1 2	Clifford A. Chanler, State Bar No. 135534 Josh Voorhees, State Bar No. 241436 THE CHANLER GROUP	
3	2560 Ninth Street   Parker Plaza, Suite 214	1 / 1 2 200
4	Berkeley, CA 94710-2565 Telephone: (510) 848-8880	
5	Facsimile: (510) 848-8118	Marine Charles (Marine) Colors (Marine) And Andrew Colors (Appendix)
6	Attorneys for Plaintiff JOHN MOORE	
7		
8	SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA	
9	FOR THE COUNTY OF MARIN	
10	UNLIMITED CIVIL JURISDICTION	
11		<b>A</b> .
12	JOHN MOORE,	Case No. CIV 1005991
13	Plaintiff,	
14	v.	COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF
15	VENTURE PRODUCTS LLC; SEARS, ROEBUCK AND CO.; SEARS HOLDINGS	AND INSURCITVE RELIEF
16	CORPORATION; and DOES 1-150, inclusive,	(Cal. Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 et seq.)
17	Defendants.	
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		

COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF

## NATURE OF THE ACTION

- 1. This Complaint is a representative action brought by plaintiff JOHN MOORE, in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California, to enforce the People's right to be informed of the presence of di(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate ("DEHP"), a toxic chemical found in vinyl flooring tiles sold in California.
- 2. By this Complaint, plaintiff seeks to remedy defendants' continuing failures to warn California citizens about their exposure to DEHP, present in or on certain vinyl flooring tiles that defendants manufacture, import, distribute, and/or offer for sale to consumers throughout the State of California.
- 3. Under California's Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 et seq. ("Proposition 65"), "No person in the course of doing business shall knowingly and intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the state to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable warning to such individual. . . ." (Cal. Health & Safety Code § 25249.6.)
- 4. On October 23, 2003, California identified and listed DEHP as a chemical known to cause birth defects and other reproductive harm. DEHP became subject to the warning requirement one year later and was, therefore, subject to the "clear and reasonable warning" requirements of Proposition 65, beginning on October 23, 2004. (27 CCR § 27001 (c); Cal. Health & Safety Code § 25249.8.)
- 5. Defendants VENTURE PRODUCTS LLC ("VENTURE PRODUCTS"); SEARS, ROEBUCK and CO. ("SEARS"); and SEARS HOLDINGS CORPORATION ("SEARS HOLDINGS") manufacture, import, distribute, and/or sell vinyl flooring tiles containing DEHP including, but not limited to, *Best-Step Ultra-Flex Flooring System, Item No. BS 1115 (#8 99530 01898 8)*;
- 6. All such vinyl flooring tiles containing DEHP, as listed in paragraph 5, shall hereinafter be collectively referred to as the "PRODUCTS."
- 7. Defendants' failure to warn adequately, if at all, a variety of California consumers, businesses, employees, and other persons not covered by California's Occupational Safety

Health Act, Labor Code § 6300 et seq., in the State of California about their exposure to DEHP in conjunction with defendants' distribution, importation, manufacturing, and sale of the PRODUCTS is a violation of Proposition 65 and subjects defendants to enjoinment of such conduct as well as civil penalties for each violation.

- 8. For defendants' violations of Proposition 65, plaintiff seeks preliminary injunctive and permanent injunctive relief to compel defendants to provide purchasers or users of the PRODUCTS with the required warning regarding the health hazards of DEHP. (Cal. Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(a).)
- 9. Plaintiff also seeks civil penalties against defendants for their violations of Proposition 65, as provided for by California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(b).

#### **PARTIES**

- 10. Plaintiff JOHN MOORE is a citizen of the State of California who is dedicated to protecting the health of California citizens through the elimination or reduction of toxic exposures from consumer and commercial products, and brings this action in the public interest pursuant to California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7.
- 11. Defendants VENTURE PRODUCTS, SEARS, and SEARS HOLDINGS are each persons doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.11.
- 12. Defendants VENTURE PRODUCTS, SEARS, and SEARS HOLDINGS each manufacture, import, distribute, and/or offer the PRODUCTS for sale or use in the State of California or implies by its conduct that it manufacture, import, distribute, and/or offer the PRODUCTS for sale or use in the State of California.
- 13. Defendants DOES 1-50 ("MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS") are each persons doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.11.
- 14. MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS engage in the process of research, testing, designing, assembling, fabricating and/or manufacturing, or imply by their conduct that they engage in the process of research, testing, designing, assembling, fabricating and/or manufacturing, e.g. by engaging in private labeling one or more of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in the State of California.

- 15. Defendants DOES 51-100 ("DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS") are each persons doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.11.
- 16. DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS distribute, exchange, transfer, process, and/or transport one or more of the PRODUCTS to individuals, businesses or retailers for sale or use in the State of California.
- 17. Defendants DOES 101-150 ("RETAILER DEFENDANTS") are each persons doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.11.
- 18. RETAILER DEFENDANTS offer the PRODUCTS for sale to individuals in the State of California and, in some circumstances, may also be manufacturers and/or distributors.
- 19. At this time, the true names of Defendants DOES 1 through 150, inclusive, are unknown to plaintiff, who therefore sues said defendants by their fictitious name pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure § 474. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, that each of the fictitiously named defendants is responsible for the acts and occurrences herein alleged. When ascertained, their true names shall be reflected in an amended complaint.
- 20. VENTURE PRODUCTS, SEARS, SEARS HOLDINGS, MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS, DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS, and RETAILER DEFENDANTS shall, where appropriate, collectively be referred to hereinafter as "DEFENDANTS."

