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ELECTRONICALLY
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Superior Court of California,
County of San Francisco

11/12/2021
Clerk of the Court
BY: KAREN VALDES
Deputy Clerk

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

9 ANTHONY FERREIRO,

10 Plaintiff,

11 vs.

12 STORAGEWORKS CO., LTD.,
13 LOWE'S COMPANIES, INC.,

14 Defendants.

Case No.:

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES AND
INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

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

CGC-21-596255

15 Plaintiff Anthony Ferreiro ("Plaintiff"), by and through his 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 at
20 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 di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP), a toxic chemical found in We
27 Think Hangers sold and/or distributed by defendant StorageWorks Co., Ltd. ("StorageWorks")
28 and defendant Lowe's Companies, Inc. ("Lowe's") (collectively, the "Defendants") in California.

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

7 4. Proposition 65 requires all businesses with ten (10) or more employees that operate
8 within California or sell products therein to comply with Proposition 65 regulations. Included in
9 such regulations is the requirement that businesses must label any product containing a Proposition
10 65-listed chemical that will create an exposure above safe harbor levels with a “clear and
11 reasonable” warning before “knowingly and intentionally” exposing any person to any such listed
12 chemical.

13 5. Proposition 65 allows for civil penalties of up to \$2,500.00 per day per violation
14 for up to 365 days (up to a maximum civil penalty amount per violation of \$912,000.00) to be
15 imposed upon defendants in a civil action for violations of Proposition 65. Health & Safety Code
16 § 25249.7(b). Proposition 65 also allows for any court of competent jurisdiction to enjoin the
17 actions of a defendant which “violate or threaten to violate” the statute. Health & Safety Code §
18 25249.7.

19 6. Plaintiff alleges that Defendants distribute and/or offer for sale in California,
20 without a requisite exposure warning, We Think Hangers (the “Products”) that expose persons to
21 DEHP when used for their intended purpose.

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

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

1 of violations of Proposition 65 in any Court of competent jurisdiction; therefore, this Court has
2 jurisdiction over this lawsuit.

3 16. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendants because each defendant is either a
4 citizen of the State of California, has sufficient minimum contacts with the State of California, is
5 registered with the California Secretary of State as foreign corporations authorized to do business
6 in the State of California, and/or has otherwise purposefully availed itself of the California market.
7 Such purposeful availment has rendered the exercise of jurisdiction by California courts consistent
8 and permissible with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

9 **STATUTORY BACKGROUND**

10 17. The people of the State of California declared in Proposition 65 their right “[t]o be
11 informed about exposures to chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive
12 harm.” (Section 1(b) of Initiative Measure, Proposition 65.)

13 18. To effect this goal, Proposition 65 requires that individuals be provided with a
14 “clear and reasonable warning” before being exposed to substances listed by the State of California
15 as causing cancer or reproductive toxicity. H&S Code § 25249.6 states, in pertinent part:

16 No person in the course of doing business shall knowingly and intentionally expose any
17 individual to a chemical known to the state to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without
18 first giving clear and reasonable warning to such individual...

19 19. An exposure to a chemical in a consumer product is one “which results from a
20 person’s acquisition, purchase, storage, consumption or other reasonably foreseeable use of a
21 consumer good, or any exposure that results from receiving a consumer service.” (27 CCR §
22 25602, para (b).) H&S Code § 25603(c) states that “a person in the course of doing business ...
23 shall provide a warning to any person to whom the product is sold or transferred unless the product
24 is packaged or labeled with a clear and reasonable warning.”

1 reproductive toxicity. In summary, the Listed Chemical was listed under Proposition 65 as a
2 chemical known to the State to cause cancer and reproductive toxicity.

3 23. The consumer exposures that are the subject of this Complaint result from dermal
4 absorption. The primary route of exposure to the DEHP is through dermal absorption directly
5 through the skin when consumers use, touch, or handle the Products. Some amount of exposure
6 through ingestion can occur by touching the Products with subsequent touching of the user's hand
7 to mouth. No clear and reasonable warning is provided with the Products regarding the health
8 hazards of exposure to the DEHP.

9 24. Defendants have manufactured, processed, marketed, distributed, offered to sell
10 and/or sold the Products in California since at least April 9, 2021. The Products continue to be
11 distributed and sold in California without the requisite warning information.

12 25. At all times relevant to this action, Defendants have knowingly and intentionally
13 exposed users of the Products to DEHP without first giving a clear and reasonable exposure
14 warning to such individuals.

15 26. As a proximate result of acts by each defendant, as a person in the course of doing
16 business within the meaning of H&S Code § 25249.11, individuals throughout the State of
17 California, including in San Francisco County, have been exposed to DEHP without a clear and
18 reasonable warning on the Products. The individuals subject to the violative exposures include
19 normal and foreseeable users and consumers that use the Products, as well as all others exposed to
20 the Products.

21 **SATISFACTION OF NOTICE REQUIREMENTS**

22 27. On May 17, 2021, Plaintiff gave notice of alleged violation of Health and Safety
23 Code § 25249.6 (the "Notice") to Defendants concerning the exposure of California citizens to
24 DEHP contained in the Products without proper warning, subject to a private action to Defendants
25 and to the California Attorney General's office and the offices of the County District attorneys and
26 City Attorneys for each city with a population greater than 750,000 persons wherein the herein
27 violations allegedly occurred.

1 Products with subsequent touching of the user's hand to mouth. No clear and reasonable warning
2 is provided with the Products regarding the health hazards of exposure to the DEHP.

3 37. Plaintiff, based on his best information and belief, avers that such exposures will
4 continue every day until clear and reasonable warnings are provided to purchasers and users or
5 until this known toxic chemical is removed from the Products.

6 38. Defendants have knowledge that the normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the
7 Products exposes individuals to DEHP, and Defendants intend that exposures to DEHP will occur
8 by its deliberate, non-accidental participation in the importation, distribution, sale and offering of
9 the Products to consumers in California

10 39. Plaintiff has engaged in good faith efforts to resolve the herein claims prior to this
11 Complaint.

12 40. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(b), as a consequence of the above
13 described acts, Defendants are liable for a maximum civil penalty of \$2,500 per day per violation.

14 41. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(a), this Court is specifically
15 authorized to grant injunctive relief in favor of Plaintiff and against Defendants.

16 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

17 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against Defendants and requests the following
18 relief:

19 A. That the court assess civil penalties against each defendant in the amount of \$2,500
20 per day for each violation for up to 365 days (up to a maximum civil penalty amount per
21 violation of \$912,000.00) in accordance with Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(b);

22 B. That the court preliminarily and permanently enjoin Defendants mandating
23 Proposition 65 compliant warnings on the Products;

24 C. That the court grant Plaintiff reasonable attorney's fees and costs of suit, in the
25 amount of \$50,000.00.

26 D. That the court grant any further relief as may be just and proper.

27 Dated: November 12, 2021

BRODSKY & SMITH

28 By: _____

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