

COURT APPROVED NOTICE OF CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT AND HEARING DATE FOR FINAL COURT APPROVAL

Genesis Gonzalez and Gerry Siemon v. Mrs. Gooch's Natural Food Markets, Inc., Los Angeles Superior Court, Case No. 22STCV03934

***The Superior Court for the State of California authorized this Notice. Read it carefully!
It's not junk mail, spam, an advertisement, or solicitation by a lawyer. You are not being sued.***

You may be eligible to receive money from an employee class action lawsuit ("Action") against Mrs. Gooch's Natural Food Markets, Inc. ("Defendant") for alleged wage and hour violations. The Action was filed by two former employees of Defendant, Genesis Gonzalez and Gerry Siemon ("Plaintiffs") and seeks payment of unpaid sick pay wages and other relief for a class of hourly, nonexempt employees ("Class Members") who worked for Defendant during the Class Period February 1, 2018, to May 1, 2024; and (2) penalties under the California Private Attorney General Act ("PAGA") for all hourly, nonexempt employees who worked for Defendant during the PAGA Period October 26, 2020 to May 1, 2024.) ("Aggrieved Employees").

The proposed Settlement has two main parts: (1) a Class Settlement requiring Defendant to fund Individual Class Payments, and (2) a PAGA Settlement requiring Defendant to fund Individual PAGA Payments and pay penalties to the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency ("LWDA").

Based on Defendant's records, and the Parties' current assumptions, **your Individual Class Payment is estimated to be <<SettAmount>> (less withholding) and your Individual PAGA Payment is estimated to be <<PAGAAmount>>**. The actual amount you may receive likely will be different and will depend on a number of factors. (If no amount is stated for your Individual PAGA Payment, then according to Defendant's records you are not eligible for an Individual PAGA Payment under the Settlement because you didn't work during the PAGA Period.)

Pay Periods for purposes of this settlement are defined as those pay periods when you received sick pay, as well as any remuneration in addition to your base hourly pay, such as shift differentials, hazard pay, or non-discretionary bonuses. The above estimates are based on Defendant's records showing that **you worked <<PayPeriods>> Pay Periods** during the Class Period and **you worked <<PAGA_PayPeriods>> Pay Periods** during the PAGA Period. If you believe that you worked more Pay Periods during either period, you can submit a challenge by the deadline date. See Section 4 of this Notice.

The Court has already preliminarily approved the proposed Settlement and approved this Notice. The Court has not yet decided whether to grant final approval. Your legal rights are affected whether you act or not act. Read this Notice carefully. You will be deemed to have carefully read and understood it. At the Final Approval Hearing, the Court will decide whether to finally approve the Settlement and how much of the Settlement will be paid to Plaintiffs and Plaintiffs' attorneys ("Class Counsel"). The Court will also decide whether to enter a judgment that requires Defendant to make payments under the Settlement and requires Class Members and Aggrieved Employees to give up their rights to assert certain claims against Defendant.

If you worked for Defendant during the Class Period and/or the PAGA Period, you have three basic options under the Settlement:

- (1) **Do Nothing.** You don't have to do anything to participate in the proposed Settlement and be eligible for an Individual Class Payment and/or an Individual PAGA Payment. As a Participating Class Member, though, you will give up your right to assert Class Period wage claims and PAGA Period penalty claims against Defendant.
- (2) **Opt-Out of the Class Settlement.** You can exclude yourself from the Class Settlement (opt-out) by submitting the written Request for Exclusion or otherwise notifying the Administrator in writing. If you opt-out of the Settlement, you will not receive an Individual Class Payment. You will, however, preserve your right to personally pursue Class Period wage claims against Defendant, and, if you are an Aggrieved Employee, remain eligible for an Individual PAGA Payment. You cannot opt-out of the PAGA portion of the proposed Settlement.

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(3) **Object to the Settlement.** All Class Members who do not opt-out (“Participating Class Members”) can object to any aspect of the proposed Settlement. See section 7 of this notice for more information.

