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Superior Court of California,
County of Alameda

03/01/2023 at 04:15:52 PM

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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.,

Plaintiff,

v.

HARMONY HOUSE FOODS, INC., a North
Carolina corporation; AMAZON.COM, INC.,
a Delaware corporation; and DOES 1 through
100, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.: **23CV028565**

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES
AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

(Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 et seq.)

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I.
INTRODUCTION

1. This Complaint is a representative action brought by Environmental Health Advocates, Inc. (“Plaintiff”) in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California (“the People”). Plaintiff seeks to remedy Defendants’ failure to inform the People of exposure to mercury, a reproductive toxin. Defendants expose consumers to mercury by manufacturing, importing, selling, and/or distributing dried mushrooms including, but not limited to, Harmony House Dehydrated Mushrooms (“Products”). Defendants know and intend that customers will ingest Products containing mercury.

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

3. California identified and listed mercury as a chemical known to cause reproductive toxicity as early as July 1, 1990.

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

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

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II.
PARTIES

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

1 7. Defendant HARMONY HOUSE FOODS, INC. (“Harmony”) is a corporation
2 organized and existing under the laws of North Carolina. Harmony is registered to do business in
3 California, and does business in the County of Alameda, within the meaning of Health and Safety Code,
4 section 25249.11. Harmony manufactures, imports, sells, or distributes the Products in California and
5 Alameda County.

6 8. Defendant AMAZON.COM, INC. (“Amazon”) is a corporation organized and existing
7 under the laws of Delaware. Amazon 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. Amazon
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 is informed and believes and thereon alleges that these
13 Defendants are responsible in whole or in part for violation of the Labor Code sections described in this
14 Complaint.

15 10. At all times mentioned, Defendants were the agents, alter egos, servants, joint venturers,
16 joint employers, or employees for each other. Defendants acted with the consent of the other Co-
17 Defendants and acted within the course, purpose, and scope of their agency, service, or employment.
18 All conduct was ratified by Defendants, and each of them.

19 **III.**
20 **VENUE AND JURISDICTION**

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

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

1 13. Defendants have sufficient minimum contacts in the State of California or otherwise
2 purposefully avail themselves of the California market. Exercising jurisdiction over Defendants would
3 be consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

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5 **IV.**
6 **CAUSES OF ACTION**

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

9 14. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained above.

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

12 16. Defendants manufactured, imported, sold, and/or distributed Products containing
13 mercury in violation of Health and Safety Code, section 25249.6 et seq. Plaintiff is informed and
14 believes such violations have continued after receipt of the Notice (defined *infra*) and will continue to
15 occur into the future.

16 17. In manufacturing, importing, selling, and/or distributing Products, Defendants failed to
17 provide a clear and reasonable warning to consumers and individuals in California who may be exposed
18 to mercury through reasonably foreseeable use of the Products.

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

22 19. Defendants knew or should have known that the Products contained mercury and
23 exposed individuals to mercury in the ways provided above. The Notice informed Defendants of the
24 presence of mercury in the Products. Likewise, media coverage concerning mercury and related
25 chemicals in consumer products provided constructive notice to Defendants.

26 20. Defendants' actions in this regard were deliberate and not accidental.

27 21. More than sixty days prior to naming each defendant in this lawsuit, Plaintiff issued a
28 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.

1 The Notice alleged that Defendants violated Proposition 65 by failing to sufficiently warn consumers in
2 California of the health hazards associated with exposures to mercury contained in the Products.

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

5 23. Individuals exposed to mercury contained in Products through direct ingestion resulting
6 from reasonably foreseeable use of the Products have suffered and continue to suffer irreparable harm.
7 There is no other plain, speedy, or adequate remedy at law.

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

11 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

12 Wherefore, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendants as follows:

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

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

18 3. Reasonable attorney’s fees and costs of suit; and

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

20 Respectfully submitted:

21 Dated: March 1, 2023

ENTORNO LAW, LLP

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24 By: 
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25 Craig M. Nicholas
26 Jake W. Schulte
27 Janani Natarajan

28 Attorneys for Plaintiff
Environmental Health Advocates, Inc.