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7 Attorneys for Plaintiff  
8 Raul Villarreal

9 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**  
10 **CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**  
11 **WESTERN DIVISION**

12  
13 RAUL VILLARREAL, an individual,

14 Plaintiff,

15 vs.

16  
17 CENTRAL FREIGHT LINES, INC., a  
18 Texas corporation; and DOES 1 through  
10, inclusive,

19 Defendants.

CASE NO: 2:17-CV-5496

[Assigned to Hon. Otis D. Wright, II]

(Removed from Los Angeles County  
Superior Court Action, Case No.  
NS032922)

**NOTICE OF MOTION AND  
MOTION FOR REMAND; AND**

**MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND  
AUTHORITIES IN SUPPORT**

**Appeal Filed: October 17, 2016**

**Date: October 16, 2017**

**Time: 1:30 pm**

**Place: Courtroom 5D**

24 **TO THE COURT AND ALL PARTIES AND THEIR COUNSEL OF**  
25 **RECORD:**

26 Please take notice that on October 16, 2017 at 1:30 pm in Courtroom 5D, 5<sup>th</sup>  
27 Floor, located at 350 W. 1st Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012, RAUL VILLARREAL  
28



1 **MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES**

2 **I. INTRODUCTION**

3 This case should not have been removed to federal court for a second time.  
4 Defendant Central Freight Lines, Inc. (CFL) has *again* failed to show that the amount in  
5 controversy exceeds \$75,000 and there are no *new* or *different* grounds warranting a  
6 successive removal. Moreover, a *de novo* appeal of a Labor Commissioner decision  
7 may not be removed to federal court given the nature of the appeal and the role of the  
8 superior court in the appeal process. For these reasons, Plaintiff respectfully requests  
9 this Court to grant Plaintiff’s Motion to Remand.

10 **II. RELEVANT FACTS**

11 Raul Villarreal worked for CFL from August 8, 2014 through April 30, 2015 as a  
12 truck driver. Declaration of Rabiah A. Rahman in Support of Motion for Remand  
13 (“Rahman Decl.”), ¶ 6, Ex. A. CFL classified Mr. Villarreal as an “Owner Operator”  
14 and paid him as an independent contractor. CFL agreed to pay Mr. Villarreal on a  
15 piece-rate, per mile, basis. *Id.* Mr. Villarreal testified at his Labor Commissioner  
16 hearing that he regularly worked an average of 14 hours a day and 6 days a week  
17 throughout his employment. *Id.*

18 CFL paid Mr. Villarreal weekly and provided settlement statements detailing his  
19 wages and deductions. *Id.* CFL made deductions from each of Mr. Villarreal’s  
20 paychecks. *Id.* On multiple occasions, CFL deducted amounts leaving Mr. Villarreal  
21 with a total compensation of \$0.00, even though he preformed services for them during  
22 that pay period. *Id.*

23 **III. PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

24 On July 8, 2015, Raul Villarreal filed a complaint with the California Department  
25 of Industrial Relations (“DLSE”) for unlawful wage deductions, associated penalties,  
26 and interest. After a hearing on August 29, 2016, the Labor Commissioner Hearing  
27 Officer issued an order awarding Mr. Villarreal \$74,042.87 for unlawfully deducted  
28 wages, interest, and penalties on October 12, 2016. *Raul Villarreal v. Central Freight*

1 *Lines, Inc.*, State Case Number 05-65228-EE (October 12, 2016)., Rahman Decl., ¶¶ 3-  
2 5, Ex. A.

3 CFL filed a notice of appeal under California Labor Code section 98.2(a) with the  
4 Superior Court of Los Angeles on October 26, 2016. *Id.* at ¶ 7. After CFL filed an  
5 Answer to its *De Novo* Appeal on November 14, 2016, Mr. Villarreal subsequently filed  
6 a Notice of Claims and Issues at *De Novo* Trial of Wage Claim on November 22, 2016.  
7 *Id.* at ¶ 8. Pursuant to *Murphy v. Kenneth Cole Productions, Inc.*, 40 Cal.4th 1094  
8 (2007), Mr. Villarreal made additional claims for minimum wage violations, rest period  
9 violations, and paycheck stub violations. *Id.* The claims made therein overlap to an  
10 extent with the claims on which he prevailed at the Labor Commissioner hearing and  
11 which CFL appealed to the superior court. *Id.*

12 On November 23, 2016, CFL removed this action to the United States District  
13 Court, Central District of California, Western Division (Case No. 2:16-cv-08747), for  
14 the first time. Plaintiff filed a timely Motion to Remand. On February 13, 2017, this  
15 Court granted Plaintiff's Motion to Remand. Specifically, the Court held, "Central  
16 Freight Lines, Inc. has not met its burden to show the amount in controversy exceeds  
17 the \$75,000 threshold for diversity jurisdiction." Rahman Decl., ¶ 11, Ex D. On May  
18 25, 2017, after remand, the Los Angeles Superior Court set trial in this case for August  
19 28, 2017. Rahman Decl., ¶ 12, Ex. E.

