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ENDORSED
FILED
ALAMEDA COUNTY
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By **Marcus Plong**

7 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
8 FOR THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA
9 UNLIMITED CIVIL JURISDICTION

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12 ANTHONY E. HELD, PH.D, P.E.

13 Plaintiff,

14 v.

15 BENTEX GROUP, INC.; FOUR SEASONS
16 GENERAL MERCHANDISE, INC.; and
DOES 1 through 150, inclusive,

17 Defendants.

Case No. RG 08370699

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES
AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

(Cal. Health & Safety Code §25249.6 et seq.)

BY FAX

1 NATURE OF THE ACTION

2 1. This Complaint is a representative action brought by plaintiff ANTHONY E.
3 HELD, PH.D., P.E., in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California, to enforce the
4 People's right to be informed of the presence of Di(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate (a toxic chemical)
5 found in bibs manufactured and sold by defendants in California.

6 2. By this Complaint, plaintiff seeks to remedy defendants' continuing failures to warn
7 California citizens about their exposure to Di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP) present in or on
8 certain bibs that defendants manufacture, distribute and/or offer for sale to consumers throughout
9 the State of California.

10 3. High levels of DEHP are commonly found in and on bibs that defendants
11 manufacture, distribute, and/or offer for sale to consumers throughout the State of California.

12 4. Under California's Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986,
13 California Health & Safety Code §25249.6 *et seq.* (Proposition 65), "No person in the course of
14 doing business shall knowingly and intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the
15 state to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable warning to
16 such individual. . . ." (*Cal. Health & Safety Code §25249.6.*)

17 5. On January 1, 1988, California identified and listed DEHP as a chemical known to
18 cause birth defects and other reproductive harm. DEHP became subject to the warning
19 requirement one year later and was therefore subject to the "clear and reasonable warning"
20 requirements of Proposition 65, beginning on January 1, 1989. (*CCR §12000(c); Cal. Health &*
21 *Safety Code §25249.8.*) DEHP shall hereinafter be referred to as the "LISTED CHEMICAL."

22 6. Defendants manufacture and sell bibs containing DEHP including, but not limited
23 to, *Spider-Man & Friends Vinyl Bib, #00682RS (#0 79522 29133 3)*, which contain excessive
24 levels of the LISTED CHEMICAL. All such bibs containing the LISTED CHEMICAL shall
25 hereinafter be referred to as the "PRODUCTS."

26 7. Defendants' failure to warn consumers and/or other individuals in the State of
27 California about their exposure to the LISTED CHEMICAL in conjunction with defendants' sale
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1 of the PRODUCTS is a violation of Proposition 65 and subjects defendants to enjoinder of such
2 conduct as well as civil penalties for each such violation.

3 8. For defendants' violations of Proposition 65, plaintiff seeks preliminary injunctive
4 and permanent injunctive relief to compel defendants to provide purchasers or users of the
5 PRODUCTS with the required warning regarding the health hazards of the LISTED CHEMICAL.
6 (*Cal. Health & Safety Code §25249.7(a).*)

7 9. Plaintiff also seeks civil penalties against defendants for their violations of
8 Proposition 65, as provided for by California Health & Safety Code §25249.7(b).

9 **PARTIES**

10 10. Plaintiff ANTHONY E. HELD, PH.D., P.E., is a citizen of the City and County of
11 Sacramento in the State of California who is dedicated to protecting the health of California
12 citizens through the elimination or reduction of toxic exposures from consumer products, and
13 brings this action in the public interest pursuant to California Health & Safety Code §25249.7.

14 11. Defendant BENTEX GROUP, INC. (BENTEX) is a person doing business within
15 the meaning of California Health & Safety Code §25249.11.

16 12. BENTEX manufactures, distributes, and/or offers the PRODUCTS for sale or use
17 in the State of California or implies by its conduct that it manufactures, distributes and/or offers
18 the PRODUCTS for sale or use in the State of California.

19 13. Defendant FOUR SEASONS GENERAL MERCHANDISE, INC., (FOUR
20 SEASONS) is a person doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code
21 §25249.11.

