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ENDORSED
FILED
Superior Court of California
County of San Francisco

FEB 14 2017

CLERK OF THE COURT
BY: ARLENE RAMOS
Deputy Clerk

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

ERIKA MCCARTNEY, in the public interest,)
Plaintiff,)
v.)
FREELAND FOODS INC., a California)
corporation, and DOES 1 through 500, inclusive,)
Defendants.)

CIVIL ACTION NO. **CGC-17-557063**

**COMPLAINT FOR INJUNCTIVE
RELIEF AND CIVIL PENALTIES**

[Cal. Health and Safety Code
Sec. 25249.6, *et seq.*]

BY FAX
ONE LEGAL LLC

COMPLAINT FOR INJUNCTIVE RELEIF AND CIVIL PENALTIES
McCartney v. Freeland Foods Inc.

1 Erika McCartney, in the public interest, based on information and belief and investigation
2 of counsel, except for information based on knowledge, hereby makes the following allegations.
3

4 **INTRODUCTION**

5
6 1. This Complaint seeks to remedy Defendant's continuing failure to adequately warn
7 individuals in California that they are being exposed to cadmium, a chemical known to the State of
8 California to cause birth defects and other reproductive harm. Such exposures have occurred, and
9 continue to occur, through the manufacture, distribution, sale and consumption of Defendant's "Go
10 Raw" chocolate pieces, in "Super," "Mint" and "Orange" varieties (the "Products.") On
11 information and belief, the Products are available to consumers in California through a multitude of
12 retail channels including, without limitation: (a) via the internet through Defendant's website; and
13 (c) via the internet through third-party retail websites; and (c) via traditional "brick and mortar"
14 third-party retail locations. Consumers are exposed to cadmium when they consume the Products.
15

16 2. Under California's Proposition 65, Health & Safety Code § 25249.5, *et seq.*, it is
17 unlawful for businesses to knowingly and intentionally expose individuals in California to
18 chemicals known to the State to cause cancer, birth defects or other reproductive harm without
19 providing clear and reasonable warnings to individuals prior to their exposure. Defendant
20 introduces products contaminated with significant quantities of cadmium into the California
21 marketplace, exposing consumers of the Products to cadmium.
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23 3. Despite the fact that the Defendant exposes consumers to cadmium, during the
24 relevant period Defendant provided no warning about the reproductive hazards associated with
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1 cadmium exposure. Defendant's conduct thus violates the warning provision of Proposition 65,
2 Health & Safety Code § 25249.6.

3 **PARTIES**

4 4. Plaintiff brings this enforcement action in the public interest pursuant to Health &
5 Safety Code § 25249.7(d).

6 5. Defendant FREELAND FOODS INC. ("Defendant") is a person in the course of
7 doing business within the meaning of Health & Safety Code § 25249.11. This Defendant
8 manufactures, distributes and/or sells the Products for sale and use in California.
9

10 6. The true names of DOES 1 through 500 are unknown to Plaintiff at this time. When
11 their identities are ascertained, the Complaint shall be amended to reflect their true names.
12

13 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

14 7. The Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to Health & Safety Code §
15 25249.7, which allows enforcement in any court of competent jurisdiction, and pursuant to
16 California Constitution Article VI, Section 10, because this case is a cause not given by statute to
17 other trial courts.
18

19 8. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendant as a business entity that does sufficient
20 business, has sufficient minimum contacts in California, or otherwise intentionally avails itself of
21 the California market through the sale, marketing or use of the Product in California and/or by
22 having such other contacts with California so as to render the exercise of jurisdiction over it by the
23 California courts consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.
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9. Venue is proper in San Francisco County Superior Court because one or more of the violations arise in the County of San Francisco.

BACKGROUND

10. The People of the State of California have declared by initiative under Proposition 65 their right “[t]o be informed about exposures to chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm.” Proposition 65 § 1(b).

