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8 *Attorneys for Plaintiff*

ELECTRONICALLY
FILED
Superior Court of California,
County of San Francisco

03/06/2024
Clerk of the Court
BY: DAEJA ROGERS
Deputy Clerk

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

9 GABRIEL ESPINOZA,

10 Plaintiff,

11 vs.

12 THE KROGER CO.,

13 Defendant.

Case No.:

CGC-24-612879

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES AND
INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

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

14 Plaintiff Gabriel Espinoza (“Plaintiff”), by and through his attorneys, alleges the following
15 cause of action in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California.

16 **BACKGROUND OF THE CASE**

17 1. Plaintiff brings this representative action on behalf of all California citizens to
18 enforce relevant portions of Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, codified at
19 the Health and Safety Code § 25249.5 et seq (“Proposition 65”), which reads, in relevant part,
20 “[n]o person in the course of doing business shall knowingly and intentionally expose any
21 individual to a chemical known to the state to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first
22 giving clear and reasonable warning to such individual ...”. Health & Safety Code § 25249.6.

23 2. This complaint is a representative action brought by Plaintiff in the public interest
24 of the citizens of the State of California to enforce the People’s right to be informed of the health
25 hazards caused by exposure to lead, a toxic chemical found in (a) *Blue Diamond Almonds*® almond
26 nut thins rice cracker snacks, UPC # 041570054048, (b) King Arthur Baking Company gluten free
27 pancake mixes, UPC # 071012075034, (c) *Frieda’s*® simply dried oyster mushrooms, UPC #
28 037842043889, and (d) Bela sardines in extra virgin oil with piri-piri and smoke flavor, UPC #

1 633600502331 sold and/or distributed by defendant The Kroger Co. (“Kroger” or “Defendant”) in
2 California.

3 3. Lead is a harmful chemical known to the State of California to cause cancer and
4 birth defects or other reproductive harm. On October 1, 1992, the state of California listed lead as
5 a chemical known to cause cancer and it 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). On February 27, 1987, the State of California listed lead as a chemical known to
8 cause birth defects or other reproductive harm.

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

15 5. Proposition 65 allows for civil penalties of up to \$2,500.00 per day per violation
16 for up to 365 days (up to a maximum civil penalty amount per violation of \$912,000.00) to be
17 imposed upon defendants in a civil action for violations of Proposition 65. Health & Safety Code
18 § 25249.7(b). Proposition 65 also allows for any court of competent jurisdiction to enjoin the
19 actions of a defendant which “violate or threaten to violate” the statute. Health & Safety Code §
20 25249.7.

21 6. Plaintiff alleges that Defendant distributes and/or offers for sale in California,
22 without a requisite exposure warning, (a) *Blue Diamond Almonds*® almond nut thins rice cracker
23 snacks, UPC # 041570054048, (b) King Arthur Baking Company gluten free pancake mixes, UPC
24 # 071012075034, (c) *Frieda’s*® simply dried oyster mushrooms, UPC # 037842043889, and (d)
25 Bela sardines in extra virgin oil with piri-piri and smoke flavor, UPC # 633600502331
26 (collectively, the “Products”) that expose persons to lead when used for their intended purpose.

27 7. Defendant’s failure to warn consumers and other individuals in California of the
28 health hazards associated with exposure to lead in conjunction with the sale and/or distribution of

1 the Products is a violation of Proposition 65 and subjects Defendant to the enjoinder and civil
2 penalties described herein.

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

5 9. Plaintiff also seeks injunctive relief, preliminarily and permanently, requiring
6 Defendant to provide purchasers or users of the Products with required warnings related to the
7 dangers and health hazards associated with exposure to lead pursuant to Health and Safety Code §
8 25249.7(a).

