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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

GUSTAVO ADAME, an individual, on behalf of
himself, and on behalf of all persons similarly
situated,

Plaintiff,

v.

HUSTEAD'S COLLISION CENTER, INC., a
California Corporation; and DOES 1 through 50,
Inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No. 22CV018744

**MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND
AUTHORITIES IN SUPPORT OF MOTION
FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF CLASS
ACTION AND PAGA SETTLEMENT**

Date: February 6, 2025
Time: 10:00 a.m.

Judge: Hon. Michael Markman
Dept.: 23

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I. INTRODUCTION

Plaintiff GUSTAVO ADAME (hereinafter “Plaintiff”) seeks final approval of the Stipulation of Settlement of Class and PAGA Action Claims and Release of Claims (“Agreement”)¹, which if approved, would provide valuable monetary relief for 171 Settlement Class Members employed by Defendant Hustead’s Collision Center, Inc. (hereinafter “Defendant”) during the Class Period.

In an order dated August 20, 2024, this Court preliminarily approved the Agreement and preliminarily certified the Class. Declaration of Jean-Claude Lapuyade (“JCL Dec.”), ¶ 4. On September 24, 2024, the Court-approved Class Notice was mailed to each Class Member via U.S. First Class Mail. Declaration of Katherine Rovertoni of Apex Class Action, LLC (“Apex Dec.”), ¶ 7.

The Class greeted news of the Settlement with unanimous approval. There are **zero** objections and **zero** opt-outs to the Settlement. Apex Dec., ¶¶ 11-12. The **100% approval** by the Class evidences the clear fairness and reasonableness of the Settlement. JCL Dec., ¶ 10.

An objective evaluation of the proposed settlement Three Hundred Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$300,000.00) (“Gross Settlement Amount”) confirms that the relief negotiated on behalf of the Settlement Class Members is fair, reasonable, and valuable. The Settlement is a product of informed, adversarial, and non-collusive negotiations, between experienced counsel, and presided over by the Hon. Brian C. Walsh (Ret.). After deducting any Court-approved attorneys’ fees and costs, the Enhancement Payment, administration costs, and the PAGA Penalties, the Net Settlement Amount shall be distributed to Settlement Class Members based on the number of Workweeks they were employed by Defendant during the Class Period. JCL Dec., ¶ 10.

This Settlement provides substantial recovery for Defendant’s alleged wage and hour violations. Plaintiff estimates that the Settlement, if approved, would result in a Net Settlement Amount of approximately \$147,500.00. This will result in an average Individual Settlement Payment of **\$862.57** and a high payment of **\$4,408.09**. JCL Dec., ¶ 11; Apex Dec. at ¶ 15.

The relief offered by the Settlement is immediate and is particularly impressive when viewed against the difficulties encountered by plaintiffs pursuing similar wage and hour cases (*see infra*).

¹ The Agreement is attached as Ex “1” to the Declaration of Jean-Claude Lapuyade (“JCL Dec.”) at ¶ 3. All citations to the Agreement incorporate by this reference a citation to the JCL Dec., ¶ 3. Further, unless indicated otherwise, capitalized terms used herein have the same meaning as those defined by the Agreement.

1 Indeed, by settling now rather than proceeding to trial, the Class Members will not have to wait
2 (possibly years) for relief, nor will they have to bear the risks associated with prolonged and uncertain
3 litigation. JCL Dec., ¶ 12.

4 As discussed below, the proposed Settlement satisfies all criteria for final settlement approval
5 under California law and falls well within the range of reasonableness. Accordingly, the Class
6 Representative and Class Counsel respectfully request that this Court grant final approval of the
7 Agreement and enter the proposed Final Approval Order and Judgment. JCL Dec., ¶ 13.

8 **II. OVERVIEW OF THE LITIGATION**

9 Defendant is a California corporation that owns and operates automobile collision repair shops
10 in the state of California, including in Alameda County, where Plaintiff worked. Plaintiff worked for
11 Defendant as a non-exempt employee in California from 2014 through May of 2020. At all times during
12 his employment, Plaintiff earned an hourly wage, including overtime, and was entitled to legally
13 compliant meal and/or rest periods. Throughout his employment, Plaintiff was subject to Defendant's
14 written policies and procedures. JCL Dec., ¶ 14.