#### 20 **IV. ARGUMENT**

##### 21 **A. Authority To Remand**

22 Diversity jurisdiction exists only "where the matter in controversy exceeds the  
23 sum or value of \$75,000, exclusive of interest and costs..." 28 U.S.C. §1332(a). To  
24 invoke federal diversity jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a), where the matter is  
25 unclear or ambiguous from the face of a state court complaint whether the requisite  
26 amount in controversy is pled, the removing defendant bears the burden of establishing,  
27 by a preponderance of the evidence, that the amount in controversy exceeds the  
28

1 jurisdictional threshold. *Urbino v. Orkin Servs. of California, Inc.*, 726 F.3d 1118,  
2 1121–22 (9th Cir. 2013).

3 Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1447(c), a removed action must be remanded to state  
4 court if the federal court lacks subject matter jurisdiction. “The removal statute is  
5 strictly construed against removal jurisdiction, and the burden of establishing federal  
6 jurisdiction falls to the party invoking the statute.” *California ex rel. Lockyer v.*  
7 *Dynegy, Inc.*, 375 F.3d 831, 838 (9th Cir. 2004) citing *Ethridge v. Harbor House Rest.*,  
8 861 F.2d 1389, 1393 (9th Cir. 1988). “Federal jurisdiction must be rejected if there is  
9 any doubt as to the right of removal in the first instance.” *Gaus v. Miles, Inc.*, 980 F.2d  
10 564, 566 (9th Cir. 1992). “The defendant also has the burden of showing that it has  
11 complied with the procedural requirements for removal.” *Riggs v. Plaid Pantries, Inc.*,  
12 233 F. Supp. 2d 1260, 1264 (D. Or. 2001).

13 A strong presumption exists against removal. *Lockyer v. Dynegy, Inc.*, 375 F.3d  
14 at 838. Accordingly, a defendant seeking to remove an action to federal court bears the  
15 burden of proving the matter in controversy exceeds \$75,000. *Id.* To meet this hefty  
16 burden, a defendant must prove, by a preponderance of the evidence, facts  
17 demonstrating that the amount in controversy exceeds the jurisdictional minimum.  
18 *Guglielmino v. McKee Foods Corp.*, 506 F.3d 696 (9th Cir. 2007) .

19 **B. This Case Must Be Remanded Because CFL Has Again Failed to Show**  
20 **By A Preponderance Of The Evidence That The Amount In Controversy**  
21 **Exceeds the \$75,000 Diversity Jurisdiction Requirement.**

22 Here, the amount in controversy is unclear and ambiguous and CFL cannot show,  
23 by a preponderance of the evidence, that the amount in controversy meets or exceeds  
24 the jurisdictional threshold. Specifically, the Court cannot aggregate the damages  
25 arising from Mr. Villarreal’s alternate claims of recovery for jurisdictional purposes,  
26 which is what CFL attempts to do in arguing that the amount of controversy exceeds  
27 \$75,000. *See Atrion Networking Corp. v. Marble Play, LLC*, 18 F. Supp. 3d 136, 140  
28 (D. R.I. 2014).

1 It has long been held that “[o]n remand, ... claims brought by a single plaintiff  
2 against a single defendant can be aggregated when calculating the amount in  
3 controversy, regardless of whether the claims are related to each other.” *Suber v.*  
4 *Chrysler Corp.*, 104 F.3d 578, 588 (3d Cir. 1997), *as amended* (Feb. 18, 1997) *citing*  
5 *Snyder v. Harris*, 394 U.S. 332, 335 (1969). “However, when aggregating claims to  
6 determine if more than \$75,000 is at issue, the court may not aggregate claims that  
7 merely assert different theories of recovery for the same damages.” *Frumpp ex rel.*  
8 *Aubuchon v. Claire's Boutiques, Inc.*, No. 10-1106-CV-W-SWH, 2011 WL 1103055, at  
9 \*3 (W.D. Mo. Mar. 22, 2011)

