” The “Class Period” is
 defined as “July 1, 2018 through October 17, 2023.” (Preliminary Approval Order at ¶5.)

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

\$3,800,000 (Gross Settlement Amount)

- \$10,000 (Plaintiff's proposed service award not to exceed \$10,000)
- \$33,000 (Class Counsel Litigation Expenses Payment - not to exceed amount)
- \$1,266,666 (Class Counsel Fees Payment - not to exceed 1/3 of settlement)
- \$80,000 (PAGA Penalties payment - 75% to LWDA / 25% to Aggrieved Employees)
- \$20,467 (Administration Expenses Payment)

\$2,389,867 (Net Settlement Amount)

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

The Settlement is fair, adequate and reasonable to the class and should be finally approved for the same reasons the Court granted preliminary approval of the Settlement, agreeing that the settlement is "fair, adequate, and reasonable". (Preliminary Approval Order at ¶ 3.) In sum, the Settlement valued at \$3,800,000 is an excellent result for the Class. This result is particularly favorable in light of the fact that liability and class certification in this case were far from certain in light of the defenses asserted by Defendants. Given the complexities of this case, the defenses asserted, the uncertainty of class certification, along with the uncertainties of proof at trial and appeal, the proposed settlement is fair, reasonable and adequate, and should be finally approved. Blumenthal Decl. ¶3(j).

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

Settlements of disputed claims are favored by the courts. *Huens v. Tatum*, 52 Cal. App. 4th 259, 265 (1997). In evaluating settlements, the courts have long recognized that compromise is particularly 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 settlements, taking into account that settlements are compromises between the parties reflecting

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

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

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

15 The Court must determine whether the settlement is fair, adequate, and reasonable. *Dunk v.*
16 *Ford Motor Co.*, 48 Cal.App.4th 1794, 1801 (1996); *see also Officers for Justice v. Civil Service*
17 *Com'n*, 688 F.2d 615, 625 (9th Cir. 1982). The trial court has broad discretion to determine whether
18 the settlement is fair. *Cellphone Termination Fee Cases*, 180 Cal. App. 4th 1110, 1117 (2009). “The
19 well-recognized factors that the trial court should consider in evaluating the reasonableness of a class
20 action settlement agreement include 'the strength of plaintiffs' case, the risk, expense, complexity and
21 likely duration of further litigation, the risk of maintaining class action status through trial, the amount
22 offered in settlement, the extent of discovery completed and the stage of the proceedings, the experience
23 and views of counsel, the presence of a governmental participant, and the reaction of the class members
24 to the proposed settlement.’” *Kullar v. Foot Locker Retail, Inc.*, 168 Cal. App. 4th 116, 128 (2008)
25 (internal citations omitted); *see also Munoz v. BCI Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of L. A.*, 186 Cal. App. 4th
26 399, 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 one year of litigation, the Parties engaged in the investigation of
12 the claims, including the production of documents, class data, and other information, allowing for the
13 full and complete analysis of liabilities and defenses to the claims in this Action. The procedural history
14 and investigation performed was detailed at length in support of the motion for preliminary approval.
15 The Settlement was the product of one arms-length mediation and contentious negotiations through two
16 all-day mediation sessions presided over by David A. Rotman, Esq.. The details of the litigation are
17 set forth 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. Defendants have expressly denied and continue to deny
21 any 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 two arms-length mediation sessions with David A. Rotman, Esq., a
26 respected and experienced mediator of wage and hour class actions, in order to reach this Settlement.
27 In preparation for the mediation, Defendants 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. Following the second all-day mediation session, the Parties agreed to this Settlement based
4 upon a mediator's proposal. Blumenthal Decl. ¶7(b).

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

11 From August 2023 to November 2023, the settlement agreement and exhibits thereto were
12 finalized and executed. On February 15, 2024, the Court issued its Order granting preliminary approved
13 of the settlement as fair, adequate, and reasonable to the Class. Blumenthal Decl. ¶7(c).

