

SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Parties. This Settlement Agreement is entered into by and between Ema Bell (“Bell”) and Grupo Ruz, S.A. de C.V. (“Grupo Ruz”). Together, Bell and Grupo Ruz are collectively referred to as the “Parties.” Bell 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. Bell alleges that Grupo Ruz 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. Bell alleges, and Grupo Ruz denies, that Grupo Ruz has exposed individuals to lead from its sales of *The Grinch*[™] plush in jumbo mugs, UPC # 1 93849 06607 5, 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 *The Grinch*[™] plush in jumbo mugs, UPC # 1 93849 06607 5 (the “Products”) that have been imported, distributed, offered for sale and/or sold in California by Grupo Ruz that Bell alleges exposed users to lead.

1.4 Notice of Violation. On December 23, 2024, Bell served Grupo Ruz, Walmart Inc., and various public enforcement agencies with a document entitled “Notice of Violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, et seq.” (the “Notice”). The Notice alleged that Grupo Ruz 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 lead. No public enforcer has diligently prosecuted the allegations set forth in the Notice.

1.5 No Admission. Grupo Ruz 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 Grupo Ruz 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 Grupo Ruz, its officers, directors, employees, or parents, subsidiaries, or affiliated corporations, of any fact, finding, conclusion, issue of law or violation of law, such being specifically denied by Grupo Ruz. However, this § 1.5 shall not diminish or otherwise affect the obligations, responsibilities and duties under this Settlement Agreement. Notwithstanding the allegations in the Notice, Grupo Ruz maintains that it has not knowingly manufactured, or caused to be manufactured, the Products for sale in California in violation of Proposition 65. Except for the allegations settled and compromised, nothing in this Settlement Agreement shall prejudice, waive, or impair any right, remedy, argument, or defense that Grupo Ruz has in any other pending legal proceeding as to allegations unrelated to the Dispute or claims released herein.

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

2. INJUNCTIVE RELIEF: REFORMULATION AND/OR WARNINGS


2.1 Formulation of Products. Commencing within sixty (60) days after the Effective Date, and continuing thereafter, Products that Grupo Ruz directly manufactures, imports, distributes, sells, or offers for sale in California shall either be: (a) Products formulated pursuant to § 2.2, below; or (b) labeled with a clear and reasonable exposure warning pursuant to §§ 2.3 - 2.4, below. For purposes of this Settlement Agreement, a “Formulated 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 - 2.4 shall not apply to any Formulated Product.

2.2 Formulation Standard. “Formulated Products” are defined as those Products that: (a) contain no more than 90 parts per million (“ppm”) lead in any decoration, colored artwork, designs and/or marking on the surface of the Products when analyzed pursuant to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency testing methodologies 3050B or equivalent methodologies utilized by federal or state agencies for the purpose of determining lead content in a solid substance; or (b) yield no more


than one microgram of lead on any surface sampled and analyzed pursuant to the NIOSH 9100 testing protocol, or equivalent methodologies used by state and federal agencies to determine lead content on a solid substance.

2.3 Clear and Reasonable Warning. Commencing within 60 days after 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 Grupo Ruz manufacturers, imports, distributes, sells, or offers for sale in California that is not a Formulated Product. There shall be no obligation for Grupo Ruz to provide an exposure warning for Products that entered the stream of commerce within 60 days after 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 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.

(b) **Alternative Warning:** Grupo Ruz 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.

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 only if such electronic device or automatic process provides the **Warning** or **Alternative Warning** without the purchaser having to seek it out, 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. A **Warning** or **Alternative Warning** provided via an electronic device or automatic process does not apply to internet purchases, which are subject to the provisions of Section 25602(b). 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. 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, Grupo Ruz shall provide the **Warning** or **Alternative Warning** in the foreign language in accordance with applicable warning regulations adopted by the State of California’s Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (“OEHHA”). An **Alternative Warning** on a Product manufactured and labeled after January 1, 2028 shall be provided in accordance with Title 27, California Code of Regulations, § 25603(b).

In addition to affixing the **Warning** or **Alternative Warning** to the Product’s packaging or labeling, the **Warning** or **Alternative Warning** shall be posted on websites where Grupo Ruz offers Products for sale to consumers in California. The requirements of this Section shall be satisfied if the **Warning** or **Alternative Warning**, or a clearly marked hyperlink using the word “**WARNING**,” appears on the product display page, or by otherwise prominently displaying the warning to the purchaser prior to completing the purchase. To comply with this Section, Grupo Ruz shall (a) post the **Warning** or **Alternative Warning** on its own website and, if it has the ability to do so, on the websites of its third-party internet sellers; and (b) if it does not have the ability to post the **Warning** or **Alternative Warning** on the websites of its third-party internet sellers, provide such sellers with written notice in accordance with Title 27, California Code of Regulations, Section 25600.2. Third-party internet sellers of the Product that have been provided with written notice in accordance with Title 27, California Code of Regulations, Section 25600.2 are not released in Section 5 of this Agreement if they fail to meet the warning requirements of this Section.

2.5 Compliance with Warning Regulations. The Parties agree that Grupo Ruz shall be deemed to be in compliance with this Settlement Agreement by either adhering to § 2 of this Settlement Agreement or by complying with current warning regulations adopted by the State of

California's OEHHA applicable to the Product and the exposure at issue, as to all Products in existing inventory and for Products manufactured after the Effective Date, regardless of when distributed and/or sold.

