

To: Alameda County Superior Court Civil Fax Page 5 of 9 2020-08-21 20:09:17 (GMT)

16193930154 From: Samantha Dice

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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., a California organization,  
  
Plaintiff,  
  
v.  
  
THE ABS COMPANY., a New Jersey corporation, WALMART, INC., a Delaware corporation, DOES 1 through 100, inclusive,  
  
Defendants.

Case No.:  
  
**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**  
  
(Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 et seq.)

**FILED BY FAX**  
ALAMEDA COUNTY  
August 21, 2020  
CLERK OF THE SUPERIOR COURT  
By Lynn Wiley, Deputy  
CASE NUMBER:  
**HG20071419**

**I.**  
**INTRODUCTION**

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2           1.       This Complaint is a representative action brought by Environmental Health Advocates,  
3 Inc. (“Plaintiff”) in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California (“the People”). Plaintiff  
4 seeks to remedy Defendants’ failure to inform the People of exposure to Di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate  
5 (DEHP), a known carcinogen. Defendants expose consumers to DEHP by manufacturing, importing,  
6 selling, and/or distributing CoreMat – a core training accessory designed to strengthen abdominal  
7 muscles (“Products”). Defendants know and expose customers to Products containing DEHP.

8           2.       Under California’s Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, California  
9 Health and Safety Code, section 25249.6 et seq. (“Proposition 65”), “[n]o person in the course of doing  
10 business shall knowingly and intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the state to  
11 cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable warning to such  
12 individual. . . .” (Health & Safety Code, § 25249.6.)

13           3.       California identified and listed DEHP as a chemical known to cause cancer as early as  
14 January 1, 1988, and as a chemical known to cause developmental/reproductive toxicity on October 24,  
15 2003.

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

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

**II.**  
**PARTIES**

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

1           7.        Defendant THE ABS COMPANY (“The Abs Company”) is a corporation organized  
2 and existing under the laws of New Jersey. The Abs Company is registered to do business in  
3 California, and does business in the County of Alameda, within the meaning of Health and Safety  
4 Code, section 25249.11. The Abs Company manufactures, imports, sells, or distributes the Products in  
5 California and Alameda County.

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

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

15   **III.**  
16    **VENUE AND JURISDICTION**

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

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

24          12.       Defendants have sufficient minimum contacts in the State of California or otherwise  
25 purposefully avails itself of the California market. Exercising jurisdiction over Defendants would be  
26 consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

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**IV.**  
**CAUSES OF ACTION**

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

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

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

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. Products expose individuals to DEHP through direct exposure. This exposure is a natural and foreseeable consequence of Defendants placing Products into the stream of commerce. As such, Defendants intend that consumers will ingest Products, exposing them to DEHP.

18. 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.

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

20. 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.

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

1           22.       Individuals exposed to DEHP contained in Products through direct exposure resulting  
2 from reasonably foreseeable use of the Products have suffered and continue to suffer irreparable harm.  
3 There is no other plain, speedy, or adequate remedy at law.

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

7  
8 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

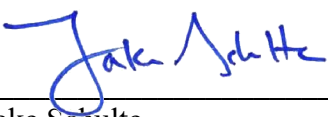
9           Wherefore, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendants, and each of them, as follows:

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

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17 Respectfully submitted:

18 Dated: August 21, 2020

**Nicholas and Tomasevic, LLP**

19  
20   By:   
21   \_\_\_\_\_  
22   Jake Schulte  
23   Attorney for Plaintiff