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12 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
13 COUNTY OF ALAMEDA
14 UNLIMITED CIVIL JURISDICTION

15 DR. WHITNEY R. LEEMAN,
16 Plaintiff.

17 v.

18 KKU INCORPORATED; THE HOME
19 DEPOT, INC.; and DOES 1-150, inclusive,
20 Defendants.

Case No. **RG14733167**

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES
AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

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

**ENDORSED
FILED
ALAMEDA COUNTY**

JUL 16 2014

**CLERK OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
By Louis Staley, Jr.**

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1 NATURE OF THE ACTION

2 1. This Complaint is a representative action brought by plaintiff, DR. WHITNEY R.
3 LEEMAN, in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California, to enforce the People’s
4 right to be informed of the presence of di(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate (“DEHP”), a toxic chemical
5 found in shop seats with vinyl/PVC upholstery sold in the State of 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 shop seats with vinyl/PVC upholstery that defendants manufacture, import,
9 distribute, sell and/or offer for sale to consumers throughout the State of California.

10 3. High levels of DEHP are commonly found in and on shop seats with vinyl/PVC
11 upholstery that defendants manufacture, import, distribute, sell and/or offer for sale to
12 consumers throughout the 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 warning
20 requirement one year later and was therefore subject to the “clear and reasonable warning”
21 requirements of Proposition 65 beginning on October 24, 2004. (27 CCR § 27001 (c); *Cal.*
22 *Health & Safety Code § 25249.8.*) DEHP is hereinafter referred to as the “LISTED
23 CHEMICAL.”

24 6. Defendants manufacture, import, distribute, sell and/or offer for sale shop seats
25 with vinyl/PVC upholstery containing excessive levels of the LISTED CHEMICAL including,
26 but not limited to the *Husky Heavy Duty Rolling Shop Seat, SKU 684 351, UPC #4 56094*
27 *872010*. All such shop seats with vinyl/PVC upholstery containing the LISTED CHEMICAL
28 shall hereinafter be referred to as the “PRODUCTS.”

1 manufactures, imports, distributes, sells and/or offers the PRODUCTS for sale or use in the
2 State of California.

3 15. Defendants DOES 1-50 (“MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS”) are each
4 persons in the course of doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code
5 § 25249.11.

6 16. MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS engage in the process of researching,
7 testing, designing, assembling, fabricating, and/or manufacturing, or imply by their conduct that
8 they engage in the process of researching, testing, designing, assembling, fabricating, and/or
9 manufacturing, one or more of the PRODUCTS offered for sale or use in the State of California.

10 17. Defendants DOES 51-100 (“DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS”) are each persons
11 in the course of doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code §
12 25249.11.

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

16 19. Defendants DOES 101-150 (“RETAILER DEFENDANTS”) are each persons in
17 the course of doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code §
18 25249.11.

19 20. RETAILER DEFENDANTS offer the PRODUCTS for sale to individuals in the
20 State of California.

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

26 22. KCU, HOME DEPOT, MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS, DISTRIBUTOR
27 DEFENDANTS, and RETAILER DEFENDANTS shall, where appropriate, collectively be
28 referred to as “DEFENDANTS.”

1 **VENUE AND JURISDICTION**

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

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

11 25. The California Superior Court has jurisdiction over DEFENDANTS based on
12 plaintiff’s information and good faith belief that each defendant is a person, firm, corporation,
13 or association that is a citizen of the State of California, has sufficient minimum contacts in the
14 State of California, or otherwise purposefully avails itself of the California market.
15 DEFENDANTS’ purposeful availment renders the exercise of personal jurisdiction by
16 California courts consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

17 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

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

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

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

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

1 29. On or about April 30, 2014, a supplemental sixty-day notice of violation, together
2 with the requisite certificate of merit, was provided to KKU and HOME DEPOT and various
3 public enforcement agencies stating that, as a result of the DEFENDANTS' sales of the
4 PRODUCTS, purchasers and users in the State of California were being exposed to the LISTED
5 CHEMICAL resulting from the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS, without the
6 individual purchasers and users first having been provided with a "clear and reasonable
7 warning" regarding such toxic exposures.

8 30. DEFENDANTS have engaged in the manufacture, importation, distribution, sale,
9 and/or offering of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in violation of California Health & Safety
10 Code § 25249.6, and DEFENDANTS' manufacture, importation, distribution, sales, and/or
11 offering of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in violation of California Health & Safety Code §
12 25249.6 has continued to occur beyond DEFENDANTS' receipt of plaintiff's sixty-day notice
13 of violation. As such, DEFENDANTS' violations are ongoing and continuous in nature, and
14 will continue to occur in the future.

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

18 32. The PRODUCTS manufactured, imported, distributed, sold, and/or offered for
19 sale or use in California by DEFENDANTS contained the LISTED CHEMICAL in an amount
20 above the allowable State limits.

21 33. DEFENDANTS knew or should have known that the PRODUCTS manufactured,
22 imported, distributed, sold, and/or offered for sale or use in California contained the LISTED
23 CHEMICAL.

24 34. The LISTED CHEMICAL is present in or on the PRODUCTS in such a way as to
25 expose individuals to the LISTED CHEMICAL through dermal contact and/or ingestion during
26 the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS.

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1 35. The normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS has caused, and
2 continues to cause, consumer and workplace exposures to the LISTED CHEMICAL, as such
3 exposure is defined by Title 27 CCR § 25602(b).

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

7 37. DEFENDANTS intended that such exposures to the LISTED CHEMICAL from
8 the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS would occur by their deliberate, non-
9 accidental participation in the manufacture, importation, distribution, sale, and/or offering of the
10 PRODUCTS for sale or use to individuals in the State of California.

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

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

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

23 41. As a consequence of the above-described acts, California Health & Safety Code
24 § 25249.7(a) also specifically authorizes the Court to grant injunctive relief against
25 DEFENDANTS.

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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;
- 2. That the Court, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(a), preliminarily and permanently enjoin DEFENDANTS from manufacturing, importing, distributing, selling, and/or offering the PRODUCTS for sale or use in California, without providing “clear and reasonable warnings” as defined by California Code of Regulations title 27, § 25601 et. seq., as to the harms associated with exposure to the LISTED CHEMICAL;
- 3. That the Court grant plaintiff her 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 16, 2014

Respectfully Submitted,
THE CHANLER GROUP

By: 

Stephen E. Cohen
Attorneys for Plaintiff
DR. WHITNEY R. LEEMAN