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

In settlement of all the claims referred to in this Settlement Agreement, Grupo Ruz shall pay a total of \$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 Bell. The Civil Penalty payment(s) shall be delivered to the addresses identified in § 3.2, below

3.1 Civil Penalty. Within twenty (20) business days of the Effective Date, Grupo Ruz shall issue two (2) separate checks for the Civil Penalty payment to (a) "OEHHA" in the amount of \$750.00; and to (b) "Ema Bell" in the amount of \$250.00. The Civil Penalty payment(s) shall be delivered to the addresses identified in § 3.2, below. By the Effective Date, Ema Bell shall provide taxpayer identification (including, if need be, a Social Security Number) and all other information as necessary for Grupo Ruz to process the check.

3.2 Payment Procedures.

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

(i) All payments owed to Bell, 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.** Grupo Ruz agrees to provide Bell's counsel with a copy of the checks payable to OEHHA, simultaneous with its penalty payments to Bell (or as soon as reasonably practical thereafter), to be delivered to the address provided in § 3.2(a)(i), as proof of payment to OEHHA.

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

(i) "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;

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

(iii) "Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment" 1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814.

4. **REIMBURSEMENT OF FEES AND COSTS**

The Parties acknowledge that Bell and her 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 Bell and her 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, Grupo Ruz shall reimburse Bell's counsel for fees and costs incurred as a result of investigating and bringing this matter to the attention of Grupo Ruz and negotiating a settlement in the public interest. Within fifteen (15) business days of the Effective Date, Grupo Ruz shall issue a check payable to "Brodsky Smith" in the amount of \$20,750.00 for delivery to the address identified in § 3.2(a)(i), above. By the Effective Date, Brodsky Smith shall provide Grupo Ruz with its Employer Identification Number.

Aside from the payments specified in Sections 3 and 4, no additional monies shall be due from Grupo Ruz, its suppliers or distributors, or any person or entity with respect to the Products.

5. RELEASE OF ALL CLAIMS

5.1 Release of Grupo Ruz and Downstream Customers and Entities. This Settlement Agreement is a full, final and binding resolution between Bell, acting on her own behalf, and Grupo Ruz, of any violation of Proposition 65 that was or could have been asserted by Bell or on behalf of her past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors, and/or assigns ("Releasers") for failure to provide warnings for alleged exposures to lead from use of the Products, and Releasers hereby release any such claims against Grupo Ruz and its parents, subsidiaries, affiliated and/or related entities, shareholders, marketplaces, directors, officers, agents, employees, suppliers (including Access Asia), manufacturers, predecessors, attorneys, successors and assignees, and each entity to whom Grupo Ruz directly or indirectly distributes or sells the Products, including but not limited to, downstream distributors, wholesalers, customers, retailers, including but not limited to Walmart Inc., its respective subsidiaries, affiliates and parents, franchisees, cooperative members and licensees (collectively, the "Releasees"), from and all violations, or claims for violations, of Proposition 65, that has been, could have been, or may be in the future asserted against the Releasees in connection with exposure to lead from use of the Products (including any and all asserted in any complaint filed against Walmart Inc.) through 60 days after the Effective Date.

In further consideration of the promises and agreements herein contained, and for the payments to be made pursuant to §§ 3 and 4 above, Bell, on behalf of herself, her 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 she 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 lead from use of the Products.

5.2 Grupo Ruz's Release of Bell. Grupo Ruz, on behalf of itself, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors and/or assignees, hereby waives any and all claims against Bell, her attorneys and other representatives, for any and all actions taken or statements made (or those that could have been taken or made) by Bell and/or her 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 lead from 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. Bell on behalf of herself only, on one hand, and Grupo Ruz, on the other hand, acknowledge that this Agreement is expressly intended to cover and include all such claims up through 60 days after 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 HER OR HER FAVOR AT THE TIME OF EXECUTING THE RELEASE AND THAT, IF KNOWN BY HIM OR HER, WOULD HAVE MATERIALLY AFFECTED HER OR HER SETTLEMENT WITH THE DEBTOR OR RELEASED PARTY.

Bell and Grupo Ruz 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 Grupo Ruz with this Settlement Agreement constitutes compliance by Grupo Ruz with Proposition 65 with respect to exposure to lead from use of the Products.

5.5 Public Benefit. It is Grupo Ruz's understanding that the commitments it has agreed to herein, and actions to be taken by Grupo Ruz 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 Grupo Ruz that to the extent any other private party initiates an action alleging a violation of Proposition 65 with respect to Grupo Ruz'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 Grupo Ruz 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.

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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 Grupo Ruz:

Leon Gladstone
Michael J. Aiken
GladstoneWeisberg, ALC
300 Corporate Pointe, Suite 400
Culver City, CA 90230

For Bell:

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)

Bell 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: _____

Date: 3/23/26

By: _____
Ema Bell

By: 
Grupo Ruz, S.A. de C.V.

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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: 3 / 23 / 26

Date: _____

By:  _____
Ena Bell

By: _____
Grupo Ruz, S.A. de C.V.