

SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Parties. This Settlement Agreement is entered into by and between Gabriel Espinoza (“Espinoza”) and Trade Linker International, Inc. (“Trade Linker”). Together, Espinoza and Trade Linker are collectively referred to as the “Parties.” Espinoza is an individual who resides in the State of California and seeks to promote awareness of exposures to toxic chemicals and to improve human health by reducing or eliminating hazardous substances contained in consumer products. Espinoza alleges that Trade Linker is a person in the course of doing business for purposes of the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, et seq. (“Proposition 65”).

1.2 General Allegations. Espinoza alleges that Trade Linker has exposed individuals to the chemicals di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP) from their sales of Park Avenue pillowcases – plastic cases without first providing users and consumers of the products with a clear and reasonable health hazard exposure warning as required pursuant to Proposition 65. DEHP is listed pursuant to Proposition 65 as a chemical known to the State of California to cause cancer and reproductive toxicity.

1.3 Product Description. The products covered by this Settlement Agreement are Park Avenue bedding – zipper bags (the “Products”) that have been imported, distributed, offered for sale and/or sold in California by Trade Linker.

1.4 Notice of Violation. On March 25, 2020, Espinoza served Trade Linker, The TJX Companies, Inc., Marshalls of MA, Inc., and various public enforcement agencies with documents each entitled “Notice of Violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, et seq.” (the “Notice”). The Notice alleged that Trade Linker was in violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, for failing to warn California consumers and customers that use of the Products will expose them to DEHP. No public enforcer has diligently prosecuted the allegations set forth in the Notice.

1.5 No Admission. Trade Linker denies the material factual and legal allegations contained in the Notice and maintains that, to the best of its knowledge, all products that are or have

been sold and distributed in California, including the Products, have been and are in compliance with all laws. Nothing in this Settlement Agreement shall be construed as an admission by Trade Linker of any fact, finding, issue of law, or violation of law; nor shall compliance with this Settlement Agreement constitute or be construed as an admission by Trade Linker of any fact, finding, conclusion, issue of law or violation of law, such being specifically denied by Trade Linker. However, this § 1.5 shall not diminish or otherwise affect the obligations, responsibilities and duties under this Settlement Agreement. Notwithstanding the allegations in the Notices, Trade Linker maintains that it has not knowingly manufactured, or caused to be manufactured, the Products for sale in California in violation of Proposition 65.

1.6 Effective Date. For purposes of this Settlement Agreement, the term “Effective Date” shall mean the date this Agreement is last executed by the Parties.

2. INJUNCTIVE RELIEF: REFORMULATION AND/OR WARNINGS

2.1 Reformulation of Products. As of the Effective Date, and continuing thereafter, Products that Trade Linker directly manufactures, imports, distributse, sells, or offers for sale in California shall either: (a) be Reformulated Products pursuant to § 2.2, below; or (b) be labeled with a clear and reasonable exposure warning pursuant to §§ 2.3 and 2.4, below.

2.2 Reformulation Standard. “Reformulated Products” shall mean Products that contain concentrations less than or equal to 0.1% (1,000 parts per million (ppm)) of DEHP when analyzed pursuant to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency testing methodologies 3580A and 8270C or other methodology utilized by federal or state government agencies for the purpose of determining the phthalate content in a solid substance.

2.3 Clear and Reasonable Warning. As of the Effective Date, and continuing thereafter, a clear and reasonable exposure warning as set forth in this §§ 2.3 and 2.4 must be provided for all Products that Trade Linker manufactures, imports, distributse, sells, or offers for sale in California that is not a Reformulated Product. There shall be no obligation for Trade Linker to provide an exposure warning for Products that entered the stream of commerce prior to the Effective Date. The

warning shall consist of either the **Warning** or **Alternative Warning** described in §§ 2.3(a) or (b), respectively:

(a) **Warning.**

 **WARNING:** This product can expose you to chemicals including di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP), which are known to the State of California to cause cancer and birth defects or other reproductive harm. For more information go to www.P65Warnings.ca.gov.

(b) **Alternative Warning:**

 **WARNING:** Cancer and Reproductive Harm - www.P65Warnings.ca.gov.

2.4 A **Warning** or **Alternative Warning** provided pursuant to § 2.3 must print the word “**WARNING:**” in all capital letters and in bold font, followed by a colon. The warning symbol to the left of the word “**WARNING:**” must be a black exclamation point in a yellow equilateral triangle with a black outline, except that if the sign or label for the Products does not use the color yellow, the symbol may be in black and white. The symbol must be in a size no smaller than the height of the word “**WARNING:**”. The warning shall be affixed to or printed on the Products’ packaging or labeling, or on a placard, shelf tag, sign or electronic device or automatic process, providing that the warning is displayed with such conspicuousness, as compared with other words, statements, or designs as to render it likely to be read and understood by an ordinary individual under customary conditions of purchase or use. The warning may be contained in the same section of the packaging, labeling, or instruction booklet that states other safety warnings, if any, concerning the use of the Products and shall be at least the same size as those other safety warnings.