14 3. Class Counsel is Experienced in Similar Litigation

15 Class Counsel in this matter has extensive class action experience and has represented thousands
16 of persons in class actions including employment litigation, wage and hour class actions, and complex
17 litigation. Class Counsel has previously litigated wage and hour class actions involving employees and
18 claims similar to this case and have been approved as experienced class counsel during contested
19 motions in state and federal courts throughout California. The experience of counsel and class action
20 cases managed and settled by the Class Counsel in this action is provided to the Court in the Blumenthal
21 Decl. at Exhibit #1. Class Counsel have participated in every aspect of the settlement discussions and
22 have concluded the settlement is fair, adequate and reasonable and in the best interests of the Class.
23 Blumenthal Decl. ¶ 3(j).

24 4. There Are No Objections and Only Two (2) Requests for Exclusion

25 The reaction of the Class unequivocally supports approval of the Settlement. On March 25,
26 2024, the Administrator mailed the Court-approved Class Notice to the Class Members, which provided
27 each class member with the terms of the Settlement, including notice of the claims at issue and the
28 financial terms of the settlement, including the attorneys' fees, costs, and service award that were being

1 sought, how individual settlement awards would be calculated, and the specific, estimated payment
2 amount to that individual. See Declaration of Nicole Bench (“Bench Decl.”) ¶ 8, Exh. A. In
3 disseminating the notice, the Administrator followed the notice procedures authorized by the Court in
4 its Preliminary Approval Order. Significantly, there have been no objections and only two requests to
5 opt-out. Bench Decl. ¶¶ 13-14. As such, nearly the entire Class (99.89%) will participate in the
6 Settlement and will be sent a settlement check. See Bench Decl. at ¶¶ 13-16; Blumenthal Decl. ¶4.

7 The absence of any objector strongly supports the fairness, reasonableness and adequacy of the
8 Settlement. See *In re Austrian & German Bank Holocaust Litigation*, 80 F. Supp. 2d 164, 175
9 (S.D.N.Y. 2000) (“If only a small number of objections are received, that fact can be viewed as
10 indicative of the adequacy of the settlement.”); *Stoetznerv v. U.S. Steel Corp.*, 897 F.2d 115, 118-119 (3d.
11 Cir. 1990) (29 objections out of 281 member class “strongly favors settlement”); *Laskey v. Int’l Union*,
12 638 F.2d 954 (6th Cir. 1981) (The fact that 7 out of 109 class members objected to the proposed
13 settlement should be considered when determining fairness of settlement). Here, where there are no
14 objections, the approval of the class is evident.

15 5. The Strength of Plaintiff’s Case

16 The Action generally alleges that Plaintiff and other Class Members were not properly paid all
17 overtime wages for hours worked and at the correct rate of pay, were not provided meal and rest periods
18 or paid premiums at the correct rate of pay in lieu thereof, were not timely paid earned wages, were not
19 provided reimbursement for required expenses, were not provided accurate itemized wage statements,
20 were not paid sick wages at the correct rate, and were not paid all wages at the time of termination. The
21 Action seeks unpaid wages, penalties, attorney fees, litigation costs, and any other equitable or legal
22 relief allegedly due and owing to Plaintiff and the other Class Members by virtue of the foregoing
23 claims. Blumenthal Decl. ¶5.

24 Where both sides face significant uncertainty, the attendant risks favor settlement. *Hanlon v.*
25 *Chrysler Corp.*, 150 F.3d 1011, 1026 (9th Cir. 1998). Here, a number of defenses asserted by
26 Defendants present serious threats to the claims of the Plaintiff and the other Class Members.
27 Defendants asserted that Defendants’ practices complied with all applicable Labor laws. Defendants
28 argued that all work time was properly recorded and paid for and that there was no miscalculation of