15 Generally, Plaintiff claims that Defendant failed to provide compliant meal and rest periods,
16 failed to pay overtime at the correct regular rate of pay, failed to furnish accurate itemized wage
17 statements, and failed to reimburse employees for mandatory business expenses. Defendant forcefully
18 denies liability for each of Plaintiff's claims. Further, Defendant asserts that it fully complied with all
19 applicable employment laws and raised several other significant defenses to Plaintiff's claims, including
20 but not limited to, compliant compensation policies and plans, complaint meal and rest practices, and
21 compliant wage statements. JCL Dec., ¶ 15.

22 On September 29, 2022, Plaintiff filed a Notice of Violations ("PAGA Notice") with the LWDA
23 and served the same on Defendant. Plaintiff's PAGA Notice set forth the facts and theories supporting
24 Defendant's alleged violations of various California Labor Code and applicable Industrial Welfare
25 Commissions ("IWC") Wage Orders and of his intent to pursue claims under the California Labor Code
26 Private Attorneys General Act, Cal. Lab. Code sections 2698, *et seq.* ("PAGA"). JCL Dec., ¶ 16.

27 Also on September 29, 2022, Plaintiff filed a class action complaint in the Alameda Superior
28 Court. The Action alleged twelve causes of action against Defendant for: (1) Retaliation in violation

1 of Cal. Lab. Code section 1102.5; (2) Wrongful termination in violation of public policy; (3) Violation
2 of Government Code section 12940 (Disability and Racial Discrimination); (4) Failure to provide
3 reasonable accommodation; (5) Unfair Competition in Violation of Bus. and Prof. Code sections 17200
4 *et seq*; (6) Failure to pay minimum wages in violation of California Labor Code sections 1194, 1197 &
5 1197.1; (7) Failure to pay overtime wages in violation of California Labor Code sections 510 *et seq*;
6 (8) Failure to provide required meal periods in violation of California Labor Code sections 226.7 and
7 512 and the applicable IWC wage order; (9) Failure to provide required rest periods in violation of
8 California Labor Code sections 226.7 and 512 and the applicable IWC wage order; (10) Failure to
9 reimburse employees for required business expenses in violation of California Labor Code section
10 2802; (11) Failure to provide wages when due in violation of Cal. Lab. Code sections 201, 202 and
11 203; and (12) Failure to provide accurate itemized statements in violation of Cal. Lab. Code section
12 226. On May 20, 2024, Plaintiff filed a First Amended Complaint that added a cause of action for
13 violations of the PAGA. JCL Dec., ¶ 17.

14 Plaintiff and Defendant agreed to mediate the Action with the Hon. Brian C. Walsh (Ret.), a
15 respected jurist and mediator. Class Counsel requested pertinent documents and data points to evaluate
16 Plaintiff's claims and measure Defendant's liability exposure to the Class. In response, Defendant
17 produced, among other things, time, and payroll records for 30% of the Class, aggregate workweek and
18 pay period data, and copies of applicable handbooks, policies, and procedures. In total, Defendant
19 produced over 2,000 pages of documents and more than 1 million unique cells of time and payroll data.
20 As discussed *infra*, Plaintiff's counsel retained the statisticians and economists at Creal & Creal, An
21 Accountancy Corporation, to analyze Defendant's time and payroll data. JCL Dec., ¶ 18.

22 On October 24, 2023, the Parties participated in a full day mediation with Judge Walsh. The
23 mediation concluded without settlement. However, the Parties continued settlement negotiations after
24 the mediation, with the assistance of the mediator. This ultimately resulted in settlement after the Parties
25 accepted a Mediator's proposal, which was memorialized in the form of a Memorandum of
26 Understanding ("MOU"). Subsequently, the Parties drafted and negotiated a long-form settlement
27 agreement, which is the subject of the instant motion. The Parties now seek approval of the entire
28 Agreement. JCL Dec., ¶ 19.

1 On August 20, 2024, this Court granted preliminary approval of the Settlement. JCL Dec., ¶ 4.
2 On September 24, 2024, the Settlement Administrator mailed Notice Packets to all 171 Class Members.
3 Apex Dec., ¶ 7. The mailing of the Notice Packets triggered a forty-five (45) day Response Deadline
4 for the Class to submit requests for exclusion or objections to the Settlement. The response from the
5 Class to the Settlement was outstanding – 100% of the Class Members are participating in the
6 Settlement. Apex Dec., ¶ 10.