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

10 **PARTIES**

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

15 12. Defendant Kroger, through its business, effectively imports, distributes, sells,
16 and/or offers the Products for sale or use in the State of California, or it implies by its conduct that
17 it imports, distributes, sells, and/or offers the Products for sale or use in the State of California.
18 Plaintiff alleges that defendant Kroger is a "person" in the course of doing business within the
19 meaning of Health & Safety Code sections 25249.6 and 25249.11.

20 **VENUE AND JURISDICTION**

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

25 14. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to California Constitution
26 Article VI, § 10, which grants the Superior Court original jurisdiction in all causes except those
27 given by statute to other trial courts. Health and Safety Code § 25249.7 allows for the enforcement
28

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

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

9 **STATUTORY BACKGROUND**

10 16. 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 17. 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 and/or birth defects or other reproductive harm. H&S Code § 25249.6 states, in
16 pertinent part:

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

20 18. In this case, exposures are caused by consumer products. A “Consumer Product” is
21 defined as “any article, or component part thereof, including food, that is produced, distributed, or
22 sold for the personal use, consumption or enjoyment of a consumer.” (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 27, §
23 25600.1, subd. (d).) Food includes “dietary supplements” as defined in California Code of
24 Regulations, title 17, section 10200. (*Id.* at subd. (g).) An exposure to a chemical in a Consumer
25 Product is one “which results from a person’s acquisition, purchase, storage, consumption or other
26 reasonably foreseeable use of a consumer good, or any exposure that results from receiving a
27 consumer service.” (27 CCR § 25602, para (b).) H&S Code § 25603(c) states that “a person in the
28

1 course of doing business ... shall provide a warning to any person to whom the product is sold or
2 transferred unless the product is packaged or labeled with a clear and reasonable warning.”

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

5 a. A warning that appears on a product’s label or other labeling.

6 b. Identification of the product at the retail outlet in a manner which provides
7 a warning. Identification may be through shelf labeling, signs, menus, or a combination
8 thereof.

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

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

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

22 **FACTUAL BACKGROUND**

23 21. On October 1, 1992, the state of California listed lead as a chemical known to cause
24 cancer and it has come under the purview of Proposition 65 regulations since that time. Cal. Code
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.

1 Regs. Tit. 27, § 27001(c); Health & Safety Code §§ 25249.8 & 25249.10(b). On February 27,
2 1987, the State of California listed lead as a chemical known to cause birth defects or other
3 reproductive harm. In summary, lead was listed under Proposition 65 as a chemical known to the
4 State to cause cancer and birth defects or other reproductive harm.

5 22. The exposures that are the subject of the Notices result from the purchase,
6 acquisition, and recommended use of the Products. The primary route of exposure to lead is
7 through ingestion. When foods contaminated with lead are consumed, ingestion of lead will occur
8 which will increase blood lead levels. No clear and reasonable warning is provided with the
9 Products regarding the health hazards of exposure.

10 23. Defendant has processed, marketed, distributed, offered to sell and/or sold the
11 Products in California since at least March 7, 2023 with respect to the *Blue Diamond Almonds*®
12 almond nut thins rice cracker snacks, since at least March 8, 2023 with respect to the King Arthur
13 Baking Company gluten free pancake mixes, since at least March 22, 2023 with respect to the
14 *Frieda's*® simply dried oyster mushrooms, and since at least May 10, 2023 with respect to the
15 Bela sardines in extra virgin oil with piri-piri and smoke flavor. The Products continue to be
16 distributed and sold in California without the requisite warning information.

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

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

SATISFACTION OF NOTICE REQUIREMENTS

1
2 26. Plaintiff purchased the Products from Kroger. At the time of purchase, Defendant
3 did not provide a Proposition 65 exposure warning for lead or any other Proposition 65 listed
4 chemical in a manner consistent with H&S Code § 25603.1 as described *supra*.

5 27. The Products were sent to a testing laboratory to determine if, and what amount of,
6 lead a consumer would be exposed to per serving size.

7 28. The laboratory provided the results of its analysis. Results of these tests determined
8 the Products expose users to lead (collectively, the “Chemical Test Reports” and each a “Chemical
9 Test Report”).