1 the regular rate. Defendants contended that their meal and rest period policies fully complied with
2 California law and Defendants did not fail to provide the opportunity for legally required meal and rest
3 breaks. Defendants showed that significant meal and rest period premiums were paid, which could be
4 argued established the lawfulness of their practices. As to expenses reimbursement, Defendants
5 contended that they did not fail to provide reimbursement for necessary business expenses and that
6 claimed expenses were incurred voluntarily and/or for the convenience of employees and is therefore
7 not required reimbursement. Defendants argued that the decisions in *Brinker v. Superior Court*, 53 Cal.
8 4th 1004 (2012), *Lockheed Martin Corp. v. Superior Ct.*, 29 Cal. 4th 1096, 1108 (2003), and *Salazar*
9 *v. See's Candy Shops Inc.*, 64 Cal.App.5th 85 (2021), weakened Plaintiff's claims, on liability, value,
10 and class certifiability as to the meal and rest period claims. Defendants also argued that based on their
11 facially lawful practices, they acted in good faith and without willfulness, which if accepted would
12 negate the claims for waiting time penalties and/or inaccurate wage statements. If successful,
13 Defendants' defenses could eliminate or substantially reduce any recovery to the Class. While Plaintiff
14 believes that these defenses could be overcome, Defendants maintain these defenses have merit and
15 therefore present a serious risk to recovery by the Class. Blumenthal Decl. ¶8(a).

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

18 Plaintiffs may have a strong case, but the risks inherent in continued litigation are great.
19 Defendants strongly deny liability for Plaintiffs' principal claim... [...T]he gross
20 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.

21 2009 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 33900 at *19-20 (N.D. Cal. 2009); *see also Browning v. Yahoo!, Inc.*, 2007
22 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 86266, at *30 (N.D. Cal. 2007) ("In considering the strength of Plaintiff's case, legal
23 uncertainties at the time of settlement - particularly those which go to fundamental legal issues - favor
24 approval."). As recognized in a federal decision approving settlement of an overtime wage class action:

25 The potential complexity and possible duration of trial also weigh in favor of granting
26 final approval. Plaintiffs acknowledge the difficulties of proving damages, recognize the
27 uncertainty of outcome, and believe defendant would appeal in the event of adverse
28 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
outweigh an uncertain future result. Accordingly, plaintiffs argue, and the Court agrees,

1 the actual recovery confers substantial benefits on the class that outweigh the potential
2 recovery through full adjudication.

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

5 There was also a significant risk that, if the Action was not settled, Plaintiff would be unable
6 to obtain class certification and thereby not recover on behalf of any employees other than himself.
7 Defendants argued that the individual experience of each putative class member varied with respect to
8 the claims. Defendants could also contest class certification by arguing injury and good faith were case-
9 by-case determinations that precluded class certification. Plaintiff is aware of other cases where class
10 certification of similar claims was denied. *See e.g. Cacho v. Eurostar, Inc.*, 43 Cal. App. 5th 885 (2019)
11 (denying certification of rest break claims). Finally, even if class certification was successful, as
12 demonstrated by the California Supreme Court decision in *Duran v. U.S. Bank National Assn.*, 59 Cal.
13 4th 1 (2014), there are significant hurdles to overcome for a class wide recovery even where the class
14 has been certified. While other cases have approved class certification in wage and hour claims, class
15 certification in this action would have been hotly disputed and was by no means a foregone conclusion.
16 Blumenthal Decl. ¶8(b).

17 In sum, the Settlement is a fair and reasonable result, and provides the Class with a significant
18 recovery, particularly when viewed in light of the fact that the Defendants asserted serious and
19 substantial defenses both to liability and to class certification. The maximum and average class member
20 allocation (in addition to their Individual PAGA Payment) are \$3,318.86 and \$1,303.09, respectively.
21 *See* Bench Decl. ¶18. Given the complexities of this case, the defenses, along with the uncertainties
22 of proof and appeal, the proposed Settlement is fair, reasonable and adequate, and should be finally
23 approved. Blumenthal Decl. at ¶8(e).

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

25 As demonstrated by the decision in *Duran*, the complexities and duration of further litigation
26 cannot be overstated. There is little doubt that Defendants would post a bond and appeal in the event
27 of an adverse judgment. A post-judgment appeal by Defendants would have required many more years
28 to resolve, assuming the judgment was affirmed. If the judgment was not affirmed in total, then the case

1 could have dragged on for years after the appeal. The benefits of a guaranteed recovery today outweigh
2 an uncertain result three or more years in the future. Blumenthal Decl. ¶8(c).

