

ENDORSED
FILED
ALAMEDA COUNTY
AUG 01 2012
CLERK OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
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9 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
10 COUNTY OF ALAMEDA
11 UNLIMITED CIVIL JURISDICTION

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

14 Plaintiff,

15 v.

16 VO-TOYS INCORPORATED; and DOES 1-
17 150, inclusive,

18 Defendants.

Case No. _____

RG12641736

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES
AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

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

23 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 (“DEHP”), a toxic
5 chemical found in pet carriers sold in California.

6 2. By this Complaint, plaintiff seeks to remedy defendants’ continuing failure to
7 warn California citizens about reproductive toxicity associated with their exposure to DEHP
8 present in or on certain pet carriers that defendants manufacture, import, distribute, and/or offer
9 for sale to consumers throughout the state of California.

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

13 4. Under California’s Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986,
14 California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 *et seq.* (“Proposition 65”), “[n]o person in the
15 course of doing business shall knowingly and intentionally expose any individual to a chemical
16 known to the state to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and
17 reasonable warning to such individual ...” (Cal. Health & Safety Code, § 25249.6.)

18 5. On October 24, 2003, California identified and listed DEHP as a chemical known
19 to cause birth defects and other reproductive harm. DEHP became subject to the “clear and
20 reasonable warning” requirements of Proposition 65 one year later on October 24, 2004. (Tit.
21 27 Cal. Code Regs. (“CCR”) § 27001(c); Cal. Health & Safety Code §§ 25249.8 &
22 25249.10(b).)

23 6. Defendants manufacture, import, distribute, and/or offer for sale pet carriers
24 containing excessive levels of DEHP including, but not limited to, *Pet Voyage Paris Quilted*
25 *Tote* (#0 75726 26041 0). All such pet carriers containing DEHP shall hereinafter be referred to
26 as the “PRODUCTS.”

27 7. Defendants’ failure to warn consumers and/or other individuals in the state of
28 California not covered by California’s Occupational Safety Health Act, Labor Code § 6300 *et*

1 *seq.* about their exposure to DEHP and its potential to cause birth defects and other reproductive
2 harm in conjunction with defendants' manufacturing, importation, distribution, and/or sale of
3 the PRODUCTS is a violation of Proposition 65 and subjects defendants to enjoinder of such
4 conduct as well as civil penalties for each such violation.

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

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

11 PARTIES

12 10. Plaintiff, ANTHONY E. HELD, Ph.D., P.E., is a citizen of the state of California
13 who is dedicated to protecting the health of California citizens through the elimination or
14 reduction of toxic exposures from consumer products; he brings this action in the public interest
15 pursuant to California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(d).

16 11. Defendant VO-TOYS INCORPORATED ("VO-TOYS") is a person in the course
17 of doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.11.

18 12. Defendant VO-TOYS manufactures, imports, distributes, and/or offers the
19 PRODUCTS for sale or use in the state of California, or implies by its conduct that it
20 manufactures, imports, distributes, and/or offers the PRODUCTS for sale or use in the state of
21 California.

22 13. Defendants DOES 1-50 ("MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS") are each
23 persons in the course of doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code
24 § 25249.11.

25 14. MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS engage in the process of researching,
26 testing, designing, assembling, fabricating, and/or manufacturing, or imply by their conduct that
27 they engage in the process of researching, testing, designing, assembling, fabricating, and/or
28 manufacturing, one or more of the PRODUCTS offered for sale or use in the state of California.

1 15. Defendants DOES 51-100 (“DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS”) are each persons
2 in the course of doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code §
3 25249.11.

4 16. DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS distribute, exchange, transfer, process, and/or
5 transport one or more of the PRODUCTS to individuals, businesses, or retailers for sale or use
6 in the state of California.

7 17. Defendants DOES 101-150 (“RETAILER DEFENDANTS”) are each persons in
8 the course of doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code §
9 25249.11.

10 18. RETAILER DEFENDANTS offer the PRODUCTS for sale to individuals in the
11 state of California.

