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Attorneys for Plaintiff

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

NATASHA TAYLOR, individually, and on
behalf of other members of the general
public similarly situated;

Plaintiff,

vs.

THE WEST OAKLAND HEALTH
COUNCIL, a California corporation; and
DOES 1 through 100, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No. RG20049604
Honorable Somnath Raj Chatterjee

CLASS ACTION

**DECLARATION OF RYAN SLINGER IN
SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR
PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF CLASS
ACTION AND PAGA SETTLEMENT**

Date: February 25, 2025
Time: 1:30 p.m.
Department: 21

Complaint Filed: January 7, 2020
Trial Date: None Set

DECLARATION OF RYAN SLINGER

I, Ryan Slinger, hereby declare as follows:

1. I am an attorney licensed to practice law in the State of California. I am a member of Lawyers *for* Justice, PC, attorneys of record for Plaintiff Natasha Taylor (“Plaintiff”) in the action entitled *Taylor v. The West Oakland Health Council, et al.*, (Alameda County Superior Court Case No. RG20049604 (the “Action”). The facts set forth in this declaration are within my personal knowledge or based on information and belief, and if called as a witness, I could and would competently testify thereto.

LITIGATION AND REPRESENTATIVE AND CLASS ACTION EXPERIENCE

2. For over a decade, Lawyers *for* Justice, PC has almost exclusively focused on the prosecution of consumer and employment class actions, involving wage-and-hour claims, race discrimination, unfair business practices, or consumer fraud. Currently, Lawyers *for* Justice, PC is attorney of record in over a dozen employment-related putative class actions in both state and federal courts in the State of California. Lawyers *for* Justice, PC is comprised of attorneys who focus on litigating complex wage-and-hour class and Private Attorneys General Act (“PAGA”) representative actions. The firm has successfully litigated cases involving the executive, administrative, and other overtime exemptions to the State of California and federal overtime compensation requirements. During a relatively short time, in association with other law firms, Lawyers *for* Justice, PC has recovered millions of dollars on behalf of thousands of individuals in California. Below is a summary of the experience and qualifications of the attorneys at Lawyers *for* Justice, PC who most recently and primarily have been responsible for the representation of Plaintiff in connection with the resolution of above-captioned matter. Additional attorney and non-attorney staff have also worked on the above-captioned matter.

3. Edwin Aiwasian is the Managing Member and Shareholder of Lawyers *for* Justice, PC. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Pepperdine University in April of 1999 and earned a Juris Doctor degree from Pepperdine University School of Law in May of 2004. He has extensive formal training in dispute resolution and negotiation from the Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution as part of its Masters in Dispute Resolution degree program. In addition, he has previously served

1 as a pro bono mediator for the Los Angeles County Superior Court. In October of 2000, he obtained
2 a Litigation Paralegal Certificate from the UCLA Extension Program. During the summer of 2000,
3 he studied Legal Writing at Harvard University. From approximately September 2002 to
4 approximately December 2002, he served as a Judicial Extern to the Honorable Kim McLane
5 Wardlaw of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. From approximately June 2002
6 to approximately August 2002, he served as a Judicial Extern to the Honorable Earl Johnson, Jr. of
7 the California Court of Appeal for the Second Appellate District. In December of 2004, he obtained
8 a license to practice law from the California State Bar. Since in or around October of 2008, through
9 his work at Lawyers *for* Justice, PC, he has almost exclusively focused on the prosecution of
10 consumer and employment class actions. While employed by Lawyers *for* Justice PC, he has argued
11 over one hundred (100) motions, taken or defended over one hundred fifty (150) depositions,
12 prepared dozens of expert witnesses for deposition or trial, and attended over one hundred seventy-
13 five (175) mediations. Together with other attorneys at the firm, and in many cases in conjunction
14 with co-counsel, he has successfully litigated cases involving the executive, administrative, and
15 other overtime exemptions to the State of California and federal overtime compensation
16 requirements. Under his supervision, Lawyers for Justice, PC has successfully obtained class
17 certification by contested motion practice in approximately fifteen (15) cases in the last decade and
18 litigated over 1,000 class action or representative action cases.

