Fill in this information to identify the case:							
Debtor 1 Buffets, LLC							
Debtor 2 (Spouse, if filing)							
United States Bankruptcy Court for the: Northern District of Texas, Dallas Division							
Case number <u>21-30723-11</u>							

E-Filed on 08/30/2021 Claim # 368

Official Form 410

Proof of Claim

04/19

Read the instructions before filling out this form. This form is for making a claim for payment in a bankruptcy case. Do not use this form to make a request for payment of an administrative expense. Make such a request according to 11 U.S.C. § 503.

Filers must leave out or redact information that is entitled to privacy on this form or on any attached documents. Attach redacted copies of any documents that support the claim, such as promissory notes, purchase orders, invoices, itemized statements of running accounts, contracts, judgments, mortgages, and security agreements. Do not send original documents; they may be destroyed after scanning. If the documents are not available, explain in an attachment.

A person who files a fraudulent claim could be fined up to \$500,000, imprisoned for up to 5 years, or both. 18 U.S.C. §§ 152, 157, and 3571.

Fill in all the information about the claim as of the date the case was filed. That date is on the notice of bankruptcy (Form 309) that you received.

F	Part 1: Identify the Claim								
1.	Who is the current creditor?	Reina Gonzalez; Schneider Wallace Cottrell Konecky Name of the current creditor (the person or entity to be paid for this claim) Other names the creditor used with the debtor							
2.	Has this claim been acquired from someone else?	☑ No ☐ Yes. From whom?							
3.	Where should notices and payments to the creditor be sent? Federal Rule of Bankruptcy Procedure (FRBP) 2002(g)	Where should notices to the creditor be sent? Carolyn H. Cottrell Name 2000 Powell Street Suite 1400 Number Street Emeryville CA 94608 City State ZIP Code Contact phone (415) 421-7100 Contact email Ccottrell@schneiderwallace.com	Where should payments to the creditor be sent? (if different) Name Number Street City State ZIP Code Contact phone Contact email						
4.	Does this claim amend one already filed?	Uniform claim identifier for electronic payments in chapter 13 (if you use one): ———————————————————————————————————							
5.	Do you know if anyone else has filed a proof of claim for this claim?	☑ No ☐ Yes. Who made the earlier filing?							

6.	Do you have any number you use to identify the debtor?	No See I No Yes. Last 4 digits of the debtor's account or any number you use to identify the debtor:						
7.	How much is the claim?	\$ Does this amount include interest or other charges? □ No ¥ Yes. Attach statement itemizing interest, fees, expenses, or other charges required by Bankruptcy Rule 3001(c)(2)(A).						
3.	What is the basis of the claim?	Examples: Goods sold, money loaned, lease, services performed, personal injury or wrongful death, or credit card. Attach redacted copies of any documents supporting the claim required by Bankruptcy Rule 3001(c). Limit disclosing information that is entitled to privacy, such as health care information. Unpaid wages						
9.	Is all or part of the claim secured?	Yes. The claim is secured by a lien on property. Nature of property: Real estate. If the claim is secured by the debtor's principal residence, file a Mortgage Proof of Claim Attachment (Official Form 410-A) with this Proof of Claim. Other. Describe: Basis for perfection: Attach redacted copies of documents, if any, that show evidence of perfection of a security interest (for example, a mortgage, lien, certificate of title, financing statement, or other document that shows the lien has been filed or recorded.)						
		Value of property: \$ Amount of the claim that is secured: \$ Amount of the claim that is unsecured: \$(The sum of the secured and unsecured						
		Amount necessary to cure any default as of the date of the petition: Annual Interest Rate (when case was filed)% Fixed Variable						
10	. Is this claim based on a lease?	✓ No Yes. Amount necessary to cure any default as of the date of the petition. \$						
11	. Is this claim subject to a right of setoff?	✓ No ✓ Yes. Identify the property:						

12. Is all or part of the claim	V	No							
entitled to priority under 11 U.S.C. § 507(a)?		Yes. Check	one:					Amount entit	tled to priority
A claim may be partly priority and partly		Domestic support obligations (including alimony and child support) under 11 U.S.C. § 507(a)(1)(A) or (a)(1)(B).			\$	0.00			
nonpriority. For example, in some categories, the law limits the amount entitled to priority.		☐ Up to \$3,025* of deposits toward purchase, lease, or rental of property or services for personal, family, or household use. 11 U.S.C. § 507(a)(7).					\$	0.00	
		bankrup	salaries, or commissions (up to \$13,650*) earned within 180 days befortcy petition is filed or the debtor's business ends, whichever is earlier. C. § 507(a)(4).			\$	0.00		
☐ Taxes or penalties owed to governmental units. 11 U.S.C. § 507(a)(8).								\$	0.00
		☐ Contribu	itions to an emp	loyee benefit p	lan. 11 U.S.C. §	507(a)(5).		\$	0.00
☐ Contributions to an employee benefit plan. 11 U.S.C. § 507(a)(5). ☐ Other. Specify subsection of 11 U.S.C. § 507(a)() that applies.								\$	0.00
		* Amounts a	re subject to adjus	stment on 4/01/22	2 and every 3 year	s after that for cases	begun on or aft	er the date of adj	ustment.
Part 3: Sign Below									
The person completing this proof of claim must	Che	eck the appro	priate box:						
sign and date it.		I am the cre	ditor.						
FRBP 9011(b).	d		ditor's attorney		•				
If you file this claim electronically, FRBP					•	ankruptcy Rule 30			
5005(a)(2) authorizes courts	Ц	I am a guarantor, surety, endorser, or other codebtor. Bankruptcy Rule 3005.							
to establish local rules specifying what a signature									
is.	I understand that an authorized signature on this <i>Proof of Claim</i> serves as an acknowledgment that when calculating the amount of the claim, the creditor gave the debtor credit for any payments received toward the debt.								
A person who files a	amount of the staint, the dreater gave the debter creaters any payments received toward the debt.								
fraudulent claim could be fined up to \$500,000,	I have examined the information in this <i>Proof of Claim</i> and have a reasonable belief that the information is true and correct.								
imprisoned for up to 5 years, or both.	and correct.								
18 U.S.C. §§ 152, 157, and	I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.								
3571.	Executed on date 08/30/2021 MM / DD / YYYY								
	<u>C</u>	Carolyn H Signature	. Cottrell				_		
		J							
	Prir	Print the name of the person who is completing and signing this claim:							
	Nam	ne	Carolyn H	. Cottrell	NA' LU				
			First name		Middle name		Last name		
	Title	•	Attorney						
Company Schneider Wallace Cottrell Konecky Identify the corporate servicer as the company if the authorized agent is a servicer.									
			,		, , ,	. 9			
	Add	ress	Number	Ctroot					
			Number	Street					
			City			State	ZIP Code		
	Con	tact phone				Email			

Attachment 1 - Gonzalez v Buffets LLC Proof of Claim FINAL.pdf Description -



August 29, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

BMC Group Attention: Claims Processing 3732 W. 120th St. Hawthorne, CA 90250

Re: Proof of Claim of Reina Gonzalez in Chapter 11 Bankruptcy Matter of Buffets, LLC, United States Bankruptcy Court – Northern District of Texas, Case No. 3:2021-bk-30723-11

To Whom It May Concern:

We represent Reina Gonzalez for the wages and penalties she is owed by Buffets, LLC under the Fair Labor Standards Act, the California Labor Code, California Unfair Competition Law, and California Private Attorneys General Act of 2004.

Ms. Gonzalez has asserted claims against Buffets, LLC in civil actions filed in the United States District Court for the Central District of California¹ and California Superior Court for the County of Santa Clara.² Both actions are stayed.

Ms. Gonzalez worked for Buffets, LLC as a non-exempt, hourly employee at HomeTown Buffet restaurants located in Palmdale and Lancaster, California from approximately April 4, 1994 until approximately September 23, 2018.³ Ms. Gonzalez worked at least five days per week and at various times as a cashier and waitress. At the time of her termination, her regular hourly rate of pay was approximately \$11.00 per hour.⁴

¹ See **Exhibit A**, Complaint, *Gonzalez et al. v. Food Management Partners, Inc. et al.* (Case No. 2:19-cv-08496-ODW-AS) (filed October 1, 2019) asserts claims on behalf of Ms. Gonzalez, a putative collective under the Fair Labor Standards Act, and a putative class under Fed. R. Civ. P. 23.

² See Exhibit B, Complaint, Gonzalez et al. v. Food Management Partners, Inc. et al. (Case No. 19CV357419) (filed October 25, 2019) asserts claims on behalf of the State of California and similarly situated Aggrieved Employees under the California Private Attorneys General Act of 2004 (PAGA).

³ See Exhibit C, Exemplar Pay Stub dated October 10, 2018 (confirming Ms. Gonzalez's employment with Buffets, LLC).

⁴ FMP-Ovation Payroll, LLC and Buffets, LLC appear directly on Ms. Gonzalez's pay stubs. Food Management Partners, Inc. is a restaurant investment and management company that manages, or managed, all store-level and corporate operations for nine restaurant-chains in thirty-six states, including HomeTown Buffet. Accordingly, all three entities jointly exercised control over Ms. Gonzalez and thus jointly employed her. Each are solely or jointly and severally liable for damages and penalties owed to Ms. Gonzalez for unpaid wages.



Each day, management instructed and required Ms. Gonzalez to continue working for up to an additional 3-4 hours off-the-clock after her shift ended. Ms. Gonzalez regularly worked 11 hours or more in a day but was paid as if she had worked only 7.5 hours. Ms. Gonzalez was not compensated for this off-the-clock work and as a result, denied both minimum wages, regular wages, and overtime premiums for this work in violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act and California Labor Code.

In addition, because Ms. Gonzalez regularly worked shifts lasting at least 10 hours, she was entitled to two meal periods of not less than 30 minutes. Ms. Gonzalez was also entitled to take ten minutes of net rest time per four hours or major fraction thereof of work. However, Ms. Gonzalez was not permitted to take 10-minute rest breaks or 30-minute meal periods as required by California law. Furthermore, Ms. Gonzalez was not paid any premiums for her missed breaks, as also required by California law. Instead, Buffets, LLC instructed Ms. Gonzalez to clock out for a meal period even though she did not take a break. As a result, Buffets, LLC excluded 30 minutes from Ms. Gonzalez's hours worked each day, as if Ms. Gonzalez had been provided a meal period.

The net effect of these practices is that (1) Ms. Gonzalez was denied compensation for work performed off the clock, much of which should have been compensated at her overtime rate; (2) Ms. Gonzalez was denied meal and rest period premiums to which she is entitled; (3) Ms. Gonzalez's pay stubs did not accurately reflect the hours she worked or the compensation due to her; and (4) Buffets, LLC willfully withheld Ms. Gonzalez's wages when her employment ended.

Ms. Gonzalez is entitled to \$25,492.50 in unpaid overtime premiums and an equal amount in liquidated damages under the Fair Labor Standards Act. **This amounts to \$50,985.** ⁵

Ms. Gonzalez is entitled to 2 hours of premium pay at her regular hourly rate each day for being denied meal and rest periods.⁶ **This amounts to \$17,050.**⁷

Ms. Gonzalez is entitled to compensation for all hours worked at the appropriate regular or overtime rate under the California Labor Code. This amounts to \$42,625 in unpaid wages. 9

⁵ Ms. Gonzalez worked roughly 15 hours of overtime off-the-clock per workweek at a rate of \$11.00 per hour. The total amount assumes a recovery period dating back to October 1, 2016, three years before the filing of the FLSA claims in the United States District Court for the Central District of California. 29 U.S.C. §255.