7 **III. THE SETTLEMENT BEFORE THE COURT**

8 The Court preliminarily approved an initial Gross Settlement Amount of Three Hundred
9 Thousand Dollars (\$300,000.00) based on a total of an estimated 9,250 workweeks that the Class were
10 employed during the Class Period. The Gross Settlement Amount shall be used: (1) to satisfy Individual
11 Class Settlement Payments; (2) to satisfy the Enhancement Award; (3) to satisfy the Attorneys' Fees
12 Payment and Attorneys' Expenses Payment (collectively hereinafter "Attorneys' Fees and Expenses
13 Payment"); (4) to satisfy the payment of PAGA Penalties; and (5) to satisfy the Claims Administration
14 Expenses incurred in this action. JCL Dec., ¶ 20.

15 Defendant will fund the Settlement by transferring the Gross Settlement Amount into a Qualified
16 Settlement Fund by the Funding Date. Agreement, ¶ III(A)(3). The Settlement Administrator shall
17 disburse the Individual Settlement Payments to the Settlement Class Members no later than fifteen (15)
18 calendar days after the Funding Date. Agreement, ¶ III(M)(7). The Settlement Administrator will
19 calculate Individual Settlement Payments by adding up the total number of Workweeks for all Class
20 Members. The Settlement Administrator will then divide the Net Settlement Amount by the Workweek
21 Total, resulting in a Workweek Value for each Class Member. Each Workweek Value is then multiplied
22 by the number of Workweeks of all Settlement Class Members to calculate each estimated Individual
23 Settlement Payments. Agreement, ¶ III(M)(1). The estimated average Individual Class Settlement
24 Payment is approximately **\$862.57**. Apex Dec., ¶ 15.

25 In exchange for the valuable consideration, as of the funding of the Gross Settlement Amount,
26 the Settlement Class Member will release the Released Parties from the Released Class Claims that
27 accrued during the Class Period. Agreement, ¶ III(B).

28 Apex Class Action LLC was appointed as the Settlement Administrator for the Class. The Claims

Administration Expenses include those expenses of effectuating and administering the Settlement, i.e., the costs incurred by the Settlement Administrator, the costs of giving notice to the Class, the costs of administering and disbursing the Individual Settlement Payments, and the fees of the Settlement Administrator approved for reimbursement by the court. The Settlement Administrator expenses are \$7,500.00. Apex Dec., ¶ 18. These expenses shall be paid from the Gross Settlement Amount. Agreement, ¶ III(M)(12).

Subject to Court approval, Class Counsel shall seek an Attorneys' Fees and Expenses Payment in the amount of \$120,000.00 comprised of attorneys' fees equal to one-third of the Gross Settlement Amount (\$100,000.00) and up to \$20,000 for actually incurred litigation expenses. Agreement, ¶ III(M)(10). Plaintiff's counsel is to split the fees 50% to the JCL Law Firm, APC, and 50% to the Zakay Law Group, APLC. Agreement, ¶ I(F). The Agreement also provides for an Enhancement Award in the amount of \$5,000 for Plaintiff, in consideration of his time, risk, and efforts as the Class Representative on behalf of the Class. Agreement, ¶ III(M)(9).

As explained in further detail below, the Settlement is fair, adequate, and reasonable to the class and should be granted final approval. This is evidenced by the unanimous approval of the Settlement by the Class, the absence of any objections to the Settlement and the average Individual Settlement Payment of \$862.57. Apex Dec., ¶¶ 11-12, 15; JCL Dec., ¶ 21.

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

Settlements of disputed claims are favored by the courts. *Huens v. Tatum* (1997) 52 Cal.App.4th 259, 265. 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.* (2000) 85 Cal.App.4th 1135, 1151 ("voluntary conciliation and settlement are the preferred means of dispute resolution. This is especially true in complex class action litigation").

"[T]o prevent fraud, collusion or unfairness to the class, the settlement or dismissal of a class action requires court approval." *Dunk v. Ford Motor Co.* (1996) 48 Cal.App.4th 1794, 1801 citing *Malibu Outrigger Bd. Of Governors v. Superior Court* (1980) 103 Cal.App.3d 573, 578-579. The court must decide whether the proposed settlement falls within the range of reasonable settlements,

1 considering that settlements are compromises between the parties reflecting subjective, unquantifiable
2 judgments concerning the risks and possible outcomes of litigation. See also *Wershba v. Apple*
3 *Computer* (2001) 91 Cal.App.4th 224, 2246 (The proposed settlement is not to be judged against a
4 hypothetical or speculative measure of what might have been achieved had plaintiffs prevailed at trial.”).
5 In *Wershba*, appellants argued that the settlement was too low given the “clear” liability, however, the
6 Court rejected this argument and held that “the merits of the underlying class claims are not a basis for
7 upsetting the settlement of a class action.” *Wershba, supra*, at 246; see also *7-Eleven, supra*, at 1150.

