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Electronically FILED by
Superior Court of California,
County of Los Angeles
8/14/2024 5:24 PM
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Executive Officer/Clerk of Court,
By E. Galicia, Deputy Clerk

Attorneys for Plaintiff EVANGELINA ZUNIGA,
on behalf of herself and current and former aggrieved employees

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES- CENTRAL DISTRICT**

EVANGELINA ZUNIGA, on behalf of herself
and current and former aggrieved employees

Plaintiff,

vs.

NEXT LEVEL STAFFING; SIMPLEHUMAN,
LLC; and DOES 1 to 100, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.: **24STCV20605**

PAGA ACTION

**PLAINTIFF EVANGELINA
ZUNIGA’S COMPLAINT FOR:**

- CIVIL PENALTIES PURSUANT
TO THE PRIVATE ATTORNEYS
GENERAL ACT OF 2004
("PAGA"), LABOR CODE
SECTIONS 2698, ET SEQ.**

COMES NOW Plaintiff EVANGELINA ZUNIGA ("Plaintiff"), who alleges and complains
against Defendants NEXT LEVEL STAFFING; SIMPLEHUMAN, LLC; and DOES 1 to 100,
inclusive (collectively "Defendants") as follows:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This is a Private Attorneys General Act of 2004, Labor Code §§ 2698, *et seq.*
("PAGA") representative action brought by Plaintiff on behalf of the State of California, herself and
other current and former aggrieved employees of Defendants who worked as hourly non-exempt
employees in California during the relevant time period seeking civil penalties associated with
Defendants’ violation of the Labor Code based on Defendants’ failure to pay wages for all hours

1 worked at minimum wage and all overtime hours worked at the overtime rate of pay; failure to
2 authorize or permit all legally required and/or compliant meal periods or pay meal period premium
3 wages; failure to authorize or permit all legally required and/or compliant rest periods or pay rest
4 period premium wages; statutory penalties for failure to timely pay earned wages during
5 employment; statutory penalties for failure to provide accurate wage statements; statutory waiting
6 time penalties in the form of continuation wages for failure to timely pay employees all wages due
7 upon separation of employment. Plaintiff seeks on a representative basis, following notice to the
8 Labor and Workforce Development Agency, civil penalties, reasonable attorneys' fees pursuant to
9 Labor Code section 2699(g)(1) and costs brought on behalf of Plaintiff, the State of California, and
10 others aggrieved.

11 **II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

12 2. This Court has jurisdiction over the claims of Plaintiff and all other current and
13 former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees because Plaintiff's lawsuit seeks
14 civil penalties on behalf of herself, all other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly
15 non-exempt employees, and the State of California in excess of twenty-five thousand dollars
16 (\$25,000); Defendants employed Plaintiff and all other current and former aggrieved California-
17 based hourly non-exempt employees; and the injuries to Plaintiff and all other current and former
18 aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees occurred in locations throughout
19 California, including but not limited to Los Angeles County, at 19850 Magellan Drive, Torrance,
20 CA 90502.

21 **III. PARTIES**

22 1. Plaintiff brings this action as a representative of the Labor and Workforce
23 Development Agency on behalf of herself and other current and former employees subject to
24 violations of the Labor Code. The named Plaintiff and the persons on whose behalf this action is
25 filed include current, former and/or future employees of Defendants who work, worked, or will work
26 for Defendants as direct employees as well as temporary employees employed through temp
27 agencies as hourly non-exempt employees in California. At all times mentioned herein, the currently
28 named Plaintiff is and was domiciled and a resident and citizen of California and was employed by

1 Defendants in an hourly position at Defendants' location in Los Angeles County from in or around
2 May 2022 until on or about February 26, 2024.