19 4. Arby Aiwarzian is a Member and Shareholder of Lawyers *for* Justice, PC. He received
20 his Bachelor of Arts degree from University of California, Los Angeles and graduated magna cum
21 laude. He earned a Juris Doctor degree, cum laude, from Southwestern Law School. From
22 approximately May 2007 to approximately July 2007, he served as a Judicial Extern to the Honorable
23 Earl Johnson, Jr. of the California Court of Appeal for the Second Appellate District. From
24 approximately August 2008 to approximately December 2008 he served as a Judicial Extern to the
25 Honorable Kim McLane Wardlaw of the United State Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. He
26 was admitted to practice law in California in 2010. He is admitted to practice before all courts of the
27 State of California and all United States District Courts in the State of California. He has worked on
28 many wage-and-hour class action and representative action cases, taking the lead in taking and

1 defending depositions, arguing motions, and attending mediations. He has played an integral role in
2 preparing matters for class certification, including and not limited to, successful certification of a
3 class in *Upson v. Sur La Table* (Los Angeles County Superior Court Case No. BC424012),
4 *Montazemi v. Regus Management* (Los Angeles County Superior Court Case No. BC478769), and
5 *Abdulhaqq v. Urban Outfitters* (Alameda County Superior Court Case No. RG13680477). He has
6 worked on over one hundred (100) class action or representative action cases which have resulted in
7 settlement, including and not limited to those listed in paragraph 7 herein.

8 5. Joanna Ghosh is a Senior Member of Lawyers for Justice, PC. She received a
9 Bachelor of Arts degree from California State University, Los Angeles in 2006, a Master of Science
10 degree from the London School of Economics in 2007, and a Juris Doctor degree from Georgetown
11 University Law Center in 2010. She is admitted to practice in California (since 2010) and in New
12 York (since 2013) and is also admitted to practice in all U.S. District Courts in California, the U.S.
13 Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California, and the U.S. Supreme Court. She has taken
14 and defended dozens of depositions and successfully handled motion practice in class action cases
15 regarding discovery (including and not limited to, regarding class contact information), class
16 certification (both contested class certification and stipulated class certification), arbitration
17 agreements, coordination, intervention. She has successfully handled briefing and oral argument on
18 appeal, and obtained notable decisions regarding the Private Attorneys General Act and employer
19 efforts to compel arbitration of PAGA claims, e.g., *Betancourt v. Prudential Overall Supply*, 9
20 Cal.App.5th 439 (Cal. Ct. App., Mar. 7, 2017), cert. denied (Cal., May 24, 2017), cert. denied (U.S.,
21 Dec. 11, 2017) and *ZB, N.A. v. Superior Court*, 8 Cal.5th175 (2019). She also has extensive
22 experience with class action and/or representative action settlements. Under her, Edwin Aiwazian,
23 and Arby Aiwazian's supervision, the firm has handled the class certification and court approval
24 process for hundreds of class action and/or representative action matters that have successfully
25 resolved. She is a member of the California Employment Lawyers Association.

26 6. I am a Member of Lawyers for Justice, PC. I received my Bachelor of Arts degree
27 from the University of Michigan in 2020, and I earned my Juris Doctor degree from Loyola Law
28 School in 2023. I was admitted to practice law in California in 2023. I am admitted to practice before

all courts of the State of California. I have worked on many wage-and-hour class action and PAGA representative cases, and my work on these cases has included preparing pleadings and motions, making court appearances, and drafting and finalizing settlement agreements.

THE SETTLEMENT REACHED IN THE ACTION

7. The Stipulation of Settlement of Class and PAGA Action Claims and Release of Claims (“Agreement,” or “Settlement Agreement”), attached to the Declaration of Jean-Claude Lapuyade, entered into between Plaintiff, individually and on behalf of members of the general public similarly situated and the State of California with respect to aggrieved employees pursuant to the Private Attorneys General Act (“PAGA”), and Defendant The West Oakland Health Council (“Defendant”).

