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Attorneys for Plaintiff

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

PRECILA BALABBO,

Plaintiff,

vs.

HOBBY LOBBY STORES, INC.,

Defendant.

Case No.: **26STCV15907**

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES AND
INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

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

Plaintiff Precila Balabbo ("Plaintiff"), by and through her attorneys, alleges the following cause of action in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California.

BACKGROUND OF THE CASE

1. Plaintiff brings this representative action on behalf of all California citizens to enforce relevant portions of Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, codified at the Health and Safety Code § 25249.5 et seq ("Proposition 65"), which reads, in relevant part, "[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.

2. This complaint is a representative action brought by Plaintiff in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California to enforce the People's right to be informed of the health hazards caused by exposure to lead, a toxic chemical found in Market Square spoon rests sold and/or distributed by defendant Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc. ("Hobby Lobby" or "Defendant") in California.

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

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

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

18 6. Plaintiff alleges that Defendant distributes and/or offers for sale in California,
19 without a requisite exposure warning, Market Square spoon rests (the “Product”) that expose
20 persons to lead when used for their intended purpose.

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

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

27 9. Plaintiff also seeks injunctive relief, preliminarily and permanently, requiring
28 Defendant to provide purchasers or users of the Product with required warnings related to the

1 dangers and health hazards associated with exposure to lead pursuant to Health and Safety Code §
2 25249.7(a).

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

4 **PARTIES**

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

9 12. Defendant Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc., through its business, effectively imports,
10 distributes, sells, and/or offers the Product for sale or use in the State of California, or it implies
11 by its conduct that it imports, distributes, sells, and/or offers the Product for sale or use in the State
12 of California. Plaintiff alleges that defendant Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc. is a "person" in the course
13 of doing business within the meaning of Health & Safety Code sections 25249.6 and 25249.11.

14 **VENUE AND JURISDICTION**

15 13. Venue is proper in the County of Los Angeles because one or more of the instances
16 of wrongful conduct occurred and continue to occur in this county and/or because Defendant
17 conducted, and continues to conduct, business in the County of Los Angeles with respect to the
18 Product. Because the Products are distributed, marketed, and sold to consumers throughout Los
19 Angeles County, the alleged Proposition 65 violations necessarily occurred here. Upon
20 information and belief, the Products are consistently in the stream of commerce and available to
21 consumers for purchase in the City and County of Los Angeles.

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

27 15. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant is either a citizen of
28 the State of California, has sufficient minimum contacts with the State of California, is registered

1 with the California Secretary of State as foreign corporations authorized to do business in the State
2 of California, and/or has otherwise purposefully availed itself of the California market. Such
3 purposeful availment has rendered the exercise of jurisdiction by California courts consistent and
4 permissible with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice. Public policy further
5 supports this conclusion.

6 **STATUTORY BACKGROUND**

7 16. The people of the State of California declared in Proposition 65 their right “[t]o be
8 informed about exposures to chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive
9 harm.” (Section 1(b) of Initiative Measure, Proposition 65.)

10 17. To effect this goal, Proposition 65 requires that individuals be provided with a
11 “clear and reasonable warning” before being exposed to substances listed by the State of California
12 as causing cancer and birth defects or other reproductive harm. H&S Code § 25249.6 states, in
13 pertinent part:

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

17 18. An exposure to a chemical in a consumer product is one “which results from a
18 person’s acquisition, purchase, storage, consumption or other reasonably foreseeable use of a
19 consumer good, or any exposure that results from receiving a consumer service.” (27 CCR §
20 25602, para (b).) H&S Code § 25603(c) states that “a person in the course of doing business ...
21 shall provide a warning to any person to whom the product is sold or transferred unless the product
22 is packaged or labeled with a clear and reasonable warning.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 21. Pursuant to Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 27, § 25600.2(e), a retail seller is responsible for
18 providing the warning required by § 25249.6 of the Act for a consumer product exposure when
19 one or more of the following circumstances exist: (a) the retailer seller is selling the product under
20 a brand or trademark that is owned or licensed by the retail seller or an affiliated entity; (b) the
21 retailer seller has knowingly introduced a listed chemical into the product, or knowingly caused
22 the listed chemical to be created in the product; (c) the retail seller has covered, obscured or altered
23 a warning label that has been affixed to the product pursuant to § 25600.2(b); (d) the retail seller
24 has received a notice and warning materials for the exposure pursuant to § 25600.2(b)-(c) and the
25 retail seller has sold the product without conspicuously posting or displaying the warning; or (e)
26 the retailer seller has actual knowledge of the potential consumer product exposure requiring the
27 warning, and there is no manufacturer, producer, packager, importer, supplier, or distributor of the
28 product who: (i) is a "person in the course of doing business under § 25249.11(b) of the Act, and

