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Superior Court of California,
County of San Francisco

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Deputy Clerk

9 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
10 COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

11 DONATUS MCCOY,

12 Plaintiff,

13 vs.

14 THE HOME DEPOT, INC.,

15 Defendants.

Case No.:

CGC-22-599719

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES AND
INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

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

16 Plaintiff Donatus McCoy (“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 at
21 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 against defendant The Home Depot, Inc. (“Home Depot”
27 or “Defendant”) to enforce the People’s right to be informed of the health hazards caused by
28

1 exposure to Bisphenol A (BPA) from the use of Husky Waterproof Storage Bins that are
2 manufactured, distributed, offered for sale and/or sold by Home Depot in California.

3 3. BPA is a harmful chemical known to the State of California to cause reproductive
4 toxicity. On May 11, 2015, the State of California listed BPA as a chemical known to the State to
5 cause reproductive toxicity and BPA has come under the purview of Proposition 65 regulations
6 since that time. Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 27, § 27001(c); Health & Safety Code §§ 25249.8 &
7 25249.10(b).

8 4. Proposition 65 requires all businesses with ten (10) or more employees that operate
9 within California or sell products therein to comply with Proposition 65 regulations. Included in
10 such regulations is the requirement that businesses must label any product containing a Proposition
11 65-listed chemical with a “clear and reasonable” warning before “knowingly and intentionally”
12 exposing any person to any such listed 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 Home Depot distributes and/or offers for sale in California,
20 without a requisite Proposition 65 exposure warning, Husky Waterproof Storage Bins (the
21 “Products”) that expose persons to BPA when used as intended and/or for its intended purpose.

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

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

1 9. Plaintiff also seeks injunctive relief, preliminarily and permanently, requiring
2 Home Depot to provide purchasers or users of the Products with required warnings related to the
3 dangers and health hazards associated with exposure to BPA from use of the Products pursuant to
4 Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(a).

5 10. Plaintiff further seeks a reasonable award of attorney's fees and costs.

6 **PARTIES**

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

11 12. Defendant Home Depot, through its business, effectively imports, distributes, sells
12 and/or offers the Products for sale or use in the State of California, or it implies by its conduct that
13 it imports, distributes, sells and/or offers the Products for sale or use in the State of California..

14 13. Plaintiff alleges that defendant Home Depot is a "person" in the course of doing
15 business within the meaning of Health & Safety Code sections 25249.6 and 25249.11.

16 **VENUE AND JURISDICTION**

17 14. Venue is proper in the County of San Francisco because one or more of the
18 instances of wrongful conduct occurred and continues to occur in this county and/or because Home
19 Depot conducted, and continues to conduct, business in the County of San Francisco with respect
20 to the Products.

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

26 16. This Court has jurisdiction over Home Depot because Defendant is either a citizen
27 of the State of California, has sufficient minimum contacts with the State of California, is
28 registered with the California Secretary of State as foreign corporations authorized to do business

1 in the 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 consistent
3 and permissible with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

4 STATUTORY BACKGROUND

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

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

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

14 19. An exposure to a chemical in a consumer product is one “which results from a
15 person’s acquisition, purchase, storage, consumption or other reasonably foreseeable use of a
16 consumer good, or any exposure that results from receiving a consumer service.” (27 CCR §
17 25602, para (b).) H&S Code § 25603(c) states that “a person in the course of doing business ...
18 shall provide a warning to any person to whom the product is sold or transferred unless the product
19 is packaged or labeled with a clear and reasonable warning.”

20 20. Pursuant to H&S Code § 25603.1, the warning may be provided by using one or
21 more of the following methods individually or in combination:¹

- 22 a. A warning that appears on a product’s label or other labeling.
- 23 b. Identification of the product at the retail outlet in a manner which provides
24 a warning. Identification may be through shelf labeling, signs, menus, or a combination
25 thereof.

26
27 ¹ Alternatively, a person in the course of doing business may elect to comply with the warning
28 requirements set out in the amended version of 27 CCR 25601, *et.seq.* as amended on August 30,
2016, and operative on August 30, 2018.

1 c. The warnings provided pursuant to subparagraphs (a) and (b) shall be
 2 prominently placed upon a product's labels or other labeling or displayed at the retail outlet
 3 with such conspicuousness, as compared with other words, statements, designs, or devices
 4 in the label, labeling or display as to render it likely to be read and understood by an
 5 ordinary individual under customary conditions of purchase or use.

6 d. A system of signs, public advertising identifying the system and toll-free
 7 information services, or any other system that provides clear and reasonable warnings.

8 21. Proposition 65 provides that any "person who violates or threatens to violate" the
 9 statute may be enjoined in a court of competent jurisdiction. (H&S Code § 25249.7.) The phrase
 10 "threaten to violate" is defined to mean creating "a condition in which there is a substantial
 11 probability that a violation will occur." (H&S Code § 25249.11(e).) Violators are liable for civil
 12 penalties of up to \$2,500.00 per day for each violation of the Act (H&S Code § 25249.7) for up to
 13 365 days (up to a maximum civil penalty amount per violation of \$912,000.00).

14 **FACTUAL BACKGROUND**

15 22. On May 11, 2015, the State of California listed BPA as a chemical known to the
 16 State to cause female reproductive toxicity and BPA has come under the purview of Proposition
 17 65 regulations since that time. Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 27, § 27001(c); Health & Safety Code §§
 18 25249.8 & 25249.10(b).