If Trade Linker sells Products via an internet website to customers located in California, the warning requirements of this section shall be satisfied if the foregoing warning, or a clearly marked hyperlink using the word “WARNING”, appears either: (a) on the same web page on which Products are displayed and/or described; (b) on the same page as the price for the Product; or (c) on one or more web pages displayed to a purchaser prior to purchase during the checkout process.

2.5 Compliance with Warning Regulations. The Parties agree that Trade Linker shall be deemed to be in compliance with the warning provisions of this Settlement Agreement by either adhering to §§ 2.3 and 2.4 of this Settlement Agreement or by complying with warning regulations

adopted by the State of California’s Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (“OEHHA”) after the Effective Date.

3. PENALTIES PURSUANT TO HEALTH & SAFETY CODE § 25249.7(b)

In settlement of all the claims referred to in this Settlement Agreement, Trade Linker shall pay \$1,000.00 as a Civil Penalty in accordance with this Section. The Civil Penalty payment shall be allocated in accordance with California Health & Safety Code §§ 25249.12(c)(1) and (d), with 75% of the Penalty remitted to OEHHA and the remaining 25% of the Penalty remitted to Espinoza. The Civil Penalty payment(s) shall be delivered to the addresses identified in § 3.2, below.

3.1 Civil Penalty. Within ten (10) business days of the Effective Date, Trade Linker shall issue two (2) separate checks for the Civil Penalty payments to (a) “OEHHA” in the amount of \$750.00; and to (b) “Brodsky Smith in Trust for Espinoza” in the amount of \$250.00. The Civil Penalty payment(s) shall be delivered to the addresses identified in § 3.2, below.

3.2 Payment Procedures.

(a) Issuance of Payments. Payments shall be delivered as follows:

(i) All payments owed to Espinoza, pursuant to § 3.1 shall be delivered to the following payment address:

Evan J. Smith, Esquire
Brodsky Smith
Two Bala Plaza, Suite 805
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

(ii) All payments owed to OEHHA (EIN: 68-0284486), pursuant to § 3.1 shall be delivered directly to OEHHA (Memo Line “Prop 65 Penalties”) at the following addresses:

For United States Postal Service Delivery:

Mike Gyurics
Fiscal Operations Branch Chief
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
P.O. Box 4010
Sacramento, CA 95812-4010

For Non-United States Postal Service Delivery:

Mike Gyurics
Fiscal Operations Branch Chief
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

(b) **Copy of Payments to OEHHA.** Trade Linker agrees to provide Espinoza’s counsel with a copy of the checks payable to OEHHA, simultaneous with its penalty payments to Espinoza, to be delivered to the address provided in § 3.2(a)(i), as proof of payment to OEHHA.

(c) **Tax Documentation.** Trade Linker agrees to provide a completed IRS 1099 for their payments to, and Espinoza agrees to provide IRS W-9 forms for, each of the following payees under this Settlement Agreement:

(i) “Brodsky Smith” (EIN: 23-2971061) at the address provided in Section 3.2(a)(i); and

(ii) “Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment” 1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814.

4. **REIMBURSEMENT OF FEES AND COSTS**

The Parties acknowledge that Espinoza and his counsel offered to reach preliminary agreement on the material terms of this dispute before reaching terms on the amount of fees and costs to be reimbursed to him. The Parties thereafter reached an accord on the compensation due to Espinoza and his counsel under general contract principles and the private attorney general doctrine and principles codified at California Code of Civil Procedure § 1021.5, for all work performed through the mutual execution of this agreement. Under these legal principles, Trade Linker shall reimburse Espinoza’s counsel for fees and costs incurred as a result of investigating and bringing this matter to Trade Linker’s attention, and negotiating a settlement in the public interest. Within ten (10) business days of the Effective Date, Trade Linker shall issue a check payable to “Brodsky Smith” in the amount of \$13,000.00 for delivery to the address identified in § 3.2(a)(i), above.

5. RELEASE OF ALL CLAIMS

5.1 Release of Trade Linker and Downstream Customers and Entities. This Settlement Agreement is a full, final and binding resolution between Espinoza, acting on his own behalf, and Trade Linker, of any violation of Proposition 65 that was or could have been asserted by Espinoza or on behalf of his past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors, and/or assigns (“Releasers”) for failure to provide warnings for alleged exposures to DEHP contained in the Products, and Releasers hereby release any such claims against Trade Linker and its parents, subsidiaries, affiliated entities, shareholders, marketplaces, directors, officers, agents, employees, attorneys, successors and assignees, and each entity to whom Trade Linker directly or indirectly distributes or sells the Products, including but not limited to, downstream distributors, wholesalers, customers, retailers, including but not limited to The TJX Companies, Inc. and Marshalls of MA, Inc., and their respective subsidiaries, affiliates and parents, franchisees, cooperative members and licensees (collectively, the “Releasees”), from all claims for violations of Proposition 65 through the Effective Date for the Products.