⁶ Cal. Lab. Code §§ 226.7, 512.

⁷ Ms. Gonzalez worked at least 5 days per week at a rate of \$11.00 per hour. The total amount assumes a recovery period dating back to October 1, 2015, four years before the filing of the California Labor Code and Unfair Competition Law claims in the United States District Court for the Central District of California. Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 17208.

⁸ Cal. Lab. Code § 1194.

⁹ Buffets, LLC failed to compensate Ms. Gonzalez for 2.5 hours of work at her regular rate of \$11.00 per hour and 15 hours of work at her overtime rate of \$16.50 per hour for each workweek dating back to October 1, 2015, four years before the filing of the California Labor Code and

Moreover, Ms. Gonzalez is entitled to liquidated damages in the amount of \$42,625.10

Because Buffets, LLC willfully failed to pay Ms. Gonzalez all wages owing to her at the end of her employment, and still has failed to pay such wages, **Ms. Gonzalez is entitled to \$2,640 in waiting time penalties**.¹¹

Ms. Gonzalez is also entitled to collect penalties from Buffets, LLC pursuant to the California Private Attorneys General Act ("PAGA"). ¹² Specifically, Buffets, LLC is liable for \$100 for each violation of Ms. Gonzalez's rights per pay period. Therefore, **Ms. Gonzalez is entitled to collect \$1,600 in PAGA penalties**. ¹³

In addition, because Buffets, LLC provided Ms. Gonzalez with wage statements that did not accurately reflect her hours worked or wages owed, Ms. Gonzalez is entitled to collect \$1,000 in civil penalties.¹⁴

Lastly, Ms. Gonzalez is entitled to recovery of her attorneys' fees and costs under the FLSA and California law. To date, Ms. Gonzalez's attorneys' fees total \$575,299 and costs total \$10,138.

Accordingly, Buffets, LLC owes Ms. Gonzalez \$158,525 in damages and penalties plus attorneys' fees and costs in the amount of \$146,359. Consequently, Ms. Gonzalez submits a total claim of \$304,884 to the Bankruptcy Court and Claims Agent.

Unfair Competition Law claims in the United States District Court for the Central District of California. Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 17208.

¹⁰ Cal. Lab. Code § 1194.2. Ms. Gonzalez was not paid the minimum wage for her off-the-clock work. Moreover, Ms. Gonzalez's work on-the-clock was compensated at the minimum wage. *See* Industrial Welfare Commission Minimum Wage Order.

¹¹ Cal. Lab. Code § 203. This figure assumes 8-hour shifts over 30 days at a rate of \$11.00 per hour.

¹² Cal. Labor Code §§ 2698, *et seq*.

¹³ Buffets, LLC and the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency received notice of the PAGA violations on August 8, 2019. Ms. Gonzalez received wage statements approximately every two weeks. Assuming a one-year penalty period, Ms. Gonzalez worked for approximately four pay periods within the penalty period. Ms. Gonzalez is entitled to penalties for Buffets, LLC's failure to pay all hours worked, failure to pay OT, failure to provide meal breaks, and failure to provide rest breaks. Pursuant to Cal. Labor Code § 2699(i), Ms. Gonzalez is entitled to 25 percent of the civil penalties recovered under the PAGA with the remainder distributed to the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency.

¹⁴ Cal. Lab. Code §§ 226(a), 226.3. Ms. Gonzalez received wage statements approximately every two weeks. This figure assumes four pay periods within the PAGA penalty period dating back to August 8, 2018.

¹⁵ This figure represents one-fourth of the total attorneys' fees and costs incurred to date in prosecuting these claims. The total amount of attorneys' fees and costs has been divided evenly among the four creditors (Reina Gonzalez, Maria Aguilar, Rosario Felix, and Esperanza Jimenez) to file a proof of claim, all represented by the same attorneys.

Sincerely,

SCHNEIDER WALLACE COTTRELL KONECKY LLP

CAROLYN H. COTTRELL Attorney at Law

Enclosures (3)

- -Exhibit A: Complaint, Gonzalez et al. v. Food Management Partners, Inc. et al. (Case No. 2:19-cv-08496-ODW-AS)
- -Exhibit B: Complaint, Gonzalez et al. v. Food Management Partners, Inc. et al. (Case No. 19CV357419)
- -Exhibit C: Ms. Gonzalez's Paystub dated October 10, 2018

cc:

Reina Gonzalez, via U.S. Mail

EXHIBIT A

26

CLASS AND COLLECTIVE ACTION COMPLAINT

Plaintiffs Reina Gonzalez, Maria Aguilar, Rosario Felix, and Esperanza Jimenez ("Plaintiffs"), on behalf of themselves and all others similarly situated, complain and allege as follows:

INTRODUCTION

- 1. Plaintiffs bring this class and collective action on behalf of themselves and all other similarly situated individuals who have worked for Food Management Partners, Inc. ("FMP"); Buffets, LLC ("Buffets"); and FMP-Ovation Payroll LLC ("FMP-Ovation") (collectively "Defendants") as hourly non-exempt employees in California and throughout the United States. These employees prepare and cook food, greet and serve customers, clean Defendants' restaurants, and perform various other tasks central to Defendants' operations.
- 2. Defendants maintain a longstanding policy and practice of failing to properly compensate non-exempt hourly employees for work performed during meal periods, for work performed while "off-the-clock," and for missed rest and meal periods. These policies deny Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members payment for all hours worked, including overtime, and deny Plaintiffs and Class members meal and rest periods that comply with California law.
- 3. Defendants fail to pay Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members minimum and overtime wages required under applicable state and federal law. When uncompensated time is factored in, Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members regularly work over eight hours per day, necessitating the payment of overtime compensation for some of the time that they work. Moreover, Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members are paid rates at or just above the applicable minimum wage. When the daily pay for these workers is divided by the actual hours

¹ Although Plaintiffs are former employees, the putative Class and Collective include current and former employees. For ease of discussion, the allegations are made in the present tense.

that they worked, the effective hourly rate of pay often falls below the applicable minimum wage.

- 4. Defendants receive value from the work Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members perform during their meal periods and while "off-the-clock" without compensating them for their services. Defendants willfully, deliberately, and voluntarily refuse to pay Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members for work performed.
- 5. Defendants' conduct violated and continues to violate the Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 U.S.C. §§ 201, *et seq.* ("FLSA") because of the mandate that non-exempt employees, such as Plaintiffs and the Collective members, be paid at one and one-half times their regular rate of pay for all hours worked in excess of forty within a single workweek. *See* 29 U.S.C. § 207(a).
- 6. Defendants' conduct also violated and continues to violate California wage and hour laws, including for: (1) failing to pay Plaintiffs and Class members minimum wage; (2) failing to pay Plaintiffs and Class members overtime wages; (3) failing to compensate Plaintiffs and Class members for all hours worked; (4) failing to authorize and permit Plaintiffs and Class members to take meal and rest breaks to which they are entitled by law and pay premium compensation for missed breaks; (5) failing to provide Plaintiffs and Class members accurate, itemized wage statements; (6) and failing to timely pay Plaintiffs and Class members wages owed upon the termination of employment.
- 7. Plaintiffs file this action to recover on behalf of themselves and Class and Collective members all unpaid wages, compensation, penalties, and other damages owed to them under the FLSA as a 29 U.S.C. § 216(b) collective action, and under state law as a class action under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23, in order to remedy the sweeping practices which Defendants have integrated into their

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time tracking and payroll policies and which have deprived Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members of their lawfully-earned wages.

PARTIES

- 8. Plaintiffs and the Class and Collective members are current or former non-exempt employees employed by Defendants throughout the United States, including in California.
- 9. Plaintiff Reina Gonzalez is an individual over the age of eighteen who at all times relevant to this Complaint was a resident of Los Angeles County. Plaintiff Gonzalez was employed by Defendants from approximately 1994 until September 23, 2018. Plaintiff Gonzalez worked for Defendants at their HomeTown Buffet restaurants in Palmdale and Lancaster, California.
- 10. Plaintiff Maria Aguilar is an individual over the age of eighteen who at all times relevant to this Complaint was a resident of Los Angeles County. Plaintiff Aguilar was employed by Defendants from approximately February 2004 until December 28, 2018. Plaintiff Aguilar worked for Defendants at their HomeTown Buffet restaurant in Palmdale, California.
- 11. Plaintiff Rosario Felix is an individual over the age of eighteen who at all times relevant to this Complaint was a resident of Los Angeles County. Plaintiff Felix was employed by Defendants from approximately May 2003 until December 28, 2018. Plaintiff Felix worked for Defendants at their HomeTown Buffet restaurants in Palmdale and Lancaster, California.
- 12. Plaintiff Esperanza Jimenez is an individual over the age of eighteen who at all times relevant to this Complaint was a resident of Los Angeles County. Plaintiff Jimenez was employed by Defendants from approximately October 2017 to December 28, 2018. Plaintiff Jimenez worked for Defendants at their HomeTown Buffet restaurant in Palmdale, California.

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- 13. The Collective members are people who are, or who have been, employed by Defendants as hourly, non-exempt employees in the United States at any time within the three years preceding the filing of this Complaint.
- The Class members are all people who are, or who have been, employed 14. by Defendants as hourly, non-exempt employees in California within the four years preceding the filing of this Complaint.
- Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendant Food 15. Management Partners, Inc. ("FMP") is a Texas corporation with its Principal Executive Office in Hollywood Park, Texas. Defendant FMP is not registered as a foreign business entity with the California Secretary of State.
- 16. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendant FMP is a restaurant investment and management company that operates nine restaurantchains in thirty-six states. According to its website, FMP "manages all store-level and corporate operations for Furr's Fresh Buffet, Hometown Buffet, Hops, Old Country Buffet, Ryan's, Curry House, Sushi Zushi, Tahoe Joe's and Zio's Italian Kitchen in 36 states," including California.
- 17. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendant FMP owns and operates approximately 120 restaurants nationwide.
- 18. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendant Buffets, LLC ("Buffets") is a Minnesota limited liability corporation whose members reside in Hollywood Park, Texas. Defendant Buffets is registered as a foreign business entity with the California Secretary of State. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendant Buffets is an entity formed, owned, and controlled by Defendant FMP for the purpose of operating its buffetstyle restaurant brands nationwide.
- Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendant FMP 19. Ovation Payroll LLC ("FMP-Ovation") is a Texas limited liability corporation

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whose members reside in Hollywood Park, Texas. Defendant FMP-Ovation is not registered as a foreign business entity with the California Secretary of State. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendant FMP-Ovation is an entity formed, owned, and controlled by Defendant FMP for the purpose of, among other things, processing payroll for Defendant FMP's employees. At times relevant to this complaint Plaintiffs' wage statements came from FMP-Ovation.

- Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and allege that Defendants FMP, 20. Buffets, and FMP-Ovation share the same business address in Hollywood Park, Texas, and that they share the same three managers and directors.
- 21. The true names and capacities, whether individual, corporate, associate, or otherwise, of Does 1-10, inclusive, are unknown to Plaintiffs, who therefore sues the Doe Defendants by fictitious names. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon alleges that each of these fictitiously-named Defendants is responsible in some manner for the occurrences and Plaintiffs' and Class and Collective members' damages as herein alleged. Plaintiffs will amend this Complaint to show their true names and capacities when they have been ascertained. Defendants and Doe Defendants are jointly and severally liable for Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members' damages.
- 22. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and allege that at all times mentioned in this Complaint, each Defendant was the agent and employee of the other Defendant and in doing the things alleged in this Complaint were acting within the course and scope of such agency and employment. Plaintiffs are further informed, believe, and allege that each of the Defendants gave consent to, ratified, and authorized the acts alleged herein. Defendants are sued both in their own right and on the basis of respondent superior.
- 23. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendant FMP serves in a capacity of direct control over the operations of its agents, Defendants

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Buffets and FMP-Ovation. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that FMP, Buffets, and FMP-Ovation jointly exercised control over Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members with respect to their work for Defendants.

- Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and allege that Defendants are either 24. solely or jointly and severally liable for damages and penalties owed to Plaintiffs under common law and by statute, including attorneys' fees and costs.
- At all relevant times, Defendants have done business under the laws of 25. the United States, including California; have had places of business in California, including in this judicial district; and have employed Class and Collective members in this judicial district.
- 26. At all material times, Plaintiffs and Collective members were and are employees of Defendants within the meaning of 29 U.S.C. § 203(e).
- At all material times, Defendants have been an employer within the 27. meaning of the FLSA under 29 U.S.C. § 203(d).
- At all material times, Defendants have been an enterprise in commerce 28. or in the production of goods for commerce within the meaning of section 3(s)(1) of the FLSA because Defendants have had and continues to have employees engaged in commerce. 29 U.S.C. § 203(s)(1).
- 29. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendants have had, and continue to have, an annual gross business volume of not less than \$500,000, thereby exceeding the statutory standard. 29 U.S.C. § 203(s)(1)(A)(ii).
- 30. In addition to Plaintiffs, Defendants have employed numerous other employees who, like Plaintiffs, are hourly, non-exempt employees engaged in interstate commerce. Further, Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendants are engaged in interstate commerce since they order supplies across state lines, conduct business deals with merchants across state lines, and process client credit cards with banks in other states.

who engaged in commerce or in the production of goods for commerce as required

California, have had places of business in California, including in this judicial

district, and have employed Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members in this

judicial district. Defendants are a "person" as defined in Labor Code § 18 and

Business and Professions Code § 17201. Defendants are also an "employer" as that

term is used in the Labor Code and the IWC Wage Orders regulating wages, hours,

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

At all material times, Plaintiffs and Collective members were employees

At all material times, Defendants have done business under the laws of

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by 29 U.S.C. § 207.

and working conditions.

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33. This Court has federal question jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and Section 16(b) of the FLSA, 29 U.S.C. § 216(b). This Court has supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiffs' state law claims pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367.

34. Venue is proper in this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391. Defendants conduct business in this district, employ numerous hourly, non-exempt employees who reside in this district, and a substantial part of the events or

omissions giving rise to Plaintiffs' claims occurred in this judicial district.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

35. Plaintiff Gonzalez worked for Defendants as a non-exempt, hourly employee at HomeTown Buffet restaurants located in Palmdale and Lancaster, California from approximately April 4, 1994 until September 23, 2018. During her employment with Defendants, Plaintiff Gonzalez worked at various times as a cashier and waitress. At the time of her termination, her regular hourly rate of pay was approximately \$11.00 per hour.

- 36. Plaintiff Aguilar worked for Defendants as a non-exempt, hourly employee at a HomeTown Buffet restaurant in Palmdale, California from approximately February 2004 to December 28, 2018. Plaintiff Aguilar first worked as a dishwasher, then as a cook, and finally as a waitress. At the time of her termination, her regular hourly rate of pay was approximately \$11.00 per hour.
- 37. Plaintiff Felix worked for Defendants as a non-exempt, hourly employee at a HomeTown Buffet restaurant in Palmdale, California from approximately May 2003 to December 28, 2018. At all times during her employment with Defendants, Plaintiff Felix worked as a cook. At the time of her termination, her regular hourly rate of pay was approximately \$11.00 per hour.
- 38. Plaintiff Jimenez worked for Defendants as a non-exempt, hourly employee at a HomeTown Buffet restaurant in Palmdale, California from approximately October 2017 to December 28, 2018. During her employment with Defendants, Plaintiff Jimenez worked at the Palmdale location's bakery and omelet stations. At the time of her termination, her regular hourly rate of pay was approximately \$11.00 per hour.
- 39. Defendants operate a chain of restaurants throughout the United States and California, including HomeTown Buffet restaurants. Defendants employ hundreds of hourly non-exempt workers similarly situated to Plaintiffs across these restaurants.
- 40. To conduct their operations, Defendants employ hourly, non-exempt employees who are responsible for all aspects of its restaurant operations. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege, that this operational structure is uniform and standardized throughout Defendants' operations. The employment conditions for these hourly, non-exempt employees are substantially similar, if not identical, for Defendants' employees throughout the United States, including in California.

- 41. Defendants' waitstaff, such as Plaintiffs Reina Gonzalez and Maria Aguilar, solicit and fulfill Defendants' customers' service requests, clean up after departing customers, and prepare Defendants' restaurants for new customers. Defendants' cashiers, meanwhile, assist Defendants' customers in paying for their food while also handling miscellaneous related responsibilities. Other employees, such as Plaintiffs Esperanza Jimenez and Rosario Felix, prepare food for Defendants' customers.
- 42. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendants pay all of their hourly, non-exempt staff, regardless of position or location, at or near applicable minimum wages. At the time their employments with Defendants terminated, Plaintiffs were paid \$11.00 per hour, the California minimum wage at the time. When the daily pay for these workers is divided by the actual hours that they work, and required missed break premiums, off-the-clock work, and overtime are factored in, the effective hourly rate of pay often falls below the applicable minimum wage.
- 43. As a matter of policy, Defendants require Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members to perform work off-the-clock after their shift has ended. Defendants neither record nor compensate these employees for the work performed while off-the-clock.
- 44. Specifically, after clocking out, Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members are required to continue working for up to an additional 3-4 hours off-the-clock. Defendants instruct Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members to clock out but continue working in order to complete their assigned responsibilities without accruing additional compensation, including overtime compensation. For example, Plaintiff Gonzalez regularly worked 11 hours or more in a day but was paid as if she had worked only 7.5 hours. Likewise, despite the fact that, at times, Plaintiff

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26 27 Jimenez worked 12 or more hours per day, Defendants typically paid her for only 7.5 hours of daily work.

- 45. As a result of these policies, Defendants deny Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members the overtime premiums resulting from the additional work performed off-the-clock.
- Defendants also fail to provide Plaintiffs and Class and Collective 46. members with timely, legally compliant meal breaks. Similarly, Defendants instruct Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members to clock out for meal breaks, even when they didn't take them. Defendants also regularly interrupt Plaintiffs and Class and Collective member meal breaks with work requests without providing a substitute meal break and without requiring them to clock back in.
- 47. As a result of these policies, Defendants deny Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members the overtime premiums resulting from the additional off-theclock work performed during the unpaid meal breaks.
- 48. Defendants also violate California law by regularly failing to provide Plaintiffs and Class members with *any* meal break, and failing to provide timely meal breaks as required by California law. As a result of these policies and practices, Defendants deny Plaintiffs and Class members meal periods to which they are statutorily entitled under California law, as well as the overtime premiums resulting from the additional off-the-clock work performed during meal breaks. Despite these recurring violations, Defendants do not provide Plaintiffs and Class members premium pay for missed breaks and meal periods.
- As a matter of policy and practice, Defendants also fail to provide Plaintiffs and Class members with adequate rest periods as required by California law. Defendants routinely deny Plaintiffs and Class members the opportunity to take any rest breaks at all. Instead, Defendants require Plaintiffs and Class members to continue working throughout the day to meet their customers' demands.

- 50. Despite failing to provide Plaintiffs and Class members the opportunity to take legally compliant rest breaks, Defendants do not provide premium pay in lieu of these missed breaks.
- 51. Defendants also do not provide Plaintiffs and Class members with accurate wage statements. First, Defendants issue wage statements to Plaintiffs and Class members that indicate that their employer is "FMP Ovation Payroll LLC," an entity that is neither registered to do business in the state of California as an independent entity nor on information and belief is it registered as a fictitious business name pursuant to California Business & Professions Code § 17900. The wage statements issued by Defendants to Plaintiffs and Class members also do not reflect all hours worked, premium pay for missed meal and rest breaks, or applicable overtime premiums.
- 52. Defendants' common course of wage-and-hour abuses includes routinely failing to maintain true and accurate records of the hours worked by Collective and Class members. In particular, Defendants fail to record hours that Plaintiffs and Collective and Class members worked during missed meal breaks as well as hours worked off-the-clock.
- 53. Defendants' failure to record all hours worked also results in a failure to provide Class members, including Plaintiff, accurate itemized wage statements as required by California law. The wage statements Defendants provide are not accurate because they do not reflect the actual hours worked by Plaintiffs and Class members. The wage statements do not contain off-the-clock work or time that should be compensable during interruptible meal breaks. Further, the wage statements are inaccurate because they do not include premium pay for missed breaks, overtime, and work that was performed while the timeclock was out of service.
- 54. Further, Defendants did not and do not provide Plaintiffs and Class members with full payment of all wages owed at the end of employment. These

workers are owed wages and premium pay for all time worked, overtime, and missed meal and rest breaks when their employment ends. These amounts remain unpaid pursuant to Defendants' policies and practices, even after voluntary or involuntary termination. Defendants therefore fail to pay all wages due upon termination as required by California law. As a consequence, Defendants owe Plaintiffs and Class members waiting time penalties.

- 55. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendants' unlawful conduct has been widespread, repeated, and consistent as to the Class and Collective members. Defendants know or should know that their policies and practices are unlawful and unfair.
- 56. Defendants' conduct is willful, carried out in bad faith, and has caused significant damages to Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members in an amount to be determined at trial.

COLLECTIVE ALLEGATIONS UNDER THE FLSA

- 57. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate the foregoing paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.
- 58. Plaintiffs brings their FLSA claims as a collective action pursuant to 29 U.S.C. § 216(b) as to claims for failing to pay Plaintiffs and Collective members for all hours worked, including minimum wage and overtime compensation for all hours worked over 40 hours per week, liquated damages, and attorneys' fees and costs under the FLSA. The FLSA Collective that Plaintiffs seeks to represent is defined as follows:

All current and former hourly, non-exempt employees who worked for Food Management Partners, Inc., Buffets, LLC, or FMP-Ovation Payroll LLC in the United States during the time period three years prior to the filing of this Complaint until the resolution of this action.

- 59. Plaintiffs' claims for violations of the FLSA may be brought and maintained as an "opt-in" collective action pursuant to Section 216(b) of the FLSA because Plaintiffs' FLSA claims are similar to the claims of the Collective members.
- 60. Plaintiffs are informed, believes, and thereon allege that that Collective members have been denied compensation, including overtime compensation for time worked "off-the-clock," and would therefore likely join this collective action if provided a notice of their rights to do so.
- 61. Plaintiffs and the Collective members are similarly situated. Like Plaintiffs, Defendants subjected Collective members to Defendants' common practices, policies, or plans of refusing to pay overtime for all work performed in clear violation of the FLSA. Other hourly, non-exempt employees work, or have worked, for Defendants but were not paid overtime at the rate of one and one-half times their regular hourly rate when those hours exceeded forty per workweek. Other hourly, non-exempt employees also performed compensable work while "off-the-clock" which, when included with their recorded hours, results in additional overtime hours worked that were not compensated at the rate of one and one-half times their regular hourly in violation of the FLSA.
- 62. Although Defendants permitted and/or required Plaintiffs and Collective members to work in excess of forty hours per workweek, Defendants have denied them full compensation for their hours worked over forty as a result of meal breaks that were interrupted due to work demands and "off-the-clock" work.
- 63. Collective members perform or have performed the same or similar work as Plaintiff.
- 64. Collective members regularly work or have worked in excess of forty hours during a workweek.
- 65. Collective members are not exempt from receiving overtime compensation under the FLSA.