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

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

16 In light of the above-referenced uncertainty in the law, the risk, expense, complexity,
17 and likely duration of further litigation likewise favors the settlement. Regardless of how
18 this Court might have ruled on the merits of the legal issues, the losing party likely
19 would have appealed, and the parties would have faced the expense and uncertainty of
20 litigating an appeal. "The expense and possible duration of the litigation should be
21 considered in evaluating the reasonableness of [a] settlement." See *In re Mego Financial
22 Corp. Securities Litigation*, 213 F.3d 454, 458 (9th Cir. 2000). Here, the risk of further
23 litigation is substantial.

24 *Id.* at *12.

25 7. The Amount Offered in Settlement

26 The Settlement in this case is fair, reasonable and adequate considering Defendants' defenses
27 to Plaintiff's claims. As set forth in the Declaration of Nordrehaug in support of preliminary approval
28 which discussed the value of the class claims in detail, the Gross Settlement Amount compares
favorably to the value of the claims. Based upon 1,834 Class Members who collectively worked
199,464 weeks, the Gross Settlement Amount provides a value of \$2,071 per Class Member and \$19

1 per work week and the Net Settlement Amount provides an average recovery of \$1,303.09 per Class
2 Member and a recovery of \$11.98 per work week. Blumenthal Decl. at ¶8(d).

3 The calculations to compensate for the amount due for the Class at the time of the mediation
4 were calculated by Berger Consulting, Plaintiff's damage expert. As to the Class whose claims are at
5 issue in this Action, Plaintiff used the expert to analyze the data and determine the potential unpaid
6 wages for the employees. For the Class, the maximum value of the claim for unpaid overtime was
7 \$52,513, the maximum value of the claim for unpaid wages due to alleged miscalculation of the regular
8 rate for sick pay and overtime was \$50,580, the maximum value of the claim for unpaid wages due to
9 alleged off-the-clock work was \$7,877,768, the maximum potential damages for unpaid meal premiums
10 were estimated to be \$6,365,280 based upon a potential 31% violation rate observed in the records and
11 after deduction for meal premiums paid (\$991,464), the maximum potential rest period damages were
12 estimated to be \$3,144,579 based upon one violation per week after deducting premiums paid, and the
13 maximum potential damages for failure to provide expense reimbursement were calculated to be
14 \$265,150. In total, the damages for the Class were calculated to have a maximum potential total value
15 of \$17,755,870. In addition, Plaintiff calculated that the maximum value of the potential waiting time
16 penalties was between \$483,800 and \$4,325,950, depending on the predicate violation, and the
17 maximum value of the potential waiting time penalties was \$1,977,506.³ Blumenthal Decl. ¶8(d).

18 Consequently, the Gross Settlement Amount represents more than 21% of the potential
19 maximum damages at issue for the Class in this case, assuming these amounts could all be proven in
20
21
22

23 ³ While Plaintiff alleged claims for statutory penalties pursuant to Labor Code Sections 203 and 226,
24 at mediation Plaintiff recognized that these claims were subject to additional, separate defenses asserted
25 by Defendants, including, a good faith dispute defense as to whether any premium wages for meal or
26 rest periods or other wages were owed given Defendants' position that Plaintiff and Class Members
27 were properly compensated. *See Naranjo v. Spectrum Sec. Servs., Inc.*, 2024 Cal. LEXIS 2438, at *3
28 (May 6, 2024) ("if an employer reasonably and in good faith believed it was providing a complete and
accurate wage statement in compliance with the requirements of section 226, then it has not knowingly
and intentionally failed to comply with the wage statement law."); *Nordstrom Commission Cases*, 186
Cal. App. 4th 576, 584 (2010) (no willful failure to pay wages if the employer has good faith dispute).

1 full at trial.⁴ Given the amount of the Settlement as compared to the potential value of the claims, the
2 Settlement is most certainly fair and reasonable.⁵ Blumenthal Decl. ¶8(d).

