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10	UNITED STATES	S DISTRICT COURT	
19			
	FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA		
20			
2.1	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,	No. CV 23-03615-MWF(AFMx)	
21	Dlaintiff		
22	Plaintiff,	CONSENT ORDER	
22		CONSENT ORDER	
23			
23	V.	Honorable Michael W. Fitzgerald	
24		United States District Judge	
	ABRAHAM KESARY and M&F	8	
25	DEVELOPMENT, LLC,		
2	D. C. 1.		
26	Defendants.		
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	I .		

I. INTRODUCTION

- 1. Plaintiff United States of America ("United States") and Defendants Abraham Kesary ("Kesary") and M&F Development, LLC ("M&F") ("Defendants") (collectively, "the Parties") have agreed that this action should be resolved without further litigation. Therefore, the Parties have settled this matter, and consent to the entry of this Consent Order (the "Order"), as shown by the signatures below.
- 2. This Court has jurisdiction over this action under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1345, and 42 U.S.C. § 3614(a).
- 3. This Order constitutes a full resolution of all claims asserted against Defendants by the United States in this action, and those claims the United States could have asserted under the Fair Housing Act ("FHA"), 42 U.S.C. §§ 3601 *et seq.* in this action, as a result of any actions or inactions of Defendants.

II. DEFINITIONS

- 4. "Subject Property" means the apartment complex owned by M&F and formerly managed by Kesary located at 445 South Western Avenue in Los Angeles, California.
- 5. The "Effective Period" means a time period of no more than two (2) years from the date the entry of this Order.
- 6. "Aggrieved Person" or "Aggrieved Persons" means (an) individual(s) who claim(s) to have been injured by a discriminatory housing practice as defined in 42 U.S.C. § 3602(i). *See also* 42 U.S.C. § 3602(d).
- 7. "Independent Property Manager" is an individual or entity who is experienced in managing rental properties and has no current or past employment, financial, contractual, personal, or familial relationship with any Defendant in this action.
- 8. "Contact or Communications," as referred to in Paragraph 16, below, includes, but is not limited to, physical contact, oral communications (either direct or by

telephone), e-mails, faxes, written communications, text or instant messages, contacts through social media, or other communications made through third parties.

9. "Property Management Responsibilities," means showing or renting housing units; processing rental applications; selecting tenants or participating in the selection of tenants; performing or supervising repairs or maintenance; inspecting dwelling units; collecting rent and fees; entering rental units; overseeing any aspects of the rental process; or engaging in any other property-related activities that involve, or may involve, personal contact with tenants or prospective tenants.

III. RECITALS

- 10. This action was filed on May 11, 2023, by Plaintiff United States of America to enforce Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, as amended by the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, 42 U.S.C. §§ 3601-3631 ("FHA"). In its complaint, the United States alleges that Defendants Kesary and M&F violated the FHA by discriminating against tenants on the basis of sex. Compl., ECF No. 1. Specifically, the complaint alleges that from at least 2012, Kesary, in his capacity as the former property manager at the Subject Property, engaged in severe, pervasive, and unwelcome sexual harassment of multiple female tenants. *Id.* at ¶¶ 9-13. The complaint also alleges M&F, the owner of the Subject Property, is vicariously liable for the harassment. *Id.* at ¶¶ 15.
- 11. The United States alleges that Defendants' conduct constitutes a pattern or practice of resistance to the full enjoyment of rights granted by the FHA and a denial to a group of persons of rights granted by the FHA that raises an issue of general public importance. 42 U.S.C. § 3614(a).
- 12. The United States alleges that Defendants' discriminatory conduct injured female tenants. Such persons are Aggrieved Persons and have suffered damages as a result of Defendants' conduct.

