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2		FILED
3		Superior Court of California County of Los Angeles
4		04/26/2022
5		Sherri R. Carter, Executive Officer / Clerk of Court By:A. MoralesDeputy
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9	SUPERIOR COURT OF TH	
10	COUNTY OF I	LOS ANGELES
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12	ERIC PAUL, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated,	Case No.: 19STCV22782
13		[Assigned for all purposes to the Honorable Amy D. Hogue, Dept. SS7]
14	Plaintiff,	CLASS ACTION
15	VS.	[proposed] judgment
16		
17	STAPLES THE OFFICE SUPERSTORE, LLC, a Delaware Limited Liability Company; and DOES 1	Date: April 15, 2022 Time: 11:00 a.m.
18	through 50,	Dept. SS7 Honorable Amy D. Hogue
19	Defendants.	Action Filed: July 1, 2019
20		Trial Date: None Set
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	[PROPOSED]	JUDGMENT

 The Court having entered its Order Granting Motion for Final Approval of Class Action ettlement in the above-captioned action on April 15, 2022, a copy of which is attached hereto as xhibit A and incorporated herein by reference as though set forth in full (the "Order"), the Court ereby: Orders that Judgment be entered pursuant to rule 3.769(h) of the California Rules of Court; Further pursuant to rule 3.769(h), the Court hereby retains jurisdiction over the parties to enforce the terms of the Judgment; and No class members opted out. LET JUDGMENT BE ENTERED ACCORDINGLY. ATED:
 A and incorporated herein by reference as though set forth in full (the "Order"), the Court ereby: 1. Orders that Judgment be entered pursuant to rule 3.769(h) of the California Rules of Court; 2. Further pursuant to rule 3.769(h), the Court hereby retains jurisdiction over the parties to enforce the terms of the Judgment; and 3. No class members opted out. LET JUDGMENT BE ENTERED ACCORDINGLY. ATED:04/26/2022
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LET JUDGMENT BE ENTERED ACCORDINGLY. ATED: 04/26/2022 ATED: Amy D. Hogue Honorable Amy D. Hogue Judge of the Superior Court
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Amy D. Hogue / Judge
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EXHIBIT A

	E-Served: Apr 15 2022 11:	37AM PDT Via Case Anywhere
1		
2		FILED Superior Court of California County of Los Angeles
3		
4		APR 15 2022 Sherri R. Cangi, Lineard Chineer/Clerk
5		By Refredo Morales deputy (ALFREDO MORALES
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8	SUPERIOR COUR'	Г OF CALIFORNIA
9		LOS ANGELES
10		COS AITOELES
11		
12	ERIC PAUL, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated,	Case No.: 19STCV22782
13	Plaintiff,	ORDER GRANTING
14	v.	MOTION FOR FINAL APPROVAL OF CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT
15	STAPLES THE OFFICE SUPERSTORE,	D (A 1115 0000
16	LLC, a Delaware Limited Liability	Date: April 15, 2022 Time: 11:00 a.m.
17	Company; and DOES 1 through 50,	Dept.: SSC-7
81	Defendants.	
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21	I. BACKGROUND	

Plaintiffs Eric Paul and Devin Glasere sue their former employer, Defendant Staples the Office Superstore, LLC ("Defendant" or "Staples") for alleged wage and hour violations. Defendant is a Delaware limited liability company doing business as a chain retailer, operating office supply stores throughout California and other places.

Plaintiffs seek to represent a class of Defendant's current and former non-exempt employees.

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Plaintiffs' claims arise out of Defendant's alleged use of a group messaging 3 application called GroupMe by its store level employees in California. Plaintiffs allege 4 that, under California law, Defendant was required to reimburse Plaintiffs and other 5 6 persons employed as Sales Managers at Defendant's stores in California for costs associated with using their personal cell phones to participate in the group messages, 7 but that Defendant failed to do so. Plaintiffs also allege that Defendant failed to pay 8 them and other Sales Managers for the time they spent reviewing and responding to 9 group messages when they were off the clock. After Defendant stopped the use of 10 11 GroupMe by its employees in California, Plaintiffs allege that they still had to respond to group messages on their cell phones, including when they were off the clock, using 12 their phones' general text application. 13