8 In these cases, Courts have repeatedly emphasized that there is a strong initial presumption that
9 the compromise is fair and reasonable. *Wershba*, 91 Cal.App.4th at 245. Courts should not substitute
10 their judgment for that of the parties who negotiated the settlement. *Id.* At 246. The presumption of
11 fairness exists where: (1) investigation and discovery are sufficient to allow counsel and the court to act
12 intelligently; (2) the settlement is reached through arm’s-length bargaining; (3) counsel is experienced
13 in similar litigation; and (4) the percentage of objectors is small. *Dunk*, 48 Cal.App.4th at 1801, citing
14 Newberg & Conte, *Newberg on Class Actions*, (3d ed. 1992) §11.41, pp. 11-91. Here, all of these factors
15 support a presumption of fairness.

16 The essential evaluation is whether, given the risks of litigation and the range of probable results,
17 the settlement, taken as a whole, is fair, reasonable, and adequate to all concerned. Here, the facts and
18 circumstances compel the conclusion that the proposed settlement satisfies that standard.

19 **V. THE SETTLEMENT IS FAIR, REASONABLE, AND ADEQUATE**

20 The court must determine whether the settlement is fair, adequate, and reasonable. *Dunk v. Ford*
21 *Motor Co.* (1996) 48 Cal.App.4th 1794, 1801; see also *Officers for Justice v. Civil Service Com'n* (9th
22 Cir. 1982) 688 F. 2d 615, 625. The purpose of the requirement is "the protection of those class members,
23 including the named plaintiffs, whose rights may not have been given due regard by the negotiating
24 parties." *Dunk, supra*, at 1801.

25 The trial court has broad discretion to determine whether the settlement is fair. *Rebney v. Wells*
26 *Fargo Bank* (1990) 220 Cal.App.3d 1117, 1138. “The well-recognized factors that the trial court should
27 consider in evaluating the reasonableness of a class action settlement agreement include 'the strength of
28 plaintiffs' case, the risk, expense, complexity and likely duration of further litigation, the risk of

maintaining class action status through trial, the amount offered in settlement, the extent of discovery completed and the stage of the proceedings, the experience and views of counsel, the presence of a governmental participant, and the reaction of the class members to the proposed settlement.' [Citations.]" *Kullar v. Foot Locker Retail, Inc.* (2008) 168 Cal.App.4th 116, 128; see also *Munoz v. BCI Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of Los Angeles* (2010) 186 Cal.App.4th 399, 408.

The list of factors is not exhaustive and should be tailored to each case. *Dunk, supra*, at 1801. Due regard should be given to what is otherwise a private consensual agreement between the parties. *Id.* The inquiry "must be limited to the extent necessary to reach a reasoned judgment that the agreement is not the product of fraud or overreaching by, or collusion between, the negotiating parties, and that the settlement, taken as a whole, is fair, reasonable and adequate to all concerned." *Id.* "Ultimately, the [trial] court's determination is nothing more than 'an amalgam of delicate balancing, gross approximations and rough justice.' [Citation omitted.]" *Id.*

These factors are analyzed seriatim below and all support final approval of the class action settlement before this Court.

A. Class Counsel Conducted a Thorough Investigation.

As detailed in the motion for preliminary approval, Class Counsel thoroughly investigated the proposed Class Members' claims, applicable law, and potential defenses. Specifically, Class Counsel assessed the value of the class claims using data and documents provided by Defendant through formal and informal discovery. Class Counsel obtained time, payroll, and policy records, as well as data regarding the number of Class Members, workweeks, and average rate of pay to assess damages before mediation. Class Counsel retained Creal & Creal to analyze Defendant's time and payroll data to formulate damage models estimating Defendant's liability exposure. Class Counsel's investigation, research, experience, and damage models informed and guided the mediated negotiations that resulted in this settlement. Accordingly, Plaintiff's Counsel fully understood the strengths and weaknesses of the class claims before the parties reached a settlement. JCL Dec., ¶ 22.