10 29. Plaintiff provided the Chemical Test Reports and Products to an analytical chemist
11 to determine if, based on the findings of the Chemical Test Reports and the reasonable and
12 foreseeable use of the Products, exposure to lead will occur at levels that require Proposition 65
13 warnings under the Clear and Reasonable Warnings section 25601 of Title 27 of the California
14 Code of Regulations.

15 30. On March 7, 2023, Plaintiff received from the analytical chemist an exposure
16 assessment report which concluded that persons in California who use the *Blue Diamond*
17 *Almonds*® almond nut thins rice cracker snacks will be exposed to levels of lead that require a
18 Proposition 65 exposure warning. On March 8, 2023, Plaintiff received from the analytical chemist
19 an exposure assessment report which concluded that persons in California who use the King Arthur
20 Baking Company gluten free pancake mixes will be exposed to levels of lead that require a
21 Proposition 65 exposure warning. On March 22, 2023, Plaintiff received from the analytical
22 chemist an exposure assessment report which concluded that persons in California who use the
23 *Frieda's*® simply dried oyster mushrooms will be exposed to levels of lead that require a
24 Proposition 65 exposure warning. On May 10, 2023, Plaintiff received from the analytical chemist
25 an exposure assessment report which concluded that persons in California who use the Bela
26 sardines in extra virgin oil with piri-*piri* and smoke flavor will be exposed to levels of lead that
27 require a Proposition 65 exposure warning.
28

1 37. Use of the Products will expose users to lead, a hazardous chemical found on the
2 Proposition 65 list of chemicals known to be hazardous to human health.

3 38. The Products do not comply with the Proposition 65 warning requirements.

4 39. Plaintiff, based on his best information and belief, avers that at all relevant times
5 herein, and since at least March 7, 2023 with respect to the *Blue Diamond Almonds*® almond nut
6 thins rice cracker snacks, since at least March 8, 2023 with respect to the King Arthur Baking
7 Company gluten free pancake mixes, since at least March 22, 2023 with respect to the *Frieda's*®
8 simply dried oyster mushrooms, and since at least May 10, 2023 with respect to the Bela sardines
9 in extra virgin oil with piri-piri and smoke flavor, continuing until the present, that Defendant has
10 continued to knowingly and intentionally expose California users and consumers of the Product to
11 lead without providing required warnings under Proposition 65.

12 40. The exposures that are the subject of the Notices result from the purchase,
13 acquisition, and recommended use of the Products. The primary route of exposure to lead is
14 through ingestion. When foods contaminated with lead are consumed, ingestion of lead will occur
15 which will increase blood lead levels. No clear and reasonable warning is provided with the
16 Products regarding the health hazards of exposure.

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

20 42. Defendant has knowledge that the normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the
21 Products exposes individuals to lead, and Defendant intends that exposures to lead will occur by
22 its deliberate, non-accidental participation in the importation, distribution, sale and offering of the
23 Products to consumers in California

24 43. Plaintiff has engaged in good faith efforts to resolve the herein claims prior to this
25 Complaint.

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

28

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

3 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

4 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against Defendant and requests the following
5 relief:

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

9 B. That the court preliminarily and permanently enjoin Defendant mandating
10 Proposition 65 compliant warnings on the Products;

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

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

14 Dated: March 6, 2024

BRODSKY SMITH

15 By:  _____

16 Evan J. Smith (SBN242352)
17 Ryan P. Cardona (SBN302113)
18 9595 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 900
19 Beverly Hills, CA 90212
20 Telephone: (877) 534-2590
21 Facsimile: (310) 247-0160

Attorneys for Plaintiff

EXHIBIT “A”

LAW OFFICES
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 CHERRY HILL, NJ 08934
 856.795.7250