Defendant will not retaliate against you for any actions you take with respect to the proposed Settlement.

SUMMARY OF YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS AND OPTIONS IN THIS SETTLEMENT

You Don’t Have to Do Anything to Participate in the Settlement	If you do nothing, you will be a Participating Class Member, eligible for an Individual Class Payment and an Individual PAGA Payment (if any). In exchange, you will give up your right to assert the wage claims against Defendant that are covered by this Settlement (Released Claims).
You Can Opt-out of the Class Settlement but not the PAGA Settlement The Opt-out Deadline is July 22, 2024	If you don’t want to fully participate in the proposed Settlement, you can opt-out of the Class Settlement by sending the Administrator a written Request for Exclusion. Once excluded, you will be a Non- Participating Class Member and no longer eligible for an Individual Class Payment. Non-Participating Class Members cannot object to any portion of the proposed Settlement. See Section 6 of this Notice. You cannot opt-out of the PAGA portion of the proposed Settlement. Defendant must pay Individual PAGA Payments to all Aggrieved Employees and the Aggrieved Employees must give up their rights to pursue Released Claims (defined below).
Participating Class Members Can Object to the Class Settlement but not the PAGA Settlement Written Objections Must be Submitted by July 22, 2024	All Class Members who do not opt-out (“Participating Class Members”) can object to any aspect of the proposed Settlement. The Court’s decision whether to finally approve the Settlement will include a determination of how much will be paid to Class Counsel and Plaintiffs who pursued the Action on behalf of the Class. You are not personally responsible for any payments to Class Counsel or Plaintiff, but every dollar paid to Class Counsel and Plaintiffs reduces the overall amount paid to Participating Class Members. You can object to the amounts requested by Class Counsel or Plaintiffs if you think they are unreasonable. See Section 7 of this Notice.

1. WHAT IS THE ACTION ABOUT?

Plaintiffs are former employees of Defendant. The Action accuses Defendant of violating California labor laws by failing to pay all sick leave wages owed, including failing to pay sick leave wages at the correct regular rate of pay. Based on the same claims, Plaintiffs also asserted a claim for civil penalties under the California Private Attorneys General Act (Labor Code §§ 2698, et seq.) (“PAGA”), for failure to timely pay wages under Labor Code section 203, and for violation of the Unfair Competition Law. Plaintiffs are represented by attorneys in the Action: Nazo Koulloukian of KOUL LAW FIRM and Sahag Majarian, II, and Garen Majarian of MAJARIAN LAW GROUP, APC (“Class Counsel”).

Defendant strongly denies violating any laws or failing to pay any wages and contends it complied with all applicable laws.

2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT THE ACTION HAS SETTLED?

So far, the Court has made no determination whether Defendant or Plaintiffs are correct on the merits. In the meantime, Plaintiffs and Defendant hired an experienced, retired Judge to serve as a neutral mediator in an effort to resolve the Action by negotiating an to end the case by agreement (settle the case) rather than continuing the expensive and time-consuming process of litigation. The negotiations were successful. By signing a lengthy written settlement agreement (“Agreement”) and agreeing to jointly ask the Court to enter a judgment ending the Action and enforcing the Agreement, Plaintiffs and Defendant have negotiated a proposed Settlement that is subject to the Court’s Final Approval. Both sides agree the proposed Settlement is a compromise of disputed claims. By agreeing to settle, Defendant does not admit any violations or concede the merit of any claims.

The Court preliminarily approved the proposed Settlement as fair, reasonable and adequate, authorized this Notice, and scheduled a hearing to determine Final Approval.

3. WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT TERMS OF THE PROPOSED SETTLEMENT?

1. Defendant Will Pay \$1,000,000 as the Gross Settlement Amount (Gross Settlement). Defendant has agreed to deposit the Gross Settlement into an account controlled by the Administrator of the Settlement. The Administrator will use the Gross Settlement to pay the Individual Class Payments, Individual PAGA Payments, Class Representative Service Payment, Class Counsel's attorney's fees and expenses, the Administrator's expenses, and penalties to be paid to the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency ("LWDA"). Assuming the Court grants Final Approval, Defendant will fund the Gross Settlement not more than 14 days after the Judgment entered by the Court become final. The Judgment will be final on the date the Court enters Judgment, or a later date if Participating Class Members object to the proposed Settlement or the Judgment is appealed.
2. Court Approved Deductions from Gross Settlement. At the Final Approval Hearing, Plaintiffs and/or Class Counsel will ask the Court to approve the following deductions from the Gross Settlement, the amounts of which will be decided by the Court at the Final Approval Hearing:
 - A. Up to \$333,300 (33.33% of the Gross Settlement) to Class Counsel for attorneys' fees and up to \$25,000 for their litigation expenses. To date, Class Counsel have worked and incurred expenses on the Action without payment.
 - B. Up to \$10,000 to each Plaintiff as a Class Representative Award (for a total of up to \$20,000) for filing the Action, working with Class Counsel and representing the Class. A Class Representative Award will be the only monies Plaintiffs will receive other than Plaintiffs' Individual Class Payments and any Individual PAGA Payments.
 - C. Up to \$32,500 to the Administrator for services administering the Settlement.
 - D. Up to \$50,000 for PAGA Penalties, allocated 75% to the LWDA PAGA Payment and 25% in Individual PAGA Payments to the Aggrieved Employees based on their PAGA Period Pay Periods.

Participating Class Members have the right to object to any of these deductions. The Court will consider all objections.

3. Net Settlement Distributed to Class Members. After making the above deductions in amounts approved by the Court, the Administrator will distribute the rest of the Gross Settlement (the "Net Settlement") by making Individual Class Payments to Participating Class Members based on their Class Period Pay Periods.
4. Taxes Owed on Payments to Class Members. Plaintiffs and Defendant are asking the Court to approve an allocation of 30% of each Individual Class Payment to taxable wages ("Wage Portion") and 70% to penalties and interest ("Non-Wage Portion."). The Wage Portion is subject to withholdings and will be reported on IRS W-2 Forms. Defendant will separately pay employer payroll taxes it owes on the Wage Portion. The Individual PAGA Payments are counted as penalties rather than wages for tax purposes. The Administrator will report the Individual PAGA Payments and the Non-Wage Portions of the Individual Class Payments on IRS 1099 Forms. Although Plaintiffs and Defendant have agreed to these allocations, neither side is giving you any advice on whether your Payments are taxable or how much you might owe in taxes. You are responsible for paying all taxes (including penalties and interest on back taxes) on any Payments received from the proposed Settlement. You should consult a tax advisor if you have any questions about the tax consequences of the proposed Settlement.
5. Need to Promptly Cash Payment Checks. The front of every check issued for Individual Class Payments and Individual PAGA Payments will show the date when the check expires (the void date). If you don't cash it by the

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void date, your check will be automatically cancelled, and the monies will be deposited with the California Controller's Unclaimed Property Fund in your name.

If the monies represented by your check is sent to the Controller's Unclaimed Property, you should consult the rules of the Fund for instructions on how to retrieve your money.

6. Requests for Exclusion from the Class Settlement (Opt-Outs). You will be treated as a Participating Class Member, participating fully in the Class Settlement, unless you notify the Administrator in writing, not later than July 22, 2024, that you wish to opt-out. The easiest way to notify the Administrator is to send a written and signed Request for Exclusion by the July 22, 2024, Response Deadline. The Request for Exclusion should be a letter from a Class Member or his/her representative setting forth a Class Member's name, present address, telephone number, and a simple statement electing to be excluded from the Settlement. Excluded Class Members (i.e., Non-Participating Class Members) will not receive Individual Class Payments, but will preserve their rights to personally pursue wage and hour claims against Defendant.

You cannot opt-out of the PAGA portion of the Settlement. Class Members who exclude themselves from the Class Settlement (Non-Participating Class Members) remain eligible for Individual PAGA Payments and are required to give up their right to assert PAGA claims against Defendant based on the PAGA Period facts alleged in the Action.

