Reuben Yeroushalmi (SBN 193981) Daniel D. Cho (SBN 105409) Ben Yeroushalmi (SBN 232540) 2 YEROUSHALMI & ASSOCIATES MAR 25 2013 3 9100 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 610E Beverly Hills, California 90212 John A. Clarke, Executive Officer/Clerk 4 Telephone: 310.623.1926 Facsimile: 310.623.1930 5 Attorneys for Plaintiff, 6 Consumer Advocacy Group, Inc. 7 8 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA 9 COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES 10 11 BC 50 3 79 9 CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC., CASE NO. 12 in the public interest, 13 COMPLAINT FOR PENALTY AND Plaintiff. INJUNCTION 14 v. 15 Violation of Proposition 65, the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement UKA'S BIG SAVER FOODS, INC., dba Act of 1986 (Health & Safety Code, § BIG SAVER FOODS, INC., a California 25249.5, et seq.) Corporation; SMART COOK, INC., a California Corporation; SUPERMAX CORPORATION, a Texas Corporation; ACTION IS AN UNLIMITED CIVIL CASE (exceeds \$25,000) BETTER HOME PLASTICS CORP., a New Jersey Corporation; and DOES 1-20; 20 Defendants. 21 22 Plaintiff CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. alleges a cause of action against 23 defendants UKA'S BIG SAVER FOODS, INC., dba BIG SAVER FOODS, INC., SMART 24 COOK, INC., SUPERMAX CORPORATION, BETTER HOME PLASTICS CORP., and DOES 25 1-20 as follows: 26 /// 27 28

COMPLAINT FOR VIOLATION OF PROPOSITION 65, THE SAFE DRINKING WATER AND TOXIC ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 1986 (HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE § 25249.5, ET SEQ.)

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THE PARTIES

- Plaintiff CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. ("Plaintiff" or "CAG") is an
 organization qualified to do business in the State of California. CAG is a person within
 the meaning of Health and Safety Code section 25249.11, subdivision (a). CAG, acting
 as a private attorney general, brings this action in the public interest as defined under
 Health and Safety Code section 25249.7, subdivision (d).
- Defendant UKA'S BIG SAVER FOODS, INC., dba BIG SAVER FOODS, INC. ("BIG SAVER") is a California corporation, doing business in the State of California at all relevant times herein.
- Defendant SMART COOK, INC. ("SMART COOK") is a California corporation, doing business in the State of California at all relevant times herein.
- Defendant SUPERMAX CORPORATION ("SUPERMAX") is a Texas corporation, doing business in the State of California at all relevant times herein.
- Defendant BETTER HOME PLASTICS CORP. ("BETTER HOME") is a New Jersey corporation, doing business in the State of California at all relevant times herein.
- 6. Plaintiff is presently unaware of the true names and capacities of defendants DOES 1-20, and therefore sues these defendants by such fictitious names. Plaintiff will amend this complaint to allege their true names and capacities when ascertained. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each fictitiously named defendant is responsible in some manner for the occurrences herein alleged and the damages caused thereby.
- At all times mentioned herein, the term "Defendants" includes BIG SAVER, SMART COOK, SUPERMAX, BETTER HOME, and DOES 1-20.
- Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges that each of the Defendants at all times mentioned herein have conducted business within the State of California.
- Upon information and belief, at all times relevant to this action, each of the Defendants, including DOES 1-20, was an agent, servant, or employee of each of the other

Defendants. In conducting the activities alleged in this Complaint, each of the Defendants was acting within the course and scope of this agency, service, or employment, and was acting with the consent, permission, and authorization of each of the other Defendants. All actions of each of the Defendants alleged in this Complaint were ratified and approved by every other Defendant or their officers or managing agents. Alternatively, each of the Defendants aided, conspired with and/or facilitated the alleged wrongful conduct of each of the other Defendants.

10. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that at all relevant times, each of the Defendants was a person doing business within the meaning of Health and Safety Code section 25249.11, subdivision (b), and that each of the Defendants had ten (10) or more employees at all relevant times.