ACCORDINGLY, it is hereby ADJUDGED, ORDERED and DECREED:

IV. INJUNCTIVE RELIEF¹

A. Prohibition Against Discrimination and Retaliation Under the FHA

- 13. Defendants, their officers, agents, employees, transferees, successors, heirs and assigns, and all other persons or entities in active concert or participation with them, agree to not:
 - a. Discriminate in the sale or rental, or otherwise make unavailable or deny, a dwelling to any buyer or renter because they are a member of a protected class under the FHA, including sex;
 - b. Discriminate against any person in the terms, conditions or privileges of renting a dwelling unit, or in the provision of services or facilities in connection therewith, because they are a member of a protected class under the FHA, including sex;
 - c. Make, print, publish, or cause to be made, printed, or published any notice, statement, or advertisement with respect to the rental of a dwelling unit that states any preference, limitation, or discrimination based on a protected class under the FHA, including sex; or
 - d. Coerce, intimidate, threaten, or interfere with any person in the exercise or enjoyment of, or on account of having exercised or enjoyed, or on account of having aided and encouraged any other person in the exercise or enjoyment of, any right granted or protected by the FHA, including by retaliating against any person exercising her or his rights under this Order.

¹ The requirements applicable to M&F in Sections IV.C-F will also apply to Kesary if it is established he has or acquires any direct or indirect ownership interest, financial interest, managerial interest, or control interest in any residential rental property.

B. Prohibition Against Abraham Kesary's Management of Residential Rental Properties and Contact with "Aggrieved Persons"

- 14. Kesary is permanently enjoined from directly or indirectly performing any Property Management Responsibilities at the Subject Property or any other residential rental property.
- dwelling in which he has or acquires any direct or indirect ownership interest, financial interest, managerial interest, or control interest, except for the dwelling unit in which he resides. This includes, but is not limited to, the dwelling units (whether occupied or unoccupied), communal spaces, yards, parking areas, garages, and leasing offices. If Kesary enters a rental dwelling in which he acquires any direct or indirect ownership interest, financial interest, managerial interest or control interest, Kesary will notify the United States in writing within five (5) days. Notification under this provision will include Kesary's reason prior to entering the premises for believing he needed to do so, approximate beginning and end times Kesary was on the premises, any individuals he spoke or had any contact with, and any actions he took while at the premises.
- 16. Kesary shall be permanently prohibited from purposefully or knowingly engaging in Contact or Communications, either directly or indirectly, with any Aggrieved Person identified by the United States in this action. Kesary shall refrain from initiating any such Contact or Communication. If Kesary is contacted by an Aggrieved Person, he shall immediately terminate such contact and inform the Independent Property Manager of the contact in writing.

C. Retention of an Independent Property Manager

17. For as long as M&F owns, leases, manages², or has control over any residential rental properties, all Property Management Responsibilities must be handled

² "Manage" includes providing *any* assistance with *any* Property Management Responsibilities.

- by an Independent Property Manager. The United States has approved the current Independent Manager and the Independent Manager's qualifications. M&F will ensure that the Independent Property Manager and their employees or representatives who will be performing duties with respect to M&F Properties are familiar with the requirements of the FHA, particularly as they pertain to sexual harassment and other forms of sex discrimination (including through the training required by Section IV.F, below), and this Order.
- 18. To the extent M&F has a need to Contact or Communicate with current or prospective tenants about matters related to rental of property, any such Contact or Communication shall be made by or through the Independent Property Manager or their representative.
- 19. If, after retaining an Independent Property Manager, M&F wishes to change the Independent Property Manager for any reason, it shall seek advance written approval from the United States. M&F shall not discontinue its arrangement with an Independent Property Manager and retain a different individual or entity to serve as Independent Property Manager prior to receiving the United States' approval during the Effective Period.

D. <u>Implementation of Fair Housing Policies and Practices</u>

- 20. M&F shall implement, subject to the United States' approval, a written policy prohibiting housing discrimination, including sexual harassment and other forms of sex discrimination, as well as discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, familial status, or disability (the "Policy"). The Policy shall include a formal complaint procedure that identifies and provides contact information for the Independent Property Manager who will receive complaints. A copy of this Policy shall be provided to counsel for the United States within thirty (30) days of the entry of this Order for approval.
- 21. Within five (5) days of notification from the United States to M&F that the Policy is satisfactory to the United States, the Policy will go into effect at all M&F