22 14. FOUR SEASONS manufactures, distributes, and/or offers the PRODUCTS for sale
23 or use in the State of California or implies by its conduct that it manufactures, distributes and/or
24 offers the PRODUCTS for sale or use in the State of California.

25 15. Defendants DOES 1-50 (MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS) are each persons
26 doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code §25249.11.

27 16. MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS engage in the process of research, testing,
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1 designing, assembling, fabricating and/or manufacturing, or imply by their conduct that they
2 engage in the process of research, testing, designing, assembling, fabricating and/or
3 manufacturing, one or more of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in the State of California.

4 17. Defendants DOES 51-100 (DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS) are each persons
5 doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code §25249.11.

6 18. DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS distribute, exchange, transfer, process and/or
7 transport one or more of the PRODUCTS to individuals, businesses or retailers for sale or use in
8 the State of California.

9 19. Defendants DOES 101-150 (RETAIL DEFENDANTS) are each persons doing
10 business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code §25249.11.

11 20. RETAIL DEFENDANTS offer the PRODUCTS for sale to individuals in the State
12 of California.

13 21. At this time, the true names of Defendants DOES 1 through 150, inclusive, are
14 unknown to plaintiff, who therefore sues said defendants by their fictitious name pursuant to Code
15 of Civil Procedure §474. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, that each of
16 the fictitiously named defendants is responsible for the acts and occurrences herein alleged. When
17 ascertained, their true names shall be reflected in an amended complaint.

18 22. BENTEX, FOUR SEASONS, MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS,
19 DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS, and RETAIL DEFENDANTS shall, where appropriate,
20 collectively be referred to hereinafter as "DEFENDANTS."

21 VENUE AND JURISDICTION

22 23. Venue is proper in the Alameda County Superior Court, pursuant to Code of Civil
23 Procedure §§394, 395, 395.5, because this Court is a court of competent jurisdiction, because one
24 or more instances of wrongful conduct occurred, and continues to occur, in the County of Alameda
25 and/or because DEFENDANTS conducted, and continue to conduct, business in this County with
26 respect to the PRODUCTS.

27 24. The California Superior Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to
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1 California Constitution Article VI, §10, which grants the Superior Court “original jurisdiction in
2 all causes except those given by statute to other trial courts.” The statute under which this action
3 is brought does not specify any other basis of subject matter jurisdiction.

4 25. The California Superior Court has jurisdiction over DEFENDANTS based on
5 plaintiff’s information and good faith belief that each defendant is a person, firm, corporation or
6 association that either are citizens of the State of California, have sufficient minimum contacts in
7 the State of California, or otherwise purposefully avail themselves of the California market.
8 DEFENDANTS’ purposeful availment renders the exercise of personal jurisdiction by California
9 courts consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

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11 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

12 **(Violation of Proposition 65)**

13 26. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference, as if fully set forth herein,
14 Paragraphs 1 through 25, inclusive.

15 27. The citizens of the State of California have expressly stated in the Safe Drinking
16 Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, California Health & Safety Code §25249.5, *et seq.*
17 (Proposition 65) that they must be informed “about exposures to chemicals that cause cancer, birth
18 defects and other reproductive harm.” (*Cal. Health & Safety Code §25249.6.*)

19 28. Proposition 65 states, “No person in the course of doing business shall knowingly
20 and intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the state to cause cancer or
21 reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable warning to such individual....” (*Id.*)

22 29. On November 20, 2007, a sixty-day notice of violation, together with the requisite
23 certificate of merit, was provided to BENTEX, FOUR SEASONS, and various public enforcement
24 agencies stating that as a result of DEFENDANTS’ sale of PRODUCTS, purchasers and users in
25 the State of California were being exposed to the LISTED CHEMICAL resulting from the
26 reasonably foreseeable uses of the PRODUCTS, without the individual purchasers and users first
27 having been provided with a “clear and reasonable warning” regarding such toxic exposures.
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1 30. DEFENDANTS have engaged in the manufacture, distribution and/or offering of
2 the PRODUCTS for sale or use in violation of California Health & Safety Code §25249.6 and
3 DEFENDANTS' manufacture, distribution and/or offering of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in
4 violation of California Health & Safety Code §25249.6 has continued to occur beyond
5 DEFENDANTS' receipt of plaintiff's sixty-day notice of violation. Plaintiff further alleges and
6 believes that such violations will continue to occur into the future.