- 66. Defendants' failure to pay overtime compensation as required by the FLSA resulted from generally applicable policies and practices and did not depend on the personal circumstances of the Collective members.
- 67. Plaintiffs are representative of the Collective members and are acting on behalf of their interests, as well as Plaintiffs' own interests, in bringing this action.
- 68. Plaintiffs will fairly and adequately represent and protect the interest of Collective members. Plaintiffs have retained counsel competent and experienced in employment class action and collective action litigation.
- 69. This action may be properly maintained as a collective action on behalf of the defined Collective because, throughout the relevant time period:
 - a. Defendants maintained common scheduling systems and policies with respect to Plaintiffs and Collective members, controlled the scheduling systems and policies implemented throughout their facilities and retained authority to review and revise or approve the schedules assigned to Plaintiffs and Collective members;
 - b. Defendants maintained common timekeeping systems and policies with respect to Plaintiffs and Collective members; and
 - c. Defendants maintained common payroll systems and policies with respect to Plaintiffs and Collective members, controlled the payroll systems and policies applied to Plaintiffs and Collective members, and set the pay rates assigned to Plaintiffs and Collective members.
- 70. Collective members, irrespective of their particular job requirements, are entitled to overtime compensation for hours worked in excess of forty during a workweek.
- 71. Plaintiffs' and Collective members' claims arise from a common nucleus of operative facts; namely, the continued and willful failure of Defendants to comply

with their obligation to legally compensate their employees. Liability is based on a systematic course of wrongful conduct by Defendants that caused harm to all Collective members. Defendants had a plan, policy or practice of not recording or paying Plaintiffs and Collective members for interrupted, interruptible, or missed meal and rest breaks, as well as work performed "off-the-clock." These unpaid hours are typically worked in excess of 40 hours per week, and therefore the failure to track these hours results in a violation of the FLSA.

- 72. Collective members, irrespective of their particular job requirements, are entitled to overtime compensation for hours worked in excess of forty during a workweek.
- 73. Plaintiffs estimate the Collective, including both current and former employees over the relevant time period, will include upwards of 100 people or more. The similarly situated Collective members are known to Defendants, are readily identifiable, and may be located through Defendants' records. These similarly situated employees may readily be notified of this action and allowed to "opt-in" to this case pursuant to 29 U.S.C. § 216(b) for the purpose of collectively adjudicating their claims for unpaid wages, liquidated damages (or, alternatively, interest), and attorneys' fees and costs under the FLSA.

RULE 23 CLASS ALLEGATIONS

- 74. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate the foregoing paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.
- 75. Plaintiffs bring this case as a class action on behalf of themselves and all others similarly situated pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23. The Class that Plaintiffs seek to represent is defined as follows:

All current and former non-exempt hourly employees of Food Management Partners, Inc.; Buffets, LLC; or FMP-Ovation Payroll LLC who worked in California during the time period

from four years prior to the filing of this Complaint until the resolution of this action (the "Class").

- 76. This action has been brought and may properly be maintained as a class action under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23 because there is a well-defined community of interest in the litigation and the proposed class is easily ascertainable:
- a. **Numerosity**: The potential members of the Class as defined are so numerous that joinder of all the members of the Class is impracticable. Plaintiffs are informed and believe that the number of Class members exceeds 100. This volume makes bringing the claims of each individual member of the class before this Court impracticable. Likewise, joining each individual member of the Class as a plaintiff in this action is impracticable. Furthermore, the identities of the Class will be determined from Defendants' records, as will the compensation paid to each of them. As such, a class action is a reasonable and practical means of resolving these claims. To require individual actions would prejudice the Class and Defendants.
- b. **Commonality**: There are questions of law and fact common to Plaintiffs and the Class that predominate over any questions affecting only individual members of the Class. These common questions of law and fact include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Whether Defendants fail to compensate Class members for all hours worked, including at minimum wage and as overtime wage, in violation of the California Labor Code, and Wage Orders;
 - ii. Whether Defendants have or had a policy and/or practice of requiring Class members to be in the control of, spend time primarily for the benefit of, and work for Defendants off-the-clock and without compensation;
 - iii. Whether Defendants fail to compensate Class members with at least minimum wage for all compensable work time in violation of the

- (d.) failing to authorize and permit, make available, and/or provide Class members with timely meal and rest periods to which they are entitled;
- (e.) failing to provide Class members with timely, accurate itemized wage; and
- (f.) failing to timely pay Class members for all wages owed upon termination of employment; and
- x. The proper formula for calculating restitution, damages, and penalties owed to Plaintiffs and the Class alleged herein.
- c. **Typicality**: Plaintiffs' claims are typical of the claims of the Class. Defendants' common course of conduct in violation of law as alleged herein caused Plaintiffs and Class members to sustain the same or similar injuries and damages. Plaintiffs' claims are thereby representative of and co-extensive with the claims of the Class.
- d. **Adequacy of Representation**: Plaintiffs are members of the Class, have no conflicts of interest with other Class members, and will prosecute the case vigorously on behalf of the Class. Counsel representing Plaintiffs is competent and experienced in litigating large employment class actions, including wage and hour class actions. Plaintiffs will fairly and adequately represent and protect the interests of the Class members.
- e. **Superiority of Class Action**: A class action is superior to other available means for the fair and efficient adjudication of this controversy. Individual joinder of all Class members is not practicable, and questions of law and fact common to the Class predominate over any questions affecting only individual members of the Class. Each Class member has been damaged and is entitled to recovery by reason of Defendants' illegal policies and/or practices. Class action treatment will allow those similarly situated persons to litigate their claims in the

manner that is most efficient and economical for the Parties and the judicial system. The injury suffered by each Class member, while meaningful on an individual basis, is not of such magnitude as to make the prosecution of individual actions against Defendants economically feasible. Individualized litigation increases the delay and expense to all Parties and the Court. By contrast, class action treatment will allow these similarly situated persons to litigate their claims in the manner that is most efficient and economical for the Parties and the judicial system. In the alternative, the Class may be certified because the prosecution of separate actions by the individual members of the Class would create a risk of inconsistent or varying adjudication with respect to individual members of the Class, and, in turn, would establish incompatible standards of conduct for Defendant.

- 77. In the alternative, the Class may be certified because the prosecution of separate actions by the individual members of the Class would create a risk of inconsistent or varying adjudication with respect to individual members of the Class, and, in turn, would establish incompatible standards of conduct for Defendant.
- 78. If each individual Class member were required to file an individual lawsuit, Defendants would necessarily gain an unconscionable advantage because Defendants would be able to exploit and overwhelm the limited resources of each member of the Class with Defendants' vastly superior financial legal resources.
- 79. Requiring each individual Class member to pursue an individual remedy would also discourage the assertion of lawful claims by the Class members who would be disinclined to pursue these claims against Defendants because of an appreciable and justifiable fear of retaliation and permanent damage to their lives, careers and well-being.

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FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

Violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act for Failure to Pay Minimum Wage and Overtime

29 U.S.C. §§ 201, et seq. (On Behalf of the Collective)

- 80. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate the foregoing paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.
- 81. The FLSA requires that covered employees receive compensation for all hours worked and overtime compensation not less than one and one-half times the regular rate of pay for all hours worked in excess of forty hours in a work week. 29 U.S.C. §§ 206(a)(1), 207(a)(1).
- 82. At all times material herein, Plaintiffs and the Collective were or are covered employees entitled to the rights, protections, and benefits provided under the FLSA. 29 U.S.C. §§ 203(e) and 207(a).
- 83. Defendants are covered employers required to comply with the FLSA's mandates.
- 84. Defendants have violated the FLSA with respect to Plaintiffs and the Collective by, *inter alia*, failing to pay Plaintiffs and the Collective minimum wage and failing to pay the legally mandated overtime premium. Defendants have also violated the FLSA by failing to keep accurate records of all hours worked by Plaintiffs and the Collective. 29 U.S.C. § 211(c).
- 85. Plaintiffs and the Collective are victims of uniform and company-wide compensation policies. These uniform policies, which violate the FLSA, have been applied to Defendants' current and former non-exempt, hourly employees throughout the United States.
- 86. Plaintiffs and the Collective are entitled to damages equal to the mandated pay, including minimum wage, straight time, and overtime premium pay within the three years preceding the filing of the complaint because Defendants have

acted willfully and knew or showed reckless disregard for whether the alleged conduct was prohibited by the FLSA.

- 87. Defendants have acted neither in good faith nor with reasonable grounds to believe that their actions and omissions did not violate the FLSA and, as a result, Plaintiffs and the Collective are entitled to recover an award of liquidated damages in an amount equal to the amount of unpaid overtime pay and/or prejudgment interest at the applicable rate. 29 U.S.C. § 216(b).
- 88. As a result of the aforesaid violations of the FLSA's provisions,
 Defendants have withheld pay; including minimum wage, straight time, and
 overtime compensation; from Plaintiffs and the Collective. Accordingly, Defendants
 are liable for unpaid wages, together with an equivalent amount of liquidated
 damages; attorneys' fees; and costs incurred in pursuing this action.
- 89. Wherefore, Plaintiffs and the Collective request relief as hereinafter provided.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

Failure to Pay Minimum Wage Pursuant to California Labor Code § 1194 (On Behalf of the Class)

- 90. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate the foregoing paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.
- 91. Defendants fail to compensate Plaintiffs and Class members with at least the minimum wage for all hours worked or spent under Defendants' control because Plaintiffs and the Class members are paid at rates at or just above the applicable California minimum, and when the required premium payments for missed breaks, wages for off-the-clock work, and overtime wages are factored in, the actual rate of pay often drops below the applicable California minimum.
- 92. During the applicable statutory period, Labor Code §§ 1182.11, 1182.12, and 1197, and the Minimum Wage Order were in full force and effect and required

that employees receive the minimum wage for all hours worked at the rate of nine dollars (\$9.00) per hour commencing July 1, 2014, and at the rate of ten dollars (\$10.00) per hour commencing January 1, 2016 and ending December 31, 2016. For employers with 26 or more employees, the minimum wage for all hours worked was ten dollars and fifty cents (\$10.50) per hour from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017, inclusive, eleven dollars (\$11.00) per hour from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018, inclusive, and twelve dollars (\$12.00) per hour from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019, inclusive.

- 93. IWC Wage Order 5-2001(2)(K) defines hours worked as "the time during which an employee is subject to the control of an employer and includes all the time the employee is suffered or permitted to work, whether or not required to do so."
 - 94. Labor Code § 1194(a) provides as follows:

 Notwithstanding any agreement to work for a lesser wage, any employee receiving less than the legal minimum wage or the legal overtime compensation applicable to the employee is entitled to recover in a civil action the unpaid balance of the full amount of this minimum wage or overtime compensation, including interest thereon, reasonable attorneys' fees, and costs of suit.
- 95. Because of Defendants' policies and practices with regard to compensating Plaintiffs and Class members, Defendants have failed to pay minimum wages as required by law. Plaintiffs and Class members frequently perform work for which they are compensated below the statutory minimum, as determined by the IWC.
- 96. Labor Code § 1194.2 provides that, in any action under § 1194 to recover wages because of the payment of a wage less than minimum wage fixed by

an order of the commission, an employer shall be entitled to recover liquidated damages in an amount equal to the wages unlawfully unpaid and interest thereon.

