

SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

BETWEEN

CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC.

AND

HD SUPPLY DISTRIBUTION SERVICES, LLC

Consumer Advocacy Group, Inc. (“CAG”) and HD Supply Distribution Services, LLC (“HDS”), (CAG and HDS collectively referred to as, the “Parties”) enter into this agreement (“Settlement Agreement”) for the purpose of avoiding prolonged and costly litigation to settle CAG’s allegations that HDS violated Proposition 65. The effective date of this Settlement Agreement shall be the date upon which it is fully executed by all Parties hereto (the “Effective Date”).

1.0 Introduction

1.1 CAG is a California-based entity that seeks to promote awareness of exposures to toxic chemicals and improve human health by reducing or eliminating hazardous substances contained in consumer and industrial products.

1.2 HDS previously sold, at various times, Laundry Accessories, including but not limited to “CROWN BOLT® Plastic Clothesline; White; 3/16 in X 100 ft; 4.7 mm X 30.5 m; 64 lbs Working Load Limit; POLY & POLY BLENDS; Distributed by: CROWN BOLT® Aliso Viejo, CA 92656, MADE IN CHINA; Barcode: 0 30699 65085 9” and “CROWN BOLT® Plastic Clothesline; Green; 3/16 in X 100 ft; 4.7 mm X 30.5 m; 64 lbs Working Load Limit; POLY & POLY BLENDS; Distributed by: CROWN BOLT® Aliso Viejo, CA 92656, MADE IN

CHINA; Barcode: 0 30699 65085” (referred to throughout as the “Covered Products”). The Covered Products are limited to those sold by HDS only.

1.3 CAG alleges that Covered Products contain both Di-*n*-Butyl Phthalate (“DBP”) and Di (2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (“DEHP”), also known as Diethyl Hexyl Phthalate and Bis (2-ethylhexyl) phthalate, and that HDS did not provide a required warning in compliance with the California Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act (*Cal. Health & Safety Code* § 25249.5, *et seq.* (“Proposition 65”)).

1.4 On January 1, 1988, the Governor of California added DEHP to the list of chemicals known to the State to cause cancer, and on October 24, 2003, the Governor added DEHP to the list of chemicals known to the State to cause developmental and male reproductive toxicity. And on December 2, 2005, the Governor of California added Di-*n*-butyl Phthalate (DBP) to the list of chemicals known to the State to cause developmental, female, and male reproductive toxicity. These additions took place more than twenty (20) months before CAG served its “Sixty-Day Notice of Intent To Sue For Violations Of The Safe Drinking Water And Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986” which is further described below.

1.5 DEHP and DBP are referred to hereafter as the “Listed Chemicals”.

1.6 On or about September 16, 2014 CAG served Crown Bolt, Inc., HD Supply Distribution Services, LLC, HD Supply Holdings, LLC, HD Supply, Inc., Orchard Supply Hardware, LLC, Orchard Supply Hardware Stores and certain relevant public enforcement agencies with documents entitled “Sixty-Day Notice

Of Intent To Sue For Violations Of The Safe Drinking Water And Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986” regarding Covered Products containing the Listed Chemicals.

1.7 The Sixty-Day Notices (referred to as the “Notices”) alleged that HDS and the other noticed parties violated Proposition 65 by failing to warn consumers in California that use of Covered Products exposes persons to the Listed Chemicals.

1.8 The Parties enter into this Settlement Agreement to settle disputed claims between the Parties as set forth below concerning the Parties’ and the Covered Products’ compliance with Proposition 65 (the “Dispute”).

1.9 By execution of this Settlement Agreement, the Parties do not admit any facts or conclusions of law, including, but not limited to, any facts or conclusions of law regarding any violation of Proposition 65, or any other statutory, regulatory, common law, or equitable doctrine. Nothing in this Settlement Agreement shall be construed as an admission by the Parties of any fact, conclusion of law, issue of law, or violation of law. Nothing in this Settlement Agreement, nor compliance with its terms, shall constitute or be construed, considered, offered, or admitted as evidence of an admission or evidence of fault, wrongdoing, or liability by HDS, its officers, directors, employees, or parents, subsidiaries or affiliated corporations, in any administrative or judicial proceeding or litigation in any court, agency, or forum. Except for the allegations settled and compromised, nothing in this Settlement Agreement shall prejudice, waive, or

impair any right, remedy, argument, or defense that CAG or HDS may have against one another in any other pending legal proceeding as to allegations unrelated to the Dispute or claims released herein.

2.0 Release

This Settlement Agreement is a full, final, and binding resolution between CAG, acting in its individual capacity, on the one hand, and (a) HDS, and its owners, parents, subsidiaries, affiliates, sister and related companies (including, but not limited to, HD Supply Inc., HD Supply Holdings, LLC and Crown Bolt, Inc.), employees, shareholders, officers, directors, insurers, attorneys, predecessors, successors, and assigns (collectively “Releasees”) and (b) all entities to whom Releasees directly or indirectly provide, distribute, or sell the Covered Products, including but not limited to distributors, wholesalers, customers (including the Orchard Supply entities which also were identified in the Notices), retailers, franchisees, cooperative members, and licensees (“Downstream Releasees”), on the other hand, of any violation(s) or claimed violation(s) of Proposition 65 or any statutory or common law claim that has been, could have been or may in the future be asserted against the Releasees and Downstream Releasees regarding exposing persons to the Listed Chemicals and the failure to warn about exposure to the Listed Chemicals arising only in connection with the Covered Products manufactured, shipped, and/or otherwise distributed prior to the Effective Date, even if sold by Downstream Releasees after the Effective Date. The Covered Products are limited to those sold by HDS only.

