

## SETTLEMENT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT

### 1. **INTRODUCTION**

#### 1.1. **Ecological Alliance, LLC and The Container Store, Inc.**

This Settlement Agreement is entered into by and between Ecological Alliance, LLC ("Ecological"), on the one hand, and The Container Store, Inc. ("Container"), on the other hand, with Ecological and Container collectively referred to as the "Parties."

#### 1.2. **Ecological Allegations**

Ecological alleges that Container manufactured and distributed and offered for sale travel organizers and blanket & comfort hangers containing Di(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate ("DEHP") in the State of California, and that such sales have not included warnings pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, California Health & Safety Code sections 25249.6 *et seq.* ("Proposition 65"). California has identified and listed DEHP under Proposition 65 as a chemical known to the State of California to cause cancer and birth defects or other reproductive harm. Container has denied these allegations, as further stated in Paragraph 1.5 below.

#### 1.3. **Product Description**

The products that are covered by this Settlement Agreement are defined as travel organizers and blanket & comforter hangers containing DEHP that Container manufactured or distributed and offered for sale in California. All such items shall be referred to herein as the "Products."

#### 1.4. **Notice of Violation**

On May 19, 2021, Ecological served Alifedesign and Container; and on May 21, 2021 Ecological served Containter, and the requisite public enforcement agencies eligible to initiate Proposition 65 actions on behalf of the People of the State of California with documents entitled

"60-Day Notice of Violation" ("Notice") that provided Container and such public enforcers with notice that Container was allegedly in violation of California Health & Safety Code section 25249.6 for failing to warn consumers and customers that the Products exposed users in California to DEHP. To the best of the Parties' knowledge, no public enforcer has commenced or is diligently prosecuting the allegations set forth in the Notice.

**1.5. No Admission**

The Parties enter into this Settlement Agreement to settle disputed claims between them as set forth herein and in the Notice concerning Container's compliance with Proposition 65. Container denies the material factual and legal allegations contained in Ecological's Notice and maintain that all products they have manufactured for sale and distributed, imported, or sold in California, including the Products, have been and are in compliance with Proposition 65 or any other statutory, regulatory, common law or equitable doctrine. Nothing in this Settlement Agreement shall be construed as an admission by Container of any fact, finding, concession, issue of law, or violation of law; nor shall compliance with this Settlement Agreement constitute or be construed as an admission by Container of any fact, finding, conclusion, issue of law, or violation of law, such being specifically denied by Container on their behalf. However, nothing in this section shall diminish or otherwise affect the obligations, responsibilities, and duties of Container under this Settlement Agreement by the Parties.

**1.6. Effective Date**

For purposes of this Settlement Agreement, the term "Effective Date" shall mean the date this Settlement Agreement is fully executed by the Parties.

## **2. INJUNCTIVE RELIEF: REFORMULATION AND WARNINGS**

As of the Effective Date, Container shall manufacture, import, or otherwise source for authorized sale in California only Reformulated Products, as defined pursuant to Section 2.1 below, unless such Products are labeled with a clear and reasonable Proposition 65 warning pursuant to Section 2.2 below. Products that were supplied to third parties by Container prior to the Effective Date shall be deemed exempted from the requirements of this Section 2 and shall be permitted to be sold through as previously manufactured, packaged and labeled.

### **2.1. Reformulation Standards**

“Reformulated Products” are defined as the Accessible Components (meaning any component of the Products that could be touched by a person during reasonably foreseeable use) of those Products containing DEHP in concentrations less than 0.1 percent (1,000 parts per million) when analyzed pursuant to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency testing methodologies 3580A and 8270C or any other methodology utilized by federal or state agencies for the purpose of determining the DEHP content in a solid substance.

### **2.2. Warning Language**

Where required, Container shall provide Proposition 65 warnings on the Product’s label as follows:

(a) Container may use either of the following warning statements in full compliance with this Section:

- (1) **WARNING:** This product can expose you to chemicals including DEHP, which is 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](http://www.P65Warnings.ca.gov)

(2) **WARNING: Cancer and Reproductive Harm –**

[www.P65Warnings.ca.gov](http://www.P65Warnings.ca.gov)

(b) If Container uses either of the above warning statements to effectuate its compliance, it shall also include a symbol consisting of a black exclamation point in a yellow equilateral triangle with a bold black outline. Where the label is not printed using the color yellow, the symbol may be printed in black and white. The symbol shall be placed to the left of the text of the warning, in a size no smaller than the height of the word “WARNING.”

(c) The requirements for warnings, set forth in subsection (a) above are imposed pursuant to the terms of this Settlement Agreement. The Parties recognize that these are not the exclusive methods of providing a warning under Proposition 65 and its implementing regulations.

(d) In the event that the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment or another authorized agency promulgates one or more regulations requiring or permitting warning text and/or methods of transmission different than those set forth above, or legislation is enacted by the California legislature, United States Congress or voters with such requirements or permission, Container shall be entitled to use, at its discretion, such other warning text and/or method of transmission without being deemed in breach of this Agreement.

(e) If Proposition 65 warnings for DEHP should no longer be required, Container shall have no further obligations pursuant to this Settlement Agreement.

Container Store may provide a point-of-sale warning. Such warning shall be presented in any of the following forms:

(f) In-store Sales of the Covered Products. Customers purchasing Covered Products directly from Container Store's California retail stores will receive the Proposition 65 warnings above via register purchase display or on customers' printed receipts.