7. The Proposed Settlement Will be Void if the Court Denies Final Approval. It is possible the Court will decline to grant Final Approval of the Settlement or decline enter a Judgment. It is also possible the Court will enter a Judgment that is reversed on appeal. Plaintiffs and Defendant have agreed that, in either case, the Settlement will be void: Defendant will not pay any money and Class Members will not release any claims against Defendant.
8. Administrator. The Court has appointed a neutral company, CPT Group, Inc., (the "Administrator") to send this Notice, calculate and make payments, and process Class Members' Requests for Exclusion. The Administrator will also decide Class Member Challenges over Workweeks, mail and re-mail settlement checks and tax forms, and perform other tasks necessary to administer the Settlement. The Administrator's contact information is contained in Section 9 of this Notice.
9. Participating Class Members' Release. After the Judgment is final and Defendant has fully funded the Gross Settlement and separately paid all employer payroll taxes, Participating Class Members will be legally barred from asserting any of the claims released under the Settlement. This means that unless you opted out by validly excluding yourself from the Class Settlement, you cannot sue, continue to sue, or be part of any other lawsuit against Defendant or related entities for wages based on the Class Period facts as alleged in the Action and resolved by this Settlement.

The Participating Class Members will be bound by the following release:

All Participating Class Members, on behalf of themselves and their respective former and present representatives, agents, attorneys, heirs, administrators, successors, and assigns, release Released Parties from all claims that were alleged, or reasonably could have been alleged, based on the facts stated in the Operative Complaint and ascertained in the course of the Action including any and all claims for alleged failure to pay sick pay wages, including Covid-19 supplemental paid sick leave, and the alleged failure to pay sick leave wages or Covid-19 supplemental paid sick leave at the correct rate of pay, and all derivative claims thereof, including claims for unpaid sick pay wages, interest thereon, the provision of wage statements; unfair business practices; penalties, including, but not limited to, civil penalties, statutory penalties, recordkeeping penalties, wages statement penalties, and waiting-time penalties; and attorneys' fees and costs; all claims related to the released claims which are asserted in the Action or which could have been asserted based on the factual allegations pled in the Action arising under: the California Labor Code (including, but not limited to, sections 201, 202, 203, 246, and 248.5), the Wage Orders 4-2001, 5-2001, and 7-2001 of the Industrial Welfare Commission; and California Business and Professions Code section 17200 derivative of Plaintiffs' sick pay claim. This release excludes the release of claims not permitted by law.

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10. **Aggrieved Employees' PAGA Release.** After the Court's judgment is final, and Defendant has paid the Gross Settlement and separately paid the employer-side payroll taxes, all Aggrieved Employees will be barred from asserting PAGA claims against Defendant, whether or not they exclude themselves from the Settlement. This means that all Aggrieved Employees, including those who are Participating Class Members and those who opt-out of the Class Settlement, cannot sue, continue to sue, or participate in any other PAGA claim against Defendant or its related entities based on the PAGA Period facts alleged in the Action and resolved by this Settlement.

The Aggrieved Employees' Releases for Participating and Non-Participating Class Members are as follows:

All Non-Participating Class Members who are Aggrieved Employees ("PAGA Members") are deemed to release, on behalf of themselves, the LWDA, and their respective former and present representatives, agents, attorneys, heirs, administrators, successors, and assigns, the Released Parties from all claims for PAGA penalties that were alleged, or reasonably could have been alleged, based on the PAGA Period facts stated in the Operative Complaint and the PAGA Notice to the LWDA ("Released PAGA Claims"). These include claims including any and all claims for alleged failure to pay sick pay wages, including Covid-19 supplemental paid sick leave, and the alleged failure to pay sick leave wages or Covid-19 supplemental paid sick leave at the correct rate of pay, and all derivative claims thereof; and all claims related to the released claims which are asserted in the Action or which could have been asserted based on the factual allegations pled in the Action arising under: the California Labor Code (including, but not limited to, sections 201, 202, 203, 246, 248.5, 2698 et seq.), the Wage Orders 4-2001, 5-2001, and 7-2001 of the Industrial Welfare Commission; and the California Private Attorneys General Act of 2004 ("PAGA"). This release excludes the release of claims not permitted by law. All Aggrieved Employees/PAGA Members shall release all claims arising under PAGA regardless of their decision to participate in the Settlement.