NEW YORK OFFICE
 240 MINEOLA BOULEVARD
 MINEOLA, NY 11501
 516.741.4977

PENNSYLVANIA OFFICE
 TWO BALA PLAZA, STE. 805
 BALA CYNWYD, PA 19004
 610.667.6200

March 7, 2023

CEO/GM/Board of Directors Blue Diamond Growers c/o CT Corporation System 28 Liberty Street New York, NY 10005	President/CEO Blue Diamond Almond Growers c/o CT Corporation System 28 Liberty Street New York, NY 10005
CEO/GM/Board of Directors Blue Diamond Growers 1802 C Street Sacramento, CA 95811	President/CEO Blue Diamond Almond Growers 1802 C Street Sacramento, CA 95811
President/CEO California Almond Growers Exchange c/o CT Corporation System 28 Liberty Street New York, NY 10005	President/CEO California Almond Growers Exchange 3900 E. Camelback Road, Suite 300 Att: Legal Department Phoenix, AZ 85018
CEO/GM/Board of Directors Blue Diamond Growers PO Box 1766 Sacramento, CA 95812-1768	President/CEO The Kroger Co. c/o Corporation Service Company 3366 Riverside Drive, Suite 103 Upper Arlington, OH 43221
President/CEO The Kroger Co. dba Ralphs c/o Corporation Service Company 3366 Riverside Drive, Suite 103 Upper Arlington, OH 43221	President/CEO The Kroger Co. c/o Corporation Service Company Which Will Do Business In California As CSC – Lawyers Incorporating Service 2710 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 150N Sacramento, CA 95833

60-Day Notice of Violation of California Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act¹

To Whom It May Concern:

This Notice of Violation (the “Notice”) is provided to you pursuant to and in compliance with California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(d).

Brodsky & Smith, LLC (“Brodsky Smith”) represents Gabriel Espinoza (“Espinoza”), a citizen of the State of California acting in the interest of the general public to promote awareness of exposures to toxic chemicals from use of consumer products sold in California and to improve human health and the environment by reducing hazardous substances.

¹ The public enforcement agencies that have been served with copies of this Notice are identified in the attached distribution list accompanying the Certificate of Service.

With respect to the Product herein, Espinoza has identified a violation of California’s Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 (“Proposition 65”) codified at Cal. Health & Safety Code § 25249.5, et seq. This violation has occurred and continues to occur because the alleged Violator(s) failed to provide a clear and reasonable health hazard warning in connection with the sale or use of the Product in California. Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 provides that “[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 providing a clear and reasonable warning to such individual ...” Without proper warnings regarding the toxic effects of exposures to the Listed Chemical resulting from use of the Product, California citizens lack the information necessary to make informed decisions on whether and/or how to eliminate (or reduce) the risk of exposure to the Listed Chemical from the reasonably foreseeable use of the Product.

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE VIOLATION

1. **Enforcer:** Gabriel Espinoza, 3924 Carlin Ave., Lynwood, CA 90262-5204; (Ph) 310.863.2852.
2. **Alleged Violator(s):** Blue Diamond Growers; Blue Diamond Almond Growers; California Almond Growers Exchange; The Kroger Co.; The Kroger Co. dba Ralphs
3. **Time Period of Exposure:** Violations have been occurring since at least March 7, 2023 and are continuing to this day.
4. **Listed Chemical:** Lead. Lead is listed under Proposition 65 as a chemical known to the State to cause cancer and reproductive toxicity.
5. **Product:**

Product ²	Non- Exclusive Examples of the Product
Rice Cracker Snacks	Blue Diamond Almonds Almond Nut Thins Rice Cracker Snacks UPC#041570054048

6. **Description of Exposure:** The exposures that are the subject of this Notice result from the purchase and recommended use of the Product. The primary route of exposure to the Listed Chemical is through ingestion. When foods contaminated with the Listed Chemical are consumed, ingestion of the Listed Chemical will occur which will increase BLLs. No clear and reasonable warning is provided with the Products regarding the health hazards of exposure to the Listed Chemical.