3 2. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that Defendant NEXT LEVEL
4 STAFFING is authorized to do business within the State of California and is doing business in the
5 State of California and/or that Defendants DOES 1-25 are, and at all times relevant hereto were
6 persons acting on behalf of Defendant NEXT LEVEL STAFFING in the establishment of, or
7 ratification of, the aforementioned illegal wage and hour practices or policies. Defendant NEXT
8 LEVEL STAFFING operates in Los Angeles County and employed Plaintiff and aggrieved
9 employees in Los Angeles County, including but not limited to, at 19850 Magellan Drive, Torrance,
10 CA 90502.

11 3. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that Defendant
12 SIMPLEHUMAN, LLC is authorized to do business within the State of California and is doing
13 business in the State of California and/or that Defendants DOES 26-50 are, and at all times relevant
14 hereto were persons acting on behalf of Defendant SIMPLEHUMAN, LLC in the establishment of,
15 or ratification of, the aforementioned illegal wage and hour practices or policies. Defendant
16 SIMPLEHUMAN, LLC operates in Los Angeles County and employed Plaintiff and aggrieved
17 employees in Los Angeles County, including but not limited to, at 19850 Magellan Drive, Torrance,
18 CA 90502.

19 4. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that Defendants DOES 1
20 through 50 are corporations, or are other business entities or organizations of a nature unknown to
21 Plaintiff that employed Plaintiff and aggrieved California non-exempt employees, permitted
22 Plaintiff and aggrieved employees to work, and exercised control over the wages, hours and working
23 conditions of employment of Plaintiff and aggrieved employees.

24 5. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that Defendants DOES 51
25 through 100 are individuals unknown to Plaintiff. Each of the individual defendants is sued
26 individually and in his or her capacity as an agent, shareholder, owner, representative, manager,
27 supervisor, independent contractor and/or employee of each defendant who violated or caused to be
28 violated the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Labor Code and/or any provision of the

1 Industrial Welfare Commission's wage orders regulating hours and days of work.

2 6. Plaintiff is unaware of the true names of Defendants DOES 1 through 100. Plaintiff
3 sues said defendants by said fictitious names, and will amend this complaint when the true names
4 and capacities are ascertained or when such facts pertaining to liability are ascertained, or as
5 permitted by law or by the Court. Plaintiff is informed and believes that each of the fictitiously
6 named defendants is in some manner responsible for the events and allegations set forth in this
7 complaint.

8 7. Plaintiff makes the allegations in this complaint without any admission that, as to
9 any particular allegation, Plaintiff bears the burden of pleading, proving, or persuading and Plaintiff
10 reserves all of Plaintiff's right to plead in the alternative.

11 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

12 **CIVIL PENALTIES PURSUANT TO THE PRIVATE ATTORNEYS GENERAL ACT OF**
13 **2004, LABOR CODE SECTIONS 2698, ET SEQ.**

14 **(Against all Defendants by Plaintiff on behalf of Themselves, the State of California, and**
15 **Other Current and Former Aggrieved Employees)**

16 8. Plaintiff incorporates all paragraphs above as though fully set forth herein.

17 9. During Plaintiff's employment and continuing through the present, Plaintiff alleges
18 Defendants violated Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 223, 226, 226.7, 510, 512, 1194, 1197,
19 and the applicable Wage Orders.

20 10. Specifically, Defendants have committed the following violations of California
21 Labor Code:

22 11. **Failure to pay wages for all hours worked at the legal minimum wage:**
23 Defendants employed many of their employees, including Plaintiff, as hourly non-exempt
24 employees. In California, an employer is required to pay hourly employees for all "hours worked,"
25 which includes all time that an employee is under control of the employer and all time the employee
26 is suffered and permitted to work. This includes the time an employee spends, either directly or
27 indirectly, performing services which inure to the benefit of the employer.

28 12. Labor Code sections 1194 and 1197 require an employer to compensate employees

1 for all “hours worked” at least at a minimum wage rate of pay as established by the IWC and the
2 Wage Orders.