10 In its Notice of Removal, CFL aggregated Plaintiff’s alternative theories of  
11 recovery, for the same alleged injury, in calculating the amount in controversy. Notice  
12 of Removal at ¶27. This is an invalid method of calculating the amount of controversy.  
13 *See TriState HVAC Equip., LLP v. Big Belly Solar, Inc.*, 752 F. Supp. 2d 517, 529 (E.D.  
14 Pa. 2010) (“[A] plaintiff’s claims against a single defendant may be aggregated for  
15 purposes of calculating the amount in controversy, except if the claims are alternative  
16 bases of recovery for the same harm such that the plaintiff could not be awarded  
17 damages for both claims.”)

18 In *Holmes v. Boehringer Ingelheim Pharm., Inc.*, 158 F.Supp.2d 866 (N.D. Ill.  
19 2001) (*Holmes*), the Plaintiff brought personal injury claims in state court on theories of  
20 negligence and strict liability. *Id.* at 867-868. The Defendants removed the case under  
21 diversity jurisdiction, alleging Plaintiff sought damages in excess of the diversity  
22 threshold. *Id.* at 867. The court held, “[O]ne claim pleaded in the alternative under  
23 separate legal theories cannot be aggregated for jurisdictional purposes.” *Id.* at 868.

24 Here, Plaintiff’s alleged injury arose under allegations that CFL failed to pay  
25 wages in compliance with the California Labor Code. Plaintiff advances four theories  
26 of recovery for his minimum wage claims. Rahman Decl. ¶9. Three of his four  
27 theories allege that CFL sometimes deducted so many wages from Plaintiff’s earnings  
28 that Plaintiff’s resulting pay was less than the California minimum wage. *Id.* These

1 theories of recovery and his claims for unlawful deductions are alternative in nature. If,  
2 for example, Plaintiff recovers wrongfully deducted wages from a pay period in which  
3 he took home less than the minimum wage, Plaintiff will be made whole. If, however,  
4 he does not recover the deducted wages, he must still be made whole for CFL's failure  
5 to pay him at least the minimum wage for that pay period. Stated differently, if CFL  
6 paid Plaintiff without making unlawful deductions from his wages, Plaintiff would  
7 **NOT** have a claim for those unpaid minimum wages. These theories of Labor Code  
8 violations are merely different bases for a single recovery. *See Indiana Harbor Belt*  
9 *R.R. Co. v. American Cyanamid Co.*, 860 F.2d 1441, 1445 (7th Cir.1988) (defining  
10 single "claim" for purposes of Fed.R.Civ.P. 54(b)).

11 CFL calculated the diversity threshold by aggregating Plaintiff's alternative  
12 theories of recovery for the same unpaid wages. In calculating the amount in  
13 controversy for jurisdictional purposes, CFL may only aggregate Plaintiff's fourth  
14 minimum wage theory of recovery for unpaid rest periods. Rahman Decl. ¶9. CFL has  
15 not factored that amount into its calculations to meet the diversity jurisdiction threshold  
16 requirement.

17 Again, CFL has not shown, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the amount  
18 will meet or exceed the jurisdictional requirement of \$75,000. Therefore, Plaintiff  
19 respectfully requests this Court to Remand this case back to the Los Angeles Superior  
20 Court for the second time.

21 **C. Remand Should Be Granted Because CFL Has Failed To Show That Its**  
22 **Second Notice Of Removal Is Based On Newly Discovered Facts Not**  
23 **Available At The Time Of The First Removal,' And Thus Their**  
24 **Successive Removal Is Improper.**

25 "A successive removal petition is permitted only upon a 'relevant change of  
26 circumstances'—that is, 'when subsequent pleadings or events reveal a *new* and  
27 *different* ground for removal.' " *Reyes v. Dollar Tree Stores, Inc.*, 781 F.3d 1185, 1188  
28 (9th Cir. 2015) quoting *Kirkbride v. Cont'l Cas. Co.*, 933 F.2d 729, 732 (9th Cir.1991).