4. HOW WILL THE ADMINISTRATOR CALCULATE MY PAYMENT?

1. **Individual Class Payments.** The Administrator will calculate Individual Class Payments by (a) dividing the Net Settlement Amount by the total number of Pay Periods worked by all Participating Class Members, and (b) multiplying the result by the number of Pay Periods worked by each individual Participating Class Member.
2. **Individual PAGA Payments.** The Administrator will calculate Individual PAGA Payments by (a) dividing \$12,500.00 by the total number of PAGA Pay Periods worked by all Aggrieved Employees and (b) multiplying the result by the number of PAGA Period Pay Periods worked by each individual Aggrieved Employee.
3. **Pay Period Challenges.** Pay Periods for purposes of this settlement are defined as those pay periods when you received sick pay, as well as any remuneration in addition to your base hourly pay, such as shift differentials, hazard pay, or non-discretionary bonuses. The number of Pay Periods you worked during the Class Period and the number of PAGA Pay Periods you worked during the PAGA Period, as recorded in Defendant's records, are stated in the first page of this Notice. You have until July 22, 2024, to challenge the number of Pay Periods credited to you. You can submit your challenge by signing and sending a letter to the Administrator via mail, email or fax. Section 9 of this Notice has the Administrator's contact information.

You need to support your challenge by sending copies of pay stubs or other records. The Administrator will accept Defendant's calculation of Pay Periods based on Defendant's records as accurate unless you send copies of records containing contrary information. You should send copies rather than originals because the documents will not be returned to you. The Administrator will resolve Pay Period challenges based on your submission and on input from Class Counsel (who will advocate on behalf of Participating Class Members) and Defendant's Counsel. The Administrator's decision is final. You can't appeal or otherwise challenge its final decision.

5. HOW WILL I GET PAID?

1. **Participating Class Members.** The Administrator will send, by U.S. mail, a single check to every Participating Class Member (i.e., every Class Member who doesn't opt-out) including those who also qualify as Aggrieved Questions? Call the Settlement Administrator Toll Free at 1 (888) 710-5818

Employees. The single check will combine the Individual Class Payment and the Individual PAGA Payment.

2. Non-Participating Class Members. The Administrator will send, by U.S. mail, a single Individual PAGA Payment check to every Aggrieved Employee who opts out of the Class Settlement (i.e., every Non-Participating Class Member).

Your check will be sent to the same address as this Notice. If you change your address, be sure to notify the Administrator as soon as possible. Section 9 of this Notice has the Administrator's contact information.

6. HOW DO I OPT-OUT OF THE CLASS SETTLEMENT?

Submit a written and signed letter with your name, present address, telephone number, and a simple statement that you do not want to participate in the Settlement. The Administrator will exclude you based on any writing communicating your request be excluded. Be sure to personally sign your request, identify the Action as *Gonzalez and Siemon v. Mrs. Gooch's Natural Food Markets, Inc.*, and include your identifying information (full name, address, telephone number, approximate dates of employment, and social security number for verification purposes). You must make the request yourself. If someone else makes the request for you, it will not be valid. **The Administrator must be sent your request to be excluded by July 22, 2024, or it will be invalid.** Section 9 of the Notice has the Administrator's contact information.