11. To effectuate this goal, Proposition 65 prohibits exposing people to chemicals listed by the State of California as known to cause cancer, birth defects or other reproductive harm above certain levels without a “clear and reasonable warning” unless the business responsible for the exposure can prove that it fits within a statutory exemption. Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 states, in pertinent part:

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

12. On May 1, 1997, the State of California officially listed cadmium as a chemical known to cause reproductive toxicity. Cadmium is specifically identified as a reproductive toxicant under two subcategories: “developmental reproductive toxicity,” which means harm to the developing fetus, and “male reproductive toxicity,” which means harm to the male reproductive system. 27 California Code of Regulations (“C.C.R.”) § 27001(c). On May 1, 1998, one year after it was listed as a chemical known to cause reproductive toxicity, cadmium became subject to the clear and reasonable warning requirement regarding reproductive toxicants under Proposition 65.

1 13. The level of exposure to a chemical causing reproductive toxicity under Proposition
2 65 is determined by multiplying the level in question times the reasonably anticipated rate of
3 exposure for an individual to a given medium. 27 C.C.R. § 25821(b). For exposures to consumer
4 products, the level of exposure is calculated using the reasonably anticipated rate of intake or
5 exposure for average users of the consumer product. 27 C.C.R. § 25821(c)(2).
6

7 14. Defendant's Products contain sufficient quantities of cadmium such that consumers,
8 including pregnant women, who consume the Products are exposed to cadmium. The primary
9 route of exposure for the violations is direct ingestion when consumers orally ingest the Products.
10 These exposures occur in homes, workplaces and everywhere in California where the Products are
11 consumed.
12

13 15. During the relevant one-year period herein, no clear and reasonable warning was
14 provided with the Products regarding the reproductive hazards of cadmium.

15 16. Any person acting in the public interest has standing to enforce violations of
16 Proposition 65 provided that such person has supplied the requisite public enforcers with a valid
17 60-Day Notice of Violation and such public enforcers are not diligently prosecuting the action
18 within such time. Health & Safety Code §25249.7(d).
19

20 17. More than sixty days prior to naming each Defendant in this lawsuit, Plaintiff
21 provided a 60-Day "Notice of Violation of Proposition 65" to the California Attorney General, the
22 District Attorneys of every county in California, the City Attorneys of every California city with a
23 population greater than 750,000 and to the named Defendant. In compliance with Health & Safety
24 Code § 25249.7(d) and 27 C.C.R. § 25903(b), each Notice included the following information: (1)
25 the name and address of each violator; (2) the statute violated; (3) the time period during which
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1 violations occurred; (4) specific descriptions of the violations, including (a) the routes of exposure
2 to cadmium, *inter alia*, from the Products, and (b) the specific type of Products sold and used in
3 violation of Proposition 65; and (5) the name of the specific Proposition 65-listed chemical that is
4 the subject of the violations described in each Notice.

5
6 18. Plaintiff also sent a Certificate of Merit for each Notice to the California Attorney
7 General, the District Attorneys of every county in California, the City Attorneys of every California
8 city with a population greater than 750,000 and to the named Defendant. In compliance with
9 Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(d) and 11 C.C.R. § 3101, each Certificate certified that Plaintiff's
10 counsel: (1) has consulted with one or more persons with relevant and appropriate experience or
11 expertise who reviewed facts, studies or other data regarding the exposures to Cadmium alleged in
12 each Notice; and (2) based on the information obtained through such consultations, believes that
13 there is a reasonable and meritorious case for a citizen enforcement action based on the facts
14 alleged in each Notice. In compliance with Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(d) and 11 C.C.R. §
15 3102, each Certificate served on the Attorney General included factual information - provided on a
16 confidential basis – sufficient to establish the basis for the Certificate, including the identity of the
17 person(s) consulted by the Plaintiff's counsel and the facts, studies or other data reviewed by such
18 persons.
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20
21 19. None of the public prosecutors with the authority to prosecute violations of
22 Proposition 65 has commenced and/or is diligently prosecuting a cause of action against Defendant
23 under Health & Safety Code § 25249.5, *et seq.*, based on the claims asserted in Plaintiff's Notice.

