

SETTLEMENT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Ecological Alliance, LLC and Momentum Brands, Inc.

This Settlement Agreement is entered into by and between Ecological Alliance, LLC ("Ecological"), on the one hand, and 99 Cents Only Stores LLC ("99 Cents") and Momentum Brands, Inc. ("Momentum" and together with 99 Cents, "Defendants"), on the other hand, with Ecological and Defendants collectively referred to as the "Parties" and each, a "Party."

1.2. General Allegations

Ecological alleges that Defendants manufactured and/or distributed and/or offered for sale in the State of California stationery sets with cases containing Di(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate [DEHP], 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, birth defects or other reproductive harm.

1.3. Product Description

The products that are covered by this Settlement Agreement are defined as stationery sets with cases containing Di(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate [DEHP], that Defendants have manufactured, sold, offered for sale, or distributed in California. All such items shall be referred to herein as the "Products."

1.4. Notice of Violation

On June 8, 2022, Ecological served Momentum, 99 Cents Only Stores LLC, 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 Defendants and such public enforcers with notice that Defendants were 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 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 Defendants' compliance with Proposition 65. Specifically, Defendants deny the material factual and legal allegations contained in Ecological's Notice and maintains that all products that it has manufactured for sale and distribution 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 Defendants 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 Defendants of any fact, finding, conclusion, issue of law, or violation of law, such being specifically denied by Defendants. However, nothing in this section shall diminish or otherwise affect the obligations, responsibilities, and duties of Defendants under this Settlement Agreement.

1.6. Effective Date

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

2. INJUNCTIVE RELIEF: WARNING

2.1. Warning and Reformulation Requirements

Within 90 days of the Effective Date, Products shall either be (1) accompanied by a warning as described in Section 2.2 below, or (2) reformulated to contain no more than 1,000 parts per million of DEHP. The warning and reformulation requirements shall apply only to Products that are distributed, marketed, sold, or shipped for sale in the State of California. Products with less than 1,000 parts per million DEHP shall be considered compliant with Proposition 65. The warning requirement shall not apply to Products that are already in the stream of commerce as of the Effective Date or that Defendants place into the stream of commerce within 90 days of the Effective Date.

2.2. Warning Language

Where required, Defendants shall provide Proposition 65 warnings as follows:

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

(1) **WARNING:** This product can expose you to chemicals including DEHP, a chemical known to the State of California to cause cancer and birth defects or other reproductive harm. For more info go to www.P65Warnings.ca.gov.

(2) **WARNING:** Cancer and Reproductive Harm – www.P65Warnings.ca.gov.

(b) If Defendants elect to use the warning statements identified in either 2.2(a)(1) or (2), it shall also include a symbol consisting of a black exclamation point in a yellow equilateral triangle with a bold black outline. Where the sign,

label or shelf tag for the product 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) If Proposition 65 warnings for DEHP should no longer be required, Defendants shall have no further obligations pursuant to this Settlement Agreement.

(e) In the event that the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment promulgates one or more regulations requiring or permitting warning text and/or methods of transmission different than those set forth above, Defendants shall be entitled to use, at their discretion, such other warning text and/or method of transmission without being deemed in breach of this Agreement.

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

In settlement of all the claims referred to in this Settlement Agreement, Defendants shall pay a total of \$500 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 general doctrine and principles of contract law. Under these legal principles, Defendants shall reimburse Ecological's counsel for fees and costs, incurred as a result of investigating and bringing this matter to Defendants' attention. Defendants shall pay Ecological's counsel \$7,000 for all attorneys' fees, expert and investigation fees, and related costs associated with this matter and the Notice.

5. PAYMENT INFORMATION

By January 6, 2023 Defendants shall make a total payment of Seven Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$7,500) for the civil penalties and attorney's fees / costs by wire transfer to Plaintiff's counsel Custodio & Dubey LLP:

Bank: Bank of America, N.A.

Routing No.: 026009593

Account No.: 325149324377

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 Defendants, Downstream Distributors and Upstream Vendors

In further consideration of the promises and agreements herein contained, and for the payments to be made pursuant to Sections 3 and 4 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) Defendants, (b) each of Defendants' upstream vendors and downstream distributors, wholesalers, vendors, licensors, licensees, auctioneers, retailers, franchisees, dealers, shareholders, cooperative members, customers, owners, purchasers, users, and (c) Defendants' respective or collective parent companies, corporate affiliates, and subsidiaries, and their respective officers, directors, attorneys, representatives, shareholders, agents, and employees (all of the persons and entities listed in (a), (b) and (c), collectively, "Releasees").

Ecological also, in its capacity, 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 Defendants and the other 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 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.

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. Defendants' Release of Ecological

Defendants waive any and all claims against Ecological, its attorneys and other representatives, for any and all actions taken or statements made by Ecological and its attorneys and other representatives, whether in the course of investigating claims or otherwise, in seeking enforcement of Proposition 65 against them 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, exclusive of its conflict of laws rules. In the event that Proposition 65 is repealed or is otherwise rendered inapplicable by reason of law generally, or as to the Products, then Defendants 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 Defendants: Joseph D. Lee, Esq.
Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP
350 South Grand Avenue, 50th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90071-3426

With a copy to: Mary Kay Delgado
99 Cents Only Stores LLC
4000 Union Pacific Avenue
City of Commerce, CA 90023

For Ecological: Vineet Dubey, Esq.
Custodio & Dubey LLP
445 S. Figueroa St., Suite 2520
Los Angeles, CA 90013

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.

AGREED TO: Date: December <u>20</u> , 2022 By:  On Behalf of Ecological Alliance, LLC	AGREED TO: Date: December <u>21</u> , 2022 By:  On Behalf of Momentum Brands, Inc.
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AGREED TO: Date: December <u>21</u> , 2022 By:  On Behalf of 99 Cents Only Stores, LLC
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