JURISDICTION

- 11. The Court has jurisdiction over this lawsuit pursuant to California Constitution Article VI, Section 10, which grants the Superior Court original jurisdiction in all causes except those given by statute to other trial courts. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 25249.7, which allows enforcement of violations of Proposition 65 in any Court of competent jurisdiction.
- 12. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendants named herein because Defendants either reside or are located in this State or are foreign corporations authorized to do business in California, are registered with the California Secretary of State, or who do sufficient business in California, have sufficient minimum contacts with California, or otherwise intentionally avail themselves of the markets within California through their manufacture, distribution, promotion, marketing, or sale of their products within California to render the exercise of jurisdiction by the California courts permissible under traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.
- 13. Venue is proper in the County of Los Angeles because one or more of the instances of wrongful conduct occurred, and continues to occur, in the County of Los Angeles and/or

because Defendants conducted, and continue to conduct, business in the County of Los Angeles with respect to the consumer product that is the subject of this action.

BACKGROUND AND PRELIMINARY FACTS

- 14. In 1986, California voters approved an initiative to address growing concerns about exposure to toxic chemicals and declared their right "[t]o be informed about exposures to chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm." Ballot Pamp., Proposed Law, Gen. Elec. (Nov. 4, 1986) at p. 3. The initiative, The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, codified at Health and Safety Code sections 25249.5, et seq. ("Proposition 65"), helps to protect California's drinking water sources from contamination, to allow consumers to make informed choices about the products they buy, and to enable persons to protect themselves from toxic chemicals as they see fit.
- 15. Proposition 65 requires the Governor of California to publish a list of chemicals known to the state to cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm. Health & Safety Code § 25249.8. The list, which the Governor updates at least once a year, contains over 700 chemicals and chemical families. Proposition 65 imposes warning requirements and other controls that apply to Proposition 65-listed chemicals.
- 16. All businesses with ten (10) or more employees that operate or sell products in California must comply with Proposition 65. Under Proposition 65, businesses are: (1) prohibited from knowingly discharging Proposition 65-listed chemicals into sources of drinking water (Health & Safety Code § 25249.5), and (2) required to provide "clear and reasonable" warnings before exposing a person, knowingly and intentionally, to a Proposition 65-listed chemical (Health & Safety Code § 25249.6).
- 17. Proposition 65 provides that any person "violating or threatening to violate" the statute may be enjoined in any court of competent jurisdiction. Health & Safety Code § 25249.7. "Threaten to violate" means "to create a condition in which there is a substantial probability that a violation will occur." Health & Safety Code § 25249.11(e).

- Defendants are also liable for civil penalties of up to \$2,500.00 per day per violation, recoverable in a civil action. *Health & Safety Code* § 25249.7(b).
- 18. Plaintiff identified certain practices of manufacturers and distributors of Diethyl Hexyl Phthalate ("DEHP") and lead-bearing products of exposing, knowingly and intentionally, persons in California to the Proposition 65-listed chemicals of such products without first providing clear and reasonable warnings of such to the exposed persons prior to the time of exposure. Plaintiff later discerned that Defendants engaged in such practice.
- 19. On January 1, 1988, the Governor of California added DEHP to the list of chemicals known to the State to cause cancer, and on October 24, 2003, the Governor added DEHP to the list of chemicals known to the State to cause developmental male reproductive toxicity. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code sections 25249.9 and 25249.10, twenty (20) months after addition of DEHP to the list of chemicals known to the State to cause reproductive toxicity, DEHP became fully subject to Proposition 65 warning requirements and discharge prohibitions.
- 20. On February 27, 1987, the Governor of California added lead to the list of chemicals known to the State to cause reproductive toxicity (Cal. Code Regs. tit. 27, § 27001(c)). lead is known to the State to cause developmental, female, and male reproductive toxicity. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code sections 25249.9 and 25249.10, twenty (20) months after addition of lead to the list of chemicals known to the State to cause reproductive toxicity, lead became fully subject to Proposition 65 warning requirements and discharge prohibitions.
- 21. On October 1, 1992, the Governor of California added lead and lead compounds to the list of chemicals known to the State to cause cancer (Cal. Code Regs. tit. 27, § 27001(b)). Pursuant to Health and Safety Code sections 25249.9 and 25249.10, twenty (20) months after addition of lead and lead compounds to the list of chemicals known to the State to cause cancer, lead and lead compounds became fully subject to Proposition 65 warning requirements and discharge prohibitions.