B. The Parties Settled Following Mediation.

On October 24, 2023, the Parties conducted a full day mediation with the Hon. Brian C. Walsh (Ret.), an experienced jurist and mediator. Judge Walsh helped to manage the Parties' expectations

1 and provided a useful, neutral analysis of the issues and risks to both sides. The Parties made substantial
2 progress with Judge Walsh's assistance. Namely, the Parties exchanged information regarding their
3 respective claims and defenses, including their respective evaluations of the damages. The mediation
4 concluded without settlement. However, the Parties continued settlement negotiations after the
5 mediations, with the assistance of the mediator. This ultimately resulted in settlement after the Parties
6 accepted a Mediator's proposal, which was memorialized in the form of a Memorandum of
7 Understanding ("MOU") and then the Agreement, which is the subject of this instant motion. JCL Dec.,
8 ¶ 23.

9 **C. Class Counsel is Experienced in Similar Litigation.**

10 Class Counsel in this matter has extensive class action experience in multiple fields and has
11 represented tens-of-thousands of persons in class actions. Counsel has previously litigated similar wage
12 and hour class actions involving similar claims. Class Counsel has been approved as class counsel in
13 similar wage and hour class actions throughout the State of California. As such, courts throughout
14 California have deemed Class Counsel experienced and knowledgeable in this area of law. Class
15 Counsel has participated in every aspect of the settlement discussions and has concluded the settlement
16 is fair, adequate, and reasonable and in the best interests of the Class. JCL Dec., ¶¶ 24-30; Declaration
17 of Shani Zakay ("Zakay Dec."), ¶¶ 1-3.

18 **D. The Class Responded Positively to the Settlement.**

19 The reaction of the Class unequivocally supports approval of the Settlement. Significantly, after
20 dissemination of the notice to the Class, which provided each class member with the terms of the
21 Settlement, including the specific estimated Individual Class Settlement Payments. To date, **none** of
22 the 171 members of the Class opted out of the Settlement. Moreover, there are **no** objections. Stated
23 differently, **100%** of the Class chose to participate in the Settlement. Apex Dec., ¶¶ 11-13.

24 The unanimous approval by the Class strongly supports a finding that the Settlement is fair,
25 reasonable, and adequate. See *In re Austrian & German Bank Holocaust Litigation* (S.D.N.Y. 2000) 80
26 F.Supp.2d 164, 175 ("If only a small number of objections are received, that fact can be viewed as
27 indicative of the adequacy of the settlement."); *Stoetznner v. U.S. Steel Corp.* (3d. Cir. 1990) 897 F.2d
28 115, 118-119 (29 objections out of 281 member class "strongly favors settlement"); *Laskey v. Int'l*

1 *Union* (6th Cir. 1981) 638 F.2d 954 (The fact that 7 out of 109 class members objected to the proposed
2 settlement should be considered when determining fairness of settlement.). Consequently, Class
3 Counsel respectfully requests the Court to follow the unanimous approval of the Class and grant final
4 approval of the Settlement.

5 **E. The Gross Settlement Amount is Fair and Reasonable.**

6 The Gross Settlement Amount of Three Hundred Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents
7 (\$300,000.00) in this case is fair and well within the range of recognized reasonableness. The *Kullar*
8 court acknowledged that “as the court does when it approves a settlement as in good faith under Code
9 of Civil Procedure section 877.6, the court must at least satisfy itself that the class settlement is within
10 the ‘ballpark’ of reasonableness.” *Kullar, supra*, at 129; *See Tech-Bilt, Inc. v. Woodward-Clyde &*
11 *Associates*, 38 Cal.3d 488, 499-500 (1985).)

12 Here, the Settlement is clearly within the “ballpark” of reasonableness because the Settlement
13 provides a sizeable recovery to the Settlement Class Member and need not necessarily obtain 100 percent
14 of the damages sought to be fair, reasonable, and ultimately, meaningful. *Wershba*, 91 Cal.App.4th at
15 250. While the Gross Settlement Amount of Three Hundred Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents
16 (\$300,000.00) represents a discount on Defendant’s potential exposure if Plaintiff established liability
17 on all claims and was awarded the full amount of the estimated damages at trial, this compromise is
18 reasonable because (1) the formidable defenses raised by Defendant presented a risk that could award
19 significantly less in damages than Plaintiff’s estimate and (2) any theoretical post-trial recovery may
20 require many more years of litigation, resulting in added fees and costs without any guarantee of
21 recovery for the Class. JCL Dec., ¶ 31.