- 97. California law further requires that employers pay their employees for all hours worked at the statutory or agreed upon rate. No part of the rate may be used as a credit against a minimum wage obligation.
- 98. By failing to maintain adequate time records as required by Labor Code §1174(d) and IWC Wage Orders 5-2001(7), Defendants have made it difficult to calculate the minimum wage compensation due to Plaintiffs and Class members.
- 99. Plaintiffs and Class members have been deprived of minimum wages in an amount to be proven at trial, and are entitled to a recovery of such amount, plus liquidated damages, plus interest thereon, attorneys' fees, and costs of suit pursuant to Labor Code §§ 1194, 1194.2, and 1197.1.
 - 100. Wherefore, Plaintiffs and the Class request relief as hereinafter provided.

THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

Failure to Pay Overtime Wages Pursuant to California Labor Code § 510 (On Behalf of the Class)

- 101. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate the foregoing paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.
- 102. Defendants do not properly compensate Plaintiffs and Class members with appropriate overtime premiums, including time-and-a-half premiums based on their regular rate of pay, as required by California law.
 - 103. Labor Code § 510(a) provides as follows:

 Eight hours of labor constitutes a day's work. Any work in excess of eight hours in one workday and any work in excess of 40 hours in any one workweek and the first eight hours worked on the seventh day of work in any one workweek shall be compensated at the rate of no less than one and one-half times

the regular rate of pay for an employee. Any work in excess of 12 hours in one day shall be compensated at the rate of no less than twice the regular rate of pay for an employee. In addition, any work in excess of eight hours on any seventh day of a workweek shall be compensated at the rate of no less than twice the regular rate of pay of an employee.

104. IWC Wage Order 5-2001(3)(A)(1) states:

[E]mployees shall not be employed more than eight (8) hours in any workday or more than 40 hours in any workweek unless the employee receives one and one-half (1½) times such employee's regular rate of pay for all hours worked over 40 hours in the workweek. Eight (8) hours of labor constitutes a day's work. Employment beyond eight (8) hours in any workday or more than six (6) days in any workweek is permissible provided the employee is compensated for such overtime at not less than ... [o]ne and one-half (1½) times the employee's regular rate of pay for all hours worked in excess of eight (8) hours up to and including 12 hours in any workday, and for the first eight (8) hours worked on the seventh (7th) consecutive day of work in a workweek....

105. Labor Code § 1194(a) provides as follows:

Notwithstanding any agreement to work for a lesser wage, any employee receiving less than the legal minimum wage or the legal overtime compensation applicable to the employee is entitled to recover in a civil action the unpaid balance of the full amount of this minimum wage or overtime compensation,

including interest thereon, reasonable attorneys' fees, and costs of suit.

- 106. Labor Code § 200 defines wages as "all amounts of labor performed by employees of every description, whether the amount is fixed or ascertained by the standard of time, task, piece, commission basis or other method of calculation." All such wages are subject to California's overtime requirements, including those set forth above.
- 107. Defendants' policies and practices of requiring Plaintiffs and Class members to perform work off-the-clock is unlawful and results in overtime violations. As a result of this unlawful policy, Plaintiffs and Class members have worked overtime hours for Defendants without being paid overtime premiums in violation of the Labor Code, the applicable IWC Wage Orders, and other applicable law.
- 108. Defendants have knowingly and willfully refused to perform their obligations to compensate Plaintiffs and Class members for all premium wages for overtime work. Defendants are liable to Plaintiffs and Class members alleged herein for the unpaid overtime and civil penalties, with interest thereon. Furthermore, Plaintiffs and Class members are entitled to an award of attorneys' fees and costs as set forth below.
- 109. As a proximate result of the aforementioned violations, Plaintiffs and the Class have been damaged in an amount according to proof at time of trial.

 Defendants are liable to Plaintiffs and the Class alleged herein for the unpaid overtime and civil penalties, with interest thereon. Furthermore, Plaintiffs are entitled to an award of attorneys' fees and costs as set forth below.
 - 110. Wherefore, Plaintiffs and the Class request relief as hereinafter provided.

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FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION Failure to Pay for All Hours Worked

Pursuant to Labor Code §§ 200, 204, 1194, and 1198 (On Behalf of the Class)

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111. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate the foregoing paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.

6 7 112. Plaintiffs allege that Defendants willfully engaged and continues to engage in a policy and practice of not compensating Plaintiffs and Class members for all hours worked.

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113. Defendants regularly require Plaintiffs and Class members to perform uncompensated off-the-clock work. As detailed above, Defendants require Plaintiffs and Class members to clock out at the end of their shifts and then requires, suffers, and/or permits them to continue working for Defendants' benefit.

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114. Labor Code § 200 defines wages as "all amounts for labor performed by employees of every description, whether the amount is fixed or ascertained by the standard of time, task, piece, commission basis or method of calculation."

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115. Labor Code § 204(a) provides that "[a]ll wages ... earned by any person in any employment are due and payable twice during each calendar month...."

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116. Labor Code § 1194(a) provides as follows:

of suit.

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employee receiving less than the legal minimum wage or the

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legal overtime compensation applicable to the employee is entitled to recover in a civil action the unpaid balance of the full

Notwithstanding any agreement to work for a lesser wage, any

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amount of this minimum wage or overtime compensation,

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including interest thereon, reasonable attorneys' fees, and costs

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117. Labor Code § 1198 makes it unlawful for employers to employ employees under conditions that violate the Wage Order.

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- 118. IWC Wage Order 5-2001(2)(K) defines hours worked as "the time during which an employee is subject to the control of an employer, and includes all the time the employee is suffered or permitted to work, whether or not required to do so."
- 119. In violation of California law, Defendants knowingly and willfully refuse to perform their obligation to provide Plaintiffs and Class members with compensation for all time worked. Therefore, Defendants committed, and continue to commit, the acts alleged herein knowingly and willfully, and in conscious disregard of Plaintiffs' and Class members' rights. Plaintiffs and Class members are thus entitled to recover nominal, actual, and compensatory damages; plus interest, attorneys' fees, expenses and costs of suit.
- 120. As a proximate result of the aforementioned violations, Plaintiffs and the Class have been damaged in an amount according to proof at time of trial.
 - 121. Wherefore, Plaintiffs and the Class request relief as hereinafter provided.

FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION

Failure to Authorize and Permit and/or Make Available Meal and Rest Periods Pursuant to California Labor Code §§ 226.7 and 512 (On Behalf of the Class)

- 122. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate the foregoing paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.
- 123. Defendants routinely do not make compliant meal periods available to Plaintiffs and Class members. Instead, Defendants require Plaintiffs and Class members to continue working during these breaks.
- 124. Defendants also fail to pay Plaintiffs and Class members one hour of premium pay for missed breaks.
- 125. Labor Code §§ 226.7 and 512 and the applicable Wage Order require Defendants to authorize and permit meal and rest periods to their employees. Labor Code §§ 226.7 and 512 and the Wage Order prohibit employers from employing an

employee for more than five hours without a meal period of not less than thirty minutes, and from employing an employee more than ten hours per day without providing the employee with a second meal period of not less than thirty minutes. Labor Code § 226.7 and the applicable Wage Order also require employers to authorize and permit employees to take ten minutes of net rest time per four hours or major fraction thereof of work, and to pay employees their full wages during those rest periods. Unless the employee is relieved of all duty and employer control during the thirty-minute meal period and ten-minute rest period, the employee is considered "on duty" and the meal or rest period is counted as time worked under the applicable Wage Order.

- 126. Under Labor Code § 226.7(b) and the applicable Wage Order, an employer who fails to authorize, permit, and/or make available a required meal period must, as compensation, pay the employee one hour of pay at the employee's regular rate of compensation for each workday that the meal period was not authorized and permitted and/or not made available. Similarly, an employer must pay an employee denied a required rest period one hour of pay at the employee's regular rate of compensation for each workday that the rest period was not authorized and permitted and/or not made available.
- 127. Despite these requirements, Defendants knowingly and willfully refuse to perform their obligations to authorize and permit and/or make available to Plaintiffs and Class members the ability to take the off-duty meal and rest periods to which they are entitled.
- 128. Defendants also fail to pay Plaintiffs and Class members one hour of pay for each off-duty meal and/or rest period that they are denied.
- 129. Defendants' conduct described herein violates Labor Code §§ 226.7 and 512. Therefore, pursuant to Labor Code § 226.7(b), Plaintiffs and Class members are entitled to compensation for the failure to authorize and permit and/or make

available meal and rest periods, plus interest, attorneys' fees, expenses, and costs of suit.

- 130. As a proximate result of the aforementioned violations, Plaintiffs and the Class have been damaged in an amount according to proof at time of trial.
 - 131. Wherefore, Plaintiffs and the Class relief as hereinafter provided.

SIXTH CAUSE OF ACTION

Failure to Provide Accurate Itemized Wage Statements Pursuant to Labor Code § 226 (On Behalf of the Class)

- 132. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate the foregoing paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.
- 133. Defendants do not provide Plaintiffs and Class members with accurate itemized wage statements as required by California law.
 - 134. Labor Code § 226(a) provides:

An employer, semimonthly or at the time of each payment of wages, shall furnish to his or her employee, either as a detachable part of the check, draft, or voucher paying the employee's wages, or separately if wages are paid by personal check or cash, an accurate itemized statement in writing showing (1) gross wages earned, (2) total hours worked by the employee, except as provided in subdivision (j), (3) the number of piece-rate units earned and any applicable piece rate if the employee is paid on a piece-rate basis, (4) all deductions, provided that all deductions made on written orders of the employee may be aggregated and shown as one item, (5) net wages earned, (6) the inclusive dates of the period for which the employee is paid, (7) the name of the employee and only the last four digits of his or her social security number or an

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employee identification number other than a social security number, (8) the name and address of the legal entity that is the employer and, if the employer is a farm labor contractor, as defined in subdivision (b) of Section 1682, the name and address of the legal entity that secured the services of the employer, and (9) all applicable hourly rates in effect during the pay period and the corresponding number of hours worked at each hourly rate by the employee...

- 135. The IWC Wage Orders also establish this requirement. (See IWC Wage Order 5-2001(7)).
 - 136. Labor Code § 226(e) provides:

An employee suffering injury as a result of a knowing and intentional failure by an employer to comply with subdivision (a) is entitled to recover the greater of all actual damages or fifty dollars (\$50) for the initial pay period in which a violation occurs and one hundred dollars (\$100) per employee for each violation in a subsequent pay period, not exceeding an aggregate penalty of four thousand dollars (\$4,000), and is entitled to an award of costs and reasonable attorneys' fees.

- 137. Plaintiffs seek to recover damages, costs, and attorneys' fees under this section.
- 138. Defendants fail to provide timely, accurate itemized wage statements to Plaintiffs and Class members in accordance with Labor Code § 226(a) and the IWC Wage Orders. The wage statements Defendants provide to employees, including Plaintiffs and Class members, do not provide the employing entity's name and do not accurately reflect the premium pay to which they are entitled to for missed meal

and rest breaks, the actual hours worked, the actual gross wages earned, the actual net wages earned, and the actual hourly rate(s).

