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ELECTRONICALLY
FILED
Superior Court of California,
County of San Francisco

07/18/2023
Clerk of the Court
BY: MARK UDAN

Deputy Clerk

9 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

10 COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CGC-23-607771

11 DONATUS MCCOY,

12 Plaintiff,

13 vs.

14 MOMI-NO KI, INC. DBA TOKYO
15 JAPANESE LIFESTYLE,

16 Defendant.

Case No.:

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES AND
INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

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

17 Plaintiff Donatus McCoy ("Plaintiff"), by and through his attorneys, alleges the following
18 cause of action in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California.

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 to enforce the People's right to be informed of the health
27 hazards caused by exposure to lead, a toxic chemical found in *Baifu*® tea pot sets, UPC #
28 844326003860, sold and/or distributed by defendant Momi-No Ki, Inc. dba Tokyo Japanese
Lifestyle ("Momi-No Ki" or "Defendant") in California.

1 3. Lead is a harmful chemical known to the State of California to cause cancer and
2 adverse developmental and reproductive effects in both males and females. On October 1, 1992,
3 the state of California listed lead as a chemical known to cause cancer and it has come under the
4 purview of Proposition 65 regulations since that time. Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 27, § 27001(c); Health
5 & Safety Code §§ 25249.8 & 25249.10(b). On February 27, 1987, the State of California listed
6 lead as a chemical known to cause adverse developmental and reproductive effects in both males
7 and females.

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 that will create an exposure above safe harbor levels with a “clear and
12 reasonable” warning before “knowingly and intentionally” exposing any person to any such listed
13 chemical.

14 5. Proposition 65 allows for civil penalties of up to \$2,500.00 per day per violation
15 for up to 365 days (up to a maximum civil penalty amount per violation of \$912,000.00) to be
16 imposed upon defendants in a civil action for violations of Proposition 65. Health & Safety Code
17 § 25249.7(b). Proposition 65 also allows for any court of competent jurisdiction to enjoin the
18 actions of a defendant which “violate or threaten to violate” the statute. Health & Safety Code §
19 25249.7.

20 6. Plaintiff alleges that Defendant distributes and/or offers for sale in California,
21 without a requisite exposure warning, *Baifu*® tea pot sets, UPC # 844326003860, (the “Products”)
22 that expose persons to lead when used for their intended purpose.

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

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

9. Plaintiff also seeks injunctive relief, preliminarily and permanently, requiring Defendant to provide purchasers or users of the Products with required warnings related to the dangers and health hazards associated with exposure to lead pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(a).

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

PARTIES

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

12. Defendant Momi-No Ki, through its business, effectively imports, distributes, sells, and/or offers the Products for sale or use in the State of California, or it implies by its conduct that it imports, distributes, sells, and/or offers the Products for sale or use in the State of California.

13. Plaintiff alleges that defendant Momi-No Ki is a “person” in the course of doing business within the meaning of Health & Safety Code sections 25249.6 and 25249.11.

VENUE AND JURISDICTION

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

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

16. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant is either a citizen of the State of California, has sufficient minimum contacts with the State of California, is registered with the California Secretary of State as a foreign corporation authorized to do business in the

1 State of California, and/or has otherwise purposefully availed itself of the California market. Such
2 purposeful availment has rendered the exercise of jurisdiction by California courts consistent and
3 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
first giving clear and reasonable warning to such individual...

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

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

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

25
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.

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

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

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

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

22. On October 1, 1992, the state of California listed lead as a chemical known to cause cancer and it has come under the purview of Proposition 65 regulations since that time. Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 27, § 27001(c); Health & Safety Code §§ 25249.8 & 25249.10(b). On February 27, 1987, the State of California listed lead as a chemical known to cause adverse developmental and reproductive effects in both males and females. In summary, lead was listed under Proposition 65 as a chemical known to the State to cause cancer and adverse developmental and reproductive effects in both males and females.

23. The exposures that are the subject of the Notice result from the purchase, acquisition, handling, and recommended use of the Products. The primary route of exposure to the is through dermal absorption directly through the skin when consumers use, touch, or handle the Products. Exposure through ingestion will occur by touching the Product with subsequent touching of the user's hand to mouth. No clear and reasonable warning is provided with the Products regarding the health hazards of exposure.

1 24. Defendant has processed, marketed, distributed, offered to sell and/or sold the
2 Products in California since at least July 27, 2022. The Products continue to be distributed and
3 sold in California without the requisite warning information.

4 25. At all times relevant to this action, Defendant has knowingly and intentionally
5 exposed users and/or consumers of the Products to lead without first giving a clear and reasonable
6 exposure warning to such individuals.

7 26. As a proximate result of acts by Defendant, as a person in the course of doing
8 business within the meaning of H&S Code § 25249.11, individuals throughout the State of
9 California, including in San Francisco County, have been exposed to lead without a clear and
10 reasonable warning on the Products. The individuals subject to the violative exposures include
11 normal and foreseeable users and consumers that use the Products, as well as all others exposed to
12 the Products.

13 **SATISFACTION OF NOTICE REQUIREMENTS**

14 27. Plaintiff purchased the Product from Tokyo Japanese Lifestyle. At the time of
15 purchase, Defendant did not provide a Proposition 65 exposure warning for lead or any other
16 Proposition 65 listed chemical in a manner consistent with H&S Code § 25603.1 as described
17 *supra*.

18 28. The Product was sent to a testing laboratory to determine the concentration of lead
19 present on the surface of the Product.

20 29. The laboratory provided the results of its analysis. Results of this test determined
21 the Product exposes users to lead (the "Chemical Test Report").

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

31. On July 27, 2022, Plaintiff received from the analytical chemist an exposure assessment report which concluded that persons in California who use the Products will be exposed to levels of lead that require a Proposition 65 exposure warning.

33. The Notice complied with all procedural requirements of Proposition 65 including the attachment of a Certificate of Merit affirming that Plaintiff's counsel had consulted with at least one person with relevant and appropriate expertise who reviewed relevant data regarding lead exposure, and that counsel believed there was meritorious and reasonable cause for a private action.

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

(By Plaintiff against Defendant for the Violation of Proposition 65)

1 39. The Product does not comply with the Proposition 65 warning requirements.

2 40. Plaintiff, based on his best information and belief, avers that at all relevant times
3 herein, and at least since July 27, 2022, continuing until the present, that Defendant has continued
4 to knowingly and intentionally expose California users and consumers of the Product to lead
5 without providing required warnings under Proposition 65.

6 41. The exposures that are the subject of the Notice result from the purchase,
7 acquisition, handling and recommended use of the Products. The primary route of exposure to the
8 is through dermal absorption directly through the skin when consumers use, touch, or handle the
9 Products. Exposure through ingestion will occur by touching the Product with subsequent touching
10 of the user's hand to mouth. No clear and reasonable warning is provided with the Products
11 regarding the health hazards of exposure.

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

15 43. Defendant has knowledge that the normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the
16 Products exposes individuals to lead, and Defendant intends that exposures to lead will occur by
17 its deliberate, non-accidental participation in the importation, distribution, sale and offering of the
18 Products to consumers in California

19 44. Plaintiff has engaged in good faith efforts to resolve the herein claims prior to this
20 Complaint.

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

23 46. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(a), this Court is specifically
24 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 each Defendant in the amount of \$2,500
5 per 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: July 18, 2023

BRODSKY SMITH

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