II. PROPOSITION 65 INFORMATION

² The specifically identified example of the Product in this Notice is to assist the recipients’ investigation of, among other things, the magnitude of potential exposures to the Listed Chemical from other items within the definition of Products. This example is not intended to be an exhaustive or comprehensive identification of each specific offending Product. It is Espinoza’s position that the alleged Violators are obligated to conduct a good faith investigation into other Products that may have been manufactured, distributed, sold, shipped, stored (or otherwise within the alleged Violators’ custody or control) during the relevant period to ensure that requisite health hazard warnings were and are provided to California citizens prior to purchase and use.

For the Violators' reference, enclosed is a copy of "Proposition 65: A Summary" that has been prepared by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment ("OEHHA"). For more information concerning the provisions of Proposition 65, contact OEHHA at 916.445.6900.

III. RESOLUTION OF THE CLAIMS

Based on the allegations set forth in this Notice, Brodsky Smith intends to file a citizen enforcement lawsuit on behalf of Espinoza against the alleged Violator(s) unless such Violator(s) agree in a binding written agreement to: (1) recall Products already sold; (2) provide Proposition 65 compliant exposure warnings for Products sold in the future or reformulate the Products to eliminate exposures to the Listed Chemical; and (3) pay an appropriate civil penalty based on the factors enumerated in Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(b). Consistent with the public interest goals of Proposition 65 and the desire to have these violations of California law quickly rectified, Espinoza is interested in seeking a constructive resolution of the claims in this Notice without engaging in costly and protracted litigation.

Espinoza has retained me as legal counsel in connection with this Notice. **Please direct all communications regarding this Notice to my attention at Brodsky & Smith, LLC, 9595 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 900, Beverly Hills, CA 90212, (877) 534-2590, esmith@brodskysmith.com.**

Sincerely,



Evan J. Smith

Attachments

Certificate of Merit

Certificate of Service

The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Action of 1986 (Proposition 65): A Summary

EXHIBIT “B”

LAW OFFICES
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NEW YORK OFFICE
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516.741.4977

PENNSYLVANIA OFFICE
TWO BALA PLAZA, STE. 805
BALA CYNWYD, PA 19004
610.667.6200

March 8, 2023

King Arthur Baking Company, Inc. c/o Brock Barton 62 Fogg Farm Road White River Junction, VT 05001	King Arthur Baking Company, Inc. aka The King Arthur Flour Company, Inc. c/o Brock Barton 62 Fogg Farm Road White River Junction, VT 05001
President/CEO King Arthur Baking Company, Inc. 135 US-5, #135 Norwich, VT 05055	President/CEO The King Arthur Flour Company, Inc. 62 Fogg Farm Road White River Junction, VT 05001
The Kroger Co. c/o Corporation Service Company Which Will Do Business In California As CSC – Lawyers Incorporating Service 2710 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 150N Sacramento, CA 95833	The Kroger co. dba Ralphs c/o Corporation Service Company 3366 Riverside Drive, Suite 103 Upper Arlington, OH 43221
The Kroger Co. c/o Corporation Service Company 3366 Riverside Drive, Suite 103 Upper Arlington, OH 43221	

60-Day Notice of Violation of California Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act¹

To Whom It May Concern:

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With respect to the Product herein, Espinoza has identified a violation of California’s Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 (“Proposition 65”) codified at Cal. Health & Safety Code § 25249.5, et seq. This violation has occurred and continues to occur because the alleged Violator(s) failed to provide a clear and reasonable health hazard warning in connection with the sale or use of the Product in California. Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 provides that “[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

¹ The public enforcement agencies that have been served with copies of this Notice are identified in the attached distribution list accompanying the Certificate of Service.

cancer or reproductive toxicity without first providing a clear and reasonable warning to such individual ...” Without proper warnings regarding the toxic effects of exposures to the Listed Chemical resulting from use of the Product, California citizens lack the information necessary to make informed decisions on whether and/or how to eliminate (or reduce) the risk of exposure to the Listed Chemical from the reasonably foreseeable use of the Product.