7. HOW DO I OBJECT TO THE SETTLEMENT?

Only Participating Class Members have the right to object to the Settlement. Before deciding whether to object, you may wish to see what Plaintiffs and Defendant are asking the Court to approve. At least 16 days before the September 20, 2024, Final Approval Hearing, Class Counsel and/or Plaintiffs will file in Court (1) a Motion for Final Approval that includes, among other things, the reasons why the proposed Settlement is fair, and (2) a Motion for Fees, Litigation Expenses and Service Award stating (i) the amount Class Counsel is requesting for attorneys' fees and litigation expenses; and (ii) the amount Plaintiffs are requesting as a Class Representative Service Award. Upon reasonable request, Class Counsel (whose contact information is in Section 9 of this Notice) will send you copies of these documents at no cost to you. You can also view them on the Administrator's Website, www.cptgroupcaseinfo.com/GonzalezSiemonSettlement, or the Court's website, (<https://www.lacourt.org/lacc/>).

A Participating Class Member who disagrees with any aspect of the Agreement, the Motion for Final Approval and/or Motion for Fees, Litigation Expenses and Service Award may wish to object, for example, that the proposed Settlement is unfair, or that the amounts requested by Class Counsel or Plaintiffs are too high or too low. **The deadline for sending written objections to the Administrator is July 22, 2024.** Be sure to tell the Administrator what you object to, why you object, and any facts that support your objection. Make sure you identify the Action, *Gonzalez and Siemon v. Mrs. Gooch's Natural Food Markets, Inc.*, and include your name, current address, telephone number, and approximate dates of employment for Defendant and sign the objection. Section 9 of this Notice has the Administrator's contact information.

Alternatively, a Participating Class Member can object (or personally retain a lawyer to object at your own cost) by attending the Final Approval Hearing. You (or your attorney) should be ready to tell the Court what you object to, why you object, and any facts that support your objection. See Section 8 of this Notice (immediately below) for specifics regarding the Final Approval Hearing.

8. CAN I ATTEND THE FINAL APPROVAL HEARING?

You can, but don't have to, attend the Final Approval Hearing on September 20, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. in Department 17 of the Los Angeles Superior Court, located at 312 N. Spring Street Los Angeles, CA 90012. At the Hearing, the judge will decide whether to grant Final Approval of the Settlement and how much of the Gross Settlement will be paid to Class Counsel, Plaintiff, and the Administrator. The Court will invite comments from objectors, Class Counsel and Defense Counsel before making a decision. You can attend (or hire a lawyer to attend) either personally or virtually via LACourtConnect (<https://www.lacourt.org/lacc/>). Check the Court's website for the most current information.

It's possible the Court will reschedule the Final Approval Hearing. You should check the Administrator's website Questions? Call the Settlement Administrator Toll Free at 1 (888) 710-5818

www.cptgroupcaseinfo.com/GonzalezSiemonSettlement beforehand or contact Class Counsel to verify the date and time of the Final Approval Hearing.

9. HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

The Agreement sets forth everything Defendant and Plaintiffs have promised to do under the proposed Settlement. The easiest way to read the Agreement, the Judgment or any other Settlement documents is to go to The Administrator's website at www.cptgroupcaseinfo.com/GonzalezSiemonSettlement. You can also telephone or send an email to Class Counsel or the Administrator using the contact information listed below, or consult the Superior Court website by going to (<http://www.lacourt.org/casesummary/ui/index.aspx>) and entering the Case Number for the Action, Case No. 22STCV03934. You can also make an appointment to personally review court documents in the Clerk's Office at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse by calling (213) 830-0800.

DO NOT TELEPHONE THE SUPERIOR COURT TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT THE SETTLEMENT.

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Fax Number: (949) 419-3446
Website: www.cptgroupcaseinfo.com/GonzalezSiemonSettlement

10. WHAT IF I LOSE MY SETTLEMENT CHECK?

If you lose or misplace your settlement check before cashing it, the Administrator will replace it as long as you request a replacement before the void date on the face of the original check. If your check is already void you should consult the California State Controller's Unclaimed Property Fund for instructions on how to retrieve the funds.

11. WHAT IF I CHANGE MY ADDRESS?

To receive your check, you should immediately notify the Administrator if you move or otherwise change your mailing address.