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Attorneys for Plaintiff ELISA ALVAREZ

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

ELISA ALVAREZ, an individual, on behalf of
herself and on behalf of all persons similarly
situated,

Plaintiff,

v.

SLO ARCHES, INC., a California Corporation;
IVERNIA, INCORPORATED, a California
Corporation; GOLDEN SENECA, INC., a
California Corporation; and DOES 1-50,
Inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No. 21CV-0533

**DECLARATION OF ELISA ALVAREZ IN
SUPPORT OF MOTION FOR FINAL
APPROVAL OF CLASS ACTION AND
PAGA SETTLEMENT**

Date: December 7, 2023

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Judge: Hon. Rita C. Federman

Dept.: D-2

1 I, ELISA ALVAREZ, declare as follows:

2 1. I am over the age of eighteen, a California resident, Plaintiff and Proposed Class
3 Representative in the above-entitled matter. I submit this declaration in support of Plaintiff's Motion
4 for Final Approval of Class Action and PAGA Settlement and in support of Plaintiff's Motion for Class
5 Counsel Award and Class Representative Service Payment. I have personal knowledge of all the facts
6 stated herein. I could and would competently testify under oath to these facts in court if requested to do
7 so.

8 2. I retained Class Counsel in August of 2021 and filed the lawsuit in September of 2021. I
9 filed the case on behalf of myself and a class of all persons who are or previously were employed by
10 Defendants SLO ARCHES, INC., IVERNIA, INCORPORATED, and GOLDEN SENECA, INC.
11 ("Defendants") in California and classified as non-exempt employees from the period between
12 September 16, 2017 to May 28, 2021.

13 3. I worked for Defendants as a non-exempt employee, paid on an hourly basis, and was
14 entitled to legally mandated meal and rest periods, minimum wages, and overtime compensation, in San
15 Luis Obispo County, from March of 2017 to March of 2019.

16 4. I filed the case because I believed my rights as an employee were violated by Defendants
17 and also the rights of other employees that worked for Defendants. Among other claims, I believe
18 Defendants failed to pay for all time worked, miscalculated the regular rate of pay, failed to provide
19 compliant meal and rest periods, failed to pay for all time worked, failed to pay all wages upon
20 separation, and failed to reimburse for required business expenses.

21 5. Before I initiated the case as a plaintiff and Class Representative, I spoke at length with
22 my attorneys. We discussed my work experience and how company policies were applied to me and
23 other employees. I provided the attorneys with documents they requested. We reviewed the documents
24 together and asked and answered many questions regarding my experience working for Defendants, the
25 litigation process, and about class actions generally.

26 6. During these conversations, I learned about my responsibilities as a plaintiff in the lawsuit
27 and as proposed a Class Representative. I understood that pursuing this action as a class action rather
28 than merely seeking my individual claims substantially increased the risk to me. Those risks included

1 the possibility of being held liable for Defendants' attorneys' fees and costs in a complex class action if
2 I lost the case. I also understood that as a Class Representative, I would be under increased scrutiny by
3 the attorneys and the Court because I needed to prove that I was an adequate class representative.
4 Further, I understood that I would lose some autonomy over my individual claims that I could not make
5 decisions for my sole benefit and that I needed to make every litigation decision with the best interests
6 of the Settlement Class in mind.

7 7. I also understood that pursuing this litigation created a very public record of my grievances
8 with Defendants which produced the risk that a future employer could hold it against me that I sued a
9 former employer.

10 8. I also knew that I was making a sacrifice in that I could have pursued my claims only on
11 an individual basis, likely obtaining a recovery greater than the portion of the class settlement I stand to
12 receive from this settlement. My attorneys explained to me that the net settlement value of my individual
13 claims may be greater than my ultimate recovery from the net class settlement amount.

14 9. Notwithstanding these risks and sacrifices, I decided to go through with the case because
15 I believed violations occurred and most employees would not know what their rights are and even if
16 they did, they would be apprehensive to file a lawsuit against their employer for fear of retaliation.

17 10. During the lawsuit I communicated on a regular basis with my attorneys. I reviewed status
18 updates from my attorneys and court filings on a regular basis, and spoke to my attorneys on the phone,
19 because I wanted to keep up with developments in the case which I understood was one of my duties as
20 a class representative.

21 11. **Review and Approval of Settlement:** A mediation was held on October 17, 2022. Even
22 though I could not attend, I was available by telephone to speak with my attorneys and did speak with
23 them regarding the mediation before it took place, as well as during the mediation itself. I also spoke
24 with my attorneys after the mediation. I was very satisfied with the terms of the settlement that was
25 agreed to by the parties. I reviewed and signed the Memorandum of Understanding on October 20,
26 2022, and when the settlement papers were ready, I again spoke with my attorneys and reviewed the
27 settlement agreement which I signed on March 6, 2023.

28 12. **Participation:** Since I retained Class Counsel approximately twenty-six months ago, I

1 have been actively involved with this class action lawsuit performing the duties described above. While
2 I did not keep formal time records, I was in regular contact with my attorneys, attended hearings,
3 reviewed important court filings, and spent considerable time on the issues presented during the
4 litigation and in the settlement process. I estimate that I spent approximately 20-25 hours working on
5 this case.

6 13. Also, my attorneys explained to me that the settlement process involved a two-step review
7 by the Court to determine whether the settlement was fair before ordering that the settlement be funded
8 and paid. I knew this process also involved notifying all class members of the settlement terms and of
9 their rights to make a claim for their settlement share, to opt out of the settlement or to object to the
10 settlement.

11 14. Ultimately, I believe I did the right thing in pursuing this case on behalf of the class who
12 now stand to receive substantial monetary payments as a result of this case and settlement. I also believe
13 that the requested Class Representative Service Award in the amount of \$10,000 from the settlement is
14 fair compensation for the (1) the general release I executed; (2) the work I performed, (3) the sacrifices
15 made not pursuing this case individually, and (4) the risks I undertook.

16 15. In light of all the time and effort I have spent on this case, the sacrifice I have made, the
17 risks I undertook by suing a former employer, the exposure to being responsible for paying Defendants'
18 costs in the event we did not win the case, and in light of the size of the settlement, I believe the request
19 for \$10,000 as a service award is fair and reasonable.

20 16. Further, I support my attorneys' application for a Class Counsel Award in the amount of
21 \$270,000.00, comprised of \$250,000.00 for attorneys' fees (one-third of the Gross Settlement Amount)
22 and up to \$20,000 for reimbursement of actually incurred litigation expenses.

23 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is
24 true and correct. Executed on Nov 7, 2023, in Pismo Beach, California.

25
26 By: 
Elisa Alvarez (Nov 7, 2023 22:03 PST)

27 ELISA ALVAREZ
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