

SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC.
AND
HOME EXPRESSIONS, INC.

Consumer Advocacy Group, Inc. (“CAG”) and Home Expressions, Inc. (referred to as “HOME EXPRESSIONS”), (CAG and HOME EXPRESSIONS 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 HOME EXPRESSIONS 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 HOME EXPRESSIONS previously sold, at various times, Paper Towel Holders including but not limited to “Home Collections® Paper Towel Holder; 7.5” x 13.5”; Home Expressions, Inc.; Made in China; UPC# 8 47311 01661 6” (referred to throughout as the “Covered Products”). The Covered Products are further limited to those sold by HOME EXPRESSIONS only.

1.3 CAG alleges that Covered Products contain Di (2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (“DEHP”), also known as Diethyl Hexyl Phthalate and Bis (2-ethylhexyl) phthalate and that HOME EXPRESSIONS 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 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 is referred to hereafter as the “Listed Chemical”.

1.6 On or about February 19, 2016, CAG served Home Expressions Inc.; National Stores, Inc. dba Fallas Paredes, Factory 2-U, Fallas Discount Stores; and Fallas Discount Stores #0136, 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 Chemical.

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

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 HOME EXPRESSIONS, 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 HOME EXPRESSIONS 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) HOME EXPRESSIONS, and its owners, parents, subsidiaries, affiliates, sister and related

companies, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, insurers, attorneys, predecessors, successors, and assigns (collectively “Releasees”) and (b) those entities to whom Releasees directly or indirectly provided, distributed, or sold the Covered Products, including but not limited to distributors, wholesalers, customers, 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 Chemical and the failure to warn about exposure to the Listed Chemical arising only in connection with the Covered Products manufactured, shipped, and/or otherwise distributed by HOME EXPRESSIONS prior to the Effective Date, even if sold by Downstream Releasees after the Effective Date. The Covered Products are limited to those sold by HOME EXPRESSIONS.

CAG, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors, and/or assignees, hereby waives and releases 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 arising from Covered Products

sold up to the Effective Date, including without limitation to the extent that such claims arise from Releasees' and/or Downstream Releasees' alleged exposure of persons to the Listed Chemical allegedly contained in the Covered Products, or any failure by Releasees and Downstream Releasees to warn about exposures to the Listed Chemical as contained in the Covered Products.

CAG acknowledges that it is familiar with Section 1542 of the California 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 waives and relinquishes any and all rights and benefits which it may have under, or which may be conferred on it by the provisions of California 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 it 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 et seq. below are paid in full.

3.0 HOME EXPRESSIONS's Duties

3.1 HOME EXPRESSIONS agrees, promises, and represents that as of sixty (60) days after the Effective Date, HOME EXPRESSIONS shall reformulate any

Covered Products manufactures to a point where the level of DEHP in the Covered Products does not exceed 0.1% by weight, or HOME EXPRESSION shall cease importing, selling, or otherwise distributing any Covered Products that do not meet this reformulation standard.

3.2 HOME EXPRESSIONS agrees, promises, and represents that, as of the Effective Date, to the extent it ships or sells into California any Covered Products in existing inventory as of that date, it will provide warnings on such Covered Products that comply with Proposition 65. The warnings shall be provided in such a conspicuously and prominent manner that will 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 Chemical in the Covered Products for only those Covered Products in existing inventory on the Effective Date that had not been reformulated and were distributed and/or sold by Releasees or Downstream Releasees after the Effective Date.

4.0 Payments

4.1 HOME EXPRESSIONS agrees to pay a total of thirty-eight thousand dollars (\$38,000), by separate checks apportioned as follows:

4.1.1 Payment to CAG: Nine thousand, five hundred dollars (\$9,500) shall be paid to Consumer Advocacy Group, Inc. The check shall be

delivered to: Reuben Yeroushalmi, Yeroushalmi & Yeroushalmi, 9100 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 240W, Beverly Hills, California 90212. By the Effective Date, CAG shall provide HOME EXPRESSIONS with CAG's Employer Identification Number.

4.1.2 Attorneys' Fees and Costs: Twenty-six thousand dollars (\$26,000) 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 HOME EXPRESSION's attention. The check shall be delivered to: Reuben Yeroushalmi, Yeroushalmi & Yeroushalmi, 9100 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 240W, Beverly Hills, California 90212. By the Effective Date, Yeroushalmi & Yeroushalmi shall provide HOME EXPRESSIONS with its Employer Identification Number.

4.1.3 Penalty: HOME EXPRESSIONS shall issue two separate checks for a total amount of two thousand, five hundred dollars (\$2,500) 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 one thousand, eight hundred, and seventy-five dollars (\$1,875), representing 75% of the total penalty; and (b) one check to Consumer Advocacy Group, Inc. in the amount of six hundred and twenty-five dollars (\$625), representing 25% of the total penalty. Both checks shall be delivered to: Reuben Yeroushalmi, Yeroushalmi & Yeroushalmi, 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 \$ \$1,875. The second 1099 shall be issued in the amount of \$625 to CAG and delivered to: Yeroushalmi & Yeroushalmi, 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 HOME EXPRESSIONS represents that its signatory to this Settlement Agreement has full authority to enter into and legally bind HOME EXPRESSIONS 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 HOME EXPRESSIONS 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 ninety (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 HOME EXPRESSIONS 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) evidence and other support for the allegations in the notice.

11.3 Within thirty (30) days of receiving the notice described in Section 11.2, HOME EXPRESSIONS shall either (1) send the stores or other places 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 HOME EXPRESSIONS 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.
YEROUSHALMI & YEROUSHALMI
9100 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 240W
Beverly Hills, CA 90212

For HOME EXPRESSIONS, INC.:

Peg Carew Toledo
PEG CAREW TOLEDO, LAW CORPORATION
3001 Douglas Blvd., Suite 340
Roseville, CA 95661

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 Chemical and/or the Covered Products, then HOME EXPRESSIONS shall provide written notice to CAG of any asserted change in the law, and shall have no further liability pursuant from the Section 11.2 of this Settlement Agreement with respect to, and to the extent that, the Covered Products are so affected.

CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC.

Dated: 09/30/16

By: 

Printed Name: Michael Marcus

Title: Director

HOME EXPRESSIONS, INC.

Dated: Sept. 30, 2016

By: 

Printed Name: Jack Chalouh

Title: Pres.