8. Plaintiff provided notice by electronic upload to the Labor and Workforce Development Agency and written notice by certified mail to Defendant of her intent to pursue civil penalties under California Labor Code section 2698, et seq. for Defendant’s alleged violations of the California Labor Code (“PAGA Notices”) on May 8, 2024. A true and correct copy of Plaintiff’s PAGA Notice is attached to the Declaration of Jean-Claude Lapuyade.

THE LITIGATION AND WORK PERFORMED BY CLASS COUNSEL

9. Lawyers *for* Justice, PC has been actively engaged in this litigation from the inception of the Action, which was filed on January 7, 2020. Lawyers *for* Justice, PC has fully and actively participated in the litigation process throughout the pendency of the Action. Lawyers *for* Justice, PC joined forces with other plaintiff’s counsel, JCL Law Firm, APC and Zakay Law Group, APLC, to represent Plaintiff (collectively, the firms are referred to as “Class Counsel”), Class Members, Aggrieved Employees, and the State of California.

10. Before initiating the Action, Lawyers *for* Justice, PC conducted extensive investigation and research into the facts and circumstances underlying the pertinent factual and legal issues and applicable law. This required thorough discussions and interviews between attorneys at our firm and Plaintiff, and research into the various legal issues involved in the Action, namely, the current state of the law as it applied to off-the-clock theory, meal and rest periods, unreimbursed business expenses, PAGA representative actions, and wage-and-hour law and enforcement, as well

1 as the evidence produced and analyzed, and the possibility of appeals, among other things. Plaintiff's
2 core allegation is that Defendant, with respect to Plaintiff, Class Members, Aggrieved Employees,
3 and the State of California, *inter alia*, violated the California Labor Code by engaging in a uniform
4 policy and systematic scheme of wage abuse against Plaintiff and the Class Members, including
5 *inter alia*, failing to properly compensate overtime and minimum wages, failing to provide compliant
6 meal and rest periods and associated premium pay, failing to timely pay wages during employment,
7 failing to timely pay wages upon termination and associated waiting-time penalties, failing to
8 provide compliant wage statements, failing to maintain requisite payroll records, and failing to
9 reimburse necessary business expenses. Plaintiff further contends that Defendant's aforementioned
10 conduct constitutes unfair business practices under the California Business and Professions Code
11 and gives rise to civil penalties recoverable under PAGA.

12 11. Prior to reaching the Settlement, Class Counsel investigated the veracity, strength,
13 and scope of the claims in the Action, and was also preparing the Action for class certification and
14 trial. Class Counsel conducted extensive investigation and research into legal and factual issues,
15 formal and informal discovery, and reviewed and analyzed a large volume of information,
16 documents, and data. The information, documents, and data that were reviewed and analyzed by
17 Class Counsel included and were not limited to: a sampling of Class Members' time and payroll
18 data, Plaintiff's earning statements, personnel records, Defendant's operations and employment
19 practice, policies, and procedures, among other information and documents. Additionally, Class
20 Counsel propounded multiple sets of formal written discovery requests onto Defendants
21 (specifically, Form Interrogatories—General (Set One), Special Interrogatories (Sets One, Two, and
22 Three), and Requests for Production of Documents (Sets One and Two). Furthermore, Class Counsel
23 served notices of deposition of Defendant's Person Most Knowledgeable ("PMK") designees
24 regarding organizational structure and job duties, along with requests for production of documents.
25 Counsel for the Parties also met and conferred on numerous occasions, e.g., to discuss issues relating
26 to the pleadings, case management, discovery, and issues relating to the production of information,
27 documents, and data in the course of litigation and in connection with mediation and settlement
28 discussions. Class Counsel also invested time researching and investigating the applicable law,

1 which is constantly evolving as it relates to certification, representative PAGA claims, off-the-clock
2 theory, regular rate, meal and rest periods, unreimbursed business expenses, wage-and-hour law and
3 enforcement, Plaintiff's allegations, and Defendant's defenses thereto, as well as the facts
4 discovered.