3 13. In this case, Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly
4 non-exempt employees worked more minutes per shift than Defendants credited them with having
5 worked. Specifically, Defendants failed to pay Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved
6 California-based hourly non-exempt employees all wages at the applicable minimum wage for all
7 hours worked due to Defendants’ policies, practices, and/or procedures including, but not limited
8 to:

9 (a) Requiring Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly
10 non-exempt employees to remain on-duty during off-the-clock meal breaks without being paid for
11 that time.

12 14. Therefore, Defendants suffered, permitted, and required Plaintiff and other current
13 and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees to be subject to Defendants’
14 control without paying wages for that time. This resulted in Plaintiff and other current and former
15 aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees working time for which they were not
16 compensated any wages, in violation of Labor Code sections 1194 and 1197 and the applicable
17 Wage Order.

18 15. **Failure to pay wages for overtime hours worked at the overtime rate of pay**
19 **and/or failure to pay overtime wages at the proper rate of pay:** Defendants employed many of
20 their employees, including Plaintiff, as hourly non-exempt employees. In California, an employer
21 is required to pay hourly employees for all “hours worked,” which includes all time that an employee
22 is under control of the employer and all time the employee is suffered and permitted to work. This
23 includes the time an employee spends, either directly or indirectly, performing services that inure to
24 the benefit of the employer.’

25 16. Labor Code sections 510 and 1194 require an employer to compensate employees a
26 higher rate of pay for hours worked in excess of eight (8) hours in a workday, in excess of forty (40)
27 hours in a workweek, and on any seventh consecutive day of work in a workweek:

28 Any work in excess of eight (8) hours in one workday, any work in excess of forty (40) hours
in any one (1) workweek, and the first eight (8) hours worked on the seventh day of work in

any one (1) workweek, shall be compensated at the rate of no less than one-and-one-half (1.5) times the regular rate of pay for an employee. Any work in excess of twelve (12) hours in one (1) day shall be compensated at the rate of no less than twice the regular rate of pay for an employee. In addition, any work in excess of eight (8) hours on any seventh day of a workweek shall be compensated at the rate of no less than twice the regular rate of pay of an employee.

Labor Code section 510.

17. In this case, Defendants failed to pay Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees overtime wages for all overtime hours worked due to Defendants' policies, practices, and/or procedures including, but not limited to:

(a) Requiring Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees to remain on-duty during off-the-clock meal breaks without being paid for that time.

18. The foregoing policies, practices, and/or procedures resulted in time during each workday that Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees were under the control of Defendants but were not compensated. To the extent that the foregoing uncompensated time occurred when Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees worked more than eight (8) hours in a workday, more than forty (40) hours in a workweek, and/or seven (7) days in a workweek, Defendants failed to pay them at their overtime rate of pay for overtime hours worked, in violation of Labor Code sections 510, 1194 and 1198, and the applicable Wage Order.

19. **Failure to pay wages to hourly non-exempt employees for workdays that Defendants failed to provide legally required and compliant meal periods and/or failure to pay period premium wages:** Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees regularly worked shifts of more than five (5) hours in length and shifts of more than ten (10) hours in length.

20. California law requires an employer to authorize or permit an employee an uninterrupted meal period of no less than thirty (30) minutes in which the employee is relieved of all duties and the employer relinquishes control over the employee's activities prior to the employee's sixth hour of work. Labor Code sections 226.7, 512, and 1198; Wage Order 4 at §11; *Brinker Rest. Corp. v. Super Ct. (Hohnbaum)* (2012) 53 Cal.4th 1004. An employer may not employ

1 an employee for a work period of more than ten (10) hours per day without providing the employee
2 with a second such meal period of not less than thirty (30) minutes prior to the start of the eleventh
3 hour of work. *Id.* If the employee is not relieved of all duty during a meal period, the meal period
4 shall be considered an “on duty” meal period and counted as time worked. A paid “on duty” meal
5 period is only permitted when: (1) the nature of the work prevents an employee from being relieved
6 of all duty; and (2) the parties have a written agreement agreeing to on-duty meal periods.