19 23. The exposures that are the subject of this complaint result from the purchase,
 20 acquisition, handling and recommend use of the Products. The primary route of exposure to BPA
 21 from use of the Products is dermal exposure. Dermal exposure to BPA is possible when the user
 22 handles the Products, or the Products are placed in contact with exposed areas of the user's skin.
 23 Additionally, exposure through ingestion will occur by touching the Products with subsequent
 24 touching of the user's hand to mouth.

25 24. Home Depot has distributed, offered to sell and/or sold the Products in California
 26 since at least August 16, 2021. The Products continue to be distributed and sold in California
 27 without a requisite Proposition 65 compliant BPA exposure warning.

1 25. At all times relevant to this action, Home Depot has knowingly and intentionally
2 exposed users, consumers and/or purchasers of the Products to BPA without first providing a clear
3 and reasonable exposure warning to such individuals.

4 26. As a proximate result of Defendant's actions, and as a person in the course of doing
5 business within the meaning of H&S Code § 25249.11, individuals throughout the State of
6 California, including in San Francisco County, have been exposed to BPA from use of the Products
7 without having first been provided a clear and reasonable exposure warning. The individuals
8 subject to the violative exposures include normal and foreseeable users and consumers that use the
9 Products.

10 **SATISFACTION OF NOTICE REQUIREMENTS**

11 27. On June 10, 2021, Plaintiff purchased the Product from Home Depot. At the time
12 of purchase, Home Depot did not provide a Proposition 65 exposure warning for BPA or any other
13 Proposition 65 listed chemical in a manner consistent with H&S Code § 25603.1 as described
14 *supra*.

15 28. On or about August 9, 2021, the Product was sent to a testing laboratory to
16 determine the concentration of BPA present on the surface of the Product.

17 29. On August 10, 2021, the laboratory provided the results of its analysis. Surface
18 BPA was collected using a wipe test. Results of this test concluded the presence of BPA at the
19 surface of the product (the "Chemical Test Report").

20 30. Plaintiff provided the Chemical Test Report and Product to an analytical chemist
21 to determine if, based on the findings of the Chemical Test Report and the reasonable and
22 foreseeable use of the Product, exposure to BPA will occur at levels that require Proposition 65
23 warnings under the Clear and Reasonable Warnings section 25601 of Title 27 of the California
24 Code of Regulations.

25 31. On August 16, 2021, Plaintiff received from the analytical chemist an exposure
26 assessment report which concluded that persons in California who use the Products will be exposed
27 to levels of BPA that require a Proposition 65 exposure warning.
28

1 32. On August 16, 2021, 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 BPA
3 from use of the Products without proper warning, subject to a private action to Defendant and to
4 the California Attorney General’s office and the offices of the County District attorneys and City
5 Attorneys for each city with a population greater than 750,000 persons wherein the herein
6 violations allegedly occurred.

7 33. 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 BPA exposure, and that counsel believed there was meritorious and reasonable cause for a private
11 action.

12 34. 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 a
14 cause of action against Defendant under Proposition 65 to enforce the alleged violations which are
15 the subject of the Notice.

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

18 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

19 **(By Plaintiff against Defendant for its Violation of Proposition 65)**

20 36. Plaintiff hereby repeats and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 35 of
21 this first amended complaint as though fully set forth herein.

22 37. Defendant has, at all times mentioned herein, acted as a distributor and/or retailer
23 of the Products.

24 38. Use of the Products will expose users and consumers thereof to BPA, a hazardous
25 chemical found on the Proposition 65 list of chemicals known to be hazardous to human health.

26 39. The Products do not comply with the Proposition 65 warning requirements.

27 40. Plaintiff, based on his best information and belief, avers that at all relevant times
28 herein, and at least since August 16, 2021, continuing until the present, that Defendant has

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

3 41. The exposures that are the subject of the Notice result from the purchase,
4 acquisition, handling and recommended use of the Product. The primary route of exposure to BPA
5 is through dermal absorption directly through the skin when consumers use, touch, or handle the
6 Products. Further, some amount of exposure through ingestion can occur by touching the Product
7 with subsequent touching of the user's hand to mouth.

8 42. Plaintiff, based on his best information and belief, avers that such exposures will
9 continue every day until clear and reasonable warnings are provided to purchasers and users or
10 until BPA is removed from the Products.

11 43. Defendant has knowledge that the normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the
12 Product exposes individuals to BPA, and Defendant intends those exposures to BPA will occur by
13 its deliberate, non-accidental participation in the importation, distribution, sale and offering of the
14 Products to consumers in California.

15 44. Plaintiff has engaged in good faith efforts to resolve the herein claims prior to the
16 filing of the first amended complaint.

17 45. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(b), because of the above-described
18 acts, Defendant is liable for a maximum civil penalty of \$2,500 per day per violation.

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

1 PRAYER FOR RELIEF

2 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against Defendant and requests the following
3 relief:

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

7 B. That the Court preliminarily and permanently enjoin Defendant mandating
8 Proposition 65 compliant warnings on the Products;

9 C. That the Court grant Plaintiff reasonable attorney’s fees and costs of suit, in the
10 amount of \$50,000.00.

11 D. That the Court grant any further relief as may be just and proper.

12 Dated: May 20, 2022

BRODSKY & SMITH

13 By:  _____

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