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Superior Court of California,
County of Alameda

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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES,
INC.,

Plaintiff,

v.

HERITAGE CRAFTS LLC, a Washington
limited liability company; and DOES 1 through
100, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.: **24CV076117**

**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 lead, a known carcinogen and
5 reproductive/developmental toxin. Defendant exposes consumers to lead by manufacturing, importing,
6 selling, and/or distributing needle cases including, but not limited to, Brass - Embossed Needle Cases
7 (“Products”). Defendant knows and intends that customers will use Products containing lead.

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 lead as a chemical known to cause cancer as early as
14 October 1, 1992, and as a chemical known to cause developmental/reproductive toxicity on February
15 27, 1987.

16 4. Defendant failed to sufficiently warn consumers and individuals in California about
17 potential exposure to lead in connection with Defendant's manufacture, import, sale, or distribution of
18 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 lead in Products. (Health & Safety Code, § 25249.7(a).) Plaintiff
21 also seeks civil penalties against Defendant for violations of Proposition 65 along with attorney’s fees
22 and costs. (Health & Safety Code, § 25249.7(b).)

II.
PARTIES

23
24 6. Plaintiff ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES, INC. (“Plaintiff”) is a
25 corporation in the State of California dedicated to protecting the health of California citizens through
26 the elimination or reduction of toxic exposure from consumer products. It brings this action in the public
27 interest pursuant to Health and Safety Code, section 25249.7.

28 7. Defendant Heritage Crafts LLC (“Heritage”) is a limited liability company organized

1 and existing under the laws of Washington. Heritage is registered to do business in California, and does
2 business in the County of Alameda, within the meaning of Health and Safety Code, section 25249.11.
3 Heritage manufactures, imports, sells, or distributes the Products in California and Alameda County.

4 8. Plaintiff does not know the true names and/or capacities, whether individual, partners,
5 or corporate, of the Defendants sued herein as DOES 1 through 100, inclusive, and for that reason sues
6 said Defendants under fictitious names. Plaintiff will seek leave to amend this Complaint when the true
7 names and capacities of these Defendants have been ascertained. Plaintiff is informed and believes and
8 thereon alleges that these Defendants are responsible in whole or in part for the remedies and penalties
9 sought herein.

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

14 **III.**
15 **VENUE AND JURISDICTION**

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

20 11. Venue is proper in Alameda County Superior Court pursuant to Code of Civil
21 Procedure, sections 394, 395, and 395.5. Wrongful conduct occurred and continues to occur in this
22 County. Defendant conducted and continues to conduct business in this County as it relates to Products.

23 12. Defendant has sufficient minimum contacts in the State of California or otherwise
24 purposefully avails itself of the California market. Exercising jurisdiction over Defendant would be
25 consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

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1 **IV.**
2 **CAUSES OF ACTION**

3 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

4 **(Violation of Proposition 65 – Against all Defendants)**

5 13. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained above.

6 14. Proposition 65 mandates that citizens be informed about exposures to chemicals that
7 cause cancer, birth defects, and other reproductive harm.

8 15. Defendant manufactured, imported, sold, and/or distributed Products containing lead in
9 violation of Health and Safety Code, section 25249.6 et seq. Plaintiff is informed and believes such
10 violations have continued after receipt of the Notice (defined *infra*) and will continue to occur into the
11 future.

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

15 17. Products expose individuals to lead through incidental ingestion via the hand-to-mouth
16 pathway. This exposure is a natural and foreseeable consequence of Defendant placing Products into
17 the stream of commerce. As such, Defendant intends that consumers will use Products, exposing them
18 to lead.

19 18. Defendant knew or should have known that the Products contained lead and exposed
20 individuals to lead in the ways provided above. The Notice informed Defendant of the presence of lead
21 in the Products. Likewise, media coverage concerning lead and related chemicals in consumer products
22 provided constructive notice to Defendant.

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

24 20. More than sixty days prior to naming each defendant in this lawsuit, Plaintiff issued a
25 60-Day Notice of Violation (“Notice”) as required by and in compliance with Proposition 65. Plaintiff
26 provided the Notice to the various required public enforcement agencies along with a certificate of merit.
27 The Notice alleged that Defendant violated Proposition 65 by failing to sufficiently warn consumers in
28 California of the health hazards associated with exposures to lead contained in the Products.

21. The appropriate public enforcement agencies provided with the Notice failed to

1 commence and diligently prosecute a cause of action against Defendant.

2 22. Individuals exposed to lead contained in Products through incidental ingestion via the
3 hand-to-mouth pathway resulting from reasonably foreseeable use of the Products have suffered and
4 continue to suffer irreparable harm. There is no other plain, speedy, or adequate remedy at law.

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

8 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

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

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

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

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

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

17
18 Respectfully submitted:

19 Dated: May 17, 2024

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20
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