7 21. If an employer fails to provide an employee a meal period in accordance with the
8 law, the employer must pay the employee one (1) hour of pay at the employee’s regular rate of pay
9 for each workday that a legally required and compliant meal period was not provided. Labor Code
10 sections 226.7 and 1198; Wage Order 4 at §11.

11 22. In this case, Defendants failed to authorize or permit legally required and compliant
12 meal periods to Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-
13 exempt employees due to Defendants’ policies, practices, and/or procedures, including but not
14 limited to:

15 (a) Requiring Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly
16 non-exempt employees to remain on-duty during off-the-clock meal breaks; and

17 (b) Failing to provide Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based
18 hourly non-exempt employees a second uninterrupted duty-free meal period of no less than thirty
19 (30) minutes for each workday that Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-
20 based hourly non-exempt employees work shifts over ten (10) hours.

21 23. Additionally, Plaintiff alleges that Defendants maintained a policy, practice, and/or
22 procedure of failing to compensate Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based
23 hourly non-exempt employees one (1) hour of pay at their regular rate of pay for each workday that
24 Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees did
25 not receive legally required and compliant meal periods, in violation of Labor Code section 226.7.

26 24. Defendants’ foregoing policies, practices, and/or procedures resulted in Plaintiff and
27 other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees not receiving
28 wages to compensate them for workdays during which Defendants did not provide them with meal

1 periods in compliance with California law.

2 25. **Failure to pay wages to hourly non-exempt employees for workdays that**
3 **Defendants failed to provide legally required and compliant rest periods and/or failure to pay**
4 **rest period premium:** Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly
5 non-exempt employees regularly worked shifts of more than three-and-a-half (3.5) hours.

6 26. California law requires every employer to authorize and permit an employee a rest
7 period of ten (10) net minutes for every four (4) hours worked or major fraction thereof. Labor Code
8 section 226.7; Wage Order 4 at §12. Under California law, “[e]mployees are entitled to 10 minutes’
9 rest for shifts from three and one-half to six hours in length, 20 minutes for shifts of more than six
10 hours up to 10 hours, 30 minutes for shifts of more than 10 hours up to 14 hours, and so on.” *Brinker*
11 *Restaurant Corp. v. Sup. Ct. (Hohnbaum)* (2012) 53 Cal.4th 1004, 1029; Labor Code section 226.7;
12 Wage Order 4 at §12. Rest periods, insofar as practicable, shall be in the middle of each work period.
13 Wage Order 4 at §12. Additionally, the rest period requirement “obligates employers to permit –
14 and authorizes employees to take – off-duty rest periods.” *Augustus v. ABM Security Services, Inc.*,
15 (2016) 5 Cal.5th 257, 269. That is, during rest periods employers must relieve employees of all
16 duties and relinquish control over how employees spend their time. *Id.*

17 27. If the employer fails to authorize or permit a required rest period, the employer must
18 pay the employee one (1) hour of pay at the employee’s regular rate of pay for each workday the
19 employer did not authorize or permit a legally required rest period. Labor Code section 226.7; Wage
20 Order 4 at § 12.

21 28. In this case, Defendants failed to authorize or permit all legally required and
22 compliant rest periods to Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly
23 non-exempt employees due to Defendants’ policies, practices, and/or procedures including, but not
24 limited to:

25 (a) Requiring Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly
26 non-exempt employees to remain on-duty during rest breaks; and

27 (b) Failing to provide Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based
28 hourly non-exempt employees a third uninterrupted duty-free rest period of no less than ten (10) net

1 minutes on each workday that Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based
2 hourly non-exempt employees work shifts over ten (10) hours.

3 29. Additionally, Plaintiff alleges that Defendants maintained a policy, practice, and/or
4 procedure of failing to compensate Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based
5 hourly non-exempt employees with one (1) hour of pay at their regular rate of pay for each workday
6 they did not receive legally required and compliant rest periods, in violation of Labor Code section
7 226.7.

