

1 Carolyn H. Cottrell (SBN 166977)
2 Ori Edelstein (SBN 268145)
3 Michelle S. Lim (SBN 315691)
4 SCHNEIDER WALLACE
5 COTTRELL KONECKY LLP
6 2000 Powell Street, Suite 1400
7 Emeryville, California 94608
8 Telephone: (415) 421-7100
9 Facsimile: (415) 421-7105
10 ccottrell@schneiderwallace.com
11 oedelstein@schneiderwallace.com
12 mlim@schneiderwallace.com

13 Attorneys for Plaintiffs, and the Putative Class
14 and Collective

15
16 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**
17 **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**
18

19 DAVID CHAVEZ and VINCENT
20 SLAUGHTER, on behalf of themselves and all
21 others similarly situated,

22 Plaintiffs,

23 vs.

24 STELLAR MANAGEMENT GROUP VII,
25 LLC; STELLAR MANAGEMENT GROUP,
26 INC. d/b/a QSI QUALITY SERVICE
27 INTEGRITY; THE VINCIT COMPANY, LLC
28 d/b/a THE VINCIT GROUP and VINCIT
ENTERPRISES,

Defendants.

Case No.: 3:19-cv-01353-JCS

**DECLARATION OF VINCENT
SLAUGHTER**

Date: March 18, 2022

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Judge: Hon. Joseph C. Spero

Ctrm.: G, 15th Floor

Filed: March 13, 2019

Trial Date: None

1 I, Vincent Slaughter, hereby declare as follows:

2 1. I am a Named Plaintiff in *Chavez, et al. v. Stellar Management Group VII, LLC, et*
3 *al.*, pending in the United States District Court for the Northern District of California.

4 2. I am over the age of eighteen. The following statements are based on my personal
5 knowledge. If called on to do so, I could and would testify competently to these statements.

6 3. I submit this declaration in support of Plaintiff's Motion for Attorneys' Fees and
7 Costs and for Service Awards in this Action.

8 4. I was employed by Stellar Management Group VII, LLC; Stellar Management
9 Group, Inc. d/b/a QSI Quality Service Integrity; and The Vincit Company, LLC d/b/a The Vincit
10 Group and Vincit Enterprises (collectively, "QSI") from approximately October 2019 to
11 December 2019. I worked for QSI as a Sanitation Worker at the Foster Farms plant in Livingston,
12 California. In this role, I performed many tasks like putting on/taking off protective equipment,
13 attending safety meetings, cleaning off and sanitizing equipment, preparing and spraying liquid
14 chemicals, performing regular maintenance on sanitation equipment, preparing the facility for
15 audits by federal and state agencies, practicing food safety procedures, and ultimately protecting
16 the brand image of meat processing companies.

17 5. I was required to work long hours for QSI. However, I was not paid for all of the
18 hours that I actually worked even though I typically completed at least forty hours of work each
19 week. For example, I had to put on or take off my personal protective equipment while I was off-
20 the-clock. I was required to walk from a specified parking lot each day to a security gate, wait in
21 long lines to have my belongings inspected, and then drop off my personal belongings at a
22 designated break room while I was off-the-clock, and repeat these tasks in reverse order at the end
23 of the day. I was also required to regularly wait in line to obtain my personal protective
24 equipment from a distribution machine. I was further regularly unable to take meal and rest
25 breaks, because they were cut short and I was required to take off or put on my personal
26 protective equipment during the breaks. I was also required to purchase equipment and tools like

27
28

1 goggles and chemical spray bottles, which I paid out of my own pocket without reimbursement
2 for a total of about \$34.00.

3 6. As a result of these issues, I believed that I experienced wage violations and meal
4 and rest break violations. I knew that my co-workers had similar experiences. I first heard about
5 this case in around May 2020. I wanted to do something about these issues for all of us, so when
6 I learned about this case, I reached out to Schneider Wallace Cottrell Konecky LLP to opt-in to
7 the case, and filled out an opt-in form to do so. I have been involved with this case for over one
8 year.

9 7. Schneider Wallace Cottrell Konecky LLP are now my attorneys in this case.

10 8. Prior to joining the case, I had multiple telephonic interviews with my attorneys
11 regarding the case and my work experiences with QSI.

12 9. I knew that there was no guarantee that we would be successful in this case, and
13 that there was a significant chance of protracted litigation. I understood I could potentially be
14 liable for fees and costs, and that there was a risk that some of the claims could be compelled to
15 arbitration. I also understood that I could have to spend a significant amount of time in the
16 discovery process.

17 10. Additionally, I realized that my name would be on a class and representative action,
18 and that this information could be visible to others. This is particularly significant for me, because
19 I knew that employers may refuse to hire me based on my involvement in this Action.

20 11. Nonetheless, I felt strongly that QSI had unlawful wage and hour policies.
21 Therefore, I decided to proceed as a representative plaintiff and join the lawsuit. I understood that
22 I would serve as the Named Plaintiff, the representative of a proposed class of California workers,
23 and the representative of a proposed nationwide collective of workers.

24 12. After learning about the duties and procedures involved with representing the
25 interests of the Class, I decided I wanted to serve as a Named Plaintiff and Class and Collective
26 representative. Being a Named Plaintiff and Class and Collective representative was no small
27 task. Although I knew being a class representative was a serious and time-consuming
28

1 commitment, I felt a sense of duty to represent my co-workers who faced the same difficulties at
2 QSI that I did, but were too afraid to challenge QSI's practices.