(ii) has designated an agent for service of process in California, or has a place of business in California.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

22. Lead is a harmful chemical known to the State of California to cause cancer and birth defects or other reproductive harm. 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 birth defects or other reproductive harm.

23. On April 14, 2025, Plaintiff purchased the Product from Defendant. At the time of the purchase, Defendant did not provide a clear and reasonable exposure warning pursuant to Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 27, § 25602.

24. On May 19, 2025, Plaintiff served notice of alleged violation of Health and Safety Code § 25249.6 (the “Notice”) to Defendant concerning the exposure of California citizens to lead from use of the Product without proper warning, subject to a private action to Defendant and to the California Attorney General’s office and the offices of the County District attorneys and City Attorneys for each city with a population greater than 750,000 persons wherein the herein violations allegedly occurred. The exposures that are the subject of the Notice result from the purchase, acquisition, handling and recommended use of the Product. The primary route of exposure to the chemicals is through dermal absorption directly through the skin when consumers use, touch, or handle the Product. 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 Product regarding the health hazards of exposure.

25. Defendant has actual knowledge that sales of the Product in California will result in an actionable consumer product exposure pursuant to Cal. Health & Safety Code § 25249.5 et seq.

26. Defendant has sold the Product under a brand or trademark that is owned or licensed by Defendant or an affiliated entity; and/or Defendant has knowingly introduced lead into the

1 Product, or knowingly caused lead to be created in the Product; and/or Defendant has covered,
2 obscured or altered a warning label that has been affixed to the Product pursuant to § 25600.2(b);
3 and/or Defendant has received a notice and warning materials for the exposure pursuant to §
4 25600.2(b)-(c) and Defendant has sold the Product without conspicuously posting or displaying
5 the warning; and/or Defendant has actual knowledge of the potential consumer product exposure
6 requiring the warning, and there is no manufacturer, producer, packager, importer, supplier, or
7 distributor of the Product who: (i) is a “person in the course of doing business under § 25249.11(b)
8 of the Act, and (ii) has designated an agent for service of process in California, or has a place of
9 business in California.

10 27. At all times relevant to this action, Defendant has knowingly and intentionally
11 exposed users of the Product to lead without first giving a clear and reasonable exposure warning
12 to such individuals. More than five business days after receipt of the Notice, Defendant continued
13 to distribute, sell, and/or offer to and sell in California without the requisite warning information.

14 28. On March 24, 2026, Plaintiff purchased the Product a second time from Defendant.
15 At the time of the purchase, Defendant did not provide a clear and reasonable exposure warning
16 pursuant to Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 27, § 25602.

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

23 **SATISFACTION OF NOTICE REQUIREMENTS**

24 30. On April 14, 2025, Plaintiff purchased the Product from Defendant. At the time of
25 purchase, Defendant did not provide a Proposition 65 exposure warning for lead or any other
26 Proposition 65 listed chemical in a manner consistent with H&S Code § 25603.1 as described
27 *supra*.

1 31. The Product was sent to a testing laboratory to determine if, and what amount of,
2 lead would migrate and/or leach from the Product.

3 32. The laboratory provided the results of its analysis. Results of these tests determined
4 the Product exposes users to lead (“Chemical Test Report”).

5 33. Plaintiff provided the Chemical Test Report and Product to an analytical chemist
6 to determine if, based on the findings of the Chemical Test Report and the reasonable and
7 foreseeable use of the Product, exposure to lead will occur at levels that require Proposition 65
8 warnings under the Clear and Reasonable Warnings section 25601 of Title 27 of the California
9 Code of Regulations.