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

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

7 Class Counsel seeks a fee award calculated at one-third (1/3) of the total value of the settlement
8 for the successful prosecution and resolution of this action. California state and federal courts have
9 recognized that an appropriate method for determining award of attorneys' fees is based on a percentage
10 of the total value of benefits to class members by the settlement. *Wershba v. Apple Computer, Inc.*, 91
11 Cal. App. 4th 224, 254 (2001); *Serrano v. Priest*, 20 Cal. 3d 25, 34 (1977); *Boeing Co. v. Van Gemert*,
12 444 U.S. 472, 478 (1980); *Vincent v. Hughes Air West, Inc.*, 557 F.2d 759, 769 (9th Cir. 1997). The
13 purpose of this equitable doctrine is to avoid unjust enrichment to the Class and to "spread litigation
14 costs proportionally among all the beneficiaries so that the active beneficiary does not bear the entire
15 burden alone." *Vincent*, 557 F.2d at 769.

16 The California Supreme Court has provided guidance regarding the award of attorneys' fees in
17 wage and hour class action settlements. Under California law, the award of attorneys' fees in common
18 fund wage and hour class action settlements should start with the percentage method. See *Laffitte v.*
19 *Robert Half Int'l*, 1 Cal. 5th 480, 503 (2016) ("We join the overwhelming majority of federal and state
20 courts in holding that when class action litigation establishes a monetary fund for the benefit of the class
21 members, and the trial court in its equitable powers awards class counsel a fee out of that fund, the court

22 ⁴ Because the PAGA claim does not provide a recovery to the Class, Plaintiff did not included the
23 PAGA claim in this discussion of the class claim valuation. The PAGA claim is addressed in the
24 Declaration of Nordrehaug at ¶ 33 filed in support of Plaintiff's Motion for Preliminary Approval.

25 ⁵ See *Dunleavy v. Nadler (In re Mego Fin. Corp. Sec. Litig.)*, 213 F.3d 454, 459 (9th Cir. 2000)
26 approving settlement which represented "roughly one-sixth of the potential recovery"); *Stovall-Gusman*
27 *v. W.W. Granger, Inc.*, 2015 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 78671, at *12 (N.D. Cal. 2015) (granting final approval
28 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 verdict 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 full verdict value).

1 may determine the amount of a reasonable fee by choosing an appropriate percentage of the fund
2 created”). Under the percentage of the fund method, a court’s objective remains to “mimic the market”
3 in fixing a reasonable fee. See *Gaskill v. Gordon*, 160 F.3d 361, 363 (7th Cir. 1998).

4 First, the fee award representing one-third of the fund clearly falls within that range and is
5 consistent with other rulings of other courts and comprehensive surveys of class action settlements and
6 fee awards. Attorneys’ fees awards of one-third of the fund are within the expected range in the market
7 in legal services. See Fitzpatrick, *An Empirical Study of Class Action Settlements and Their Fee Award*,
8 7 J. Empirical Leg. Stud. 811, 833 (2010) (analyzing 444 cases between 2006-2007 and concluding that
9 “[m]ost fee awards were between 25 percent and 35 percent”). Such similar awards by other Courts
10 are set forth in the Blumenthal Decl. ¶11.

11 Second, the results delivered by Class Counsel also support the requested percentage of the fund.
12 Here, Plaintiff and her counsel secured a \$3,800,000 settlement for the benefit of the Class, and not one
13 Class Member objected. The Settlement was possible only because Class Counsel was able to convince
14 Defendants that Plaintiff could potentially prevail on the contested issues regarding liability, maintain
15 class certification, overcome difficulties in proof as to monetary relief and take the case to trial if need
16 be. Blumenthal Decl. ¶10(f). In successfully navigating these hurdles Class Counsel displayed the
17 necessary skills in both wage and hour and class action litigation. Moreover, as discussed above, there
18 were significant risks to the contingent litigation. See *Barbosa v. Cargill Meat Solutions Corp.*, 297
19 F.R.D. 431, 449 (E.D. Cal. 2013) (“**Like this case, where recovery is uncertain, an award of**
20 **one-third of the common fund as attorneys' fees has been found to be appropriate.**”)

21 Third, “the response of the class members to attorneys’ fee notice, though not decisive, is
22 relevant to the ... reasonable determination” regarding fees. *Swedish Hospital v. Shalala*, 1 F.3d 1261,
23 1272 (D.C. Cir. 1993). A positive response rate tends to suggest that the court’s “approximation of the
24 market” for fees is well supported. *Id.* at 1269. Here, the Class Notice specifically notified the Class that
25 Class Counsel would be seeking a one-third fee award. Again, there were no objections.