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE VIOLATION

1. **Enforcer:** Gabriel Espinoza, 3924 Carlin Ave., Lynwood, CA 90262-5204; (Ph) 310.863.2852.
2. **Alleged Violator(s):** King Arthur Baking Company, Inc.; King Arthur Baking Company, Inc. aka The King Arthur Flour Company, Inc.; The King Arthur Flour Company, Inc.; The Kroger Co.; The Kroger Co. dba Ralphs
3. **Time Period of Exposure:** Violations have been occurring since at least March 8, 2023 and are continuing to this day.
4. **Listed Chemical:** Lead. Lead is listed under Proposition 65 as a chemical known to the State to cause cancer and reproductive toxicity.
5. **Product:**

Product²	Non- Exclusive Examples of the Product
Gluten Free Pancake Mix	King Arthur Baking Company Gluten Free Pancake Mix UPC# 0 71012 07503 4

6. **Description of Exposure:** The exposures that are the subject of this Notice result from the purchase and recommended use of the Product. The primary route of exposure to the Listed Chemical is through ingestion. When foods contaminated with the Listed Chemical are consumed, ingestion of the Listed Chemical will occur which will increase BLLs. No clear and reasonable warning is provided with the Products regarding the health hazards of exposure to the Listed Chemical.

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For the Violators’ reference, enclosed is a copy of “Proposition 65: A Summary” that has been prepared by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (“OEHHA”). For more information concerning the provisions of Proposition 65, contact OEHHA at 916.445.6900.

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Based on the allegations set forth in this Notice, Brodsky Smith intends to file a citizen enforcement lawsuit on behalf of Espinoza against the alleged Violator(s) unless such Violator(s) agree in a binding written agreement to: (1) recall Products already sold; (2) provide Proposition 65 compliant

² The specifically identified example of the Product in this Notice is to assist the recipients’ investigation of, among other things, the magnitude of potential exposures to the Listed Chemical from other items within the definition of Products. This example is not intended to be an exhaustive or comprehensive identification of each specific offending Product. It is Espinoza’s position that the alleged Violators are obligated to conduct a good faith investigation into other Products that may have been manufactured, distributed, sold, shipped, stored (or otherwise within the alleged Violators’ custody or control) during the relevant period to ensure that requisite health hazard warnings were and are provided to California citizens prior to purchase and use.

exposure warnings for Products sold in the future or reformulate the Products to eliminate exposures to the Listed Chemical; and (3) pay an appropriate civil penalty based on the factors enumerated in Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(b). Consistent with the public interest goals of Proposition 65 and the desire to have these violations of California law quickly rectified, Espinoza is interested in seeking a constructive resolution of the claims in this Notice without engaging in costly and protracted litigation.

Espinoza has retained me as legal counsel in connection with this Notice. **Please direct all communications regarding this Notice to my attention at Brodsky & Smith, LLC, 9595 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 900, Beverly Hills, CA 90212, (877) 534-2590, esmith@brodskysmith.com.**

Sincerely,



Evan J. Smith

Attachments

Certificate of Merit

Certificate of Service

The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Action of 1986 (Proposition 65): A Summary

EXHIBIT “C”