SATISFACTION OF PRIOR NOTICE

- 22. On or about June 7, 2012, Plaintiff gave notice of alleged violations of Health and Safety Code section 25249.6, concerning consumer products exposures and occupational exposures, subject to a private action to BIG SAVER, BETTER HOME, and to the California Attorney General, County District Attorneys, and City Attorneys for each city containing a population of at least 750,000 people in whose jurisdictions the violations allegedly occurred, concerning the product Vinyl Placemats.
- 23. On or about June 7, 2012, Plaintiff gave notice of alleged violations of Health and Safety Code section 25249.6, concerning consumer products exposures and occupational exposures, subject to a private action to BIG SAVER, SMART COOK, and to the California Attorney General, County District Attorneys, and City Attorneys for each city containing a population of at least 750,000 people in whose jurisdictions the violations allegedly occurred, concerning the product Polymeric Sink Mat.
- 24. On or about July 12, 2012, Plaintiff gave notice of alleged violations of Health and Safety Code section 25249.6, concerning consumer products exposures, subject to a private action to BIG SAVER, SUPERMAX, and to the California Attorney General, County District Attorneys, and City Attorneys for each city containing a population of at least 750,000 people in whose jurisdictions the violations allegedly occurred, concerning the product Razors.
- 25. Before sending the notices of alleged violation, Plaintiff investigated the consumer products involved, the likelihood that such products would cause users to suffer significant exposures to DEHP and lead, and the corporate structure of each of the Defendants.
- 26. Plaintiff's notice of alleged violation included a Certificate of Merit executed by the attorney for the noticing party, CAG. The Certificate of Merit stated that the attorney for Plaintiff who executed the certificate had consulted with at least one person with relevant and appropriate expertise who reviewed data regarding the exposures to DEHP and lead,

the subject Proposition 65-listed chemical of this action. Based on that information, the attorney for Plaintiff who executed the Certificate of Merit believed there was a reasonable and meritorious case for this private action. The attorney for Plaintiff attached to the Certificate of Merit served on the Attorney General the confidential factual information sufficient to establish the basis of the Certificate of Merit.

- 27. Plaintiff's notices of alleged violations also included a Certificate of Service and a document entitled "The Safe Drinking Water & Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 (Proposition 65) A Summary." Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(d).
- 28. Plaintiff is commencing this action more than sixty (60) days from the dates that Plaintiff gave notices of the alleged violations to BIG SAVER, SMART COOK, SUPERMAX, BETTER HOME, and the public prosecutors referenced in Paragraph 22, 23, and 24.
- 29. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that neither the Attorney General, nor any applicable district attorney or city attorney has commenced and is diligently prosecuting an action against the Defendants.

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

(By CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. and against BIG SAVER, BETTER HOME, and DOES 1-20 for Violations of Proposition 65, The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 (Health & Safety Code, §§ 25249.5, et seq.))

Vinyl Placemats

- 30. Plaintiff CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. repeats and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 29 of this complaint as though fully set forth herein.
- 31. Each of the Defendants is, and at all times mentioned herein was, a manufacturer, distributor, promoter, or retailer of Vinyl Placemats, which includes but is not limited to "Black Vinyl Placemat 100% PVC Made in China RN#57936 Measurements: 17 ¼" x 11 ½" and "Yellow Vinyl Placemant Measurements: 17 ½" x 11 ½" ("PLACEMATS").
- 32. PLACEMATS contain DEHP.
- 33. Defendants knew or should have known that DEHP has been identified by the State of California as a chemical known to cause cancer and reproductive toxicity and therefore

- was subject to Proposition 65 warning requirements. Defendants were also informed of the presence of DEHP in PLACEMATS within Plaintiff's notice of alleged violations further discussed above at Paragraph 22.
- 34. Plaintiff's allegations regarding PLACEMATS concerns "[c]onsumer products exposure[s]," which "is an exposure that results from a person's acquisition, purchase, storage, consumption, or other reasonably foreseeable use of a consumer good, or any exposure that results from receiving a consumer service." *Cal. Code Regs.* tit. 27, § 25602(b). PLACEMATS are consumer products, and, as mentioned herein, exposures to DEHP took place as a result of such normal and foreseeable consumption and use.
- 35. Plaintiff's allegations regarding PLACEMATS also concern Occupational Exposures, which "means an exposure to any employee in his or her employer's workplace." Cal. Code Regs. tit. 27, § 25602(f). Exposures of DEHP to Defendants' employees occurred through the course of their employment in their employers' workplaces.
- 36. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that between June 7, 2009 and the present, each of the Defendants knowingly and intentionally exposed their employees and California consumers and users of PLACEMATS, which Defendants manufactured, distributed, or sold as mentioned above, to DEHP, without first providing any type of clear and reasonable warning of such to the exposed persons before the time of exposure. Defendants have distributed and sold PLACEMATS in California. Defendants know and intend that California consumers will use and consume PLACEMATS, thereby exposing them to DEHP. Defendants thereby violated Proposition 65.
- 37. The principal routes of exposure are through dermal contact, ingestion and inhalation.
 Persons sustain exposures by handling PLACEMATS without wearing gloves or any other personal protective equipment, or by touching bare skin or mucous membranes with gloves after handling PLACEMATS, as well as through direct and indirect hand to mouth contact, hand to mucous membrane, or breathing in particulate matter dispersed from