26 Fourth, it is recognized that one of the primary factors justifying an enhanced attorney’s fees
27 reward is the attendant risks inherent in the litigation. As observed in *City of Detroit v. Grinnell Corp.*:

28 No one expects a lawyer whose compensation is contingent upon his success to charge, when

1 successful, as little as he would charge a client who had agreed to pay for his services, regardless
2 of success. Nor, particularly in complicated cases producing large recoveries, is it just to make
a fee depend solely on the reasonable amount of time expended.

3 495 F.2d 448, 470 (2d Cir. 1974).

4 Here, it is clear that a settlement fund of \$3,800,000 has been created. For Class Counsel, the
5 fees here were wholly contingent in nature and the case presented far more risk than the usual
6 contingent fee case. Among the risks was the cost inherent in class action litigation, as well as a long
7 battle with a corporate Defendants who had retained a premier and highly experienced defense firm.
8 **Counsel retained on a contingency fee basis, whether in private matters or in class action**
9 **litigation, is entitled to a premium above their hourly rate in order to compensate for both the**
10 **risks and the delay in payment.** *See e.g. Stanger v. China Elec. Motor, Inc.*, 812 F.3d 734, 741 (9th
11 Cir. 2016) (courts "must" apply a risk enhancement); *Stetson v. Grissom*, 821 F.3d 1157, 1166 (9th Cir.
12 2016) (abuse of discretion not to apply risk multiplier).

13 Fifth, the requested fee award is supported by the lodestar cross-check. The reasonableness of
14 the requested attorneys' fee of one-third equal to \$1,266,666 is also established by reference to Class
15 Counsel's lodestar in this matter. **The contemporaneous billing records for Class Counsel evidence**
16 **that through June 3, 2024, Class Counsel's total lodestar is \$355,925.00**, with significant additional
17 fees still to be incurred to complete final approval and the settlement process. (Blumenthal Decl. at ¶12
18 and Exhibits #3 and 4.) The requested fee award is therefore currently equivalent to Class Counsel's
19 total lodestar with a reasonable multiplier of less than 3.6, and there will be additional lodestar incurred
20 by Class Counsel to complete the settlement process and manage the settlement distribution and reports.
21 (Blumenthal Decl. at ¶12.) Such a multiplier is within the range of multipliers approved in other cases
22 such as *Vizcaino v. Microsoft Corp.*, 290 F.3d 1043, 1051 (9th Cir. 2002).⁶

23 _____
24 ⁶ See *Laffitte, supra*, 1 Cal. 5th at 487 (approving 1/3 fee award with multiplier of 2.13); *Vizcaino*
25 *supra*, at 1051(3.65 multiplier approved); *Pellegrino v. Robert Half Intern., Inc.*, 182 Cal.App.4th 278
26 (2010) (in class actions reasonable multipliers of 2.0 to 4.0 are often applied); *Wershba*, 91 Cal. App.
27 4th at 255 ("multipliers can range from 2 to 4 or even higher."); *In re Sutter Health Uninsured Pricing*
28 *Cases*, 171 Cal.App.4th 495, 512 (2009) (affirming multiplier of 2.52 as "fair and reasonable"); *Chavez*
v. Netflix, Inc., 162 Cal.App.4th 43, 66 (2008) (affirming multiplier of 2.53 as well within the approved
range of 2 to 4); *Taylor v. Fedex Freight, Inc.*, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 142202 (E.D. Cal. 2016) (2.26
multiplier).