CAG, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors, and/or assignees, hereby waive and release with respect to the Covered Products all rights to institute or participate in, directly or indirectly, any form of legal action, including, without limitation, all actions, and causes of action, in law or in equity, suits, liabilities, demands, obligations, damages, costs, fines, penalties, losses, or expenses (including, but not limited to, investigation fees, expert fees, and attorneys' fees) (collectively "Claims"), against Releasees and/or Downstream Releasees that arise under Proposition 65 or any other statutory or common law claims that were or could have been asserted in respect of any Covered Products sold up to the Effective Date, including without limitation to the extent that such claims relate to Releasees' and/or Downstream Releasees' alleged exposure of persons to the Listed Chemicals contained in the Covered Products or any failure by Releasees and Downstream Releasees to warn about exposures to the Listed Chemicals contained in the Covered Product.

CAG acknowledges that it is familiar with Section 1542 of Civil Code, which provides as follows:

A GENERAL RELEASE DOES NOT EXTEND TO CLAIMS WHICH THE CREDITOR DOES NOT KNOW OR SUSPECT TO EXIST IN HIS OR HER FAVOR AT THE TIME OF EXECUTING THE RELEASE, WHICH IF KNOWN BY HIM OR HER MUST HAVE MATERIALLY AFFECTED HIS OR HER SETTLEMENT WITH THE DEBTOR.

CAG, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors, and/or assignees expressly waive and relinquish any and all rights and benefits which

they may have under, or which may be conferred on them by the provisions of Civil Code § 1542 as well as under any other state or federal statute or common law principle of similar effect, to the fullest extent that they may lawfully waive such rights or benefits pertaining to the released matters. The release in this section shall have no force or effect until the full amount of payments set forth in Section 4.0 below are paid in full.

3.0 HDS's Duties

3.1 HDS, promises, and represents that within ninety (90) days from the Effective Date HDS shall reformulate any Covered Products manufactured after the Effective Date and offered for sale by HDS in California to a point where the level of DEHP and DBP, respectively, in the Covered Products does not exceed 0.1% by weight or shall cease importing or selling any Covered Products.

3.2 As to Covered Products that have been manufactured or supplied to HDS before the Effective Date and have not been reformulated, HDS agrees, promises, and represents that, as of the Effective Date, it shall provide Proposition 65-compliant warnings on such Covered Products sold or shipped for sale in California. The warnings shall be provided in such a conspicuously and prominent manner that will reasonably assure the message is made available and likely to be read, seen, or heard by the consumer prior to or at the time of the sale or purchase. The Parties agree that product labeling stating that "WARNING: This product contains chemicals known to the State of California to cause cancer and birth defects, or other reproductive harm" shall constitute compliance

with Proposition 65 with respect to the Listed Chemicals in the Covered Products for any Covered Products in existing inventory that had not been reformulated and were distributed and/or sold in California by Releasees or Downstream Releasees after the Effective Date.

3.3 The reformulation and warning duties under Section 3 of this Agreement apply only to the extent HDS imports, distributes, sells or offers for sale Covered Products in California. In addition, in the event that the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment adopts by regulation different Proposition 65 warning text and/or methods of transmission, HDS shall be entitled to implement such other text and/or method of transmission without being deemed to be in breach of this Agreement.

4.0 Payments

4.1 Because of extensive settlement negotiations and extensive discovery, the payments will be as follows. HDS agrees to pay a total of thirty-eight thousand dollars (\$38,000.00) within ten (10) days of the Effective Date by separate checks apportioned as follows:

4.1.1 Payment to CAG: Six Thousand dollars (\$6,000.00) shall be paid to Consumer Advocacy Group, Inc. The check shall be delivered to: Reuben Yeroushalmi, Yeroushalmi & Associates, 9100 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 240W, Beverly Hills, California 90212. By the Effective Date, CAG shall provide HDS with CAG's Employer Identification Number.

4.1.2 Attorneys' Fees and Costs: Twenty-six Thousand Dollars dollars (\$26,000.00) of such payment shall be paid to Yeroushalmi & Associates, as CAG's attorneys, for reasonable investigation fees and costs, attorneys' fees, and any other costs incurred as a result of investigating and bringing this matter to HDS's attention. The check shall be delivered to: Reuben Yeroushalmi, Yeroushalmi & Associates, 9100 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 240W, Beverly Hills, California 90212. By the Effective Date, Yeroushalmi & Associates shall provide HDS with its Employer Identification Number.