On July 1, 2019, Plaintiff Paul filed a putative class action complaint against 14 Defendant, alleging causes of action for: (1) failure to reimburse business expenses 15 (Lab. Code, § 2802), (2) failure to pay minimum wages (Lab. Code, §§ 1194, 1197), (3) 16 failure to pay overtime wages (Lab. Code, §§ 510, 1194), (4) failure to pay timely 17 wages upon cessation of employment (Lab. Code §§ 201, 202, 203), and (5) violation 18 of the Unfair Competition Law (Bus. & Prof. Code, § 17200 et seq.). On January 25, 19 2021, the Court granted Plaintiff Paul conditional leave to file a First Amended 20Complaint ("FAC") to add Plaintiff Glasere as a named plaintiff and the sole putative 21 class representative. Due to Plaintiffs' filing of an incorrect version of the FAC, 22 Plaintiffs filed the Second Amended Complaint on May 10, 2021. 23

On March 11, 2021, the Parties attended a Zoom mediation with mediator
Michael Loeb, Esq., and reached an agreement on the terms of the settlement in

principle. The terms of settlement were finalized in the *Class Action Settlement Agreement and Release* ("Settlement Agreement"), a copy of which was filed with the Court.

On August 4, 2021, the Court issued a "checklist" to the parties pertaining to deficiencies in the settlement. In response, the parties filed further briefing, including the Amended Settlement Agreement.

The settlement was preliminarily approved on October 12, 2021. Notice was given to the Class Members as ordered (see Declaration of Taylor Mitzner). Now before the Court is Plaintiffs' motion for final approval of the Settlement Agreement, including for payment of fees, costs, and a service award to the named plaintiffs. For the reasons set forth below, the Court grants final approval of the settlement.

II. THE TERMS OF THE SETTLEMENT

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A. SETTLEMENT CLASS DEFINITION

"Class Members" or "Class" means all current and former non-exempt employees employed by Defendant in the position of Sales Manager in California at any time from July 1, 2015 to the Preliminary Approval Date. (¶2.6)

"Class Period" means the period from July 1, 2015 to and including the
Preliminary Approval Date. (¶2.8)

"Settlement Class Members" means each Class Member who does not submit a valid. and timely Request for Exclusion. (¶2.45)

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B. THE MONETARY TERMS OF SETTLEMENT

The essential monetary terms are as follows:

f	• The Gross Settlement Amount ("GSA") is \$425,000 (¶2.22).
2	• The Net Settlement Amount ("Net") (\$212,833.33) is the GSA less:
3	• Up to \$141,666.67 (33 1/3%) for attorney fees (¶3.4);
4	• Up to \$47,000 for attorney costs (<i>Ibid.</i>);
5	• Up to \$7,500 each [\$15,000 total] for service awards to the proposed
6	class representatives (¶3.5); and
7	• Estimated \$8,500 for settlement administration costs (¶2.41).
8	• Employer-side payroll taxes will be paid in addition to the GSA (¶2.22).
9	• Assuming the Court approves all maximum requested deductions, approximately
10	\$215,170.63 will be available for automatic distribution to participating class
11	members. Assuming full participation, the average settlement share will be
12	approximately \$431.20. (\$215,170.63 Net ÷ 499 class members = \$431.20).
13	• There is no Claim Requirement (Notice pg. 1).
14	• The settlement is not reversionary (¶4.9.3).
15	• Individual Settlement Share Calculation: The Settlement Award for each
16	Settlement Class Member shall be the Settlement Class Member's pro-rata share
17	of the Net Settlement Sum, calculated as follows: (¶4.5.2)
18	• The Settlement Administrator shall calculate the total Eligible Work
19	Weeks worked by all Settlement Class Members during the Class Period.
20	(¶4.5.2.1)
21	• For every GroupMe Work Week worked by a Settlement Class Member,
22	the Settlement Class Member will receive five (5) Net Settlement Shares.
23	For every Post-GroupMe Work Week worked by a Settlement Class
24	Member, the Settlement Class Member will receive one (1) Net
25	Settlement Share. (¶4.5.2.2)