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

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

4 The Agreement provides at paragraph 3.2(b), that Class Counsel may seek a "Class Counsel
5 Litigation Expenses Payment of not more than \$33,000." Class Counsel requests reimbursement for
6 incurred litigation expenses and costs in the amount of \$33,000.00 Class Counsel have incurred
7 \$34,167.36 based upon counsel's billing records; therefore, this requested amount of \$33,000 is less
8 than the amount actually incurred by Class Counsel. These litigation expenses include the expenses
9 incurred for filing fees, mediation expenses, expert expenses (Berger Consulting), and attorney service
10 charges (Knox, OneLegal), e-service charges (File & Serve Xpress), research charges (LexisNexis), and
11 appearance fees, all of which are costs normally billed to and paid by the client.⁷ The details of the
12 litigation expenses incurred are set forth the Blumenthal Decl. at ¶13 and Exhibits #3 and 4. These costs
13 were reasonably incurred in the prosecution of the Action. (Blumenthal Decl. at ¶13.) Because these
14 costs were reasonable and necessary to the successful prosecution of these claims, the request is
15 reasonable and should be granted.

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

17 Plaintiff respectfully submit that for his service as the class representative, Plaintiff should be
18 awarded the agreed service award of \$10,000, in accordance with the Agreement for his time, risk and
19 effort expended on behalf of the Class as the class representative. (Agreement at ¶ 3.2(a).) Defendants
20 have agreed to this payment and there have been no objections to the requested service award. The
21 Blumenthal Decl., at ¶14, provides a long list of equivalent service awards approved in California in
22 similar cases, which further supports the request in this case. The Declaration of Plaintiff is submitted
23 in support of this request and is attached as Exhibit #6 to the Blumenthal Decl.

24
25
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,
28 photocopying, 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 As the representative of the Class, Plaintiff performed his duty to the Class admirably and
2 without exception. Plaintiff worked extensively with Class Counsel during the course of the litigation,
3 responding to numerous requests, searching for documents, working with counsel, and reviewing the
4 settlement documentation. (Blumenthal Decl. at ¶ 14.) As set forth in the Agreement, the Plaintiff is
5 also providing a comprehensive release as part of the Settlement, far beyond the class release. The
6 Declaration of Plaintiff details the involvement, stress and risks he undertook as a result of this Action.
7 Plaintiff also assumed the serious risk that he might possibly be liable for costs and fees to Defendants,
8 as well as the reputational risk of being “blacklisted” by other future employers for having filed a class
9 action on behalf of fellow former employees. (Blumenthal Decl. at ¶15.) Without the Plaintiff’s
10 participation, cooperation and information, no other employees would be receiving any benefit.
11 (Blumenthal Decl. at ¶¶ 15-16).

12 The payment of service awards to successful class representatives is appropriate and the amount
13 of \$10,000 is well within the currently awarded range for similar settlements. *See e.g. Mathein v. Pier*
14 *1 Imps.*, 2018 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 71386, 168 Lab. Cas. (CCH) P36,620 (E.D. Cal. 2018) (approving two
15 service awards of \$12,500 each); *Holman v. Experian Info. Solutions, Inc.*, 2014 U.S. Dist. LEXIS
16 173698 (approving \$10,000 service award where class member recovery was \$375); *Bellinghausen v.*
17 *Tractor Supply Co.*, 306 F.R.D. 245, 268 (N.D. Cal. 2015) (approving \$10,000 award). Accordingly,
18 Class Counsel respectfully request approval of the requested Class Representative Service Payment in
19 accordance with the Agreement.

20 **VI. CONCLUSION**

21 Plaintiff respectfully submits that the proposed settlement satisfies the standard of fairness
22 established in California law and should therefore be finally approved as fair, reasonable and adequate
23 and requests entry of the Final Approval Order and Judgment, submitted herewith.

24 Respectfully submitted,

25 Dated: June 3, 2024

**BLUMENTHAL NORDREHAUG BHOWMIK
DE BLOUW LLP**

26 By: /s/ Kyle Nordrehaug
27 Kyle R. Nordrehaug
28 Attorneys for Plaintiff