4.1.3 Penalty: HDS shall issue two separate checks for a total amount of Six Thousand dollars (\$6,000.00) as penalties pursuant to Health & Safety Code § 25249.12: (a) one check made payable to the State of California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) in the amount of Forty-five Hundred dollars (\$4,500.00), representing 75% of the total penalty; and (b) one check to Consumer Advocacy Group, Inc. in the amount of One Thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500.00), representing 25% of the total penalty. Both checks shall be delivered to: Reuben Yeroushalmi, Yeroushalmi & Associates, 9100 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 240W, Beverly Hills, California 90212. Additionally, two separate 1099s shall be issued for the above payments: The first 1099 shall be issued to OEHHA, P.O. Box 4010, Sacramento, CA 95184 (EIN: 68-0284486) in the amount of \$4,500.00. The second 1099 shall be issued in the amount of \$1,500.00 to CAG and delivered to:

Yeroushalmi & Associates, 9100 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 240W,
Beverly Hills, California 90212.

5.0 Authority to Enter Into Settlement Agreement

5.1 CAG represents that its signatory to this Settlement Agreement has full authority to enter into and legally bind CAG to this Settlement Agreement.

5.2 HDS represents that its signatory to this Settlement Agreement has full authority to enter into and legally bind HDS to this Settlement Agreement.

6.0 Report of the Settlement Agreement to the Office of the Attorney General Of California

6.1 CAG shall report this Settlement Agreement to the Attorney General's Office within five (5) days of the Parties' execution of this Settlement Agreement.

7.0 Execution in Counterparts and Facsimile

7.1 This Settlement Agreement may be executed in counterparts, which taken together shall be deemed to constitute the same document. A facsimile or portable document format (PDF) signature shall be as valid as the original.

8.0 Entire Agreement

8.1 This Settlement Agreement contains the sole and entire agreement and understanding of the Parties with respect to the entire subject matter hereof, and all related prior discussions, negotiations, commitments, and understandings. No other agreements, oral or otherwise, exist to bind any of the Parties.

9.0 Modification of Settlement Agreement

9.1 Any modification to this Settlement Agreement shall be in writing and signed by the Parties.

10.0 Application of Settlement Agreement

10.1 This Settlement Agreement shall apply to, be binding upon, and inure to the benefit of, CAG and the Releasees and Downstream Releasees identified in Section 2 above.

11.0 Enforcement of Settlement Agreement

11.1 Any party may file suit before the Superior Court of the County of Los Angeles, consistent with the terms and conditions set forth in paragraphs 11.2 and 11.3 of this Settlement Agreement, to enforce the terms and conditions contained in this Settlement Agreement. The prevailing party shall be entitled to its reasonable attorneys' fees and costs associated with such enforcement.

11.2 No action to enforce this Settlement Agreement may be commenced or maintained, and no notice of violation related to the Covered Products may be served or filed against HDS by CAG, unless the party seeking enforcement or alleging violation notifies the other party of the specific acts alleged to breach this Settlement Agreement at least 90 days before serving or filing any action or Notices of Violation and the entity receiving the notice fails to comply with the requirements set forth in Section 11.3 below. Any notice to HDS must contain (a) the name of the product, (b) specific dates when the product was sold after the Effective Date in California without reformulation, (c) the store or other place at

which the product was available for sale to consumers, and (d) any other evidence or other support for the allegations in the notice.

11.3 Within 30 days of receiving the notice described in Section 11.2, HDS shall either (1) send the store or other place at which the product was available for sale to the public a letter directing that the offending product be immediately removed from inventory and returned to HDS for full credit, including shipping costs, or (2) refute the information provided under Section 11.2. Should the parties be unable to resolve the dispute, any party may seek relief under Section 11.1.

12.0 Notification Requirements

12.1 Any notice required or permitted hereunder shall be effective only if given in writing and delivered in person, certified or registered mail return receipt requested, or traceable overnight delivery service, to the following designees:

For CAG:

Reuben Yeroushalmi, Esq.
YERUSHALMI & ASSOCIATES
9100 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 240W
Beverly Hills, CA 90212

For HDS:

Ann Grimaldi
GRIMALDI LAW OFFICES
50 California Street | Suite 1500
San Francisco, CA 94111

Any party may change its designee(s) for purposes of notification by providing written notice of such change pursuant to this section.

13.0 SEVERABILITY

13.1 If, subsequent to the execution of this Settlement Agreement, any of the provisions of this Settlement Agreement are held by a court to be unenforceable, the validity of the enforceable provisions remaining shall not be adversely affected.

14.0 GOVERNING LAW

14.1 The terms of this Settlement Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of California and apply within the State of California. In the event that Proposition 65 is repealed, preempted or is otherwise rendered inapplicable by reason of law generally, or as to the Listed Chemicals and/or the Covered Product, then HDS shall provide written notice to CAG of any asserted change in the law, and shall have no further obligations pursuant to this Settlement Agreement with respect to, and to the extent that, the Covered Products are so affected.

CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC.

Dated: 1-10-15

By: 

Printed Name: MILLER SAFFRON

Title: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HD SUPPLY DISTRIBUTION SERVICES, LLC

Dated: 01-08-15

By: 

Printed Name: JOE DEMARIS

Title: SVP