- Properties. M&F will provide all current and future tenants of M&F Properties with copies of the Policy. Within ten (10) days of implementation of this Policy, M&F shall confirm in writing to the United States that the Policy has been implemented. If, at any time during the term of this Order, Defendants wish to amend the Policy, Defendants shall obtain approval of any change or amendment to the Policy from the United States in accordance with the procedure in Paragraph 20 prior to implementation of any amended Policy.
- 22. For subsequently acquired M&F Properties, the Policy will go into effect within thirty (30) days of the purchase, lease, or assumption of control of any such property.
- 23. Within fifteen (15) days of the entry of this Order, M&F will post and continue to display an "Equal Housing Opportunity" sign in the office or location where any current or prospective tenants could be present at any M&F Properties. An 11-inch by 14-inch poster that comports with 24 C.F.R. Part 110 will satisfy the requirement for postings in offices and other confined spaces. M&F may use HUD Form 928, available at: https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=928.1.pdf. Such posters shall be placed in prominent, well-lit locations where they are easily readable.
- 24. All advertising conducted for M&F Properties in newspapers, telephone directories, radio, television, Internet websites, social media, or other media, and all billboards, signs (including at the properties), pamphlets, brochures, and other promotional literature, must include either a fair housing logo, the words "equal housing opportunity provider," and/or the following sentences: "We are an equal opportunity housing provider. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, or disability." The words or logo will be legible and prominently placed.

E. No Raising of Rents or Fees

25. M&F and its agents, including the Independent Property Manager, may not raise the rent or fees of any dwelling unit, or demand a deposit or other fee for a dwelling

unit at M&F Properties to off-set the costs incurred as a result of their compliance with its obligations under this Order. Nothing herein shall be interpreted to prevent M&F from raising rents or fees at any residential rental property in which it has an ownership interest in the normal course of business.

F. Educational Program

- 26. Within one hundred twenty (120) days of the entry of this Order, M&F and its employees and agents, including the Independent Property Manager described in Paragraph 17, above, will attend training on the FHA, including but not limited to the FHA's provisions related to sexual harassment. The trainer or training entity must be qualified to perform such training, and must be unconnected to Defendants, their employees, agents, or counsel. The trainer and training agenda must be approved in advance by the United States. The training may be a live training provided by videoconference (i.e. Zoom). M&F will bear the cost of any expenses associated with this training.
- 27. M&F will obtain from the trainer or training entity a separate certificate of attendance signed by each individual who attended the training. The certificates shall include the name of the course, the date the course was taken, the subject matter covered in the course, and the length of the course and/or time within which the course was completed. M&F will also obtain Certifications of Attendance in the form of Appendix A executed by each individual who received training, confirming their attendance. M&F will send a copy of executed Certificates in the form of Appendix A to counsel for the United States in accordance with their reporting obligations described in Paragraph 44.d.
- 28. All agents or employees of M&F hired after the training described in Paragraph 26 has occurred shall, within thirty (30) days of commencing an employment or agency relationship with any of M&F or the Independent Property Manager, be provided the training.
- 29. Within ten (10) days of the entry of this Order, all employees and agents of M&F who are involved in any way in the operation of M&F's rental business shall be

given a copy of this Order and shall be provided an opportunity to have any related questions answered.

30. Within ten (10) days of the commencement date of any new employee or agent who becomes involved in any way in the operation of M&F's rental business, they shall be given a copy of this Order and shall be provided an opportunity to have any related questions answered.

V. MONETARY DAMAGES AND OTHER RELIEF FOR AGGRIEVED PERSONS

- 31. Within fifteen (15) days after the entry of this Order, M&F will deposit in an interest-bearing escrow account a total of One Hundred Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$120,000.00) for the purpose of paying monetary damages to Aggrieved Persons (hereinafter "Settlement Fund").
- 32. Any interest accruing to the Settlement Fund shall become a part of the Settlement Fund and be utilized as set forth herein.
- 33. Defendants shall be solely responsible for any taxes assessed or owed on any interest earned on money deposited pursuant to Paragraph 32, above.
- 34. Within sixty (60) days of the entry of this Order, the United States will conclude its search for Aggrieved Persons and provide Defendants with a final list of Aggrieved Persons and the amount of damages that should be paid to each Aggrieved Person. Defendants will not contest, in this or any other proceeding, the United States' determinations regarding the Aggrieved Persons or their designated compensation. The United States has obtained or will obtain sworn statements from each Aggrieved Person setting forth the factual basis of their claim.
- 35. Within fifteen (15) days after receiving the determinations from the United States, Defendants shall deliver to counsel for the United States a separate check payable to each Aggrieved Person for the designated amount by overnight delivery to:

Chief c/o Lauren Marks

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Housing and Civil Enforcement Section Civil Rights Division United States Department of Justice 150 M St. NE, 8th Floor Washington, D.C. 20001 Re: DJ #175-12C-678

- 36. The requirement to pay damages under this Section is a non-dischargeable debt within the meaning of 11 U.S.C. § 523(a)(6). Accordingly, M&F shall not seek to discharge any part of this debt in bankruptcy.
- 37. When counsel for the United States has received a check from M&F payable to an Aggrieved Person and a signed release in the form of Appendix B from the Aggrieved Person, counsel for the United States shall deliver the check to the Aggrieved Person and the original, signed release to counsel for M&F or to Defendants. No Aggrieved Person shall be paid until she has executed and delivered to counsel for the United States the release at Appendix B.

VI. CIVIL PENALTY

- 38. Within thirty (30) days of the entry of this Order, M&F will pay Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) to the United States Treasury as a civil penalty under 42 U.S.C. § 3614(d)(1)(C) to vindicate the public interest. The payment will be in the form of an electronic funds transfer in accordance with written instructions to be provided by counsel for the United States.
- 39. In the event that Defendants, their agents or employees engage in any future violation of the FHA, such violation(s) shall constitute a "subsequent violation" under 42 U.S.C. § 3614(d)(1)(C)(ii) and shall be subject to further penalties.

VII. ACQUISITION OR TRANSFER OF INTEREST IN RESIDENTIAL RENTAL PROPERTIES

40. During the Effective Period, if either Defendant acquires a direct or indirect management, ownership, financial, or controlling interest in any other residential rental property, such property will be subject to the applicable provisions of this Order. Within

- thirty (30) days of acquiring such an interest, that Defendant will notify counsel for the United States of the nature of their interest in the dwelling or property; the address of the property; the number of individual dwelling units at the property; and any other information required under this Order. That Defendant will further provide the United States with copies of official documents certifying the transfer in interest of the property.
- 41. If, prior to the entry of this Order, or at any time during the Effective Period of this Order, either Defendant sells or transfers the Subject Property or any residential rental property in which the Defendant has an ownership interest to a bona fide, independent third-party purchaser in an arms-length transaction, such property will cease to be subject to this Order. For purposes of this Order, a "bona fide, independent third-party purchaser" is one with whom no Defendant in this action, and no member of M&F, has any current or past financial, contractual, personal, or familial relationship. An "arms-length transaction" is one that has been arrived at in the marketplace between independent, non-affiliated persons, unrelated by blood or marriage, with opposing economic interests regarding that transaction. A corporation or entity for which any Defendant or member of M&F is an officer, partner, member, employee, or agent, or in which any Defendant or member of M&F has an ownership, financial or controlling interest, is not a "bona fide, independent third-party purchaser," and any transaction involving such a purchaser will not qualify as an "arms-length transaction."
- 42. If, at any time during the Effective Period, any Defendant claims that their obligations under this Order have been terminated or changed because they sold or transferred one or more residential rental properties to a bona fide, independent third-party purchaser in an arms-length transaction as defined in Paragraph 41, that Defendant will inform the United States within thirty (30) days of such transaction and provide the date of the sale or transfer, copies of official documents certifying the sale or transfer, and contact information for the subsequent purchaser.
- 43. If any transfer of interest in all or a portion of any residential rental property by any Defendant during the Effective Period is not an arms-length transaction as

defined in Paragraph 41, that Defendant will remain liable for any violation of this Order related in any way to that property.