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- PLACEMATS. And as to Defendants' employees, employees may be exposed to DEHP in the course of their employment by handling, distributing, and selling PLACEMATS.
- 38. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each of Defendants' violations of Proposition 65 as to PLACEMATS have been ongoing and continuous to the date of the signing of this complaint, as Defendants engaged and continue to engage in conduct which violates Health and Safety Code section 25249.6, including the manufacture, distribution, promotion, and sale of PLACEMATS, so that a separate and distinct violation of Proposition 65 occurred each and every time a person was exposed to DEHP by PLACEMATS as mentioned herein.
- 39. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each violation of Proposition 65 mentioned herein is ever continuing. Plaintiff further alleges and believes that the violations alleged herein will continue to occur into the future.
- 40. Based on the allegations herein, Defendants are liable for civil penalties of up to \$2,500.00 per day per individual exposure to DEHP from PLACEMATS, pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 25249.7(b).
- 41. Plaintiff has engaged in good faith efforts to resolve the claims alleged herein prior to filing this Complaint.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

(By CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. and against BIG SAVER, SMART COOK, and DOES 1-20 for Violations of Proposition 65, The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 (Health & Safety Code, §§ 25249.5, et seq.))

Polymeric Sink Mat

- 42. Plaintiff CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. repeats and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 41 of this complaint as though fully set forth herein.
- 43. Each of the Defendants is, and at all times mentioned herein was, a manufacturer, distributor, promoter, or retailer of Polymeric Sink Mat, which includes but is not limited to "Smart Cook® Sink Mat 'Protects Sink & Dishes' Item #71018 Measurements: 11" x 12.5" ©2009Smart Cook, Inc." ("SINK MAT").

- 44. SINK MAT contains DEHP.
- 45. Defendants knew or should have known that DEHP has been identified by the State of California as a chemical known to cause cancer and reproductive toxicity and therefore was subject to Proposition 65 warning requirements. Defendants were also informed of the presence of DEHP in SINK MAT within Plaintiff's notice of alleged violations further discussed above at Paragraph 23.
- 46. Plaintiff's allegations regarding SINK MAT concerns "[c]onsumer products exposure[s]," which "is an exposure that results from a person's acquisition, purchase, storage, consumption, or other reasonably foreseeable use of a consumer good, or any exposure that results from receiving a consumer service." *Cal. Code Regs.* tit. 27, § 25602(b). SINK MAT is a consumer product, and, as mentioned herein, exposures to DEHP took place as a result of such normal and foreseeable consumption and use.
- 47. Plaintiff's allegations regarding SINK MAT also concern Occupational Exposures, which "means an exposure to any employee in his or her employer's workplace." Cal. Code Regs. tit. 27, § 25602(f). Exposures of DEHP to Defendants' employees occurred through the course of their employment in their employers' workplaces.
- 48. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that between June 7, 2009 and the present, each of the Defendants knowingly and intentionally exposed their employees and California consumers and users of SINK MAT, which Defendants manufactured, distributed, or sold as mentioned above, to DEHP, without first providing any type of clear and reasonable warning of such to the exposed persons before the time of exposure. Defendants have distributed and sold SINK MAT in California. Defendants know and intend that California consumers will use and consume SINK MAT, thereby exposing them to DEHP. Defendants thereby violated Proposition 65.
- 49. The principal routes of exposure are through dermal contact, ingestion and inhalation. Persons sustain exposures by handling SINK MAT without wearing gloves or any other personal protective equipment, or by touching bare skin or mucous membranes with