In further consideration of the promises and agreements herein contained, and for the payments to be made pursuant to §§ 3 and 4 above, Espinoza, on behalf of himself, his past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors and/or assignees, hereby covenants not to sue and waives any right to institute, participate in, directly or indirectly, any form of legal action and releases all claims that they may have, including without limitation, all actions and causes of action in law and in equity, all obligations, expenses (including without limitation all attorneys’ fees, expert fees, and investigation fees, and costs), damages, losses, liabilities and demands against any of the Releasees of any nature, character, or kind, whether known or unknown, suspected or unsuspected, limited to and arising out of the alleged or actual exposure to the chemical DEHP in the Products.

5.2 Trade Linker’s Release of Espinoza. Trade Linker, on behalf of itself, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors and/or assignees, hereby waives any and all claims against Espinoza, his attorneys and other representatives, for any and all actions taken or statements made by Espinoza and/or his attorneys and other representatives, whether in the course of

investigating claims or otherwise seeking to enforce Proposition 65 against it in this matter or with respect to the Products.

5.3 California Civil Code § 1542. It is possible that other claims not known to the Parties arising out of the facts alleged in the Notice and relating to the Products will develop or be discovered. Espinoza, on behalf of himself only, acknowledges that this Agreement is expressly intended to cover and include all such claims up through the Effective Date, including all rights of action therefor. Espinoza acknowledges that the claims released in § 5.1, above, may include unknown claims, and nevertheless waives California Civil Code § 1542 as to any such unknown claims. California Civil Code § 1542 reads as follows:

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

Espinoza acknowledges and understands the significance and consequences of this specific waiver of California Civil Code § 1542.

5.4 Deemed Compliance with Proposition 65. The Parties agree that compliance by Trade Linker with this Settlement Agreement constitutes compliance with Proposition 65 with respect to exposure to DEHP from use of the Products.

5.5. Public Benefit. It is Trade Linker's understanding that the commitments it has agreed to herein, and actions to be taken by Trade Linker under this Settlement Agreement, would confer a significant benefit to the general public, as set forth in Code of Civil Procedure § 1021.5 and Cal. Admin. Code tit. 11, § 3201. As such, it is the intent of Trade Linker that to the extent any other private party initiates an action alleging a violation of Proposition 65 with respect to Trade Linker's failure to provide a warning concerning exposure to DEHP prior to use of the Products it has manufactured, distributed, sold, or offered for sale in California, or will manufacture, distribute, sell, or offer for sale in California, such private party action would not confer a significant benefit on the

general public as to those Products addressed in this Settlement Agreement, provided that Trade Linker is in material compliance with this Settlement Agreement.

6. SEVERABILITY

If, subsequent to the execution of this Settlement Agreement, any of the provisions of this Settlement Agreement are deemed by a court to be unenforceable, the validity of the enforceable provisions remaining shall not be adversely affected but only to the extent the deletion of the provision deemed unenforceable does not materially affect, or otherwise result in the effect of the Settlement Agreement being contrary to the intent of the Parties in entering into this Settlement Agreement.

7. GOVERNING LAW

The terms of this Settlement Agreement shall be governed by the law of the State of California and apply within the State of California. In the event that Proposition 65 is repealed or is otherwise rendered inapplicable or limited by reason of law generally, or as to the Products, Trade Linker shall provide written notice to Espinoza 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, Products are so affected.

8. NOTICES

Unless specified herein, all correspondence and notices required to be provided pursuant to this Settlement Agreement shall be in writing and personally delivered or sent by: (i) first-class (registered or certified mail) return receipt requested; or (ii) overnight or two-day courier on any party by the other party to the following addresses:

For Trade Linker:

Arslan Ashraf
Trade Linker Int'l Inc.
570 South Avenue East, Building B
Cranford, NJ 07016

With copy to:

Jeffrey Margulies
Norton Rose Fulbright US LLP
555 South Flower Street, Forty-First Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90071

For Espinoza:

Evan J. Smith
Brodsky Smith
Two Bala Plaza, Suite 805
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

Either party, from time to time, may specify in writing to the other party a change of address to which all notices and other communications shall be sent.

9. COUNTERPARTS: SIGNATURES

This Settlement Agreement may be executed in counterparts and by facsimile or .pdf signature, each of which shall be deemed an original, and all of which, when taken together, shall constitute one and the same document.

10. COMPLIANCE WITH HEALTH & SAFETY CODE § 25249.7(f)

Espinoza agrees to comply with the reporting requirements referenced in Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(f).

11. MODIFICATION

This Settlement Agreement may be modified only by a written agreement of the Parties.

12. ENTIRE AGREEMENT

This Settlement Agreement contains the sole and entire agreement of the Parties and any and all prior negotiations and understandings related hereto shall be deemed to have been merged within it. No representations or terms of agreement other than those contained herein exist or have been made by any Party with respect to the other Party or the subject matter hereof.

13. AUTHORIZATION

The undersigned are authorized to execute this Settlement Agreement and have read, understood and agree to all of the terms and conditions contained of this Settlement Agreement.

AGREED TO:

AGREED TO:

Date: 7/26/2021

Date: 08/02/2021

By: 
Gabriel Espinoza

By: 
Trade Linker International, Inc.