8 30. Defendants' foregoing policies, practices, and/or procedures resulted in Plaintiff and
9 other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees not receiving
10 wages to compensate them for workdays in which Defendants did not provide them with rest periods
11 in compliance with California law.

12 31. **Failure to timely pay earned wages during employment:** In California, wages
13 must be paid at least twice during each calendar month on days designated in advance by the
14 employer as regular paydays, subject to some exceptions. Labor Code section 204(a). Wages earned
15 between the 1st and 15th days, inclusive, of any calendar month must be paid between the 16th and
16 the 26th day of that month and wages earned between the 16th and the last day, inclusive, of any
17 calendar month must be paid between the 1st and 10th day of the following month. *Id.* Other payroll
18 periods such as those that are weekly, biweekly, or semimonthly, must be paid within seven (7)
19 calendar days following the close of the payroll period in which wages were earned. Labor Code
20 section 204(d).

21 32. As a derivative of Plaintiff's claims above, Plaintiff alleges that Defendants failed to
22 timely pay Plaintiff's and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt
23 employees' earned wages (including minimum wages, overtime wages, meal period premium wages
24 and/or rest period premium wages), in violation of Labor Code section 204. Defendants'
25 aforementioned policies, practices, and/or procedures resulted in their failure to pay Plaintiff's and
26 other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees' their earned
27 wages within the applicable time frames outlined in Labor Code section 204.

28 33. **Secret payment of lower wages than designated by statute:** Labor Code section

223 provides that, where any statute or contract requires an employer to maintain the designated wage scale, it shall be unlawful to secretly pay a lower wage while purporting to pay the wage designated by statute or contract. By engaging in the unlawful conduct alleged herein, including by failing to: pay overtime wages at the applicable legal overtime rate, meal break premiums and lawful sick pay at the employees' regular rate of pay, as established by Labor Code sections 226.7, 246, 510, 1194 and sections 11 and 12 of the applicable IWC Wage Orders, as incorporated by Labor Code section 1198, the Defendant secretly paid a lower wage than designated by statute while purporting to pay the wages designated by statute, in violation of Labor Code section 223.

34. **Failure to provide complete and accurate wage statements:** Labor Code section 226, subdivision (a). Labor Code section 226(a) provides, *inter alia*, that, upon paying an employee his or her wages, the employer must "furnish each of his or her employees ... an itemized statement in writing showing (1) gross wages earned, (2) total hours worked by the employee, except for any employee whose compensation is solely based on a salary and who is exempt from payment of overtime under subdivision (a) of Section 515 or any applicable order of the Industrial Welfare Commission, (3) the number of piece-rate units earned and any applicable piece rate if the employee is paid on a piece-rate basis, (4) all deductions, provided, that all deductions made on written orders of the employee may be aggregated and shown as one item, (5) net wages earned, (6) the inclusive dates of the pay period for which the employee is paid, (7) the name of the employee and his or her social security number, (8) the name and address of the legal entity that is the employer, and (9) all applicable hourly rates in effect during the pay period and the corresponding number of hours worked at each hourly rate by the employee."

35. As a derivative of Plaintiff's allegations above, Defendants' failure to pay Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees all wages earned (including minimum wages, overtime wages, meal period premium wages, and/or rest period premium wages) rendered Plaintiff's and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees' wage statements inaccurate, in violation of Labor Code section 226(a)(1, 2, 5 & 9).

36. **Failure to pay employees all wages due at time of termination/resignation:** An

1 employer is required to pay all unpaid wages timely after an employee's employment ends. The
2 wages are due immediately upon termination (Labor Code section 201) or within seventy-two (72)
3 hours of resignation (Labor Code section 202).

4 37. As a derivative of Plaintiff's allegations above, because Defendants failed to pay
5 Plaintiff and other current and former aggrieved California-based hourly non-exempt employees all
6 their earned wages (including minimum wages, overtime wages, meal period premium wages,
7 and/or rest period premium wages), Defendants failed to pay those employees timely after each
8 employee's termination and/or resignation, in violation of Labor Code sections 201, 202, and 203.