- gloves after handling SINK MAT, as well as through direct and indirect hand to mouth contact, hand to mucous membrane, or breathing in particulate matter dispersed from SINK MAT. And as to Defendants' employees, employees may be exposed to DEHP in the course of their employment by handling, distributing, and selling SINK MAT.
- 50. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each of Defendants' violations of Proposition 65 as to SINK MAT have been ongoing and continuous to the date of the signing of this complaint, as Defendants engaged and continue to engage in conduct which violates Health and Safety Code section 25249.6, including the manufacture, distribution, promotion, and sale of SINK MAT, so that a separate and distinct violation of Proposition 65 occurred each and every time a person was exposed to DEHP by SINK MAT as mentioned herein.
- 51. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each violation of Proposition 65 mentioned herein is ever continuing. Plaintiff further alleges and believes that the violations alleged herein will continue to occur into the future.
- 52. Based on the allegations herein, Defendants are liable for civil penalties of up to \$2,500.00 per day per individual exposure to DEHP from SINK MAT, pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 25249.7(b).
- 53. Plaintiff has engaged in good faith efforts to resolve the claims alleged herein prior to filing this Complaint.

THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

(By CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. and against BIG SAVER, SUPERMAX, and DOES 1-20 for Violations of Proposition 65, The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 (Health & Safety Code, §§ 25249.5, et seq.))

Razors

54. Plaintiff CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. repeats and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 53 of this complaint as though fully set forth herein.

- 55. Each of the Defendants is, and at all times mentioned herein was, a manufacturer, distributor, promoter, or retailer of Razors, which includes but is not limited to "Super-Max® Twin Blade Disposable Razors (10-Pack) AC126" ("RAZORS").
- 56. RAZORS contain lead.
- 57. Defendants knew or should have known that lead has been identified by the State of California as a chemical known to cause cancer and reproductive toxicity and therefore was subject to Proposition 65 warning requirements. Defendants were also informed of the presence of lead in RAZORS within Plaintiff's notice of alleged violations further discussed above at Paragraph 24.
- 58. Plaintiff's allegations regarding RAZORS concerns "[c]onsumer products exposure[s]," which "is an exposure that results from a person's acquisition, purchase, storage, consumption, or other reasonably foreseeable use of a consumer good, or any exposure that results from receiving a consumer service." *Cal. Code Regs.* tit. 27, § 25602(b). RAZORS are consumer products, and, as mentioned herein, exposures to lead took place as a result of such normal and foreseeable consumption and use.
- 59. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that between July 12, 2009 and the present, each of the Defendants knowingly and intentionally exposed California consumers and users of RAZORS, which Defendants manufactured, distributed, or sold as mentioned above, to lead, without first providing any type of clear and reasonable warning of such to the exposed persons before the time of exposure. Defendants have distributed and sold RAZORS in California. Defendants know and intend that California consumers will use and consume RAZORS, thereby exposing them to lead. Defendants thereby violated Proposition 65.
- 60. The principal routes of exposure are through dermal contact, ingestion and inhalation. Persons sustain exposures by handling RAZORS without wearing gloves or any other personal protective equipment, or by touching bare skin or mucous membranes with gloves after handling RAZORS, as well as through direct and indirect hand to mouth

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- contact, hand to mucous membrane, or breathing in particulate matter dispersed from RAZORS.
- 61. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each of Defendants' violations of Proposition 65 as to RAZORS have been ongoing and continuous to the date of the signing of this complaint, as Defendants engaged and continue to engage in conduct which violates Health and Safety Code section 25249.6, including the manufacture, distribution, promotion, and sale of RAZORS, so that a separate and distinct violation of Proposition 65 occurred each and every time a person was exposed to lead by RAZORS as mentioned herein.
- 62. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each violation of Proposition 65 mentioned herein is ever continuing. Plaintiff further alleges and believes that the violations alleged herein will continue to occur into the future.
- 63. Based on the allegations herein, Defendants are liable for civil penalties of up to \$2,500.00 per day per individual exposure to lead from RAZORS, pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 25249.7(b).
- 64. Plaintiff has engaged in good faith efforts to resolve the claims alleged herein prior to filing this Complaint.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

Plaintiff demands against each of the Defendants as follows:

- 1. A permanent injunction mandating Proposition 65-compliant warnings;
- 2. Penalties pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 25249.7, subdivision (b);
- 3. Costs of suit;
- 4. Reasonable attorney fees and costs; and
- 5. Any further relief that the court may deem just and equitable.

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Dated: 3/21

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BY:____

Reuben Yeroushalmi Attorneys for Plaintiff, Consumer Advocacy Group, Inc.