VIII. REPORTING AND DOCUMENT RETENTION REQUIREMENTS

- 44. Defendants shall provide to counsel for the United States notification and documentation of the following events during the Effective Period:
 - a. Any change to rules or practices regarding the written policy against sexual harassment or formal complaint procedure discussed in Paragraph 21, within five (5) days of the change;
 - b. Any change to the Independent Property Manager, in accordance with Paragraph 19;
 - c. Notice of the acquisition of a direct or indirect management, ownership, financial, or controlling interest in any dwelling for rent, subject to Paragraph 40, or transfer of any dwelling, subject to Paragraph 41;
 - d. Proof of completion of any training in accordance with Paragraphs 26 and 28, and certificates of attendance at the training described in Paragraph 27 and as reflected in Appendix A, within fifteen (15) days of such training;
 - e. Any information in their possession indicating that Defendants, or any of their agents or employees, may be in violation of this Order within five (5) days of such knowledge; and
 - f. Any written or oral complaint against either Defendant of which they are aware, or any of Defendants' agents or employees, regarding discrimination in housing within ten (10) days of receipt of such complaint by any Defendant or employee or agent of Defendants. With respect to oral complaints, each Defendant, or agent or employee of a Defendant, to whom a complaint is made shall maintain a log in which they record the name of the complainant; the address, telephone number, and email address, if available, of the complainant; the date the complaint was received; the name of Defendants' employee or agent who received the complaint; the name of

Defendants' employee or agent who is the subject of the complaint; the name of the property involved in the complaint; and a general description of the complaint. Defendants shall provide this information to the United States within ten (10) days of receipt of the complaint. If the complaint is written, Defendants shall also provide a copy of the written complaint to the United States. Within fifteen (15) days of resolution of any complaint, Defendants shall inform the United States of the resolution.

- 45. Within one hundred twenty (120) days of the entry of this Order, and every six (6) months thereafter for the duration of the Effective Period, Defendants shall deliver to counsel for the United States a report containing information about their compliance efforts during the preceding reporting period, including but not limited to:
 - a. Certification that the Policy described in Paragraphs 20 and 21 has been implemented, or, in reports subsequent to the initial report, that such Policy remains in effect;
 - b. Photographs of each office or location in which rental activity is conducted showing the "Equal Housing Opportunity" signs in the locations at which they are posted, including the date on which the photograph was taken, in accordance with Paragraph 23;
 - c. A list of all residential rental properties in which Defendants have a direct or indirect management, ownership, financial, or controlling interest;
 - d. Copies of any advertisements in the preceding six months, showing the advertisements are published in accordance with Paragraph 24; and
 - e. Written and sworn verification by Defendants that, during each reporting period, all property management responsibilities at any residential rental property owned and/or managed by either Defendant and any properties listed in response to Paragraph 44.c

were performed by the Independent Property Manager or his or her designee, as required by Section IV.C.

- 46. If Defendants do not own or manage any residential rental properties at the time this report is due, the report must so indicate. Defendants shall submit a final report to the United States no later than sixty (60) days before Effective Period.
- 47. Defendants shall preserve all records that are the source of, contain, or relate in any way to their obligations under this Order. Upon reasonable notice to counsel for M&F or to Kesary, Defendants shall permit representatives of the United States to inspect and copy all such records at any and all reasonable times. If requested by the United States, Defendants shall provide the United States with copies of such documents.
- 48. Neither Defendant will be liable nor deemed to have violated any provisions of this Order by virtue of the other Defendant's failure to comply with this Order.

IX. ENFORCEMENT OF CONSENT ORDER

- 49. The Court shall retain jurisdiction for the Effective Period to enforce its terms, after which time the case shall be dismissed with prejudice. The United States may move the Court to extend the duration of the Effective Period in the event of noncompliance with any of its terms, whether intentional or unintentional, or if it otherwise determines the interests of justice so require.
- 50. The United States may review compliance with this Order at any time, including through conducting fair housing testing of Defendants and their properties. Defendants agree to cooperate with the United States in any review of compliance. Upon reasonable notice, Defendants will permit counsel for the United States to inspect and copy all non-privileged records pertinent to this Order.
- 51. The Parties shall endeavor in good faith to resolve informally any differences regarding interpretation of and compliance with this Order prior to bringing such matters to the Court for resolution. However, in the event the United States contends that there has been a failure by Defendants to comply with any provision of this

Order, or if the interests of justice so require, the United States may move this Court to impose any remedy authorized by law or equity. Such remedies may include, but are not limited to, the issuance of an order requiring performance of such act or deeming such act to have been performed, and an award of damages, costs, and reasonable attorneys' fees that may have been occasioned by the violation or failure to perform.

