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CLERK OF
THE SUPERIOR COURT
By Jessica Flores, Deputy

CASE NUMBER:

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES, INC.

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES,
INC.,

Plaintiff,

v.

CHATEAU INTERNATIONAL, INC., a New
York corporation and ROSS STORES, INC., a
California corporation, and DOES 1 through
100, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.:

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES
AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

(Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 et seq.)

COMPLAINT

I.
INTRODUCTION

1. This Complaint is a representative action brought by Environmental Health Advocates, Inc. (“Plaintiff”) in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California (“the People”). Plaintiff seeks to remedy Defendants’ failure to inform the People of exposure to di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP), a known carcinogen. Defendants expose consumers to DEHP by manufacturing, importing, selling, and/or distributing Chateau International Cross Body Handbags (“Products”). Defendants know and intend that customers will be exposed to Products containing DEHP.

2. Under California’s Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, California Health and Safety Code, section 25249.6 et seq. (“Proposition 65”), “[n]o 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. . . .” (Health & Safety Code, § 25249.6.)

3. California identified and listed DEHP as a chemical known to cause cancer as early as January 1, 1988, and as a chemical known to cause developmental/reproductive toxicity on October 24, 2003.

4. Defendants failed to sufficiently warn consumers and individuals in California about potential exposure to DEHP in connection with Defendants’ manufacture, import, sale, or distribution of Products. This is a violation of Proposition 65.

5. Plaintiff seeks injunctive relief compelling Defendants to sufficiently warn consumers in California before exposing them to DEHP in Products. (Health & Safety Code, § 25249.7(a).) Plaintiff also seeks civil penalties against Defendant for its violations of Proposition 65 along with attorney’s fees and costs. (Health & Safety Code, § 25249.7(b).)

II.
PARTIES

6. Plaintiff ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES, INC. (“Plaintiff”) is a corporation in the State of California dedicated to protecting the health of California citizens through the elimination or reduction of toxic exposure from consumer products. It brings this action in the public interest pursuant to Health and Safety Code, section 25249.7.

7. Defendant CHATEAU INTERNATIONAL, INC., (“Chateau International”) is a corporation organized and existing under the laws of New York. Chateau International is registered to do business in California and does business in the County of Alameda, within the meaning of Health and Safety Code, section 25249.11. Chateau International manufactures, imports, sells, or distributes the Products in California and Alameda County.

8. Defendant ROSS STORES, INC., (“Ross”) is a corporation organized and existing under the laws of California. Ross is registered to do business in California and does business in the County of Alameda, within the meaning of Health and Safety Code, section 25249.11. Ross manufactures, imports, sells, or distributes the Products in California and Alameda County.

9. Plaintiff does not know the true names and/or capacities, whether individual, partners, or corporate, of the defendants sued herein as DOES 1 through 100, inclusive, and for that reason sues said defendants under fictitious names. Plaintiff will seek leave to amend this Complaint when the true names and capacities of these defendants have been ascertained. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that these defendants are responsible in whole or in part for Plaintiff's alleged damages.

III. VENUE AND JURISDICTION

9. California Constitution Article VI, Section 10 grants the Superior Court original jurisdiction in all cases except those given by statute to other trial courts. The Health and Safety Code statute upon which this action is based does not give jurisdiction to any other court. As such, this Court has jurisdiction.

10. Venue is proper in Alameda County Superior Court pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure, sections 394, 395, and 395.5. Wrongful conduct occurred and continues to occur in this County. Defendants conducted and continue to conduct business in this County as it relates to Products.

11. Defendants have sufficient minimum contacts in the State of California or otherwise purposefully avail themselves of the California market. Exercising jurisdiction over Defendants would be consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

IV.
CAUSES OF ACTION

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION
(Violation of Proposition 65 – Against all Defendants)

12. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained above.

13. Proposition 65 mandates that citizens be informed about exposures to chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects, and other reproductive harm.

14. Defendants manufactured, imported, sold, and/or distributed Products containing DEHP in violation of Health and Safety Code, section 25249.6 et seq. Plaintiff is informed and believes such violations have continued after receipt of the Notice (defined *infra*) and will continue to occur into the future.

15. In manufacturing, importing, selling, and/or distributing Products, Defendants failed to provide a clear and reasonable warning to consumers and individuals in California who may be exposed to DEHP through reasonably foreseeable use of the Products.

16. Products expose individuals to DEHP through dermal absorption, ingestion, and inhalation. This exposure is a natural and foreseeable consequence of Defendants placing Products into the stream of commerce. As such, Defendants intend that consumers will either dermally absorb, ingest, or inhale Products, exposing them to DEHP.

17. Defendants knew or should have known that the Products contained DEHP and exposed individuals to DEHP in the ways provided above. The Notice informed Defendants of the presence of DEHP in the Products. Likewise, media coverage concerning DEHP and related chemicals in consumer products provided constructive notice to Defendants.

18. Defendants' action in this regard were deliberate and not accidental.

19. More than sixty days prior to naming each defendant in this lawsuit, Plaintiff issued a 60-Day Notice of Violation ("Notice") as required by and in compliance with Proposition 65. Plaintiff provided the Notice to the various required public enforcement agencies along with a certificate of merit. The Notice alleged that Defendants violated Proposition 65 by failing to sufficiently warn consumers in California of the health hazards associated with exposures to DEHP contained in the Products.

20. The appropriate public enforcement agencies provided with the Notice failed to commence and diligently prosecute a cause of action against Defendants.

21. Individuals exposed to DEHP contained in Products through dermal absorption, ingestion, and inhalation resulting from reasonably foreseeable use of the Products have suffered and continue to suffer irreparable harm. There is no other plain, speedy, or adequate remedy at law.

22. Defendants are liable for a maximum civil penalty of \$2,500 per day for each violation of Proposition 65 pursuant to Health and Safety Code, section 252497(b). Injunctive relief is also appropriate pursuant to Health and Safety Code, section 25249.7(a).

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

Wherefore, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendants, and each of them, as follows:

1. Civil penalties in the amount of \$2,500 per day for each violation;
2. A preliminary and permanent injunction against Defendants from manufacturing, importing, selling, and/or distributing Products in California without providing a clear and reasonable warning as required by Proposition 65 and related Regulations;
3. Reasonable attorney's fees and costs of suit; and
4. Such other and further relief as may be just and proper.

Respectfully submitted:

Dated: October 9, 2020

NICHOLAS & TOMASEVIC, LLP

By: Jake Schulte
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Attorney for Plaintiff