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**ENDORSED
FILED
ALAMEDA COUNTY**

JUN 19 2019

CLERK OF THE COURT

BY:  Deputy Clerk

9 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

10 PRECILA BALABBO,
11 Plaintiff,
12 vs.
13 ROSS STORES, INC.,
14 Defendant.

Case No.: **HG19023542**

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES AND
INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

(Violation of Health & Safety Code § 25249.5 et
seq.)

15 Plaintiff Precila Balabbo ("Plaintiff"), by and through her attorneys, alleges the following
16 cause of action in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California.

17 **BACKGROUND OF THE CASE**

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

24 2. This complaint is a representative action brought by Plaintiff in the public interest
25 of the citizens of the State of California to enforce the People's right to be informed of the health
26 hazards caused by exposure to diisononyl phthalate (DINP), a toxic chemical found in Karma
27 Purple-Striped bags, S18-1BG20, D2011, C576, 400177990140 sold and/or distributed by
28 defendant Ross Stores, Inc. ("Ross Stores" or "Defendant") in California.

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COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF – VIOLATION OF
HEALTH & SAFETY CODE §25249.5

Filed By Fax

1 10. Plaintiff is a citizen of the State of California acting in the interest of the general
2 public to promote awareness of exposures to toxic chemicals in products sold in California and
3 to improve human health by reducing hazardous substances contained in such items. She brings
4 this action in the public interest pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(d).

5 11. Defendant Ross Stores, through its business, effectively manufactures, imports,
6 distributes, sells, and/or offers the Products for sale or use in the State of California, or it implies
7 by its conduct that it manufactures, imports, distributes, sells, and/or offers the Products for sale
8 or use in the State of California.

9 12. Plaintiff alleges that defendant Ross Stores is a “person” in the course of doing
10 business within the meaning of Health & Safety Code sections 25249.6 and 25249.11.

11 **VENUE AND JURISDICTION**

12 13. Venue is proper in the County of Alameda because one or more of the instances
13 of wrongful conduct occurred, and continue to occur in this county and/or because Defendant
14 conducted, and continues to conduct, business in the County of Alameda with respect to the
15 Products.

16 14. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to California Constitution
17 Article VI, § 10, which grants the Superior Court original jurisdiction in all causes except those
18 given by statute to other trial courts. Health and Safety Code § 25249.7 allows for the
19 enforcement of violations of Proposition 65 in any Court of competent jurisdiction; therefore,
20 this Court has jurisdiction over this lawsuit.

21 15. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant is either a citizen
22 of the State of California, has sufficient minimum contacts with the State of California, is
23 registered with the California Secretary of State as foreign corporations authorized to do business
24 in the State of California, and/or has otherwise purposefully availed itself of the California
25 market. Such purposeful availment has rendered the exercise of jurisdiction by California courts
26 consistent and permissible with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

27 **SATISFACTION OF NOTICE REQUIREMNTS**

1 16. On June 22, 2018, Plaintiff gave notice of alleged violation of Health and Safety
2 Code § 25249.6 (the “Notice”) to Defendant concerning the exposure of California citizens to
3 DINP contained in the Products without proper warning, subject to a private action to Defendant
4 and to the California Attorney General’s office and the offices of the County District attorneys
5 and City Attorneys for each city with a population greater than 750,000 persons wherein the
6 herein violations allegedly occurred.

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

12 18. After receiving the Notice, and to Plaintiff’s best information and belief, none of
13 the noticed appropriate public enforcement agencies have commenced and diligently prosecuted
14 a cause of action against Defendant under Proposition 65 to enforce the alleged violations which
15 are the subject of the Notice.

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

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

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

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

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

23 22. The Products contain DINP, a hazardous chemical found on the Proposition 65
24 list of chemicals known to be hazardous to human health.

25 23. The Product does not comply with the Proposition 65 warning requirements.

26 24. Plaintiff, based on her best information and belief, avers that at all relevant times
27 herein, and at least since May 29, 2018, continuing until the present, that Defendant has
28

1 continued to knowingly and intentionally expose California users and consumers of the Product
2 to DINP without providing required warnings under Proposition 65.

3 25. The exposures that are the subject of the Notice result from the purchase,
4 acquisition, handling and recommended use of the Product. Consequently, the primary route of
5 exposure to these chemicals is through dermal absorption. Users may be exposed to DINP by
6 dermal absorption through direct skin contact with the Product during routine use when the
7 Product is manipulated with bare hands. If the Product is handled with wet hands or the Product
8 is wet, aqueous HMWP skin permeation rates have been reported to be faster than neat HMWP
9 permeation. Concentrations of gas phase DINP can be expected to build within the enclosed
10 interior of the Product. This gas phase DINP can potentially be absorbed to the surface of the
11 interior contents that are subsequently handled, worn, mouthed, or ingested by the user. If the
12 Product is stored or transported in a carrier, DINP that leaches from the Product may
13 contaminate other articles contained within these closed spaces that are subsequently handled,
14 worn, mouthed, or ingested by the user. Finally, while mouthing of the Product does not seem
15 likely, some amount of exposure through ingestion can occur by touching the Product with
16 subsequent touching of the user's hand to mouth.

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

20 27. Defendant has knowledge that the normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the
21 Product exposes individuals to DINP, and Defendant intends that exposures to DINP will occur
22 by its deliberate, non-accidental participation in the manufacture, importation, distribution, sale
23 and offering of the Products to consumers in California

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

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

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