X. TIME FOR PERFORMANCE AND MODIFICATIONS TO ORDER

52. Any time limits for performance imposed by this Order may be extended by mutual written agreement of the Parties without Court approval. Any other modifications to the provisions of this Order must be approved by the Court. Any party may move the Court to extend the term of this Order for good cause.

XI. COSTS OF LITIGATION

53. Except as otherwise provided in Paragraph 51, the United States and Defendants will bear their own costs and attorneys' fees associated with this litigation.

XII. TERMINATION OF LITIGATION HOLD

54. The Parties agree that, as of the entry of this Order, litigation is not "reasonably foreseeable" concerning the matters described in this Order. To the extent that any party has previously implemented a litigation hold to preserve documents, electronically-stored information, or things related to the matters described above, that party is no longer required to maintain such litigation hold. Nothing in this paragraph relieves any party of any other obligations under this Order.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: September 29, 2023

MICHAEL W. FITZGERALD United States District Judge

1	Dated: September 28, 2023	Respectfully submitted,
2	E. MARTIN ESTRADA	CARRIE PAGNUCCO Chief
3	United States Attorney Central District of California DAVID M. HARRIS	Housing and Civil Enforcement Section MEGAN K. WHYTE DE VASQUEZ
4	Assistant United States Attorney	Deputy Chief Housing and Civil Enforcement Section
5	Chief, Civil Division RICHARD M. PARK	Housing and Civil Emorcement Section
6	Assistant United States Attorney Chief, Civil Rights Section	*
7	1100	Lauren Marks
8	MARGARETM. CHEN	LAUREN M. MARKS
9	MARGARET/M. CHEN Assistant United States Attorney Civil Rights Section	Trial Attorney Housing and Civil Enforcement Section
10		Attorneys for Plaintiff
11	9	United States of America
12	Dated: September 28, 2023	O'HAGAN MEYER
13		Dan Ko
14		
15		PARISA KHADEMI DARREN PANG
16		Attorneys for Defendant
17		M&F Development, LLC
18		
19	Dated: September <u>28</u> , 2023	A
20		ABRAHAM KESARY
21		Defendant. Pro Se
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APPENDIX A 1 2 **CERTIFICATION OF TRAINING AND RECEIPT OF CONSENT DECREE** 3 4 5 (please initial) I attended a training on the federal Fair Housing Act, which included training on the Act's provisions related to sex discrimination, including sexual 6 7 harassment prohibited by the Act. I have had all of my questions concerning these topics 8 answered to my satisfaction. I have also received a copy of the Consent Order entered in *United States v*. 9 Abraham Kesary, et al., Civil Action No. 23-03615-MWF-AFM, filed in the United 10 States District Court for the Central District of California. I have read and understand 11 12 the Consent Order and had an opportunity to have my questions about the Order 13 answered. I understand my legal responsibilities under the Consent Order and will comply with those responsibilities. I further understand that the Court may impose 14 sanctions on the Defendants in the underlying lawsuit if I violate any provision of the 15 16 Order. 17 18 Name of the course: Date the course was taken: 19 Length of the course (time within which the course was completed): 20 21 22 Date: Employee/Agent Name (Print name and sign): 23 Employee/ Agent Signature: 24 25 26 27

1	APPENDIX B		
2			
3	<u>FULL AND FINAL RELEASE OF CLAIMS</u>		
4			
5	In consideration for the parties' agreement to the terms of the Consent Order		
6	entered into in the case of <i>United States v. Abraham Kesary, et al.</i> , No. CV 23-03615-		
7	MWF-AFM (C.D. Cal.), and in consideration for the payment of \$, I,		
8	, do hereby fully release and forever discharge the		
9	Defendants named in this lawsuit, as well as their insurers, attorneys, agents, employees,		
10	former employees, heirs, and executors from any and all fair housing claims based on the		
11	facts alleged in the Complaint in this lawsuit that I may have had against the Defendants		
12	for any of their actions or statements related to those claims through the date of the entry		
13	of the Consent Order.		
14			
15	Executed this day of, 202		
16			
17			
18	Signature		
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20	Print Name		
21			
22	Home Address		
23			
24	Home Address Continued		
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