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

17 20. VO-TOYS, MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS, DISTRIBUTOR
18 DEFENDANTS, and RETAILER DEFENDANTS shall, where appropriate, collectively be
19 referred to as “DEFENDANTS.”

20 **VENUE AND JURISDICTION**

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

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

3 23. The California Superior Court has jurisdiction over DEFENDANTS based on
4 plaintiff’s information and good faith belief that each defendant is a person, firm, corporation,
5 or association that is a citizen of the state of California, has sufficient minimum contacts in the
6 state of California, or otherwise purposefully avails itself of the California market.
7 DEFENDANTS’ purposeful availment renders the exercise of personal jurisdiction by
8 California courts consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

9 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

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

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

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

17 26. Proposition 65 states, “[n]o person in the course of doing business shall
18 knowingly and intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the state to cause
19 cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable warning to such
20 individual...” (*Ibid.*)

21 27. On or about April 25, 2012, a sixty-day notice of violation, together with the
22 requisite certificate of merit, was provided to VO-TOYS, and various public enforcement
23 agencies stating that, as a result of the DEFENDANTS’ sales of the PRODUCTS, purchasers
24 and users in the state of California were being exposed to DEHP resulting from the reasonably
25 foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS, without the individual purchasers and users first having
26 been provided with a “clear and reasonable warning” regarding such toxic exposures.

27 28. DEFENDANTS have engaged in the manufacture, import, distribution, and/or
28 offering of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in violation of California Health & Safety Code §

1 25249.6, and DEFENDANTS' manufacture, importation, distribution, and/or offering of the
2 PRODUCTS for sale or use in violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 has
3 continued to occur beyond DEFENDANTS' receipt of plaintiff's sixty-day notice of violation.
4 Plaintiff further alleges and believes that such violations will continue to occur into the future.

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

8 30. The PRODUCTS manufactured, imported, distributed, and/or offered for sale or
9 use in California by DEFENDANTS contained DEHP in an amount above the allowable state
10 limits.

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

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

16 33. The normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS has caused, and
17 continues to cause, consumer and workplace exposures to DEHP, as such exposure is defined
18 by Title 27 CCR § 25602(b).

19 34. DEFENDANTS had knowledge that the normal and reasonably foreseeable use of
20 the PRODUCTS would expose individuals to DEHP through dermal contact and/or ingestion.

21 35. DEFENDANTS intended that such exposures to DEHP from the reasonably
22 foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS would occur by their deliberate, non-accidental participation
23 in the manufacture, import, distribution, and/or offering of the PRODUCTS for sale or use to
24 individuals in the state of California.

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

1 37. Contrary to the express policy and statutory prohibition of Proposition 65 enacted
2 directly by California voters, individuals exposed to DEHP through dermal contact and/or
3 ingestion resulting from the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS sold by
4 DEFENDANTS without a “clear and reasonable warning,” have suffered, and continue to
5 suffer, irreparable harm for which they have no plain, speedy, or adequate remedy at law.

6 38. As a consequence of the above-described acts, DEFENDANTS are liable for a
7 maximum civil penalty of \$2,500 per day for each violation pursuant to California Health &
8 Safety Code § 25249.7(b).

9 39. As a consequence of the above-described acts, California Health & Safety Code
10 § 25249.7(a) also specifically authorizes the Court to grant injunctive relief against
11 DEFENDANTS.

12 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

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

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


17 2. That the Court, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(a),
18 preliminarily and permanently enjoin DEFENDANTS from manufacturing, importing,
19 distributing, and/or offering the PRODUCTS for sale or use in California, without providing
20 “clear and reasonable warnings” as defined by 27 CCR § 25601, as to the harms associated with
21 exposure to DEHP;

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- 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: July 20, 2012

Respectfully Submitted,
THE CHANLER GROUP

By: 

Christopher M. Martin
Attorney for Plaintiff
ANTHONY E. HELD, Ph.D., P.E.