22 As detailed at the time of preliminary approval, the Gross Settlement Amount is fair and
23 reasonable considering the nature and magnitude of the claims being settled and the various potential
24 impediments to recovery. Class Counsel developed varied economic damage models measuring
25 Defendant’s liability exposure while accounting for the uncertainties of continued litigation. The various
26 models were informed by Class Counsel’s investigation, including the analysis of a significant sample
27 of time and payroll data. Detailed in greater depth during the preliminary approval process, Class
28 Counsel projected a range of Defendant’s liability exposure for the claims asserted on behalf of the

1 Class. The Gross Settlement Amount represents approximately 32% of Defendant’s liability exposure for
2 damages, and 15% of Defendant’s *class-wide* liability exposure. JCL Dec., ¶ 32.

3 In *Stovall-Gusman v. W.W. Granger, Inc.*, 2015 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 78671, at * 12, the District
4 Court for the Northern District of California granted final approval in a wage and hour misclassification
5 action and found that the Gross Settlement Amount representing 10% of the estimated trial award was
6 within the “range of reasonableness.” In *Dunleavy v. Nadler (In re Mego Fin. Corp. Sec. Litig.)* (9th Cir.
7 2000) 213 F.3d 454, 459, the Ninth Circuit approved a settlement representing “roughly one-sixth of the
8 potential recovery.” Given the amount of the settlement here as compared to potential value of the
9 claims, particularly the strength of Plaintiff’s action, the settlement is clearly fair and reasonable.²

10 The calculation methodology used to compensate the Settlement Class Members for the alleged
11 damages was negotiated at the time of the Settlement. More importantly, the methodology is fair,
12 objective, and impartial. The calculation methodology is based on the number of Workweeks each
13 Settlement Class Member was employed for Defendant during the Class Period. The number of
14 Workweeks for the Settlement Class Member is established through Defendant’s data and documented
15 compensation records. The Settlement Administrator is responsible for calculating the Individual
16 Settlement Payments by multiplying the Workweek Value for each Settlement Class Member by the Net
17 Settlement Amount. The Settlement Administrator will calculate the payment ratio by dividing the total
18 number of Workweeks for each Settlement Class Member by the total number of Workweeks for all
19 Settlement Class Member. This process establishes an objectively fair and reasonable procedure to
20 compensate the Class. Agreement, ¶ III(M)(1).

21 The settlement also provides significant relief to the Settlement Class Members. After deductions
22 for the Attorneys’ Fees and Expenses Payment, Claims Administration Expenses, the payment of PAGA
23 Penalties, and the Enhancement Payment, the Net Settlement Amount is currently estimated to be

24 ² See also *Viceral v. Mistras Grp., Inc.* (N.D. Cal. Oct. 11, 2016, No. 15-CV-02198) 2016 WL 5907869, at *3, 7 (approving
25 a California wage and hour settlement where the class received 11.6% of the estimated total liability, or approximately \$29
26 per work week); *Leverage v. Traeger Pellet Grills, LLC* (N.D. Cal. June 28, 2017, No. 16-CV-00784) 2017 WL 2797811, at
27 *7 (Approving a California wage and hour settlement where the class received 18% of the estimated total liability); see also
28 *In re Newbridge Networks Sec. Litig.* (D.D.C. Oct. 23, 1998) 1998 WL 765724, at *2 (“Courts have not identified a precise
numerical range within which a settlement must fall in order to be deemed reasonable; but an agreement that secures roughly
six to twelve percent of a potential trial recovery, while preventing further expenditures and delays and eliminating the risk
that no recovery at all will be won, seems to be within the targeted range of reasonableness.”).

1 \$147,500.00. Apex Dec., ¶ 14. The average settlement payment is approximately \$862.57, and the
2 highest is approximately \$4,408.09. Apex Dec., ¶ 15. Additionally, Defendant must separately fund its
3 share of any employer side payroll taxes. Agreement, ¶ III(A)(4).

4 Clearly the goal of this litigation to obtain redress for the class has been met by this Settlement.
5 Given the amount of the Settlement, the risks of litigation and the arm's length negotiations between
6 experienced counsel, the settlement is fair and reasonable, and is therefore entitled to final approval.
7 JCL Dec., ¶ 33.

