

1 JCL LAW FIRM, APC
Jean-Claude Lapuyade (SBN 248676)
2 jlapuyade@jcl-lawfirm.com
Perssia Razma (State Bar # 351398)
3 prazma@jcl-lawfirm.com
4 5440 Morehouse Drive, Suite 3600
San Diego, CA 92121
5 Telephone: (619) 599-8292

6
7 ZAKAY LAW GROUP, APLC
Shani O. Zakay (SBN 277924)
8 shani@zakaylaw.com
Jackland K. Hom (SBN 327243)
9 jackland@zakaylaw.com
Jaclyn Joyce (SBN 285124)
10 jaclyn@zakaylaw.com
5440 Morehouse Drive, Suite 3600
11 San Diego, CA 92121
12 Telephone: (619) 255-9047

13 Attorneys for the Plaintiff
14

15 **SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA**
16 **COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO**
17

18 LAN HO, an individual, on behalf of herself,
19 and on behalf of all persons similarly situated,

20 Plaintiff,

21 v.

22 MHF MV MANAGER VI LLC, a Delaware
limited liability company; MHF MV
23 OPERATING VI LLC dba COURTYARD
SAN DIEGO MISSION VALLEY/HOTEL
24 CIRCLE, a Delaware limited liability
company; MHF MV VI LLC, a Delaware
25 limited liability company; and DOES 1
26 through 10, inclusive,,

27 Defendants.
28

Case No. 37-2024-00023005-CU-OE-CTL

**DECLARATION OF JOEL D.
LARABEE ISO PLAINTIFFS'
MOTION FOR PRELIMINARY
APPROVAL OF CLASS AND PAGA
ACTION SETTLEMENT**

Date: February 27, 2026
Time: 9:00 AM
Dept.: C-75
Judge: Hon. Euketa Oliver

Trial Date: N/A
Complaint Filed: May 17, 2024

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DECLARATION OF JOEL D. LARABEE

I, Joel Larabee, declare as follows:

1. I am the counsel of record for the named Plaintiff Marlene Benitez and her representative PAGA enforcement action against the same Defendants, Superior Court of California, County of San Diego, Case No. 37-2024-0090160-CU-MC-CTL (formerly ACSC Case No, 24CV080932). As such, I am fully familiar with the facts, pleadings, and history of this matter. The following facts are within my own personal knowledge, and if called as a witness, I could testify competently to the matters stated herein.
2. This declaration is submitted in support of Plaintiff Lan Ho's Motion for Preliminary Court Approval of Class and PAGA Settlement.

Introduction and Summary of Litigation

3. On May 22, 2024, before pursuing her claims against the Defendants, Plaintiff Marlene Benitez complied with all aspects of the Labor Code by filing and serving notice on the Labor and Workforce and Development Agency (LWDA) of the facts and theories underlying the violations, and the specific Labor Code sections that were violated pursuant to the Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA).
4. On June 24, 2024, Plaintiff Benitez, on behalf of herself and the State of California as its designated proxy pursuant to the PAGA, filed a PAGA enforcement action in the Superior Court of California for the County of Alameda under case number 24CV080932.
5. On July 31, 2024, Plaintiff Benitez filed a first amended complaint in the Superior Court of California for the County of Alameda, Case Number 24CV080932.
6. On August 29, 2024, per stipulation between Plaintiff Benitez and the Defendants and by court order, the Plaintiff Benitez PAGA enforcement action was transferred from the County of Alameda to the Superior Court of California for the County of San Diego and was issued case number 37-2024-00900160-CU-MC-CTL and assigned to C-62.
7. Thereafter, Plaintiff Benitez, through the undersigned counsel, and Plaintiff Lan Ho, through her counsel, entered into a joint prosecution agreement to collectively pursue their claims against the Defendants in connection with the foregoing litigation.
8. On October 30, 2024, a notice of related case was filed and, effectively, the Benitez PAGA enforcement action and the Ho class and PAGA action were deemed related.
9. On June 11, 2025, per Local Rule, the Benitez PAGA enforcement action was reassigned to C-75.
10. Thereafter, the parties engaged in settlement discussions and attended, in one form or another, private mediation during which the parties reached an arms- length settlement.
11. I believe the settlement achieved in this case, a non-reversionary gross settlement amount of \$550,000, is fair, reasonable, and adequate when considering the strengths and

1 weaknesses of the foregoing case, the Defendants' defenses, and the delays and risks
2 associated with continued litigation, including trial and potential appeals in the event this
case was not settled.

3 **My Experience**

- 4 12. I am an attorney duly licensed to practice law in the State of California. I was admitted to
5 the California State Bar in June 2006 and have been continuously licensed and in good
standing since that time.
- 6 13. I am a founding attorney and principal of the Larabee Law Firm, where my practice
7 focuses primarily on the representation of employees in employment-related matters,
8 including wage-and-hour violations, unpaid wages, meal and rest period violations,
9 retaliation, wrongful termination, discrimination, and other workplace rights violations
under California law.
- 10 14. Over the course of my career, I have successfully represented hundreds, if not thousands,
11 of employees in individual employment cases involving violations of the California Labor
Code, the Fair Employment and Housing Act, and related statutory and common-law
12 protections for employees.
- 13 15. I also have experience litigating representative and complex employment actions,
14 including matters brought under the California Private Attorneys General Act ("PAGA"),
and am familiar with the procedural, substantive, and strategic considerations unique to
class actions and PAGA representative actions.
- 15 16. My practice regularly involves all phases of employment litigation, including case
16 investigation and evaluation, drafting pleadings, conducting and responding to discovery,
17 law-and-motion practice, mediation and settlement negotiations, and preparation for trial. I
routinely analyze complex employment records and apply evolving California employment
law to assess liability, damages, and litigation risk.
- 18 17. I have practiced employment law for nearly twenty years, during which time I have
19 developed substantial expertise in wage-and-hour litigation and employee-rights
enforcement. I am familiar with prevailing market rates charged by attorneys of similar
20 experience and skill handling comparable employment matters in California.
- 21 18. My current hourly rate is \$950 per hour, which I believe is reasonable and consistent with
22 market rates for attorneys with comparable experience litigating complex employment and
23 representative actions in California, particularly where counsel undertake representation on
a contingency basis and bear the risk of non-payment.
- 24 19. In this action, I contributed to the prosecution and resolution of the case on behalf of
25 Plaintiff Marlene Benitez and the Settlement Class, including advising on legal strategy,
evaluating claims and defenses, participating in settlement discussions, and assisting in the
26 resolution of a complex class and PAGA matter.
- 27 20. The results obtained in this case reflect a fair and reasonable compromise of disputed
28 claims, achieved through arm's-length negotiations and informed by an assessment of
litigation risks, potential defenses, certification issues, and the uncertainty, expense, and
delay associated with continued litigation.

1 21. I submit this declaration in support of the requested award of attorneys' fees and costs as
2 fair and reasonable under California law.

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

6 Executed this 29 day of January, 2026, at San Diego, California.

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Joel D. Larabee