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ESSEX COUNTY
ALABAMA COUNTY
JUN 22 2018
CLERK OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
By CURTIS H. GANTER
Clerk

9 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
10 COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

11 HECTOR VELARDE,
12 Plaintiff,
13 vs.
14 NEWTON BUYING CORP.,
15 Defendant.

Case No.: **RG18909955**
**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES
AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**
**(Violation of Health & Safety Code §25249.5
et seq.)**

16 Plaintiff Hector Velarde ("Plaintiff"), by and through his attorneys, alleges the following
17 cause of action in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California.

18 **BACKGROUND OF THE CASE**

19 1. Plaintiff brings this representative action on behalf of all California citizens to
20 enforce relevant portions of Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, codified
21 at the Health and Safety Code § 25249.5 et seq. ("Proposition 65"), which reads, in relevant part,
22 "[n]o person in the course of doing business shall knowingly and intentionally expose any
23 individual to a chemical known to the state to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first
24 giving clear and reasonable warning to such individual ...". Health & Safety Code § 25249.6.

25 2. This complaint is a representative action brought by Plaintiff in the public interest
26 of the citizens of the State of California to enforce the People's right to be informed of the health
27 and safety of the products they purchase and use.

BY FAX

1 hazards caused by exposure to Di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP), a toxic chemical found in
2 Isabella Scott bags/totes sold and/or distributed by defendant Newton Buying Corp.
3 (“Defendant”) in California.

4 3. DEHP is a harmful chemical known to the State of California to cause cancer and
5 reproductive toxicity. On January 1, 1988, the State of California listed DEHP as a chemical
6 known to the State to cause cancer and DEHP has come under the purview of Proposition 65
7 regulations since that time. Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 27, § 27001(c); Health & Safety Code §§
8 25249.8 & 25249.10(b). On October 24, 2003, the State of California listed DEHP as a chemical
9 known to cause reproductive toxicity.

10 4. Proposition 65 requires all businesses with ten (10) or more employees that
11 operate within California or sell products therein to comply with Proposition 65 regulations.
12 Included in such regulations is the requirement that businesses must label any product containing
13 a Proposition 65-listed chemical with a “clear and reasonable” warning before “knowingly and
14 intentionally” exposing any person to it.

15 5. Proposition 65 allows for civil penalties of up to \$2,500.00 per day per violation
16 to be imposed upon defendants in a civil action for violations of Proposition 65. Health & Safety
17 Code § 25249.7(b). Proposition 65 also allows for any court of competent jurisdiction to enjoin
18 the actions of a defendant which “violate or threaten to violate” the statute. Health & Safety
19 Code § 25249.7.

20 6. Plaintiff alleges that Defendant manufactures, distributes, imports, sells and/or
21 offers for sale in California, without a requisite exposure warning, Isabella Scott bags/totes (the
22 “Products”) that expose persons to DEHP.

23 7. Defendant’s failure to warn consumers and other individuals in California of the
24 health hazards associated with exposure to DEHP in conjunction with the sale, manufacture,
25 and/or distribution of the Products is a violation of Proposition 65 and subjects Defendant to the
26 enjoinder and civil penalties described herein.

27 8. Plaintiff seeks civil penalties against Defendant for its violations of Proposition
28 65 in accordance with Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(b).

1 State of California, and/or has otherwise purposefully availed itself of the California market.
2 Such purposeful availment has rendered the exercise of jurisdiction by California courts
3 consistent and permissible with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

4 **SATISFACTION OF NOTICE REQUIREMENTS**

5 16. On March 9, 2018, Plaintiff gave notice of alleged violation of Health and Safety
6 Code § 25249.6 (the "Notice") to Defendant concerning the exposure of California citizens to
7 DEHP contained in the Products without proper warning, subject to a private action to Defendant
8 and to the California Attorney General's office and the offices of the County District attorneys
9 and City Attorneys for each city with a population greater than 750,000 persons wherein the
10 herein violations allegedly occurred.