10 34. On May 19, 2025, Plaintiff received from the analytical chemist exposure
11 assessment reports which concluded that persons in California who use the Product will be exposed
12 to levels of lead that require a Proposition 65 exposure warning.

13 35. On May 19, 2025, Plaintiff served the Notice on Defendant concerning the
14 exposure of California citizens to lead from use of the Product without proper warning, subject to
15 a private action to Defendant and to the California Attorney General’s office and the offices of the
16 County District attorneys and City Attorneys for each city with a population greater than 750,000
17 persons wherein the herein violations allegedly occurred.

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

23 37. After receiving the Notice, and to Plaintiff’s best information and belief, none of
24 the noticed appropriate public enforcement agencies have commenced and diligently prosecuted a
25 cause of action against Defendant under Proposition 65 to enforce the alleged violations which are
26 the subject of the Notice.

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

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

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

39. Plaintiff hereby repeats and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 38 of this Complaint as though fully set forth herein.

40. Defendant has manufactured, processed, marketed, distributed, offered to sell and/or sold the Product in California since at least April 14, 2025 with respect to the Product.

41. On May 19, 2025, Plaintiff served the Notice on Defendant concerning the exposure of California citizens to lead from use of the Product without proper warning, subject to a private action to Defendant and to the California Attorney General's office and the offices of the County District attorneys and City Attorneys for each city with a population greater than 750,000 persons wherein the herein violations allegedly occurred.

42. The Notice gives Defendant actual knowledge of the potential consumer product exposure requiring the warning pursuant to Cal. Code Regs, Tit. 27, § 25600.2. Use of the Product will expose users and consumers thereof to lead, a hazardous chemical found on the Proposition 65 list of chemicals known to be hazardous to human health.

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

44. Plaintiff, based on her best information and belief, avers that at all relevant times herein, and since at least May 19, 2025 with respect to the Product, continuing until the present, that Defendant has continued to knowingly and intentionally expose California users and consumers of the Product to lead without providing required warnings under Proposition 65.

45. Defendant continues to sell the Product under a brand or trademark that is owned or licensed by Defendant or an affiliated entity; and/or Defendant has knowingly introduced lead into the Product, or knowingly caused lead to be created in the Product; and/or Defendant has covered, obscured or altered a warning label that has been affixed to the Product pursuant to § 25600.2(b); and/or Defendant has received a notice and warning materials for the exposure pursuant to § 25600.2(b)-(c) and Defendant has sold the product without conspicuously posting or displaying the warning; and/or Defendant has actual knowledge of the potential consumer product exposure requiring the warning, and there is no manufacturer, producer, packager, importer,

supplier, or distributor of the Product who: (i) is a “person in the course of doing business under § 25249.11(b) of the Act, and (ii) has designated an agent for service of process in California, or has a place of business in California

46. On March 24, 2026, more than five business days after Defendant received the Notice, Plaintiff purchased the Product from Defendant. At the time of purchase, Defendant did not provide a Proposition 65 compliant exposure warning.

47. The exposures that are the subject of the Notice result from the purchase, acquisition, handling and recommended use of the Product. The primary route of exposure to the is through dermal absorption directly through the skin when consumers use, touch, or handle the Product. 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 Product regarding the health hazards of exposure.

48. Plaintiff, based on her best information and belief, avers that such exposures will continue every day until clear and reasonable warnings are provided to purchasers and users or until these known toxic chemicals are removed from the Product.

49. Defendant has knowledge that the normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the Product exposes individuals to lead, and Defendant intends that exposures to lead will occur by their deliberate, non-accidental participation in the importation, distribution, sale and offering of the Product to consumers in California.

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

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

52. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(a), this Court is specifically 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 Defendant in the amount of \$2,500 per
5 day for each violation for up to 365 days in accordance with Health and Safety Code §
6 25249.7(b);

7 B. That the court preliminarily and permanently enjoin Defendant mandating
8 Proposition 65 compliant warnings on the Product;

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: May 19, 2026

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