3 13. I worked with my attorneys to prepare an amended complaint to add me as a named
4 Plaintiff. I supplied large amounts of information and documents to my attorneys to assist with the
5 drafting and review process. We filed the amended complaint on around May 2020 in federal
6 court.

7 14. I estimate that I devoted at about 10 hours to the Action during the initial interviews
8 with my attorneys and the complaint-drafting process.

9 15. We eventually mediated this dispute on September 24, 2020. I cleared my schedule
10 and made myself available for the mediation, but the case did not settle at that time.

11 16. I estimate that I spent approximately 2 hours on discussions with my attorneys
12 regarding the mediation.

13 17. After mediation, I was in regular contact with my attorneys regarding the ongoing
14 negotiations with QSI and the Settlement that we eventually reached in around October 2020.

15 18. I estimate that I spent approximately 2 to 3 hours on discussions with my attorneys
16 immediately following the mediation.

17 19. Around October 2020, I also worked with my attorneys to prepare my declaration
18 which I understood would be submitted to support our request to conditionally certify a
19 nationwide collective to allow other Sanitation Workers know they can join this case as well. I
20 carefully went over the details of my employment, worked with my attorneys to draft an accurate
21 declaration, and meticulously reviewed my declaration to ensure it was correct before it was filed.

22 20. I estimate that I spent approximately 4 hours on discussions with my attorneys
23 regarding my declaration, and on reviewing, editing, and verifying my declaration.

24 21. After the proposed Settlement was reached, I carefully reviewed the terms of the
25 proposed document. The Settlement is a lengthy document, and I reviewed it closely. I discussed
26 it with my attorneys. I spent time evaluating the proposed outcome to assure that it was fair.

27 Based on my own review and my attorneys' evaluation and recommendation, I believe the
28

1 Settlement is fair and reasonable and the proposed Service Award is fair and reasonable. I signed
2 the Settlement on March 11, 2021.

3 22. In around April 2021, I knew the Court ordered the Parties to submit additional
4 documents regarding the Settlement and that subsequent negotiations with QSI's counsel were
5 ensuing to resolve any issues with the Settlement. After the proposed terms of the first
6 Amendment to the Settlement were reached, I carefully reviewed the terms of the proposed
7 document. The first Amendment was also a lengthy document, but I reviewed it closely and
8 discussed it with my attorneys. Based on my own review and my attorneys' evaluation and
9 recommendation, I believed the Settlement to be fair and reasonable, and signed the first
10 Amendment on May 6, 2021.

11 23. In around July 2021, I knew that the Court had further concerns regarding the
12 Settlement and that subsequent negotiations with QSI's counsel were re-started to resolve the
13 remaining issues with the Settlement. After the proposed terms of the second Amendment to the
14 Settlement were reached, I, again, carefully reviewed and discussed with my attorneys about the
15 terms of the proposed document which was just as lengthy as the first Amendment. Based on my
16 own review and my attorneys' evaluation and recommendation, I believed the Settlement to be
17 fair and reasonable, and signed the second Amendment on July 29, 2021.

18 24. Finally, around September 2021, QSI raised concerns regarding individuals who
19 were inadvertently left in the Settlement due to QSI's corporate restructuring. After the proposed
20 terms of the third Amendment to the Settlement was reached, I, for the last time, carefully
21 reviewed and discussed with my attorneys about the terms of the proposed document which fairly
22 lengthy as well. Based on my own review and my attorneys' evaluation and recommendation, I
23 believed the Settlement to be fair and reasonable, and signed the third Amendment on September
24 16, 2021.

25 25. I estimate that I spent at about 5 to 6 hours carefully reviewing the Settlement and
26 its three Amendments and discussing the Settlement with my attorneys.

27
28

1 26. Throughout this action, I have been in regular communication with my attorneys to
2 keep apprised of the status of the litigation. I have kept up-to-date on the status at every phase. I
3 estimate that I have spent approximately 40 to 50 hours over the course of this litigation on phone
4 calls and emails regarding status updates with my attorneys.

5 27. In sum, I worked with my attorneys to prepare the complaints against QSI;
6 strategized the assertion of claims and theories; spent hours assembling, discussing, and reviewing
7 documents; participated actively in the mediation process and settlement decisions; and otherwise
8 remained in constant contact with my attorneys. I have been involved with this litigation for over
9 a year, and during that time I have contributed at least 63 hours of my own time to the prosecution
10 of these claims.

11 28. By participating in this case as a Plaintiff, I placed myself at personal risk. For
12 example, I faced: (a) risk to my reputation in my community as a result of stepping forward
13 publicly in a class action; (b) risk to my reputation as it concerns my future employment
14 opportunities; (c) risk that I would be subject to intrusive discovery and time demands in this
15 litigation; and (d) risk that I would have to pay defense costs if I lost this case.

16 29. These risks are front and center for me because this lawsuit may be visible to future
17 employers.

18 30. Nevertheless, I chose to face these risks to challenge the way that QSI treated its
19 employees on behalf of everyone in the California Class and the nationwide Collective who I
20 believed suffered similar violations of wage and hour law.

21 31. I understand that under the Settlement, I would be releasing much broader claims
22 under a general release than other Class and Collective members. But I am willing to agree to this
23 broader release because I know it helped the parties reach a compromise that I believe is a great
24 result for the Class and Collective members I represent. I took my role as Class representative to
25 heart, and took my duties as Class representative very seriously. Although I was concerned that
26 my participation in this case could result in negative personal or employment consequences, that
27 did not stop me from stepping forward as a representative and named plaintiff to help my fellow
28

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

Class and Collective members who went through the same struggles I did at QSI.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on 11 / 18 / 2021, in Merced, California.



Vincent Slaughter