11 17. The Notice complied with all procedural requirements of Proposition 65 including
12 the attachment of a Certificate of Merit affirming that Plaintiff's counsel had consulted with at
13 least one person with relevant and appropriate expertise who reviewed relevant data regarding
14 DEHP exposure, and that counsel believed there was meritorious and reasonable cause for a
15 private action.

16 18. After receiving the Notice, and to Plaintiff's best information and belief, none of
17 the noticed appropriate public enforcement agencies have commenced and diligently prosecuted
18 a cause of action against Defendant under Proposition 65 to enforce the alleged violations which
19 are the subject of Plaintiff's notice of violation.

20 19. Plaintiff is commencing this action more than sixty (60) days from the date of the
21 Notice to Defendant, as required by law.

22 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

23 **(By Plaintiff against Defendant for the Violation of Proposition 65)**

24 20. Plaintiff hereby repeats and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 19 of
25 this complaint as though fully set forth herein.

26 21. Defendant have, at all times mentioned herein, acted as manufacturer, distributor,
27 and/or retailer of the Product.

28

1 22. The Products contain DEHP, a hazardous chemical found on the Proposition 65
2 list of chemicals known to be hazardous to human health.

3 23. The Products do not comply with the Proposition 65 warning requirements.

4 24. Plaintiff, based on his best information and belief, avers that at all relevant times
5 herein, and at least since December 13, 2017, continuing until the present, that Defendant has
6 continued to knowingly and intentionally expose California users and consumers of the Product
7 to DEHP without providing required warnings under Proposition 65.

8 25. The exposures that are the subject of the Notice result from the purchase,
9 acquisition, handling and recommended use of the product. Consequently, the primary route of
10 exposure to these chemicals is through dermal absorption. Users may potentially be exposed to
11 DEHP by dermal absorption through direct skin contact with the case during routine use when
12 the case is manipulated with bare hands. Concentrations of gas phase DEHP can potentially be
13 absorbed to the surface of the interior contents. When handled, these items can provide an
14 indirect source of dermal transfer of DEHP to the user's bare hands. Should the user manipulate
15 the cosmetic bag or contaminated inner contents with wet hands, or the cosmetic bag or its
16 contents become wet, aqueous DEHP skin permeation rates are faster than neat DEHP
17 permeation. If the cosmetic bag is stored or transported in a carrier, DEHP that leaches from the
18 item may contaminate other articles contained within these closed spaces that are subsequently
19 handled, worn, mouthed, or ingested by the user. Finally, while mouthing of the product does
20 not seem likely, some amount of exposure through ingestion can occur by touching the product
21 with subsequent touching of the user's hand to mouth.

22 26. Plaintiff, based on his best information and belief, avers that such exposures will
23 continue every day until clear and reasonable warnings are provided to Product purchasers and
24 users or until this known toxic chemical is removed from the Product.

25 27. Defendant have knowledge that the normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the
26 Product exposes individuals to DEHP, and Defendant intend that exposures to DEHP will occur
27 by their deliberate, non-accidental participation in the manufacture, importation, distribution,
28 sale and offering of the Product to consumers in California

1 28. Plaintiff has engaged in good faith efforts to resolve the herein claims prior to this
2 Complaint.

3 29. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(b), as a consequence of the above
4 described acts, Defendant is liable for a maximum civil penalty of \$2,500 per day per violation.

5 30. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(a), this Court is specifically
6 authorized to grant injunctive relief in favor of Plaintiff and against Defendant.

7 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

8 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against Defendant and requests the
9 following relief:

- 10 A. That the court assess civil penalties against Defendant in the amount of
11 \$2,500 per day for each violation in accordance with Health and Safety
12 Code § 25249.7(b);
- 13 B. That the court preliminarily and permanently enjoin Defendant mandating
14 Proposition 65 compliant warnings on the Product;
- 15 C. That the court grant Plaintiff reasonable attorney's fees and costs of suit.
- 16 D. That the court grant any further relief as may be just and proper.

17 Dated: June 21, 2018

BRODSKY & SMITH, LLC

18 By:  _____

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