- 139. As a proximate result of the aforementioned violations, Defendants are liable to Plaintiffs and Class members alleged herein for the amounts described, with interest thereon, in an amount according to proof at time of trial. Furthermore, Plaintiffs are entitled to an award of attorneys' fees and costs as set forth below, pursuant to Labor Code § 226(e).
 - 140. Wherefore, Plaintiffs and the Class request relief as hereinafter provided.

SEVENTH CAUSE OF ACTION

Waiting Time Penalties Pursuant to Labor Code §§ 201-203, 225.5, 256 (On Behalf of the Class)

- 141. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate the foregoing paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.
- 142. Defendants do not provide Class members whose employment with Defendants has ended, including Plaintiffs, with their wages due at the time their employment ends as required under California law.
- 143. Labor Code § 201 provides: "If an employer discharges an employee, the wages earned and unpaid at the time of discharge are due and payable immediately."
 - 144. Labor Code § 202(a) provides:
 - If an employee not having a written contract for a definite period quits his or her employment, his or her wages shall become due and payable not later than 72 hours thereafter, unless the employee has given 72 hours previous notice of his or her intention to quit, in which case the employee is entitled to his or her wages at the time of quitting.
 - 145. Labor Code § 203(a) provides:

If an employer willfully fails to pay, without abatement or reduction, in accordance with Sections 201, 201.5, 201.9, 202, and 205.5, any wages of an employee who is discharged or who quits, the wages of the employee shall continue as a penalty from the due date thereof at the same rate until paid or until an action therefor is commenced; but the wages shall not continue for more than 30 days.

- 146. Some of the Class members, including Plaintiffs, left their employment with Defendants during the statutory period, at which time Defendants owed them unpaid wages. These earned, but unpaid, wages derive from time spent working for the benefit of Defendants which went unrecorded and/or uncompensated.
- 147. Defendants willfully refused and continue to refuse to pay Plaintiffs and Class members who are former employees all the wages that were due and owed to them upon the end of their employment, in the form of wages owed for uncompensated, off-the-clock work, as well as meal and rest period premium pay and unpaid overtime. As a result of Defendants' actions, Plaintiffs and Class members have suffered and continue to suffer substantial losses, including lost earnings, and interest.
- 148. Defendants' willful failure to pay Plaintiffs and Class members the wages due and owing to them constitutes a violation of Labor Code §§ 201-202. As a result, Defendants are liable to Plaintiffs and Class members for all penalties owing pursuant to Labor Code §§ 201-203.
- 149. Labor Code § 203 provides that an employee's wages will continue as a penalty up to thirty days from the time the wages were due. Therefore, Plaintiffs and Class members are entitled to such penalties pursuant to Labor Code § 203, plus interest.

- 150. As a proximate result of the aforementioned violations, Defendants are liable to Plaintiffs and Class members alleged herein for the amounts described, with interest thereon, in an amount according to proof at time of trial.
 - 151. Wherefore, Plaintiffs and the Class request relief as hereinafter provided.

NINTH CAUSE OF ACTION

Unlawful Business Practices

Pursuant to California Business and Professions Code §§ 17200, et seq. (On Behalf of the Class)

- 152. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate the foregoing paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.
- 153. Business and Professions Code §§ 17200 *et seq*. (the "UCL") prohibits unfair competition in the form of any unlawful, unfair or fraudulent business acts or practices.
- 154. Business and Professions Code § 17204 allows a person injured by the unfair business acts or practices to prosecute a civil action for violation of the UCL.
- 155. Labor Code § 90.5(a) states it is the public policy of California to vigorously enforce minimum labor standards in order to ensure employees are not required to work under substandard and unlawful conditions, and to protect employers who comply with the law from those who attempt to gain competitive advantage at the expense of their workers by failing to comply with minimum labor standards.
- 156. Beginning at an exact date unknown to Plaintiffs, but at least since the date four years prior to the filing of this suit, Defendants have committed acts of unfair competition as defined by the UCL by engaging in the unlawful, unfair and fraudulent business acts and practices described in this Complaint, including, but not limited to:

- a. violations of Labor Code §§ 200, 204, 1194, and 1198 and IWC
 Wage Orders pertaining to the payment of wages for all hours worked;
- b. violations of Labor Code §§ 1182.11, 1182.12, 1194.2, and 1197 and IWC Wage Orders pertaining to minimum wage;
- c. violations of Labor Code § 510 and IWC Wage Orders pertaining to overtime;
- d. violations of Labor Code §§ 226.7 and 512 and IWC Wage Orders pertaining to meal and rest breaks;
- e. violations of Labor Code § 226 regarding accurate, timely itemized wage statements; and
- f. violations of Labor Code §§ 201-203 pertaining to waiting time penalties.
- 157. The violations of these laws and regulations, as well as of the fundamental California public policies protecting wages, serve as unlawful predicate acts and practices for purposes of Business and Professions Code §§ 17200 *et seq*.
- 158. The acts and practices described above constitute unfair, unlawful and fraudulent business practices, and unfair competition, within the meaning of Business and Professions Code §§ 17200, *et seq*. Among other things, the acts and practices have taken from Plaintiffs and Class members wages rightfully earned by them, while enabling Defendants to gain an unfair competitive advantage over lawabiding employers and competitors.
- 159. Business and Professions Code § 17203 provides that a court may make such orders or judgments as may be necessary to prevent the use or employment by any person of any practice which constitutes unfair competition. Injunctive relief is necessary and appropriate to prevent Defendants from repeating the unlawful, unfair and fraudulent business acts and practices alleged above.

160. As a direct and proximate result of the aforementioned acts and practices, Plaintiffs and Class members have suffered a loss of money and property, in the form of unpaid wages which are due and payable to them.

- 161. Business and Professions Code § 17203 provides that the Court may restore to any person in interest any money or property which may have been acquired by means of such unfair competition. Plaintiffs and Class members are entitled to restitution pursuant to Business and Professions Code §17203 for all wages and payments unlawfully withheld from employees during the four-year period prior to the filing of this Complaint. Plaintiffs' success in this action will enforce important rights affecting the public interest and, in that regard, Plaintiffs sue on behalf of themselves as well as others similarly situated. Plaintiffs and Class members seek and are entitled to unpaid wages, declaratory and injunctive relief, and all other equitable remedies owing to them.
- 162. Plaintiffs herein take it upon themselves to enforce these laws and lawful claims. There is a financial burden involved in pursuing this action, the action is seeking to vindicate a public right, and it would be against the interests of justice to penalize Plaintiffs by forcing her to pay attorneys' fees from the recovery in this action. Attorneys' fees are appropriate pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure §1021.5 and otherwise.
 - 163. Wherefore, Plaintiffs and the Class request relief as hereinafter provided.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs, on behalf of themselves and the Class and Collective she seeks to represent in this action, requests the following relief:

a) For an order certifying that the First Cause of Action in this Complaint may be maintained as a collective action pursuant to 29 U.S.C. § 216(b) and that prompt notice of this action be issued to potential members of the Collective, apprising them of the pendency of this action, and permitting them to assert

their FLSA claims;

- b) For an order equitably tolling the statute of limitations for the potential members of the Collective;
- c) Damages and restitution according to proof at trial for all unpaid wages and other injuries, as provided by the FLSA, California Labor Code, and California Business and Professions Code;
- d) For a declaratory judgment that Defendants have violated the FLSA, California Labor Code, and public policy as alleged herein;
- e) For a declaratory judgment that Defendants have violated California Business and Professions Code §§ 17200 *et seq.*, as a result of the aforementioned violations of the California Labor Code and of California public policy protecting wages;
- f) For preliminary, permanent, and mandatory injunctive relief prohibiting Defendants, their officers, agents, and all those acting in concert with them from committing in the future those violations of law herein alleged;
- g) For an equitable accounting to identify, locate, and restore to all current and former employees the wages they are due, with interest thereon;
- h) For an order awarding Plaintiffs and the Class members compensatory damages, including lost wages, earnings, liquidated damages, and other employee benefits, restitution, recovery of all money, actual damages, and all other sums of money owed to Plaintiffs and Class members, together with interest on these amounts, according to proof;
- i) For an order awarding Plaintiffs and Class and Collective members civil penalties pursuant to the FLSA, California Labor Code, and the laws of the State of California, with interest thereon;
- j) For an award of reasonable attorneys' fees as provided by the California Labor Code, California Code of Civil Procedure § 1021.5, the laws of the

1		State of California, the FLS.	A, and/or other applicable law;
2	k)	For all costs of suit;	
3	1)	For such other and further re	elief as this Court deems just and proper.
4			
5	Dated	l: October 1, 2019	Respectfully submitted,
6			/s/ Carolyn H. Cottrell
7			Carolyn H. Cottrell
8			Ori Edelstein Ian W. Forgie
9			SCHNEIDER WALLACE
			COTTRELL KONECKY
10			WOTKYNS LLP
11			Zorik Mooradian
12			MOORADIAN LAW, APC
13			Attorneys for Plaintiffs and the Putative Class
14			and Collective
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DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL Plaintiffs hereby demand a jury trial on all claims and issues for which Plaintiffs are entitled to a jury. Dated: October 1, 2019 /s/ Carolyn H. Cottrell Carolyn H. Cottrell Ori Edelstein Ian W. Forgie SCHNEIDER WALLACE COTTRELL KONECKY WOTKYNS, LLP Zorik Mooradian MOORADIAN LAW, APC Attorneys for Plaintiffs and the Putative Class and Collective

EXHIBIT B

E-FILED 10/25/2019 7:52 AM Carolyn Hunt Cottrell (SBN 166977) Clerk of Court 1 Ori Edelstein (SBN 268145) Superior Court of CA, Ian W. Forgie (SBN 307721) County of Santa Clara SCHNEIDER WALLACE 19CV357419 COTTRELL KONECKY 3 Reviewed By: M Vu WOTKYNS LLP 2000 Powell Street, Suite 1400 4 Emeryville, California 94608 Telephone: (415) 421-7100 5 Facsimile: (415) 421-7105 6 Zorik Mooradian (SBN 136636) zorik@mooradianlaw.com MOOKADIAN LAW, APC 24007 Ventura Boulevard, Suite 210 8 Calabasas, California 91302 Telephone: (818) 487-1998 9 Facsimile: (888) 783-1030 10 Attorneys for Plaintiff, on behalf of the State of California and Aggrieved Employees 11 SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA 12 **COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA** 19CV357419 13 REINA GONZALEZ and ESPERANZA Case No: JIMENEZ, on behalf of the 14 State of California and Aggrieved **COMPLAINT FOR PENALTIES** Employees, PURSUANT TO SECTIONS 2699(a) and (f) 15 OF THE CALIFORNIA LABOR CODE Plaintiffs, PRIVATE ATTORNEYS GENERAL ACT 16 AND DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL VS. 17 FOOD MANAGEMENT PARTNERS, 18 INC.; BUFFETS, LLC; FMP-OVATION PAYROLL LLC and DOES 1-10, inclusive, 19 Defendants. 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 COMPLAINT FOR PENALTIES PURSUANT TO SECTIONS 2699(A) AND (F) OF THE CALIFORNIA LABOR CODE PRIVATE

Plaintiffs Reina Gonzalez and Esperanza Jimenez ("Plaintiffs"), on behalf of the State of California and Aggrieved Employees, complain and allege as follows:

INTRODUCTION

- 1. Plaintiffs bring this enforcement action on behalf of the State of California against Food Management Partners, Inc. ("FMP"); Buffets, LLC ("Buffets"); and FMP-Ovation Payroll LLC ("FMP-Ovation") (collectively "Defendants") for its systemic violations of California labor law with respect to Defendants' non-exempt, hourly employees in California (the "Aggrieved Employees").
- 2. Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees bring this action to challenge Defendants' policies and practices of (1) failing to pay Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees minimum wage; (2) failing to pay Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees overtime wages; (3) failing to compensate Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees for all hours worked; (4) failing to authorize and permit Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees to take meal and rest breaks to which they are entitled by law and pay premium compensation for missed breaks; (5) failing to provide Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees accurate, itemized wage statements; and (6) failing to timely pay Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees wages owed upon the termination of employment.
- 3. Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees are current and former employees who worked for Defendants as non-exempt hourly employees in California.¹ These employees work in Defendants' buffet restaurants preparing and serving food, cleaning up and maintaining the restaurant, and attending to Defendants' customers. Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees regularly work over eight hours per day and up to six days per week.
- 4. Defendants fail to pay Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees for all hours worked. In particular, Defendants regularly require Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees to clock out at the scheduled shift end time but continue working for hours at a time. Defendants do not compensate Plaintiffs or Aggrieved Employees for this "off-the-clock" work.