(g) Internet sales of the Covered Products. If Container Store sells Covered Products via an internet website to customers located in California, the warning requirements of this section shall be satisfied if one of the warnings appears either: (1) on the same web page on which a Covered Product is displayed and/or described; (2) on the same page as the price for the Covered Product; or (3) on one or more web pages displayed to a purchaser prior to purchase during the checkout process.

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

In settlement of all the claims referred to in this Settlement Agreement and because it previously began to implement Proposition 65 warnings for the Products, Container shall pay a total of \$800 in civil penalties in accordance with this Section. The penalty payment will be allocated in accordance with California Health & Safety Code section 25249.12(c)(1) & (d), with 75% of the funds remitted to the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment ("OEHHA") and the remaining 25% of the penalty remitted to Ecological. Ecological's counsel shall be responsible for delivering OEHHA's portion of any penalty payment made under this Settlement Agreement.

**4. REIMBURSEMENT OF FEES AND COSTS**

The Parties reached an accord on the compensation due to Ecological and its counsel under the private attorney Container doctrine and principles of contract law. Under these legal principles, Container shall reimburse Ecological's counsel for fees and costs, incurred as a result

of investigating and bringing this matter to Container's attention. Container shall pay Ecological's counsel \$15,000 for all attorneys' fees, expert and investigation fees, and related costs associated with this matter and the Notice.

**5. PAYMENT INFORMATION**

By the latter of (i) January 10, 2022; or (ii) ten (10) calendar days from Container's receipt of a W-9 tax form from Custodio & Dubey LLP, Container shall make a total payment of Fifteen Thousand Eight Hundred Dollars (\$15,800) for the civil penalties and attorney's fees / costs by ACH payment to Plaintiff's counsel Custodio & Dubey LLP:

Bank: Bank of America, N.A.

Routing No.: 026009593

Account No.: 325132729125

Beneficiary: Custodio & Dubey LLP

Other than this payment, each side is to bear its own attorneys' fees and costs.

**6. RELEASE OF ALL CLAIMS**

**6.1. Release of Container, Downstream Customers and Upstream Vendors**

In further consideration of the promises and agreements herein contained, and for the payments to be made pursuant to Sections 4 and 5 above, Ecological, on behalf of itself, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors and/or assignees, hereby waives all rights to institute or participate in, directly or indirectly, any form of legal action and releases all claims relating to the Products, 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) of any nature whatsoever, whether known or unknown, fixed or contingent (collectively "Claims"),

against (a) Container, (b) each of Container's downstream distributors, wholesalers, vendors, licensors, licensees, auctioneers, retailers, franchisees, dealers, shareholders, cooperative members, customers, owners, purchasers, and users, (c) each of Container's upstream vendors and entities that manufactured the Products or any component part thereof, (d) Container's parent companies, corporate affiliates, subsidiaries, and their respective officers, directors, attorneys, representatives, shareholders, agents, and employees, and sister and parent entities (collectively "Releasees").

Ecological also, on behalf of itself, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors, and/or assignees and *not* in its representative capacity, provides a general release herein which shall be effective as a full and final accord and satisfaction, as a bar to all actions, causes of action, obligations, costs, expenses, attorneys' fees, damages, losses, claims, liabilities and demands of any nature, character or kind, known or unknown, suspected or unsuspected, against Container and the Releasees. Ecological acknowledges that it is familiar with California Civil Code section 1542, which provides 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.

Ecological, in its capacity only, and on behalf of itself, 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 section 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.

**6.2. Container's Release of Ecological**

Container waives any and all claims against Ecological, its attorneys and other representatives, for any and all actions taken or statements made (or those that could have been taken or made) by Ecological and its attorneys and other representatives, whether in the course of investigating claims or otherwise seeking enforcement of Proposition 65 against it in this matter, and/or with respect to the Products.

**7. GOVERNING LAW**

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 or is otherwise rendered inapplicable by reason of law generally, or as to the Products, then Container shall have no further obligations pursuant to this Settlement Agreement.

**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 courier on any party by the other party at the following addresses:

For Container: Carol R. Brophy, Esq.  
Steptoe & Johnson LLP  
1 Market Street | Steuart Tower, Suite 1800  
San Francisco, CA 94105

For Ecological: Vineet Dubey, Esq.  
Custodio & Dubey LLP  
445 S. Figueroa St., Suite 2520  
Los Angeles, CA 90071

Any 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; FACSIMILE/E-SIGNATURES**

This Settlement Agreement may be executed in counterparts and by facsimile or e-signatures, 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 SECTION 25249.7(f)**

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

**11. ENTIRE AGREEMENT**


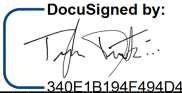
This Settlement Agreement contains the sole and entire agreement and understanding of the Parties with respect to the entire subject matter hereof, and all related prior discussions, negotiations, commitments and understandings. No other agreements, oral or otherwise, exist to bind either of the Parties.

**12. MODIFICATION**

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

**13. AUTHORIZATION**

The undersigned are authorized to execute this Settlement Agreement on behalf of their respective Parties and have read, understood and agree to all of the terms and conditions of this Settlement Agreement.

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>AGREED TO:</b></p> <p>Date: January <u>10</u>, 2022</p> <p>By: <br/>On Behalf of Ecological Alliance, LLC</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>AGREED TO:</b></p> <p>Date: January <u>15</u>, 2022</p> <p>By: <br/>On Behalf of The Container Store, Inc.</p> |
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