1	 "GroupMe Work Weeks" means the number of weeks a Class
2	Member was employed by Defendant as a Sales Manager in
3	California between July 1, 2015 and January 29, 2017. (§2.21)
4	 "Post-GroupMe Work Weeks" means the number of weeks a Class
5	Member was employed by Defendant as a Sales Manager in
6	California between January 30, 2017 and the Preliminary Approval
7	Date. (¶2.32)
8	• The Settlement Administrator will distribute the Net Settlement Sum on a
9	pro rata basis among the Settlement Class Members based on the number
10	of Net Settlement Shares each Settlement Class Member has been
11	allocated divided by the total number of Net Settlement Shares. (¶4.5.2.3)
12	• The parties agreed that this allocation is fair because Plaintiffs' primary
13	theory of liability is based on alleged off-the-clock work and expenses
14	allegedly incurred due to the use of GroupMe, which ended on January
15	29, 2017. (¶4.5.2.3)
16	• Tax Withholdings: 10% to wages, 90% to interest and penalties (¶4.6.1).
17	Uncashed Settlement Payment Checks: Any checks tendered to Settlement Class
18	Members shall remain valid and negotiable for one hundred and eighty (180)
19	days from the date of their issuance and shall thereafter be automatically
20	cancelled if not cashed by the Settlement Class Member within that time, at
21	which time the Settlement Class Member's claim shall be deemed null and void
22	and of no further force and effect, although the individual shall remain a
23	Settlement Class Member bound by the Judgment entered in the Action. After
24	180 days, the aggregate dollar amount of uncashed checks, plus any interest that
25	has accrued thereon and has not otherwise been distributed, shall be remitted to

the Justice Gap Fund of the State Bar of California pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure section 384. (¶4.9.3)

Plaintiffs, Defendant, and their respective counsel each represent that they have no interest or involvement in the governance or work of the Justice Gap Fund of the State Bar of California. (Declaration of Jeremy F. Bollinger ISO Prelim ¶12; Declaration of Karen J. Kubin ISO Prelim ¶¶ 2-3; Supp. Declaration of Devin Glasere ISO Prelim ¶2; Supp. Declaration of Eric Paul ISO Prelim ¶2; Declaration of Jason Ellis ISO Prelim ¶3.)

Funding and Distribution of Settlement: Within ten (10) business days from the Effective Date, Defendant will remit the Settlement Fund Amount to the Settlement Administrator for the establishment of the Settlement Fund. (¶4.9.1) Within ten (10) calendar days from Defendant's remittance to the Settlement Administrator of the Settlement Fund Amount, the Settlement Administrator shall establish the Settlement Fund and distribute the Settlement Award checks to Settlement Class Members. (¶4.9.2)

C.

TERMS OF RELEASES

 <u>The Settlement Class Release</u>. Effective upon Defendant remitting the Settlement Fund Amount to the Settlement Administrator as set forth in Section 4.9.1, all Settlement Class Members shall be deemed to have, and by operation of the Judgment shall have, expressly released, waived and relinquished the Released Claims. Settlement Class Members shall not sue or otherwise make a claim against any of the Released Parties for any of the Released Claims and shall be barred from filing any actions, claims, complaints or proceedings

regarding the Released Claims with the California Division of Labor Standards Enforcement or the United States Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division, or from initiating any other proceedings against the Released Parties regarding the Released Claims. Settlement Class Members' release, waiver and relinquishment of the Released Claims shall preclude them from participating in any judgment or settlement of claims that are the subject of the Released Claims in any other class, collective or representative action. (¶5.3)

"Released Claims" means all claims, debts, liabilities, demands, obligations, damages, and actions or causes of action of any kind that arose during the Class Period and that were alleged in, or arising out of the facts asserted in, the operative Second Amended Complaint, including (without limitation) claims for reimbursement of business expenses; for unpaid time worked off-the-clock; or under California Labor Code sections 200, 201, 202, 203, 218, 218.5, 218.6, 510, 1194, 1194.2, 1197, 1197.1, and 2802, and the Wage Orders promulgated thereunder; California Business and Professions Code section 17200 et seq.; California Code of Civil Procedure section 1021.5; and California Civil Code section 3287, subdivision (a). Expressly excluded from the Released Claims are (a) claims for wages in Workers' Compensation and Unemployment Insurance benefits cases, and (b) claims for benefits under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA). (¶2.35)