#### **VENUE AND JURISDICTION**

- 21. Venue is proper in the Marin County Superior Court, pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure §§ 394, 395, 395.5, because this Court is a court of competent jurisdiction, because one or more instances of wrongful conduct occurred, and continues to occur, in the County of Marin and/or because DEFENDANTS conducted, and continue to conduct, business in this County with respect to the PRODUCTS.
- 22. The California Superior Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to California Constitution Article VI, § 10, which grants the Superior Court "original jurisdiction in all causes except those given by statute to other trial courts." The statute under which this action is brought does not specify any other basis of subject matter jurisdiction.

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

### FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

# (Violation of Proposition 65 - Against All Defendants)

- 24. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference, as if fully set forth herein, Paragraphs 1 through 23, inclusive.
- 25. The citizens of the State of California have expressly stated in Proposition 65 that they must be informed "about exposures to chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects and other reproductive harm." (Cal. Health & Safely Code § 25249.6.)
- 26. Proposition 65 states, "[n]o person in the course of doing business shall knowingly and intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the state to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable warning to such individual...."

  (Id.)
- 27. On September 1, 2010, a sixty-day notice of violation, together with the requisite Certificate of Merit, was provided to VENTURE PRODUCTS, SEARS, SEARS HOLDINGS, and various public enforcement agencies stating that as a result of VENTURE PRODUCTS, SEARS, and SEARS HOLDINGS sales of the PRODUCTS, purchasers and users in the State of California were being exposed to DEHP resulting from the reasonably foreseeable uses of the PRODUCTS, without the individual purchasers and users first having been provided with a "clear and reasonable warning" regarding such toxic exposures.
- 28. DEFENDANTS have engaged in the manufacture, importation, distribution, and/or offering of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 and DEFENDANTS' manufacture, importation, distribution and/or offering of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 has

continued to occur beyond DEFENDANTS' receipt of plaintiff's sixty-day notice of violation.

Plaintiff further alleges and believes that such violations will continue to occur into the future.

- 29. After receipt of the claims asserted in the September 1, 2010 sixty-day notice of violation, the appropriate public enforcement agencies have failed to commence and diligently prosecute a cause of action against DEFENDANTS under Proposition 65.
- 30. The PRODUCTS manufactured, imported, distributed, and/or offered for sale or use in California by DEFENDANTS contained DEHP above the allowable state limits.
- 31. DEFENDANTS knew or should have known that the PRODUCTS manufactured, imported, distributed, and/or offered for sale or use by DEFENDANTS in California contained DEHP.
- 32. DEHP was present in or on the PRODUCTS in such a way as to expose individuals to DEHP through dermal contact ingestion and/or inhalation during the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS.
- 33. The normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS has caused and continues to cause consumer and workplace exposures to DEHP, as such exposure is defined by 27 CCR § 25602(b).
- 34. DEFENDANTS had knowledge that the normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS would expose individuals to the DEHP through dermal contact ingestion and/or inhalation.
- 35. DEFENDANTS intended that such exposures to DEHP from the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS would occur by their deliberate, non-accidental participation in the manufacture, importation, distribution, and/or offer for sale or use of PRODUCTS to individuals in the State of California.
- 36. DEFENDANTS failed to provide a "clear and reasonable warning" to those consumers and/or other individuals in the State of California who were or who could become exposed to DEHP through dermal contact ingestion and/or inhalation during the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS.

- 37. Contrary to the express policy and statutory prohibition of Proposition 65, enacted directly by California voters, individuals exposed to DEHP through dermal contact ingestion and/or inhalation resulting from the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS, sold by DEFENDANTS without a "clear and reasonable warning," have suffered, and continue to suffer, irreparable harm, for which harm they have no plain, speedy or adequate remedy at law.
- 38. As a consequence of the above-described acts, DEFENDANTS are each liable for a maximum civil penalty of \$2,500 per day for each violation pursuant to California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(b).
- 39. As a consequence of the above-described acts, California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(a) also specifically authorizes the Court to grant injunctive relief against DEFENDANTS.

## **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

Wherefore, plaintiff prays for judgment against DEFENDANTS as follows:

- 1. That the Court, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(b), assess civil penalties against DEFENDANTS in the amount of \$2,500 per day for each violation alleged herein;
- 2. That the Court, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(a), preliminarily and permanently enjoin DEFENDANTS from manufacturing, distributing, or offering the PRODUCTS for sale or use in California, without providing "clear and reasonable warnings" as defined by 27 CCR § 25601, as to the harms associated with exposures to the DEHP;

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	
15	
16	
17	
18	
19	
20	
21	
22	
23	
24	
25	
26	
27	

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

Dated: November 12, 2010

Respectfully Submitted,

THE CHANLER GROUP

Attorneys for Plaintiff JOHN MOORE