Although Plaintiffs are former employees, they assert their causes of action on behalf of both current and former employees. For ease of discussion, the allegations are made in the present tense.

5.	Defendants	also rou	itinely de	ny Plair	ntiffs	and	Aggrieved	Employees	legally
compliant me	eal and rest pe	eriods. Of	ten, Plaint	iffs and	Aggrie	eved]	Employees o	cannot take m	neal and
rest breaks at	all. Even whe	re Defen	dants provi	de some	sort o	of mea	ıl break, Plai	ntiffs and Ag	grieved
Employees a	re too busy p	erformin	g their req	uired du	ties to	have	e sufficient	time to take	legally-
compliant me	eal and rest bro	eaks. Def	endants do	not com	pensat	te Pla	intiffs and A	ggrieved Em	ployees
with premiun	n pay for miss	sed meal	and rest pe	riods.					

- 6. Defendants fail to properly pay minimum and overtime wages according to California law. When uncompensated time, such as off-the-clock work is factored in, Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees regularly work over eight hours per day, and sometimes over twelve hours per day, necessitating the payment of overtime compensation for some of the time that they work. Moreover, Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees are paid rates at or just above the applicable minimum wage. When the daily pay for these workers is divided by the actual hours that they worked, the effective hourly rate of pay often falls below the applicable minimum wage.
- 7. Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees do not receive accurate, itemized wage statements. Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees receive wage statements that do not reflect all hours worked, premium pay for missed meal and rest breaks, or applicable overtime premiums.
- 8. Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees are not timely paid all amounts owed following voluntary or involuntary termination of employment.

PARTIES

- 9. Plaintiffs and the Aggrieved Employees are current or former non-exempt employees employed by Defendants in California.
- 10. Plaintiff Reina Gonzalez is an individual over the age of eighteen who at all times relevant to this Complaint was a resident of Los Angeles County. Plaintiff Gonzalez was employed by Defendants from approximately 1994 until September 23, 2018. Plaintiff Gonzalez worked for Defendants at their HomeTown Buffet restaurants in Palmdale and Lancaster, California.
- 11. Plaintiff Esperanza Jimenez is an individual over the age of eighteen who at all times relevant to this Complaint was a resident of Los Angeles County. Plaintiff Jimenez was employed

by Defendants from approximately October 2017 to December 28, 2018. Plaintiff Jimenez worked for Defendants at their HomeTown Buffet restaurant in Palmdale, California.

- 12. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendant Food Management Partners, Inc. ("FMP") is a Texas corporation with its Principal Executive Office in Hollywood Park, Texas. Defendant FMP is not registered as a foreign business entity with the California Secretary of State.
- 13. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendant FMP is a restaurant investment and management company that operates nine restaurant-chains in thirty-six states. According to its website, FMP "manages all store-level and corporate operations for Furr's Fresh Buffet, Hometown Buffet, Hops, Old Country Buffet, Ryan's, Curry House, Sushi Zushi, Tahoe Joe's and Zio's Italian Kitchen in 36 states," including California.
- 14. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendant Buffets, LLC ("Buffets") is a Minnesota limited liability corporation whose members reside in Hollywood Park, Texas. Defendant Buffets is registered as a foreign business entity with the California Secretary of State. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendant Buffets is an entity formed, owned, and controlled by Defendant FMP for the purpose of operating its buffet-style restaurant brands nationwide.
- Payroll LLC ("FMP-Ovation") is a Texas limited liability corporation whose members reside in Hollywood Park, Texas. Defendant FMP-Ovation is not registered as a foreign business entity with the California Secretary of State. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendant FMP-Ovation is an entity formed, owned, and controlled by Defendant FMP for the purpose of, among other things, processing payroll for Defendant FMP's employees. At times relevant to this complaint, Plaintiffs' wage statements came from FMP-Ovation.
- 16. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and allege that Defendants FMP, Buffets, and FMP-Ovation share the same business address in Hollywood Park, Texas, and that they share the same three managers and directors.

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- 17. The true names and capacities, whether individual, corporate, associate, or otherwise, of Does 1-10, inclusive, are unknown to Plaintiffs, who therefore sues the Doe Defendants by fictitious names. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon alleges that each of these fictitiously-named Defendants is responsible in some manner for the occurrences and Plaintiffs' and other Aggrieved Employees' damages as herein alleged. Plaintiffs will amend this Complaint to show their true names and capacities when they have been ascertained. Defendants and Doe Defendants are jointly and severally liable for Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees' damages.
- 18. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and allege that at all times mentioned in this Complaint, each Defendant was the agent and employee of the other Defendant and, in doing the things alleged in this Complaint, was acting within the course and scope of such agency and employment. Plaintiffs are further informed, believe, and allege that each of the Defendants gave consent to, ratified, and authorized the acts alleged herein. Defendants are sued both in their own right and on the basis of respondent superior.
- 19. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendant FMP serves in a capacity of direct control over the operations of its agents, Defendants Buffets and FMP-Ovation. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that FMP, Buffets, and FMP-Ovation jointly exercised control over Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees with respect to their work for Defendants.
- 20. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and allege that Defendants are either solely or jointly and severally liable for damages and penalties owed to Plaintiffs under common law and by statute, including attorneys' fees and costs.
- 21. At all relevant times, Defendants have done business under the laws of California; have had places of business in California, including in this County; and have employed Aggrieved Employees in this County. Defendants are "persons" as defined in California Labor Code § 18. Defendants are also "employers" as that term is used in the Labor Code and the IWC Wage Orders regulating wages, hours and working conditions.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 22. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to the California Labor Code Private Attorneys Genera Act. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendant Buffets, LLC because it does business in California, is authorized to do business in the State of California, and is registered with the California Secretary of State. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendant FMP-Ovation because it does business in the State of California. FMP-Ovation is the entity that issues and is identified on Plaintiff's and Aggrieved employees' wage statements.
- 23. This Court also has jurisdiction over Defendants Food Management Partners, Inc. and FMP-Ovation Payroll LLC because they are principals of Defendant Buffets, LLC, over which they exercise pervasive and continual control; because this lawsuit relates to FMP's and FMP-Ovation's contacts with California; and because they are the alter egos of Defendant Buffets, LLC.
- 24. Venue is proper in this County pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure § 393. Defendants conducts business, employ Aggrieved Employees, and have jobsites in this County. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that events giving rise to these causes of action occurred in this County, and some part of these causes of action arose in this County.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

- 25. Plaintiff Gonzalez worked for Defendants as a non-exempt, hourly employee at HomeTown Buffet restaurants located in Palmdale and Lancaster, California from approximately April 4, 1994 until September 23, 2018. During her employment with Defendants, Plaintiff Gonzalez worked at various times as a cashier and waitress. At the time of her termination, her regular hourly rate of pay was approximately \$11.00 per hour.
- 26. Plaintiff Jimenez worked for Defendants as a non-exempt, hourly employee at a HomeTown Buffet restaurant in Palmdale, California from approximately October 2017 to December 28, 2018. During her employment with Defendants, Plaintiff Jimenez worked at the Palmdale location's bakery and omelet stations. At the time of her termination, her regular hourly rate of pay was approximately \$11.00 per hour.
 - 27. Defendants operate a chain of restaurants throughout the United States and

California, including HomeTown Buffet restaurants. Defendants employ hundreds of hourly non-exempt workers similarly situated to Plaintiffs across these restaurants.

- 28. To conduct their operations, Defendants employ hourly, non-exempt employees who are responsible for all aspects of their restaurant operations. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that this operational structure is uniform and standardized throughout Defendants' operations. The employment conditions for these hourly, non-exempt employees are substantially similar, if not identical, for Defendants' employees throughout the United States, including in California.
- 29. Defendants' waitstaff, such as Plaintiff Reina Gonzalez, solicit and fulfill Defendants' customers' service requests, clean up after departing customers, and prepare Defendants' restaurants for new customers. Defendants' cashiers, meanwhile, assist Defendants' customers in paying for their food while also handling miscellaneous related responsibilities. Other employees, such as Plaintiff Esperanza Jimenez, prepare food for Defendants' customers.
- 30. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendants pay all of their hourly, non-exempt staff, regardless of position or location, at or near applicable minimum wages. At the time their employments with Defendants terminated, Plaintiffs were paid \$11.00 per hour, the California minimum wage at the time. When the daily pay for these workers is divided by the actual hours that they work, and required missed break premiums, off-the-clock work, and overtime are factored in, the effective hourly rate of pay often falls below the applicable minimum wage.
- 31. As a matter of policy, Defendants require Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees to perform work off-the-clock after their shift has ended. Defendants neither record nor compensate these employees for the work performed while off-the-clock.
- 32. Specifically, after clocking out, Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees are required to continue working for up to an additional 3-4 hours off-the-clock. Defendants instruct Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees to clock out but continue working in order to complete their assigned responsibilities without accruing additional compensation, including overtime compensation. For example, Plaintiff Gonzalez regularly worked 11 hours or more in a day but was

paid as if she had worked only 7.5 hours. Likewise, despite the fact that, at times, Plaintiff Jimenez worked 12 or more hours per day, Defendants typically paid her for only 7.5 hours of daily work.

- 33. As a result of these policies, Defendants deny Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees the overtime premiums resulting from the additional work performed off-the-clock.
- 34. Defendants also fail to provide Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees with timely, legally compliant meal breaks. Instead, Defendants require Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees to continue working through their scheduled lunch breaks. Defendants instruct Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees to clock out for meal breaks, even though they didn't take them. When Defendants do provide Plaintiffs and Aggrieved Employees with meal breaks, Defendants regularly interrupt Plaintiffs' and other Aggrieved Employees' meal breaks with work requests without providing a substitute meal break and without requiring them to clock back in.
- 35. As a result of these policies, Defendants deny Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees the overtime premiums resulting from the additional off-the-clock work performed during the unpaid meal breaks.
- 36. Defendants also fail to provide Plaintiffs and Class members with adequate rest periods as required by California law. Defendants routinely deny Plaintiffs and Class members the opportunity to take any rest breaks at all. Instead, Defendants require Plaintiffs and Class members to continue working throughout the day to meet their customers' demands.
- 37. Despite failing to provide Plaintiffs and Class members the opportunity to take legally compliant rest breaks, Defendants do not provide premium pay in lieu of these missed breaks.
- 38. Defendants' common course of wage-and-hour abuses includes routinely failing to maintain true and accurate records of the hours worked by Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees. In particular, Defendants fail to record hours that Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees worked during missed meal breaks as well as hours worked off-the-clock. Defendants' failure to record all hours worked also results in a failure to provide Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees accurate itemized wage statements as required by California law. The wage statements

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Defendants provide do not reflect all hours worked, premium pay for missed meal and rest breaks, or applicable overtime premiums.