24 20. Defendant both knows and intends that individuals will consume the Products, thus
25 exposing them to cadmium.
26

1 21. Under Proposition 65, an exposure is “knowing” where the party responsible for
2 such exposure has:

3 knowledge of the fact that a[n] ... exposure to a chemical listed pursuant
4 to [Health & Safety Code § 25249.8(a)] is occurring. No knowledge that
5 the ... exposure is unlawful is required.

6 27 C.C.R. § 25102(n). This knowledge may be either actual or constructive. *See, e.g.*, Final
7 Statement of Reasons Revised (November 4, 1988) (pursuant to former 22 C.C.R. Division 2, §
8 12201).

9 22. Defendant has also been informed of the cadmium in the Product by the 60-Day
10 Notice of Violation and accompanying Certificate of Merit served on them.

11 23. Defendant also has constructive knowledge that its Products contains cadmium due
12 to the widespread media coverage concerning the problem of Cadmium in consumer products in
13 general, and, in particular, cocoa and chocolate products.

14 24. As an entity that manufactures, imports, distributes and/or sells the Products for use
15 in the California marketplace, Defendant knows or should know that the Products contain cadmium
16 and that individuals who consume the Products will be exposed to cadmium. The cadmium
17 exposures to consumers who consume the Products are a natural and foreseeable consequence of
18 Defendant’s placing the Products into the stream of commerce.
19

20 25. Nevertheless, Defendant continues to expose consumers to cadmium without prior
21 clear and reasonable warnings regarding the reproductive hazards of cadmium.
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23 26. Plaintiff has engaged in good-faith efforts to resolve the claims alleged herein prior
24 to filing this Complaint.
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1 27. Any person “violating or threatening to violate” Proposition 65 may be enjoined in
2 any court of competent jurisdiction. Health & Safety Code § 25249.7. “Threaten to violate” is
3 defined to mean “to create a condition in which there is a substantial probability that a violation
4 will occur.” Health & Safety Code § 25249.11(e). Proposition 65 provides for civil penalties not
5 to exceed \$2,500 per day for each violation of Proposition 65.
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7
8 **CAUSE OF ACTION**

9 **(Violations of the Health & Safety Code 25249.6)**

10 28. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference as if specifically set forth herein
11 Paragraphs 1 through 27, inclusive.

12 29. By placing the Products into the stream of commerce, Defendant is a person in the
13 course of doing business within the meaning of Health & Safety Code § 25249.11.
14

15 30. Cadmium is a chemical listed by the State of California as known to cause birth
16 defects and other reproductive harm.

17 31. Defendant knows that typical use of the Products will expose users of the Products
18 to cadmium. Defendant intends that the Products be used in a manner that results in exposures to
19 cadmium from the Products.

20 32. Defendant has failed to provide clear and reasonable warnings regarding the
21 reproductive toxicity of cadmium to users of the Products.
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23 33. By committing the acts alleged above, Defendant has at all times relevant to this
24 Complaint violated Proposition 65 by knowingly and intentionally exposing individuals to
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1 cadmium without first giving clear and reasonable warnings to such individuals regarding the
2 reproductive toxicity of cadmium.

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5 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

6 Wherefore, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendant as follows:

7 1. That the Court, pursuant to Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(b), assess civil
8 penalties against the Defendant in the amount of \$2,500 per day for each violation of Proposition
9 65;

10 2. That the Court, pursuant to Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(a), preliminarily and
11 permanently enjoin Defendant from offering the Products for sale in California without either
12 reformulating the Products such that no Proposition 65 warnings are required or providing prior
13 clear and reasonable warnings, as Plaintiff shall specify in further application to the Court;


14 3. That the Court, pursuant to Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(a), order Defendant to
15 take action to stop ongoing unwarranted exposures to cadmium resulting from use of Products sold,
16 as Plaintiff shall specify in further application to the Court;

17 4. That the Court, pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure § 1021.5 or any other
18 applicable theory or doctrine, grant Plaintiff her reasonable attorneys' fees and costs of suit; and
19

20 5. That the Court grant such other and further relief as may be just and proper.
21

22 Dated: February 10, 2017.

PACIFIC JUSTICE CENTER

23
24 By: 
25 Robert B. Hancock
26 Attorneys for Plaintiff