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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES, INC.

ELECTRONICALLY FILED

Superior Court of California,
County of Alameda

08/11/2022 at 02:48:35 PM

By: Angela Linhares,
Deputy Clerk

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9 **SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

10 **IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA**

11 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES,
12 INC.,

Plaintiff,

13 v.

14 WALMART INC., a Delaware corporation,
15 and DOES 1 through 100, inclusive,

16 Defendant.

Case No.: **22CV016011**

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES
AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

(Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 et seq.)

I.
INTRODUCTION

1
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 Defendant’s failure to inform the People of exposure to benzene, a known carcinogen.
5 Defendant exposes consumers to benzene by manufacturing, importing, selling, and/or distributing
6 antiperspirant products including but not limited to the Equate Cucumber Dry Spray Antiperspirant, 3.8
7 Oz (“Products”). Defendant knows and intends that customers will use Products containing benzene.

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 benzene as a chemical known to cause cancer as early as
14 February 27, 1987, and as a chemical known to cause developmental/reproductive toxicity on December
15 26, 1997.

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

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

II.
PARTIES

23
24
25 6. Plaintiff ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES, INC. (“Plaintiff”) is a
26 corporation 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 15. Defendant manufactured, imported, sold, and/or distributed Products containing
2 benzene in violation of Health and Safety Code, section 25249.6 et seq. Plaintiff is informed and
3 believes such violations have continued after receipt of the Notice (defined *infra*) and will continue to
4 occur into the future.

5 16. In manufacturing, importing, selling, and/or distributing Products, Defendant failed to
6 provide a clear and reasonable warning to consumers and individuals in California who may be exposed
7 to benzene through reasonably foreseeable use of the Products.

8 17. Products expose individuals to benzene through dermal absorption and direct inhalation.
9 This exposure is a natural and foreseeable consequence of Defendant placing Products into the stream
10 of commerce. As such, Defendant intends that consumers will use Products, exposing them to benzene.

11 18. Defendant knew or should have known that the Products contained benzene and exposed
12 individuals to benzene in the ways provided above. The Notice informed Defendant of the presence of
13 benzene in the Products. Likewise, media coverage concerning benzene and related chemicals in
14 consumer products provided constructive notice to Defendant.

15 19. Defendant's actions in this regard were deliberate and not accidental.

16 20. More than sixty days prior to naming each defendant in this lawsuit, Plaintiff issued a
17 60-Day Notice of Violation ("Notice") as required by and in compliance with Proposition 65. Plaintiff
18 provided the Notice to the various required public enforcement agencies along with a certificate of merit.
19 The Notice alleged that Defendant violated Proposition 65 by failing to sufficiently warn consumers in
20 California of the health hazards associated with exposures to benzene contained in the Products.

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

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

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

1 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

2 Wherefore, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendant as follows:

3 1. Civil penalties in the amount of \$2,500 per day for each violation. Plaintiff alleges that
4 damages total a minimum of \$1,000,000.00;

5 2. A preliminary and permanent injunction against Defendant from manufacturing,
6 importing, selling, and/or distributing Products in California without providing a clear and reasonable
7 warning as required by Proposition 65 and related Regulations;

8 3. Reasonable attorney's fees and costs of suit; and

9 4. Such other and further relief as may be just and proper.

10
11 Respectfully submitted:

12 Dated: August 11, 2022

ENTORNO LAW, LLP

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14
15 By: 
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17 Jake W. Schulte
18 Craig M. Nicholas

19 Attorneys for Plaintiff
20 Environmental Health Advocates, Inc.