- 39. Defendants also do not provide Plaintiffs and Class members with accurate wage statements because Defendants issue wage statements to Plaintiffs and Class members that indicate that their employer is "FMP Ovation Payroll LLC," an entity that is neither registered to do business in the state of California as an independent entity nor on information and belief is it registered as a fictitious business name pursuant to California Business & Professions Code § 17900.
- 40. Further, Defendants did not and do not provide Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees with full payment of all wages owed at the end of employment. These workers are owed wages and premium pay for all time worked, overtime, and missed meal and rest breaks when their employment ends. These amounts remain unpaid pursuant to Defendants' policies and practices, even after voluntary or involuntary termination. Defendants therefore fail to pay all wages due upon termination as required by California law. As a consequence, Defendants are subject to waiting time penalties.
- 41. Plaintiffs are informed, believe, and thereon allege that Defendants' unlawful conduct has been widespread, repeated, and consistent as to the other Aggrieved Employees. Defendants know or should know that their policies and practices are unlawful and unfair.
- 42. Defendants' conduct is willful, carried out in bad faith, and has caused significant damages to Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees in an amount to be determined at trial.

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION Penalties Pursuant to Labor Code § 2699(a) (Against All Defendants)

- 43. Plaintiffs incorporate the foregoing paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.
- 44. Labor Code § 2699(a) provides:

 Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any provision of this code that provides for a civil penalty to be assessed and collected by the Labor and Workforce Development Agency ... for a violation of this code, may, as an alternative, be recovered through a civil action brought by an aggrieved employee on behalf of himself or herself and other current or former employees.
- 45. Labor Code § 203 provides, in relevant part:

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26 27 If an employer willfully fails to pay, without abatement or reduction, in accordance with Sections 201, 201.5, 202, and 205.5, any wages of an employee who is discharged or who quits, the wages of the employee shall continue as a penalty from the due date thereof at the same rate until paid or until an action therefore is commenced; but the wages shall not continue for more than 30 days.

Labor Code § 226(a) provides: 46.

An employer, semimonthly or at the time of each payment of wages, shall furnish to his or her employees, either as a detachable part of the check, draft, or voucher paying the employee's wages, or separately if wages are paid by personal check or cash, an accurate itemized statement in writing showing (1) gross wages earned, (2) total hours worked by the employee, except as provided in subdivision (j), (3) the number of piece-rate units earned and any applicable piece rate if the employee is paid on a piece-rate basis, (4) all deductions, provided that all deductions made on written orders of the employee may be aggregated and shown as one item, (5) net wages earned, (6) the inclusive dates of the period for which the employee is paid, (7) the name of the employee and only the last four digits of his or her social security number or an employee identification number other than a social security number, (8) the name and address of the legal entity that is the employer, and (9) all applicable hourly rates in effect during the pay period and the corresponding number of hours worked at each hourly rate by the employee...

47. Labor Code § 558(a) provides:

- (a) Any employer or other person acting on behalf of an employer who violates, or causes to be violated, a section of this chapter or any provision regulating hours and days of work in any order of the Industrial Welfare Commission shall be subject to a civil penalty as follows:
 - (1) For any initial violation, fifty dollars (\$50) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which the employee was underpaid in addition to an amount sufficient to recover underpaid wages.
 - (2) For each subsequent violation, one hundred dollars (\$100) for each underpaid employee for each pay period for which the employee was underpaid in addition to an amount sufficient to recover underpaid wages.
- Plaintiffs seek civil penalties pursuant to Labor Code § 2699(a) for each failure by 48. Defendants, as alleged above, to timely pay all wages owed to Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees in compliance with Labor Code §§ 201-202 in the amounts established by Labor Code § 203. Plaintiffs seek such penalties as an alternative to the penalties available under Labor Code § 203, as prayed for herein.

- 49. Plaintiffs also seek civil penalties pursuant to Labor Code § 2699(a) for each failure by Defendants, alleged above, to provide Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees an accurate, itemized wage statement in compliance with Labor Code § 226(a) in the amounts established by Labor Code § 226(e). Plaintiffs seek such penalties as an alternative to the penalties available under Labor Code § 226(e), as prayed for herein.
- 50. Plaintiffs also seek civil penalties pursuant to Labor Code § 2699(a) for each failure by Defendants, alleged above, to provide aggrieved employees with compensation for all time worked in the amounts established by Labor Code § 558.
- 51. Plaintiffs also seek civil penalties pursuant to Sections 226.3 and 256 of the California Labor Code.
- 52. Pursuant to Labor Code § 2699.3(a)(1) and (2), Plaintiffs provided the Labor and Workforce Development Agency ("LWDA") with notice of their intentions to file this claim. Sixty-five calendar days have passed without notice from the LWDA. Plaintiffs satisfied the administrative prerequisites to commence this civil action in compliance with § 2699.3(a).
- 53. Plaintiffs seek the aforementioned penalties on behalf of the State, other Aggrieved Employees, and themselves as set forth in Labor Code § 2699(g)(i).
- 54. Defendants are liable to Plaintiffs, other Aggrieved Employees, and the State of California for the civil penalties set forth in this Complaint, with interest thereon. Plaintiffs are also entitled to an award of attorneys' fees and costs as set forth below.
 - 55. Wherefore, Plaintiffs request relief as hereinafter provided.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION Penalties Pursuant to Labor Code § 2699(f) (Against All Defendants)

- 56. Plaintiffs incorporate the foregoing paragraphs as though fully set forth herein.
- 57. Labor Code § 2699(f) provides:

For all provisions of this code except those for which a civil penalty is specifically provided, there is established a civil penalty for a violation of these provisions, as follows: . . . (2) If, at the time of the alleged violation, the person employs one or more employees, the civil penalty is one hundred dollars

(\$100) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for the initial violation and two hundred dollars (\$200) for each aggrieved employee per pay period for each subsequent violation.

58. Labor Code § 510(a) provides:

Eight hours of labor constitutes a day's work. Any work in excess of eight hours in one workday and any work in excess of 40 hours in any one workweek and the first eight hours worked on the seventh day of work in any one workweek shall be compensated at the rate of no less than one and one-half times the regular rate of pay for an employee. Any work in excess of 12 hours in one day shall be compensated at the rate of no less than twice the regular rate of pay for an employee.

59. Labor Code § 512(a) provides:

An employer shall not employ an employee for a work period of more than five hours per day without providing the employee with a meal period of not less than 30 minutes, except that if the total work period per day of the employee is no more than six hours, the meal period may be waived by mutual consent of both the employer and employee. An employer shall not employ an employee for a work period of more than 10 hours per day without providing the employee with a second meal period of not less than 30 minutes, except that if the total hours worked is no more than 12 hours, the second meal period may be waived by mutual consent of the employer and the employee only if the first meal period was not waived.

- 60. Plaintiffs seek civil penalties pursuant to Labor Code § 2699(f) for each failure by Defendants, alleged above, to provide Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees compliant meal and rest periods in compliance with Labor Code § 512.
- 61. Plaintiffs also seek civil penalties pursuant to Labor Code § 2699(f) for each violation of Labor Code § 510, alleged above, as well as any provision regulating hours and days of work in any order of the IWC.
- 62. To the extent than any other violation alleged herein does not carry penalties under Labor Code § 2699(a), Plaintiffs seek civil penalties pursuant to Labor Code § 2699(f) for Plaintiffs and other Aggrieved Employees each pay period in which he or she was aggrieved, in the amounts established by Labor Code § 2699(f).
- 63. Pursuant to Labor Code § 2699.3(a)(1) and (2), Plaintiffs have provided the LWDA with notice of their intention to file this claim. Sixty-five calendar days have passed without notice from the LWDA. Plaintiffs satisfied the administrative prerequisites to commence this

civil action in compliance with § 2699.3(a).

- 64. Plaintiffs seek the aforementioned penalties on behalf of the State, other Aggrieved Employees, and themselves as set forth in Labor Code § 2699(g)(i).
- 65. Defendants are liable to Plaintiffs, other Aggrieved Employees, and the State of California for the civil penalties set forth in this Complaint, with interest thereon. Plaintiffs are also entitled to an award of attorneys' fees and costs as set forth below.
 - 66. Wherefore, Plaintiffs request relief as hereinafter provided.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs, on behalf of the State of California and the Aggrieved Employees, request the following relief:

- a) For an order awarding civil penalties to the full extent provided for by the PAGA;
- b) For an award of reasonable attorneys' fees as provided by the California Labor Code, including Labor Code § 2699(g)(1); California Code of Civil Procedure § 1021.5; and/or any other applicable law;
- c) For all costs of suit;
- d) For interest on any penalties awarded, as provided by applicable law; and
- e) For such other and further relief as this Court deems just and proper.

Dated: October 23, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn H. Cottrell

Ori Edelstein Ian W. Forgie SCHNEIDER WALLACE

COTTRELL KONECKY WOTKYNS LLP

Zorik Mooradian MOORADIAN LAW, APC

Attorneys for Plaintiffs, on behalf of the State of California and Aggrieved Employees

Plaintiffs hereby demand a jury trial on all claims and issues for which Plaintiffs are

entitled to a jury.

Dated: October 23, 2019

Respectfully submitted

Carolyn Hunt Cottrell

Ori Edelstein Ian W. Forgie

SCHNEIDER WALLACE COTTRELL KONECKY

WOTKYNS LLP

Zorik Mooradian MOORADIAN LAW, APC

Attorneys for Plaintiffs, on behalf of the State of California an Aggrieved Employees

EXHIBIT C

8/21/2019 Pay Stub Portal

REINA I GONZALEZ		FMP-Ovation Payroll, LLC an						
Pay Date	10/10/2018	Statement of Earning For the Pay Date Shown 120 Chula Vista Dr.						
Advice # DD0000	000000000416988	San Antonio TX 78232 USA						
Pay Period Start	09/20/2018	USA						
Pay Period End	10/03/2018	Earnings Totals Gross Pay Net Pay			Current \$434.03 \$237.07	YTD \$16,883.48 \$8,591.90		
Department W-4 Fed Withholding	0157 M	Earnings Detail CASH RPDTIP SERVER SERVOT	Rate \$11.00 \$52.00 \$11.00	Hours 12.65 22.08	Current \$139.15 \$52.00 \$242.88 \$0.00	\$1,055.45 \$2,190.55 \$13,373.15 \$0.33		
Additional Tax \	Withholding	SICK-H			\$0.00	\$264.00		
Fed	\$0.00	Deductions Detail Taxes Federal W/H Tax			Current \$0.00	YTD \$378.68		
Exemptions		Medicare Tax Social Sec Tax			\$6.29 \$26.90	\$244.81 \$1,046.77		
Fed 0		State Tax (CA) Local Tax (CASDI) Total Taxes			\$0.00 \$3.26 \$36.45	\$88.61 \$121.26 \$1,880.13		
Employment In	formation	Deductions			φ30.43	φ1,000.10		
Job Title	SERVER	401K Total Deductions			\$108.51 \$108.51	\$4,220.90 \$4,220.90		
		Other Information Last 4 SSN SickTime Avail hours Vacation Avail hours			I	48.00 44.83		
		Distributions			Current			