

## SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

### 1. INTRODUCTION

**1.1 The Parties.** This Settlement Agreement is entered into by and between Ema Bell (“Bell”), Gabriel Espinoza (“Espinoza”) (collectively, “Enforcers”) and Big Lots Stores, LLC (“Big Lots”). Together, Enforcers and Big Lots are collectively referred to as the “Parties.” Enforcers are individuals who resides in the State of California, and seek to promote awareness of exposures to toxic chemicals and to improve human health by reducing or eliminating hazardous substances contained in consumer products. Enforcers allege that Big Lots 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.** Enforcers allege that Big Lots has exposed individuals to di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP) from its sales of (a) 24” bypass pruners, UPC # 481055859506, and (b) Big Lots 20” hedge shears, UPC # 481055859407, without first providing users and consumers of the product 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 birth defects or other reproductive harm.

**1.3 Product Description.** The products covered by this Settlement Agreement are (a) 24” bypass pruners, UPC # 481055859506, and (b) Big Lots 20” hedge shears, UPC # 481055859407 (the “Products”) that have been imported, distributed, offered for sale and/or sold in California by Big Lots.

**1.4 Notices of Violation.** On June 1, 2022, Bell served Big Lots and various public enforcement agencies with a document entitled “Notice of Violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, et seq.” (the “Bell Notice”). The Bell Notice provided Big Lots and such others, including public enforcers, with notice that alleged that Big Lots was in violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, for failing to warn California consumers and customers that use of the Big Lots 20” hedge shears, UPC # 481055859407, will expose them to DEHP. No public enforcer has diligently prosecuted the allegations set forth in the Bell Notice.

On October 7, 2022, Espinoza served Big Lots and various public enforcement agencies with a document entitled “Notice of Violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, et seq.” (the “Espinoza Notice”). The Espinoza Notice provided Big Lots and such others, including public enforcers, with notice that alleged that Big Lots was in violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, for failing to warn California consumers and customers that use of the 24” bypass pruners, UPC # 481055859506, will expose them to DEHP. No public enforcer has diligently prosecuted the allegations set forth in the Espinoza Notice.

The Bell Notice and the Espinoza Notice are collectively referred to herein as, the “Notices.”

**1.5 No Admission.** Big Lots denies the material factual and legal allegations contained in the Notices 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 Big Lots 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 Big Lots of any fact, finding, conclusion, issue of law or violation of law, such being specifically denied by Big Lots. 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, Big Lots 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 Big Lots directly manufactures, imports, distributes, sells, or offers for sale in California shall either be: (a) reformulated Products pursuant to § 2.2, below; or (b) labeled with a clear and reasonable exposure warning pursuant to §§ 2.3 - 2.6, below. For purposes of this Settlement Agreement, a “Reformulated Product” is a Product that is in compliance with the standard set forth in

§ 2.2, below. The warning requirement set forth in §§ 2.3 - 2.6 shall not apply to any Reformulated Product.


**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 - 2.6 must be provided for all Products that Big Lots manufacturers, imports, distributes, sells, or offers for sale in California that is not a Reformulated Product. There shall be no obligation for Big Lots 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.** The “Warning” shall consist of the statement:

 **WARNING:** This product can expose you to chemicals including di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (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).

(b) **Alternative Warning:** Big Lots may, but is not required to, use the alternative short-form warning as set forth in this § 2.3(b) (“**Alternative Warning**”) as follows:

 **WARNING:** Cancer and Reproductive Harm - [www.P65Warnings.ca.gov](http://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** or **Alternative 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, provided that the **Warning** or **Alternative 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** or **Alternative 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 Product and shall be at least the same size as those other safety warnings.

**2.5 Point of Sale and Internet Warnings.** The warning requirements of § 2.3 shall also be satisfied if Big Lots provides warnings to customers at the point-of-sale. Customers purchasing Products directly from California retail stores shall receive the Proposition 65 warning via register display and on customers' printed receipts.

**2.6 Internet Warnings.** If Big Lots sells Products via its own proprietary internet website to customers located in California, the warning requirements of this Section shall be satisfied if the Warning appears either: (a) on the same web page on which a Product is displayed and/or described; (b) on the same page as the price for the Product; (c) on one or more web pages displayed to a California purchaser prior to completion of the checkout process; or (d) via the "product details" section of the Product page. Alternatively, a symbol consisting of a black exclamation point in a yellow or white equilateral triangle may appear adjacent to or immediately following the display, description, price, or checkout listing of the Product, if the warning statement appears elsewhere on the same web page in a manner that clearly associates it with the product(s) to which the warning applies.

**2.7 Compliance with Warning Regulations.** The Parties agree that Big Lots shall be deemed to be in compliance with this Settlement Agreement by either adhering to §§ 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and/or 2.6 of this Settlement Agreement or by complying with warning requirements adopted by the State of California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment ("OEHHA") applicable to the Product and the exposures at issue 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, Big Lots shall pay \$2,000.00 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 Enforcers. The Civil Penalty payment(s) shall be delivered to the addresses identified in § 3.2, below. For all amounts due and owing that are not received within the payment times set forth below, Big Lots shall pay a late civil penalty payment fee equal to \$100/day to be allocated in accordance with California Health & Safety Code § 25249.12(c)(1) and (d).

