

SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Parties. This Settlement Agreement is entered into by and between Precila Balabbo (“Balabbo”), Ema Bell (“Bell”) (collectively, “Enforcers”), and Boston Warehouse Trading Corp. (“Boston Warehouse”). Together, Enforcers and Boston Warehouse 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 Boston Warehouse 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 Boston Warehouse has exposed individuals to the chemical lead from its sales of (a) Be Merry espresso set mugs, # 400246269429, and (b) Boston Warehouse Trading “Bone Appetit” hinged jars, UPC # 026602608116, without first providing users and consumers of the product with a clear and reasonable health hazard exposure warning as required pursuant to Proposition 65. Lead 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) Be Merry espresso set mugs, #400246269429, and (b) Boston Warehouse Trading “Bone Appetit” hinged jars, UPC # 026602608116, (the “Products”) that have been imported, distributed, offered for sale and/or sold in California by Boston Warehouse.

1.4 Notices of Violation. On May 22, 2023, Balabbo served Ross Stores, Inc., Boston Warehouse, and various public enforcement agencies with a document entitled “Notice of Violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, et seq.” (the “May Notice”). The May Notice provided Boston Warehouse and such others, including public enforcers, with notice that alleged that Boston Warehouse was in violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, for failing to warn California consumers and customers that use of Be Merry espresso set mugs, # 400246269429, will

expose them to lead. No public enforcer has diligently prosecuted the allegations set forth in the May Notice.

On November 2, 2023 Bell served Big Lots Stores, LLC and various public enforcement agencies with a document entitled “Notice of Violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, et seq.” (the “November Notice”). The November 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 “Bone Appetit” hinged jars, UPC # 026602608116, will expose them to lead. No public enforcer has diligently prosecuted the allegations set forth in the December Notice. On December 4, 2023, Bell served Boston Warehouse and various public enforcement agencies with a document entitled “Notice of Violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, et seq.” (the “December Notice”). The December Notice provided Boston Warehouse and such others, including public enforcers, with notice that alleged that Boston Warehouse was in violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, for failing to warn California consumers and customers that use of Boston Warehouse Trading “Bone Appetit” hinged jars, UPC # 026602608116, will expose them to lead. No public enforcer has diligently prosecuted the allegations set forth in the December Notice.

The May Notice, November Notice, and the December Notice are collectively referred to herein, as the “Notices.”

1.5 No Admission. Boston Warehouse 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 Boston Warehouse 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 Boston Warehouse of any fact, finding, conclusion, issue of law or violation of law, such being specifically denied by Boston Warehouse. 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, Boston

Warehouse 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 Boston Warehouse 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 and 2.4, 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 and 2.4 shall not apply to any Reformulated Product.

2.2 Reformulation Standard. “Reformulated Products” shall mean Products that produce a wipe test result no higher than 1 microgram (μg) of lead when analyzed pursuant to NIOSH method no. 9100.

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 Boston Warehouse manufactures, imports, distributes, sells, or offers for sale in California that is not a Reformulated Product. There shall be no obligation for Boston Warehouse 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 lead, 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:** Boston Warehouse 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.

(c) Boston Warehouse may use any form of “safe harbor” warning set forth in Proposition 65 regulations that are adopted at the time it places the Products in the stream of commerce.

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, receipt, 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 Product and shall be at least the same size as those other safety warnings.

2.5 Compliance with Warning Regulations. The Parties agree that Boston Warehouse shall be deemed to be in compliance with this Settlement Agreement by either adhering to §§ 2.3 and 2.4 of this Settlement Agreement or by complying with warning requirements adopted by the State of California’s Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (“OEHHA”) after the Effective Date. If “consumer information,” as that term is defined in Title 27, California Code of Regulations, Section 25600.1(c) as it may be amended from time to time, is provided in a foreign language, Boston Warehouse shall provide the **Warning or Alternative Warning** in the foreign language in accordance with applicable warning regulations adopted by OEHHA.

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

In settlement of all the claims referred to in this Settlement Agreement, Boston Warehouse 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.

3.1 Civil Penalty. Within ten (10) days of the Effective Date, Boston Warehouse shall issue two (2) separate checks for the Civil Penalty payment to (a) “OEHHA” in the amount of \$1,500.00; and to (b) “Brodsky Smith in Trust for Enforcers” in the amount of \$500.00. 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) Copy of Payments to OEHHA. Boston Warehouse agrees to provide Enforcers’ counsel with a copy of the checks payable to OEHHA, simultaneous with its penalty

payments to Enforcers, to be delivered to the address provided in § 3.2(a)(i), as proof of payment to OEHHA.

(c) **Tax Documentation.** Boston Warehouse 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) “Precila Balabbo” 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, Boston Warehouse shall reimburse Enforcers’ counsel for fees and costs incurred as a result of investigating and bringing this matter to the attention of Boston Warehouse, and negotiating a settlement in the public interest. Within ten (10) days of the Effective Date, Boston Warehouse shall issue a check payable to “Brodsky Smith” in the amount of \$21,500.00 for delivery to the address identified in § 3.2(a)(i), above.

5. RELEASE OF ALL CLAIMS

5.1 Release of Boston Warehouse and Downstream Customers and Entities. This Settlement Agreement is a full, final and binding resolution between Enforcers, acting on their own behalf, and Boston Warehouse, 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 (“Releasors”) for failure to provide warnings for alleged exposures to lead from use of the Products, and Releasors hereby release any such claims against Boston Warehouse and their parents, subsidiaries, affiliated entities, shareholders, marketplaces, directors, officers, agents, employees, attorneys, successors and assignees, and each entity to whom Boston Warehouse 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 Stores, LLC, Ross Stores, 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 based on exposure to lead 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 the chemical lead from use of the Products.

5.2 Boston Warehouse’s Release of Enforcers. Boston Warehouse, 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 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 Boston Warehouse, 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 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.

Enforcers and Boston Warehouse 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 Boston Warehouse with this Settlement Agreement constitutes compliance with Proposition 65 with respect to exposure to lead from use of the Products.

5.5. Public Benefit. It is Boston Warehouse's understanding that the commitments it has agreed to herein, and actions to be taken by Boston Warehouse 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 Boston Warehouse that to the extent any other private party initiates an action alleging a violation of Proposition 65 with respect to Boston Warehouse's failure to provide a warning concerning exposure to lead 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 Boston Warehouse 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, Boston Warehouse shall provide written notice to Balabbo 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, the 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 Boston Warehouse:

Carol Brophy, Esq.
Steptoe & Johnson LLP
One Market Plaza
Steuart Tower, Suite 1070
San Francisco, California 94105

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: _____

By: _____
Precila Balabbo

AGREED TO:

Date: _____

By: _____
Ema Bell

AGREED TO:

Date: 2-5-24

By: Peter K. Jenkins
Boston Warehouse Trading Corp.

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).

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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: 2/5/24

By: 
Precila Balabbo

AGREED TO:

Date: _____

By _____
Boston Warehouse Trading Corp.

AGREED TO:

Date: 2/5/24

By: 
Emma Bell