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FILED

JUL 15 2011

KIM TUKER, CLERK OF COURT
MARIN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
1000 S. GATEWAY BLVD., SUITE 100
SAN RAFAEL, CA 94901

7 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

8 FOR THE COUNTY OF MARIN

9 UNLIMITED CIVIL JURISDICTION

10
11 ANTHONY E. HELD, PH.D., P.E.,)

12 Plaintiff,)

13 v.)

14 JOE BENBASSET, INC.; and DOES 1-150,)
inclusive,)

15 Defendants.)
16

Case No. CIV 1103514

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES
AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

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

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 (“DEHP”), a toxic
5 chemical found in belts sold in California.

6 2. By this Complaint, plaintiff seeks to remedy defendant’s continuing failure to warn
7 California citizens about their exposure to DEHP, present in or on certain belts that the defendant
8 manufactures, imports, distributes, and/or offer for sale to consumers throughout the State of
9 California.

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

15 4. On October 24, 2003, California identified and listed DEHP as a chemical known
16 to cause birth defects and other reproductive harm. DEHP became subject to the warning
17 requirement one year later and was, therefore, subject to the “clear and reasonable warning”
18 requirements of Proposition 65, beginning on October 24, 2004. (*27 CCR § 27001 (c); Cal.*
19 *Health & Safety Code § 25249.8.*)

20 5. Defendant JOE BENBASSET, INC. manufactures, imports, distributes, and/or
21 sells belts containing DEHP including, but not limited to, *Joe Benbasset Skirt with Belt, Style*
22 *9208353 (#7 13550 43982 3).*

23 6. All such belts containing DEHP, shall hereinafter be collectively referred to as the
24 “PRODUCTS.”

25 7. Defendant’s failure to warn consumers and/or other individuals in the State of
26 California not covered by California’s Occupational Safety Health Act, Labor Code § 6300 *et*
27 *seq.* about their exposure to DEHP in conjunction with defendant’s distribution, importation,
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1 manufacturing, and/or sale of the PRODUCTS is a violation of Proposition 65 and subjects
2 defendant to enjoinder of such conduct as well as civil penalties for each such violation.

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

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

9 **PARTIES**

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

14 11. JOE BENBASSET, INC. ("JBB") is a person doing business within the meaning
15 of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.11.

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

19 13. Defendants DOES 1-50 ("MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS") are each persons
20 doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.11.

21 14. MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS engage in the process of research, testing,
22 designing, assembling, fabricating, and/or manufacturing, or imply by their conduct that they
23 engage in the process of research, testing, designing, assembling, fabricating, and/or
24 manufacturing, one or more of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in the State of California.

25 15. Defendants DOES 51-100 ("DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS") are each persons
26 doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.11.

1 association that either are citizens of the State of California, have sufficient minimum contacts in
2 the State of California, or otherwise purposefully avail themselves of the California market.
3 DEFENDANTS' purposeful availment renders the exercise of personal jurisdiction by California
4 courts consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

5 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

6 **(Violation of Proposition 65 - Against All Defendants)**

7 24. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference, as if fully set forth herein,
8 Paragraphs 1 through 23, inclusive.

9 25. The citizens of the State of California have expressly stated in Proposition 65 that
10 they must be informed "about exposures to chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects and other
11 reproductive harm." (*Cal. Health & Safety Code § 25249.6.*)

12 26. Proposition 65 states, "[n]o person in the course of doing business shall knowingly
13 and intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the state to cause cancer or
14 reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable warning to such individual...."
15 (*Id.*)

16 27. On April 19, 2011, a 60-Day Notice of Violation, together with the requisite
17 Certificate of Merit (the "Notice"), was provided to JBB and various public enforcement
18 agencies stating that as a result of DEFENDANTS' manufacture, distribution and/or sale of the
19 PRODUCTS, purchasers and users in the State of California were being exposed to DEHP
20 resulting from the reasonably foreseeable uses of the PRODUCTS, without the individual
21 purchasers and users first having been provided with a "clear and reasonable warning" regarding
22 such toxic exposures.

23 28. DEFENDANTS have engaged in the manufacture, importation, distribution, and/or
24 offering of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in violation of California Health & Safety Code
25 § 25249.6 and DEFENDANTS' manufacture, importation, distribution, and/or offering of the
26 PRODUCTS for sale or use in violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 has
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1 continued to occur beyond JBB receipt of plaintiff's Notice. Plaintiff further alleges and believes
2 that such violations will continue to occur into the future.

3 29. After receipt of the claims asserted in the Notice, the appropriate public
4 enforcement agencies have failed to commence and diligently prosecute a cause of action against
5 DEFENDANTS under Proposition 65.

6 30. The PRODUCTS manufactured, imported, distributed, and/or offered for sale or
7 use in California by DEFENDANTS contained DEHP above the allowable state limits.

8 31. DEFENDANTS knew or should have known that the PRODUCTS manufactured,
9 imported, distributed, and/or offered for sale or use by DEFENDANTS in California contained
10 DEHP.

11 32. DEHP was present in or on the PRODUCTS in such a way as to expose
12 individuals to DEHP through dermal contact and ingestion during the reasonably foreseeable use
13 of the PRODUCTS.

14 33. The normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS has caused and
15 continues to cause consumer and workplace exposures to DEHP, as such exposure is defined by
16 27 California Code of Regulations ("CCR") § 25602(b).

17 34. DEFENDANTS had knowledge that the normal and reasonably foreseeable use of
18 the PRODUCTS would expose individuals to DEHP through dermal contact and ingestion.

19 35. DEFENDANTS intended that such exposures to DEHP from the reasonably
20 foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS would occur by their deliberate, non-accidental participation
21 in the manufacture, importation, distribution, and/or offer for sale or use of PRODUCTS to
22 individuals in the State of California.

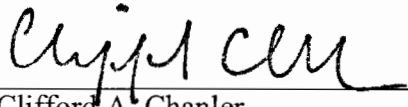
23 36. DEFENDANTS failed to provide a "clear and reasonable warning" to those
24 consumers and/or other individuals in the State of California who were or who could become
25 exposed to DEHP through dermal contact and ingestion during the reasonably foreseeable use of
26 the PRODUCTS.

- 1 3. That the Court grant plaintiff his reasonable attorneys' fees and costs of suit; and
2 4. That the Court grant such other and further relief as may be just and proper.
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4 Dated: July 15, 2011

Respectfully Submitted,

THE CHANLER GROUP

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7 By: 
8 Clifford A. Chanler
9 Attorney for Plaintiff
10 ANTHONY E. HELD, PH.D., P.E.
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