 "Released Parties" means defendant Staples the Office Superstore, LLC, its present, former or future parents, subsidiaries, affiliates, divisions, corporations in common control, predecessors, successors and assigns (including without limitation USR Parent Inc.), and each of their respective present, past or future officers, directors, employees, partners (both general and limited), shareholders,

agents, attorneys, insurers, and any other successors, assigns, or legal representatives, and any other individual or entity which could be liable for any of the Released Claims. (¶2.36)

• The named Plaintiffs will also provide a general release and a waiver of the protections of Cal. Civ. Code §1542. (¶¶ 5.4, 5.5)

• The releases are effective upon Defendant remitting the Settlement Fund Amount to the Settlement Administrator, which will be within ten (10) business days from the Effective Date. (¶4.9.1)

III. ANALYSIS OF SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

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"Before final approval, the court must conduct an inquiry into the fairness of the
proposed settlement." Cal. Rules of Court, rule 3.769(g). "If the court approves the
settlement agreement after the final approval hearing, the court must make and enter
judgment. The judgment must include a provision for the retention of the court's
jurisdiction over the parties to enforce the terms of the judgment. The court may not
enter an order dismissing the action at the same time as, or after, entry of judgment."
Cal. Rules of Court, rule 3.769(h).

18 As discussed more fully in the Order conditionally approving the settlement, "[i]n a class action lawsuit, the court undertakes the responsibility to assess fairness in order to 19 prevent fraud, collusion or unfairness to the class, the settlement or dismissal of a class 20 action. The purpose of the requirement [of court review] is the protection of those class 21 members, including the named plaintiffs, whose rights may not have been given due 22 regard by the negotiating parties." See Consumer Advocacy Group, Inc. v. Kintetsu 23 Enterprises of America (2006) 141 Cal. App.4th 46, 60 [internal quotation marks 24 25 omitted]; see also Wershba v. Apple Computer, Inc. (2001) 91 Cal.App.4th 224, 245

("Wershba"), disapproved on another ground in Hernandez v. Restoration Hardware (2018) 4 Cal.5th 260 [Court needs to "scrutinize the proposed settlement agreement to the 2 extent necessary to reach a reasoned judgment that the agreement is not the product of 3 fraud or overreaching by, or collusion between, the negotiating parties, and that the settlement, taken as a whole, is fair, reasonable and adequate to all concerned."] [internal 5 quotation marks omitted].

7 "The burden is on the proponent of the settlement to show that it is fair and reasonable. However 'a presumption of fairness exists where: (1) the settlement is 8 reached through arm's-length bargaining; (2) investigation and discovery are sufficient to 9 allow counsel and the court to act intelligently; (3) counsel is experienced in similar 10 litigation; and (4) the percentage of objectors is small." See Wershba, supra, 91 11 Cal.App.4th at pg. 245, citing Dunk v. Ford Motor Co. (1996) 48 Cal.App.4th 1794. 12 1802. Notwithstanding an initial presumption of fairness, "the court should not give 13 rubber-stamp approval." See Kullar v. Foot Locker Retail, Inc. (2008) 168 Cal.App.4th 14 116, 130. "Rather, to protect the interests of absent class members, the court must 15 independently and objectively analyze the evidence and circumstances before it in order 16 to determine whether the settlement is in the best interests of those whose claims will be 17 extinguished." Ibid., citing 4 Newberg on Class Actions (4th ed. 2002) § 11:41, p. 90. In 18 that determination, the court should consider factors such as "the strength of plaintiffs' 19 case, the risk, expense, complexity and likely duration of further litigation, the risk of 20 21 maintaining class action status through trial, the amount offered in settlement, the extent of discovery completed and stage of the proceedings, the experience and views of 22 counsel, the presence of a governmental participant, and the reaction of the class 23 members to the proposed settlement." Id. at 128. This "list of factors is not exclusive and 24