LAW OFFICES
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516.741.4977

PENNSYLVANIA OFFICE
TWO BALA PLAZA, STE. 805
BALA CYNWYD, PA 19004
610.667.6200

March 22, 2023

President/CEO Frieda's, Inc. c/o Karen B. Caplan 4465 Corporate Center Dr. Los Alamitos, CA 90720	Member/Manager Frieda's, LLC c/o CT Corporation System 330 N. Brand Blvd., Suite 700 Glendale, CA 91203
Member/Manager Frieda's, LLC c/o CT Corporation System 28 Liberty Street New York, NY 10005	President/CEO The Kroger Co. c/o Corporation Service Company Which Will Do Business In California As CSC – Lawyers Incorporating Service 2710 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 150N Sacramento, CA 95833
Member/Manager Frieda's, LLC c/o The Corporation Trust Company Corporation Trust Center 1209 Orange Street Wilmington, DE 19801	President/CEO The Kroger Co. c/o Corporation Service Company 3366 Riverside Drive, Suite 103 Upper Arlington, OH 43221
President/CEO The Kroger Co. dba Ralphs c/o Corporation Service Company 3366 Riverside Drive, Suite 103 Upper Arlington, OH 43221	

60-Day Notice of Violation of California Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act¹

To Whom It May Concern:

This Notice of Violation (the "Notice") is provided to you pursuant to and in compliance with California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(d).

Brodsky & Smith, LLC ("Brodsky Smith") represents Gabriel Espinoza ("Espinoza"), a citizen of the State of California acting in the interest of the general public to promote awareness of exposures to toxic chemicals from use of consumer products sold in California and to improve human health and the environment by reducing hazardous substances.

With respect to the Product herein, Espinoza has identified a violation of California's Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 ("Proposition 65") codified at Cal. Health & Safety Code § 25249.5, et seq. This violation has occurred and continues to occur because the alleged Violator(s)

¹ The public enforcement agencies that have been served with copies of this Notice are identified in the attached distribution list accompanying the Certificate of Service.

failed to provide a clear and reasonable health hazard warning in connection with the sale or use of the Product in California. Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 provides that “[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 providing a clear and reasonable warning to such individual ...” Without proper warnings regarding the toxic effects of exposures to the Listed Chemical resulting from use of the Product, California citizens lack the information necessary to make informed decisions on whether and/or how to eliminate (or reduce) the risk of exposure to the Listed Chemical from the reasonably foreseeable use of the Product.

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE VIOLATION

1. **Enforcer:** Gabriel Espinoza, 3924 Carlin Ave., Lynwood, CA 90262-5204; (Ph) 310.863.2852.
2. **Alleged Violator(s):** Frieda’s, Inc.; Frieda’s, LLC; The Kroger Co.; the Kroger Co. dba Ralphs
3. **Time Period of Exposure:** Violations have been occurring since at least March 22, 2023 and are continuing to this day.
4. **Listed Chemical:** Lead. Lead is listed under Proposition 65 as a chemical known to the State to cause cancer and reproductive toxicity.
5. **Product:**

Product ²	Non- Exclusive Examples of the Product
Oyster Mushrooms	Frieda’s Simply Dried Oyster Mushrooms UPC# 037842043889

6. **Description of Exposure:** The exposures that are the subject of this Notice result from the purchase and recommended use of the Product. The primary route of exposure to the Listed Chemical is through ingestion. When foods contaminated with the Listed Chemical are consumed, ingestion of the Listed Chemical will occur which will increase BLLs. No clear and reasonable warning is provided with the Products regarding the health hazards of exposure to the Listed Chemical.

II. PROPOSITION 65 INFORMATION

For the Violators’ reference, enclosed is a copy of “Proposition 65: A Summary” that has been prepared by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (“OEHHA”). For more information concerning the provisions of Proposition 65, contact OEHHA at 916.445.6900.

III. RESOLUTION OF THE CLAIMS

² The specifically identified example of the Product in this Notice is to assist the recipients’ investigation of, among other things, the magnitude of potential exposures to the Listed Chemical from other items within the definition of Products. This example is not intended to be an exhaustive or comprehensive identification of each specific offending Product. It is Espinoza’s position that the alleged Violators are obligated to conduct a good faith investigation into other Products that may have been manufactured, distributed, sold, shipped, stored (or otherwise within the alleged Violators’ custody or control) during the relevant period to ensure that requisite health hazard warnings were and are provided to California citizens prior to purchase and use.