1 However, “a party is not entitled to file a second notice of removal upon the same  
2 grounds where the district court previously remanded the action.” *Leon v. Gordon*  
3 *Trucking, Inc.*, 76 F. Supp. 3d 1055, 1062 (C.D. Cal. 2014) (quoting *Allen v. UtiliQuest,*  
4 *LLC.*, No. CV 13–4466 SBA, 2014 WL 94337, \*2 (N.D.Cal. Jan. 9, 2014). “Once a  
5 district court certifies a remand order to state court it is divested of jurisdiction and can  
6 take no further action on the case.” *Seedman v. U.S. Dist. Court for Cent. Dist. of*  
7 *California*, 837 F.2d 413, 414 (9th Cir. 1988). “[A] second removal petition based on  
8 the same grounds does not ‘reinvest’ the court’s jurisdiction.” *Id.* “As the statute  
9 makes clear, if the remand order is based on section 1447(c), a district court has no  
10 power to correct or vacate it.” *Id.*

11 In *Leon v. Gordon Trucking, Inc.*, 76 F. Supp. 3d 1055, 1062 (C.D. Cal. 2014)  
12 (*Leon*), the Defendant, Gordon Trucking, removed the state action to federal court. The  
13 district court remanded the case to state court, finding no federal question jurisdiction.  
14 Specifically, the court found that the defendant failed to show the minimum diversity  
15 requirement was met because the defendant “did not proffer evidence concerning its  
16 principal place of business.” *Id.* at 1059. The Defendant filed a second notice of  
17 removal sixty-two days after remand. *Id.* In its second removal notice, the defendant  
18 finally asserted facts to support its contention that the minimum diversity requirement  
19 was met. *Id.* The only additional evidence the Defendant proffered was in support of  
20 its principal place of business. *Id.* The court found that in all other respects,  
21 Defendant’s “notice of removal [was] identical to its response to the court’s order to  
22 show cause.” *Id.* The court noted that “nothing changed in the interim between the  
23 remand to state court and Gordon Trucking’s second removal.” *Id.* at 1067.  
24 Furthermore, the court noted that the Defendant could not argue, in good faith, that  
25 evidence of their citizenship was “new or that they did not know the information at the  
26 time it first argued that the court had jurisdiction” because “a corporate defendant, like  
27 any other, is presumed to know its own citizenship.” *Id.* at 1063.

28 In *Leon*, the court held that defendants failed to show “that their ‘second notice of



1 removal is based on newly discovered facts not available at the time of the first  
2 removal,’ and thus their successive removal is improper.” *Id.* at 1062. The Defendant  
3 was “simply attempting to redo its response to the court’s order to show cause so as to  
4 present sufficient evidence of its citizenship.” *Id.* at 1067.

5 Similarly, Defendant CFL fails to show any *new* or *different* grounds permitting a  
6 successive removal. In the Order granting Plaintiff’s Motion to Remand, this Court  
7 held that CFL failed to show that the amount in controversy met the \$75,000 diversity  
8 threshold requirement. Order Granting Granting Motion to Remand, Rahman Decl.,  
9 ¶11, Ex. D. Specifically, the court found that CFL failed to calculate the value of  
10 Plaintiff’s minimum wages claim and therefore did not credit any amount under that  
11 claim toward the amount in controversy. *Id.* Other than an amount attributed to  
12 Plaintiff’s minimum wage claim, CFL’s second notice of removal is virtually identical  
13 to its first.

14 In its second removal notice, CFL simply attempts to redo what they should have  
15 done in their first attempt to remove this action to federal court. CFL speculates that the  
16 minimum wage claim is worth at least \$2,088. Central Freight Lines, Inc.’s [Second]  
17 Notice of Removal ¶27. CFL does not argue that this is new evidence, nor does CFL  
18 show that they did not know this information at the time of its first removal.

19 All information acquired at Plaintiff’s deposition was known to Defendants at the  
20 time they filed their first Removal Notice. Defendant relies on Plaintiff’s deposition  
21 testimony that he worked approximately 116 hours during the pay periods when he  
22 received \$0.00 in wages as a result of CFL’s substantial deductions from his wages.  
23 Decl. of Tim Johnson ¶10. However, Plaintiff had already testified at his Labor  
24 Commissioner hearing on August 29, 2016 that he worked, on average, 14 hours a day  
25 six days a week. The Labor Commissioner Hearing Officer also noted Plaintiff’s  
26 average working hours as a finding of fact in the Labor Commissioner’s decision.  
27 Rahman Decl., ¶6, Ex. A. This Court also noted this fact in its calculations of  
28 Plaintiff’s claim for Rest Period Premiums. Rahman Decl., 11, Ex. D. Furthermore, as

1 the employer, CFL presumptively was well aware of Plaintiff’s hours and working  
2 conditions throughout the duration of his employment. Therefore, the number of hours  
3 Plaintiff worked, while employed by Defendant, does not bring Defendant’s subjective  
4 knowledge into play. See *Praisler v. Ryder Integrated Logistics, Inc.*, 417 F.Supp.2d  
5 917, 920 (N.D. Ohio 2006) (“a defendant's citizenship does not ... bring the defendant's  
6 subjective knowledge into play, since an individual or a corporate defendant can be  
7 expected to know its own citizenship”).