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the court is free to engage in a balancing and weighing of factors depending on the 1 circumstances of each case." Wershba, supra, 91 Cal.App.4th at pg. 245.) 2 Α. A PRESUMPTION OF FAIRNESS EXISTS 3 4 The Court preliminarily found in its Order of October 12, 2021 that the presumption of fairness should be applied. No facts have come to the Court's attention 5 that would alter that preliminary conclusion. Accordingly, the settlement is entitled to a 6 7 presumption of fairness as set forth in the preliminary approval order. **B**. 8 THE SETTLEMENT IS FAIR, ADEQUATE, AND REASONABLE 9 The settlement was preliminarily found to be fair, adequate and reasonable. 10 Notice has now been given to the Class. The notice process resulted in the following: Number of class members: 499 11 Number of notices mailed: 499 12 Number of undeliverable notices: 3 13 Number of opt-outs: 0 14 15 Number of objections: 0 Number of participating class members: 499 16 (Declaration of Taylor Mitzner ("Mitzner Decl.") ¶¶ 3-12; Supp. Mitzner Decl. ¶3.) 17 The Court finds that the notice was given as directed and conforms to due process 18 requirements. Given the reactions of the Class Members to the proposed settlement and 19 20for the reasons set for in the Preliminary Approval order, the settlement is found to be fair, adequate, and reasonable. 21 **C**. **CLASS CERTIFICATION IS PROPER** 22 For the reasons set forth in the preliminary approval order, certification of the 23 Class for purposes of settlement is appropriate. 24 // 25

D. ATTORNEY FEES AND COSTS

Class Counsel requests **\$141,666.67** (33 1/3%) for attorney fees and **\$44,662.70** for costs. (Memo ISO Final at 12:14-16.)

Courts have an independent responsibility to review an attorney fee provision and award only what it determines is reasonable. *Garabedian v. Los Angeles Cellular Telephone Company* (2004) 118 Cal.App.4th 123, 128. A percentage calculation is permitted in common fund cases. *Laffitte v. Robert Half Int'l, Inc.* (2016) 1 Cal.5th 480, 503.

In the instant case, fees are sought pursuant to the percentage method. (Memo
ISO Final at pp. 12-15.) The \$141,666.67 fee request is one-third of the Gross Settlement
Amount.

Here, the \$141,666.67 fee request represents a reasonable percentage of the total
funds paid by Defendant. Further, the notice expressly advised class members of the fee
request, and no one objected. (Mitzner Decl. ¶9, Exhibit A thereto.) Accordingly, the
Court awards fees in the amount of \$141,666.67.

Class Counsel requests \$44,662.70 in costs. This is less than the \$47,000 cap
provided in the settlement agreement (¶3.4). The amount was disclosed to Class
Members in the Notice, and no objections were received. (Mitzner Decl. ¶9, Exhibit A
thereto.) Costs include: Expert Fees (\$29,321.75); Mediator Fees (\$6,450); and Court
Reporters/Deposition Transcripts (\$3,271.90). (Decl. of Bollinger ISO Final ¶19.)

The costs appear to be reasonable and necessary to the litigation, are reasonable in amount, and were not objected to by the class.

For all of the foregoing reasons, costs of **\$44,662.70** are approved.

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E. SERVICE AWARDS TO NAMED PLAINTIFFS

A service (or incentive) fee award to a named class representative must be supported by evidence that quantifies the time and effort expended by the individual and a reasoned explanation of financial or other risks undertaken by the class representative. See *Clark v. American Residential Services LLC* (2009) 175 Cal.App.4th 785, 806-807; see also *Cellphone Termination Cases* (2010) 186 Cal.App.4th 1380, 1394-1395 ["Criteria courts may consider in determining whether to make an incentive award include: (1) the risk to the class representative in commencing suit, both financial and otherwise; (2) the notoriety and personal difficulties encountered by the class representative; (3) the amount of time and effort spent by the class representative; (4) the duration of the litigation and; (5) the personal benefit (or lack thereof) enjoyed by the class representative as a result of the litigation. (Citations.)"].

Here, the named Plaintiffs seek enhancement awards totaling \$15,000, or \$7,500
each. (Memo ISO Final at 19:27-20:2.) They urge that the awards are appropriate for
the following reasons:

Plaintiff Glasere represents that his contributions to the action include: explaining
the facts of the case to his attorneys, searching for and providing documents to his
attorneys, attending an all-day Zoom mediation, and reviewing the settlement. He
estimates spending approximately 50 hours on the case. (Declaration of Devin Glasere
ISO Final ¶¶ 8-13.)