8 **F. The Strength of Plaintiff's Case and Risks of Continued Litigation**

9 Although Class Counsel believes strongly in Plaintiff's claims, it would be misguided to ignore
10 the asserted defenses. If successful on any one of its defenses, Defendant could defend the action or,
11 at least, drastically undercut Plaintiff's claims. JCL Dec., ¶ 34. As the federal court in *Glass v. UBS*
12 *Fin. Servs.*, 2007 WL221862 held, where the parties faced uncertainties similar to those in this
13 litigation:

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

19 With respect to the most immediate challenge, i.e., class certification, the risks attendant to the
20 certification of similar wage and hour claims are demonstrated by *Magadia v. Wal-Mart Associates,*
21 *Inc.* (9th Cir. 2021) 999 F.3d 668. There, the Ninth Circuit, vacated reversed and remanded a \$110
22 million judgement against an employer for, *inter alia*, inaccurately paying overtime, and directed the
23 trial court to enter judgement in favor of the employer. *See also O'Conner v. Uber Technologies, Inc.*
24 (9th Cir. 2018) 904 F.3d 1087 (decertification of wage and hour misclassification action); *see also*
25 *Duran v. U.S. Bank National Association* (2014) 59 Cal.4th 1, 31 (reversing a trial verdict in favor
26 plaintiffs in a wage and hour class action)); *Tien v. Tenet Healthcare Corp.* (2012) 209 Cal.App.4th
27 1077, 1088 ("[T]he reason, if any, that employees might not take their breaks were predominantly
28 individualized questions of fact not susceptible to class treatment."); *Ali v. U.S.A. Cab Ltd.* (2009) 176

Cal.App.4th 1333, 1341 (affirming denial of certification because employees' declarations attesting to having taken meal and rest breaks demonstrated that individualized inquiries were required to show harm); *Campbell v. Best Buy Stores, L.P.*, (C.D. Cal. 2013) 2013 WL 5302217 at *11-13 (following *Brinker* and denying certification of proposed off-the-clock and rest and meal break classes due to lack of uniform policy); *Brown v. Fed Express Corp.* (C.D. Cal. 2008) 249 F.R.D. 580, 587-88 (denying certification of driver meal and rest period claims based on the predominance of individual issues). Collectively, the examples cited above illustrate the uncertain nature of class litigation. Consequently, the uncertainty of obtaining certification through a contested motion is a significant risk factor favoring settlement. JCL Dec., ¶ 35.

Although Plaintiff is confident about the strength of his claims, Plaintiff nevertheless recognizes that Defendant has factual and legal defenses that, if successful, would potentially defeat or impair the value of the lawsuit. Legally, the fast-changing landscape of wage and hour litigation can drastically affect the value of Plaintiff's claims and, in fact, already has. JCL Dec., ¶ 36.

In a similar wage and hour case, the federal district court in *Hopson v. Hanesbrands Inc.*, 2009 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 33900 at * 19-20 (N.D. Cal. 2009), granted approval of an overtime class action settlement and explained:

Plaintiffs may have a strong case, but the risks inherent in continued litigation are great. Defendants strongly deny liability for Plaintiffs' principal claim that full-time Service Associates were misclassified as exempt. In addition to the uncertainties raised by Defendants at the preliminary stage regarding Plaintiffs' chance of success in this case, Defendants notes that the question of an employer's duty to provide rest and meal periods is an open one, signaling even less certainty for Plaintiffs.....[T]he **Total 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.**

See also *Browning v. Yahoo!, Inc.*, 2007 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 86266, at *30 (N.D. Cal. 2007) ("In considering the strength of Plaintiffs' case, legal uncertainties at the time of settlement - particularly those which go to fundamental legal issues - favor approval.").

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

The potential complexity and possible duration of trial also weigh in favor of granting final approval. Plaintiffs acknowledge the difficulties

1 of proving damages, recognize the uncertainty of outcome, and believe
2 defendant would appeal in the event of adverse judgment. A post-judgment
3 appeal would require many years to resolve and delay payment to class
4 members. Plaintiffs believe the benefits of a guaranteed recovery today
5 outweigh an uncertain future result. Accordingly, plaintiffs argue, and the
6 Court agrees, the actual recovery confers substantial benefits on the class
7 that outweigh the potential recovery through full adjudication.

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

10 In sum, while other cases have approved class certification in wage and hour claims, class
11 certification in this action would have been hotly disputed and was by no means a foregone conclusion.
12 Where both sides face significant uncertainty, as here, the attendant risks favor settlement. *Hanlon v.*
13 *Chrysler Corp.* (9th Cir. 1998) 150 F.3d 1011, 1026.)