7 31. After receipt of the claims asserted in the sixty-day notice of violation, the
8 appropriate public enforcement agencies have failed to commence and diligently prosecute a cause
9 of action against DEFENDANTS under Proposition 65.

10 32. The PRODUCTS manufactured, distributed, and/or offered for sale or use in
11 California by DEFENDANTS contained the LISTED CHEMICAL above the allowable state
12 limits.

13 33. DEFENDANTS knew or should have known that the PRODUCTS manufactured,
14 distributed, and/or offered for sale or use by DEFENDANTS in California contained the LISTED
15 CHEMICAL.

16 34. The LISTED CHEMICAL was present in or on the PRODUCTS in such a way as
17 to expose individuals to the LISTED CHEMICAL through dermal contact and/or ingestion during
18 the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS.

19 35. The normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS has caused and
20 continues to cause consumer exposures to the LISTED CHEMICAL, as such exposure is defined
21 by 22 CCR §12601(b).

22 36. DEFENDANTS had knowledge that the normal and reasonably foreseeable use of
23 the PRODUCTS would expose individuals to the LISTED CHEMICAL through dermal contact
24 and/or ingestion.

25 37. DEFENDANTS, and each of them, intended that such exposures to the LISTED
26 CHEMICAL from the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS would occur by their
27 deliberate, non-accidental participation in the manufacture, distribution and/or offer for sale or use
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1 of PRODUCTS to individuals in the State of California.

2 38. DEFENDANTS failed to provide a “clear and reasonable warning” to those
3 consumers and/or other individuals in the State of California who were or who could become
4 exposed to the LISTED CHEMICAL through dermal contact and/or ingestion during the
5 reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS.

6 39. Contrary to the express policy and statutory prohibition of Proposition 65, enacted
7 directly by California voters, individuals exposed to the LISTED CHEMICAL through dermal
8 contact and/or ingestion resulting from the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS, sold by
9 DEFENDANTS without “clear and reasonable warning,” have suffered, and continue to suffer,
10 irreparable harm, for which harm they have no plain, speedy or adequate remedy at law.

11 40. As a consequence of the above-described acts, DEFENDANTS, and each of them,
12 are liable for a maximum civil penalty of \$2,500 per day for each violation pursuant to California
13 Health & Safety Code §25249.7(b).

14 41. As a consequence of the above-described acts, California Health & Safety Code
15 §25249.7(a) also specifically authorizes the Court to grant injunctive relief against
16 DEFENDANTS.

17 42. Wherefore, plaintiff prays judgment against DEFENDANTS, and each of them, as
18 set forth hereinafter.

19 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

20 Wherefore, plaintiff prays for judgment against DEFENDANTS as follows:

21 1. That the Court, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code §25249.7(b), assess
22 civil penalties against DEFENDANTS, and each of them, in the amount of \$2,500 per day for each
23 violation alleged herein;

24 2. That the Court, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code §25249.7(a),
25 preliminarily and permanently enjoin DEFENDANTS, and each of them, from manufacturing,
26 distributing or offering the PRODUCTS for sale or use in California, without providing “clear and
27 reasonable warnings” as defined by 22 CCR §12601, as to the harms associated with exposures to
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the LISTED CHEMICAL;

- 3. That the Court grant plaintiff his reasonable attorneys' fees and costs of suit; and
- 4. That the Court grant such other and further relief as may be just and proper.

Dated: February 7, 2008

Respectfully Submitted,

HIRST & CHANLER LLP



Christopher M. Martin
Attorneys for Plaintiff
ANTHONY E. HELD, PH.D., P.E.