5 12. After engaging in extensive investigations, formal and informal discovery, and
6 exchange of information, data, and documents, the parties in the Action participated in settlement
7 negotiations to try to resolve the matter. These efforts included participating in a full-day mediation
8 on May 9, 2024, conducted by Mediator Steven T. Rottman, Esq., a well-respected mediator
9 experienced in mediating complex labor and employment matters. In the course of mediation and
10 settlement negotiations, the parties discussed all aspects of the Action, including the risks and delays
11 of further litigation and proceeding with trial, as well as the law relating to off-the-clock theory,
12 regular rate, meal and rest periods, unreimbursed business expenses, class certification, PAGA
13 representative actions, and wage-and-hour law and enforcement, as well as the evidence produced
14 and analyzed, and the possibility of appeals, among other things. During all settlement discussions,
15 the parties conducted their negotiations at arm's length in an adversarial position.

16 **CLASS COUNSEL AWARD REQUESTED BY CLASS COUNSEL**

17 13. As set forth more fully in the accompanying Motion, Class Counsel seeks attorneys'
18 fees in the amount of \$265,000.00, which represents approximately one-third of the Gross Settlement
19 Amount, as provided by the Settlement Agreement. Pursuant to the contingency-fee agreements
20 entered into by and between Plaintiff and Lawyers for Justice, PC, Plaintiff has agreed to a
21 contingency fee of at least one-third of the recovery. The attorneys' fees sought are commensurate
22 with: (1) the risk that Class Counsel took in commencing the case; (2) the time, effort, and expense
23 that Class Counsel dedicated to the case; (3) the skill and determination that Class Counsel has
24 shown; (4) the results that Class Counsel has achieved throughout the litigation; (5) the value of the
25 settlement that Class Counsel has achieved in the case; and (6) the other cases that Class Counsel
26 has turned down in order to devote its time and efforts to this case.

27 14. While not necessarily required to be demonstrated because a percentage fee is proper
28 for this settlement, it should be noted that Class Counsel has performed many hours of work in

1 connection with litigating this matter such that the requested attorneys' fees award is also justified
2 under a lodestar analysis. Class Counsel will provide extensive evidence as to the time worked,
3 litigation efforts, and further argument at the time of filing Plaintiff's Motion for Final Approval of
4 Class Action and PAGA Settlement and application for the Class Counsel Award at the Final
5 Approval Hearing. Considering the work performed and risks incurred, the attorneys' fees provided
6 for by the Settlement are well within the range of reasonableness for preliminary approval.

7 **LITIGATION COSTS AND EXPENSES INCURRED BY CLASS COUNSEL**

8 15. The Settlement provides for reimbursement of litigation costs and expenses of up to
9 \$25,000.00. It should be noted that Class Counsel has borne all of the risks and costs of litigation to
10 date and will not receive any compensation until a recovery is obtained in this matter. These costs
11 and expenses were reasonable and necessary in the litigation of this matter and to obtain the
12 Settlement.

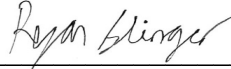
13 **SERVICE AWARD TO PLAINTIFF**

14 16. The Settlement Agreement provides for payment of up to \$10,000.00 to Plaintiff as
15 a Service Award to be paid out of the Gross Settlement Amount, subject to approval by the Court.
16 Plaintiff spent considerable time and effort to produce relevant documents and past employment
17 records and to provide the facts and evidence necessary to attempt to prove the allegations. Plaintiff
18 was available whenever Class Counsel needed her and actively tried to obtain information that would
19 facilitate the litigation of this matter. Accordingly, it is appropriate and just for Plaintiff to receive a
20 Service Award, in addition to her Individual Settlement Payment and Aggrieved Employee Payment,
21 for services performed in this matter on behalf of the Class Members, Aggrieved Employees, and
22 the State of California.

23 17. Class Counsel submits that the Settlement is fair, reasonable, and adequate, and it is
24 in the best interest of Plaintiff, the Class, Aggrieved Employees, and the State of California. Class
25 Counsel further submits that the Settlement is within an acceptable range of recovery for this type
26 of litigation given the strengths and weaknesses of the cases, the inherent costs and risks of further
27 litigation, and the costs and risks associated with class certification, representative adjudication, trial,
28 and/or appeals.

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

3 Executed on this 29th day of January 2025, at Glendale, California.

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6 Ryan Slinger
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