Plaintiff Paul represents that his contributions to the action include: meeting with
his attorneys about the case, providing and reviewing documents with his attorneys,
attending a deposition of his district manager as well as sitting for his own, participating
in the mediation, and reviewing the settlement. He estimates spending over 80 hours on
the case. (Declaration of Eric Paul ISO Final ¶¶ 7-16.)

1		In light of the above-described contributions to this action, and in	
2	acknow	ledgment of the benefits obtained on behalf of the class, a \$7,500 service award	
3	to each	named Plaintiff is reasonable and approved.	
4]	F. SETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION COSTS	
5	,	The Settlement Administrator, Phoenix Settlement Administrators, requests	
6	\$8,500	in compensation for its work in administrating this case. (Mitzner Decl. ¶14.) At	
7	the time of preliminary approval, costs of settlement administration were estimated at		
8	\$8,500 (¶2.41). Class Members were provided with notice of this amount and did not		
9	object.	(Mitzner Decl. ¶9, Exhibit A thereto.)	
10		Accordingly, settlement administration costs are approved in the amount of	
П	\$8,500.		
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13	IV. C	ONCLUSION AND ORDER	
14		The Court hereby:	
15	(1)	Grants class certification for purposes of settlement;	
16	(2)	Grants final approval of the settlement as fair, adequate, and reasonable;	
17	(3)	Awards \$141,666.67 in attorney fees to Class Counsel, Moss Bollinger LLP;	
18	(4)	Awards \$44,662.70 in litigation costs to Class Counsel;	
19	(5)	Awards \$15,000 total [\$7,500 each] in service awards to Plaintiffs Eric Paul and	
20		Devin Glasere;	
21	(6)	Awards \$8,500 in settlement administration costs to Phoenix Settlement	
22		Administrators;	
23	(7)	Orders class counsel to lodge a proposed Judgment, consistent with this ruling	
24		and containing the class definition, full release language, and a statement that no	
25		class members opted out by April 20, 2022;	

- (8) Orders class counsel to provide notice to the class members pursuant to California Rules of Court, rule 3.771(b); and
- (9) Sets a Non-Appearance Case Review re: Final Report re: Distribution of Settlement Funds for October 27, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. Final Report is to be filed five days prior. If there is unpaid residue or unclaimed or abandoned class member funds and/or interest thereon to be distributed to Justice Gap Fund of the California State Bar, Plaintiffs' counsel shall also submit an Amended Judgment pursuant to Cal. Code of Civ. Pro. § 384 and give notice of the Judicial Council of California upon entry of the Amended Judgment, when entered, pursuant to Cal. Code of Civ. Pro. §384.5.

Dated: APR 1 5 2022

Hon. Amy D. Hogue Judge of the Superior Court

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1	<u>PROOF OF SERVICE</u>
2	PAUL V. STAPLES, INC. ET AL.
3	LOS ANGELES COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT CASE NO. 19STCV22782
4 5	I am over the age of eighteen years and not a party to the within action. My business address is 15300 Ventura Boulevard, Suite 207, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403
6	On April 19, 2022, I served the document(s) described as
7	[PROPOSED] JUDGMENT
8	on the following individuals:
9	Tritia Murata Karen Kubin
10	David Zins Morrison & Foerster LLP
	Monica Rodriguez425 Market StreetMorrison & Foerster LLPSan Francisco, CA 94105
11	707 Wilshire BoulevardSan Trancisco, CA 94105Attorneys for Defendant STAPLES THE
12	Los Angeles, CA 90017 OFFICE SUPERSTORE, LLC
13	[✓] BY ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION: On the date set forth below I caused to be transmitted the document(s) listed above on the parties listed herein on CASE ANYWHERE
14	in this action before 6:00 p.m. I hereby certify that this document was served from Sherman Oaks, California.
15	
16	[✓] (STATE) I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the above is true and correct.
17	Executed at Los Angeles County, California, on April 19, 2022,
18 19	Leaverte
20	Lea Garbe
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	DDOOF OF SEDVICE
	PROOF OF SERVICE