9 38. Plaintiff has complied with the procedures for bringing suit specified in Labor Code
10 section 2699.3. On April 26, 2024, Plaintiff filed a PAGA Claim Notice with the LWDA and
11 provided notice to Defendants by certified mail which provided notice of the specific provisions of
12 the Labor Code alleged to have been violated, including the facts and theories to support the
13 violations alleged.

14 39. Pursuant to Labor Code section 2699.3, the LWDA must give written notice by
15 certified mail to the parties that it intends to investigate the alleged violations of the Labor Code
16 within 60 days of the date of the complainant's written notice. The LWDA failed to provide the
17 parties notice within 60 days of the date of Plaintiff's PAGA Claim Notice that the LWDA intends
18 to investigate Plaintiff's claims.

19 40. Pursuant to Labor Code sections 2699(a) and (f), Plaintiff is entitled to recover civil
20 penalties for Defendants' violations of Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 204, 223, 226(a), 226.7,
21 510, 512, and 1194, During Plaintiff's employment and continuing through the present, preceding
22 Plaintiff sending the initial PAGA Claim Notice to the LWDA to the present, in the following
23 amounts:

24 a. For violations of Labor Code sections 201, 202, 203, 226(a), and 226.7; one
25 hundred dollars (\$100) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for the initial violation and two
26 hundred dollars (\$200) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for each subsequent violation
27 [penalty amounts established by Labor Code section 2699(f)(2)].

28 b. For violations of Labor Code section 226(a), alternatively, two hundred fifty

1 dollars (\$250) for each employee for each pay period for the initial violation, and for each
2 subsequent violation, one thousand dollars (\$1000) for each underpaid employee for each pay period
3 [penalty amounts established by Labor Code section 226.3].

4 c. For violations of Labor Code section 510 and 512, fifty dollars (\$50) for each
5 employee for each pay period for the initial violation, and for each subsequent violation, one
6 hundred dollars (\$100) for each underpaid employee for each pay period [penalty amounts
7 established by Labor Code section 558].

8 d. For violations of Labor Code section 204, one hundred dollars (\$100) for
9 each failure to pay each employee in any initial violation, and for each subsequent violation, or any
10 willful or intentional violation, two hundred dollars (\$200) for each failure to pay each employee,
11 plus 25 percent of the amount unlawfully withheld [penalty amounts established by Labor Code
12 section 210].

13 e. For violations of Labor Code section 223, one hundred dollars (\$100) for
14 each failure to pay each employee in any initial violation, and for each subsequent violation, or any
15 willful or intentional violation, two hundred dollars (\$200) for each failure to pay each employee,
16 plus 25 percent of the amount unlawfully withheld [penalty amounts established by Labor Code
17 section 225.5].

18 41. Pursuant to Labor Code section 2699(g), Plaintiff is entitled to an award of
19 reasonable attorneys' fees and costs in connection with his claims for civil penalties.

20 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

21 **WHEREFORE, PLAINTIFF, ON BEHALF OF HIMSELF AND ON OTHER AGGRIEVED**
22 **EMPLOYEES, PRAYS AS FOLLOWS:**

23 **ON THE FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION:**

24 1. That Defendants be found to have violated the provisions of the Labor Code and the
25 IWC Wages Orders as to the Plaintiff and aggrieved employees;

26 2. For any and all legally applicable penalties during the relevant statute of limitations
27 subject to any permissible tolling, including but not limited to those recoverable under the California
28 Labor Code, including but not limited to sections 210, 225.5, 226.3, 558, 2699(f);

1 3. For attorneys' fees and costs of suit, including but not limited to those recoverable
2 under California Labor Code section 2699(g); and

3 4. For such and other further relief, in law and/or equity, as the Court deems just or
4 appropriate.

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6 Dated: August 14, 2024

Respectfully submitted,
LAVI & EBRAHIMIAN, LLP

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8 By:



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