14 As demonstrated by the decisions in *Magadia, supra*, 999 F.3d 668, *O’Conner v. Uber*
15 *Technologies* (N.D. Cal. 2018) 82 F.Supp.3d 1133 and *Duran v. U.S. Bank National Assn.* (2014) 59
16 Cal.4th 1, the complexities and duration of further litigation cannot be overstated. There is little doubt
17 that if Defendant faced a large adverse judgement, Defendant would post a bond and appeal. A post-
18 judgment appeal by Defendant would have required many more years to resolve, assuming the
19 judgment was affirmed. If the judgment was not affirmed in total, then the case could have dragged on
20 for years after the appeal. The benefits of a guaranteed recovery today outweigh an uncertain result
21 three or more years in the future. JCL Dec., ¶ 37.

22 Class Representative and Class Counsel recognize the expense and length of a trial against
23 Defendant through possible appeals which could take another three years. In arriving at their informed
24 belief that the present settlement is fair and adequate, Class Counsel accounted for the uncertain outcome
25 and risk inherent in complex actions such as this one. Class Counsel is also mindful of and recognize
26 the inherent problems of proof under, and alleged defenses to, the claims asserted in the litigation.
27 Moreover, post-trial motions and appeals would have been inevitable. Costs would have increased, and
28 recovery would have been delayed if not denied, thereby reducing the benefits of an ultimate victory.
Class Representative and Class Counsel believe that the Settlement confers substantial monetary and
non-monetary benefits upon the Class. Based upon their evaluation, Class Representative and Class

1 Counsel have determined that the Settlement set forth in the Agreement is in the best interest of the
2 Class, is fair, reasonable, and adequate, and should be granted final approval. JCL Dec., ¶ 38.

3 **VI. THE PENALTIES UNDER THE PRIVATE ATTORNEY GENERAL ACT OF 2004**
4 **ARE REASONABLE**

5 Where settlements “negotiate a good faith amount” for PAGA penalties and “there is no
6 indication that this amount was the result of self-interest at the expense of class members,” such
7 amounts are generally considered reasonable. *Hopson v. Hanesbrands Inc.*, No. CV-08-0844 EDL,
8 2009 WL 928133, at *9 (N.D. Cal. Apr. 3, 2009). Courts routinely approve of amounts for PAGA
9 penalties in the range of zero to two percent of the settlement. *See id.* at *1, 9 (approving a PAGA
10 payment of 0.3%); *Jack v. Hartford Fire Ins. Co.*, No. 09cv1683 MMA (JMA), 2011 WL 4899942, at
11 *6 (S.D. Cal. Oct. 13, 2011) (approving a PAGA payment of 0.25%); *McKenzie v. Fed. Express Corp.*,
12 No. CV 10-02420 GAF (PLAx), 2012 WL 12882124, at *5 (C.D. Cal. Jan. 23, 2012) (acknowledging
13 that courts approve PAGA claim settlements in the range of zero to two percent of the total settlement).

14 Here, Plaintiff and Defendant negotiated a good faith payment of PAGA Penalties in the amount
15 of \$20,000 which is 6.67% of the Gross Settlement Amount. As illustrated above, this amount falls
16 well within the range of approved PAGA settlements. Seventy-Five percent (75%) of the PAGA
17 Payment (\$15,000) will be paid to the LWDA (“LWDA Payment”) with the remaining twenty-five
18 percent (25%) of the PAGA Payment (\$5,000) to be distributed to the Aggrieved Employees
19 (“Aggrieved Employees Payment”), which is within the range of PAGA penalties approved by courts
20 and should be approved. JCL Dec., ¶ 39.

21 Class Counsel gave the LWDA notice of this Settlement and proposed allocation by filing a
22 copy of the Settlement, the Motion for Preliminary Approval, and this motion seeking final approval
23 with the LWDA. JCL Dec., ¶ 45. By not registering an objection with either Class Counsel or the
24 Court, the LWDA has accepted and approved of the proposed PAGA Payment.

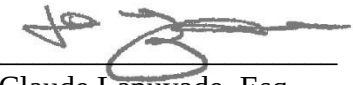
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1 **VII. CONCLUSION**

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

5
6 Dated: January 13, 2025

JCL LAW FIRM, APC

7 By: 
8 Jean-Claude Lapuyade, Esq.
9 Attorney for Plaintiff
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