Based on the allegations set forth in this Notice, Brodsky Smith intends to file a citizen enforcement lawsuit on behalf of Espinoza against the alleged Violator(s) unless such Violator(s) agree in a binding written agreement to: (1) recall Products already sold; (2) provide Proposition 65 compliant exposure warnings for Products sold in the future or reformulate the Products to eliminate exposures to the Listed Chemical; and (3) pay an appropriate civil penalty based on the factors enumerated in Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(b). Consistent with the public interest goals of Proposition 65 and the desire to have these violations of California law quickly rectified, Espinoza is interested in seeking a constructive resolution of the claims in this Notice without engaging in costly and protracted litigation.

Espinoza has retained me as legal counsel in connection with this Notice. **Please direct all communications regarding this Notice to my attention at Brodsky & Smith, LLC, 9595 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 900, Beverly Hills, CA 90212, (877) 534-2590, esmith@brodskysmith.com.**

Sincerely,



Evan J. Smith

Attachments

Certificate of Merit

Certificate of Service

The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Action of 1986 (Proposition 65): A Summary

EXHIBIT “D”

LAW OFFICES
BRODSKY & SMITH, LLC

9595 WILSHIRE BLVD., STE. 900
BEVERLY HILLS, CA 90212
877.534.2590
www.brodskysmith.com

NEW JERSEY OFFICE
1310 NORTH KINGS HIGHWAY
CHERRY HILL, NJ 08934
856.795.7250

NEW YORK OFFICE
240 MINEOLA BOULEVARD
MINEOLA, NY 11501
516.741.4977

PENNSYLVANIA OFFICE
TWO BALA PLAZA, STE. 805
BALA CYNWYD, PA 19004
610.667.6200

May 10, 2023

Member/Manager Purse Seine Holdings LLC c/o Joshua Scherz 14 Arrow St., Suite 20 Cambridge, MA 02138	Member/Manager Purse Seine Holdings LLC 328 Old Connecticut Path Wayland, MA 01778
President/CEO The Kroger Co. c/o Corporation Service Company 3366 Riverside Drive, Suite 103 Upper Arlington, OH 43221	President/CEO The Kroger Co. dba Ralphs c/o Corporation Service Company 3366 Riverside Drive, Suite 103 Upper Arlington, OH 43221
President/CEO The Kroger Co. c/o Corporation Service Company Which Will Do Business In California As CSC-Lawyers Incorporating Service 2710 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 150N Sacramento, CA 95833	

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whether and/or how to eliminate (or reduce) the risk of exposure to the Listed Chemical from the reasonably foreseeable use of the Product.

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE VIOLATION

1. **Enforcer:** Gabriel Espinoza, 3924 Carlin Ave., Lynwood, CA 90262-5204; (Ph) 310.863.2852.
2. **Alleged Violator(s):** Purse Seine Holdings LLC; The Kroger Co.; The Kroger Co. dba Ralphs
3. **Time Period of Exposure:** Violations have been occurring since at least May 10, 2023 and are continuing to this day.
4. **Listed Chemical:** Lead. Lead is listed under Proposition 65 as a chemical known to the State to cause cancer and reproductive toxicity.
5. **Product:**

Product²	Non- Exclusive Examples of the Product
Sardines	Bela Sardines in Extra Virgin Oil with Piri-Piri and Smoke Flavor UPC# 633600502331

6. **Description of Exposure:** The exposures that are the subject of this Notice result from the purchase and recommended use of the Product. The primary route of exposure to the Listed Chemical is through ingestion. When foods contaminated with the Listed Chemical are consumed, ingestion of the Listed Chemical will occur which will increase BLLs. No clear and reasonable warning is provided with the Products regarding the health hazards of exposure to the Listed Chemical.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Evan J. Smith', written over a horizontal line.

Evan J. Smith

Attachments

Certificate of Merit

Certificate of Service

The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Action of 1986 (Proposition 65): A Summary