**3.1 Civil Penalty.** Within fifteen (15) business days of the Effective Date, Big Lots shall issue three (3) separate checks for the Civil Penalty payment to (a) “OEHHA” in the amount of \$1,500.00; to (b) “Gabriel Espinoza” in the amount of \$250.00; and to (c) “Ema Bell” 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 Enforcers, 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) **Tax Documentation.** Big Lots agrees to provide a completed IRS 1099 for its payments to, and Enforcers agree to provide IRS W-9 forms for, each of the following payees under this Settlement Agreement:

(i) “Gabriel Espinoza” whose address and tax identification number shall be provided within five (5) days after this Settlement Agreement is fully executed by the Parties;

(ii) “Ema Bell” whose address and tax identification number shall be provided within five (5) days after this Settlement Agreement is fully executed by the Parties;

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

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

#### 4. **REIMBURSEMENT OF FEES AND COSTS**

The Parties acknowledge that Enforcers and their 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 them. The Parties thereafter reached an accord on the compensation due to Enforcers and their 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, Big Lots shall reimburse Enforcer’s counsel for fees and costs incurred as a result of investigating and bringing this matter to the attention of Big Lots, and negotiating a settlement in the public interest. Within fifteen (15) business days of the Effective Date, Big Lots shall issue a check payable to “Brodsky & Smith” in the amount of \$18,000.00 for delivery to the address identified in § 3.2(a)(i), above.

## **5. RELEASE OF ALL CLAIMS**

**5.1 Release of Big Lots and Downstream Customers and Entities.** This Settlement Agreement is a full, final and binding resolution between Enforcers, acting on their own behalf, and Big Lots, of any violation of Proposition 65 that was or could have been asserted by Enforcers or on behalf of their past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors, and/or assigns (“Releasers”) for failure to provide warnings for alleged exposures to DEHP from use of the Products, and Releasers hereby release any such claims against Big Lots and its parents, subsidiaries, affiliated entities, shareholders, marketplaces, directors, officers, agents, employees, attorneys, successors and assignees, and each entity to whom Big Lots directly or indirectly distributes or sells the Products, including but not limited to, downstream distributors, wholesalers, customers, retailers, including but not limited to Big Lots, and its 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 based on exposure to DEHP from use of 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, Enforcers, on behalf of themselves, their 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 DEHP from use of the Products.

**5.2 Big Lots’ Release of Enforcers.** Big Lots, on behalf of itself, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors and/or assignees, hereby waives any and all claims against Enforcers, their attorneys and other representatives, for any and all actions taken or statements made (or those that could have been taken or made) by Enforcers and/or their 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 exposure to DEHP from use of 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 Notices and relating to the Products will develop or be discovered. Enforcers on behalf of themselves only, on one hand, and Big Lots, on the other hand, acknowledge that this Agreement is expressly intended to cover and include all such claims up through the Effective Date, including all rights of action therefor. The Parties acknowledge that the claims released in §§ 5.1 and 5.2, above, may include unknown claims, and nevertheless waive 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 HIS FAVOR AT THE TIME OF EXECUTING THE RELEASE AND THAT, IF KNOWN BY HIM OR HIS, WOULD HAVE MATERIALLY AFFECTED HIS OR HIS SETTLEMENT WITH THE DEBTOR OR RELEASED PARTY.

Enforcers and Big Lots each acknowledge and understand 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 Big Lots with this Settlement Agreement constitutes compliance with Proposition 65 with respect to exposure to DEHP from use of the Products.

**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, Big Lots shall provide written notice to Enforcers 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, a Product is 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 Big Lots:

Victoria E. Lew  
Steptoe & Johnson LLP  
633 West Fifth Street, Suite 1900  
Los Angeles, CA 90071

For Enforcers:

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)**

Enforcers agree 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**

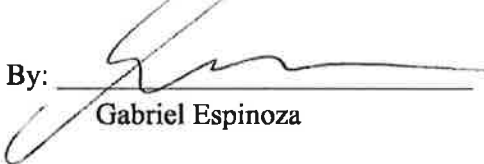
This Settlement Agreement contains the sole and entire agreement of the Parties and any and all prior negotiations and understandings related hereto shall be deemed to have been merged within it. No representations or terms of agreement other than those contained herein exist or have been made by any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

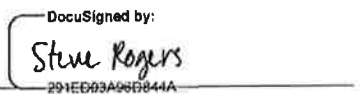
**AGREED TO:**

Date: 7/12/23

By:   
Gabriel Espinoza


**AGREED TO:**

Date: 6/19/2023

By:   
Big Lots Stores, LLC

**AGREED TO:**

Date: July 12, 2023

By:   
Erna Bell