8 There were at least four pay periods in which CFL provided Plaintiff with  
9 settlement statements resulting in \$0.00 earnings. Rahman Decl., ¶6. With full  
10 knowledge that Mr. Villarreal alleges he worked 14 hours a day and 6 days a week, on  
11 average, CFL could have easily presented facts in its first notice of removal to support a  
12 calculation of Mr. Villarreal’s minimum wage claim. However, they failed to attribute  
13 any amount to that claim. Rahman Decl., ¶11, Ex. D. Therefore, CFL cannot argue, in  
14 good faith, that this evidence is new or that they did not know the number of hours  
15 Plaintiff worked during pay periods in which he received less than the minimum wage  
16 when they filed their first notice of removal *or* in its response to Plaintiff’s first Motion  
17 to Remand.

18 In the absence of any new or different grounds for a second removal,  
19 Defendant’s successive removal notice is procedurally improper. For this reason, Raul  
20 Villarreal requests this Court to remand this case back to the California Superior Court.

21 **D. This Court Should Order That This Case Be Remanded To State Court**  
22 **Based Upon A Lack of Subject Matter Jurisdiction.**

23 Although Respondent does not contest the parties’ diversity of citizenship at this  
24 point, this is not a civil action that was brought in State Court or an action that could  
25 have been brought in the District Courts of the United States.

26 Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. section 1441(a), a defendant may remove “any civil action  
27 brought in State court of which the district court of the United States has original  
28 jurisdiction” when there is complete diversity of citizenship.

1 CFL argues that because CFL appealed to a civil court they can remove the civil  
2 action to federal court. CFL’s argument ignores the requirement in 28 U.S.C. section  
3 1441(a) that the case could have originally been brought in the federal district courts.  
4 “Defendant may only remove an action from state court if the matter could have  
5 originally been filed in federal court. Here, Section 98.2 specifically provides that any  
6 appeal from a decision by the Labor Commissioner must be filed in state court. Cal.  
7 Lab. Code § 98.2(a). Thus, this appeal was not a matter that could be removed since it  
8 could never have been originally filed in federal court.” *De La Chapelle v. PDI, Inc.*,  
9 No. C 12-2667 MEJ, 2012 WL 3026413, at \*1 (N.D. Cal. July 24, 2012).

10 The federal courts do not hear state administrative wage claims. Mr. Villarreal  
11 filed an administrative wage claim against CFL in the DLSE. The matter was heard by  
12 Labor Commissioner Hearing Officer. CFL appeared at the hearing with counsel and  
13 put on evidence. The only way this matter found its way into State Superior Court was  
14 because CFL appealed the award of the Labor Commissioner.

15 This court’s lack of subject matter jurisdiction is made evident by the specific  
16 procedural rules governing the state courts in *de novo* Labor Commissioner appeals

17 First and foremost, Labor Code section 98.2 mandates, “the parties may seek  
18 review [of a Labor Commissioner award] by filing an appeal *to the superior court*,  
19 *where the appeal shall be heard de novo*.” Lab. Code § 98.2(a) (emphasis added).  
20 Hence, state law provides that only the superior court may hear *de novo* Labor  
21 Commissioner appeals. The superior court “hears the matter, not as an appellate court,  
22 *but as a court of original jurisdiction*, with full power to hear and determine it as if it  
23 had never been before the labor commissioner.” *Murphy v. Kenneth Cole Productions,*  
24 *Inc.*, 40 Cal. 4th 1094, 1116-17 (2007) (emphasis added). Federal Courts, on the other  
25 hand, do not have such original jurisdiction as that enumerated by the California  
26 Legislature in section 98.2.

27 Second, in order to appeal the decision of the Labor Commissioner, Labor Code  
28 section 98.2 requires the employer to “post an undertaking with the reviewing court in





