

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

***Merritt v. DMA Claims***

*(Los Angeles Superior Court, Case No. 21STCV31200)*

***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.***

**Attention:** All current and former non-exempt employees (i.e., eligible to receive overtime pay) of Defendants DMA, including all former employees of Defendant DMA who were employed by Defendant Venbrook, who worked in California at any time during the Class Period of August 23, 2017 to September 29, 2022 (“Class Members”). “DMA” refers to Defendants DMA Claims, Inc. and DMA Claims Management, Inc., and “Venbrook” refers to Defendants Venbrook Group, LLC and Venbrook Insurance Services, LLC.

**You may be eligible to receive money** as a Class Member in a class action lawsuit (“Action”) against Defendants DMA and Venbrook for alleged wage and hour violations. The Action was filed by Gennine Merritt a former DMA employee (“Plaintiff”) and seeks payment of unpaid wages, statutory damages, interest and attorneys’ fees on behalf of all Class Members (defined above). Additionally, the Action seek civil penalties under the California Private Attorney General Act (“PAGA”) for the same group who worked for DMA or Venbrook in California during the PAGA Period (August 23, 2020 to September 29, 2022), who are referred to as “Aggrieved Employees.”

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

*[CLASS MEMBER NAME] [ID/CONTROL NUMBER]*

<b>Two Parts</b>	<b>Pay Periods Worked</b>	<b>Your Estimated Share</b>
Class Member	INSERT (During Class Period)	\$INSERT (Individual Class Payment)
Aggrieved Employee	INSERT (During PAGA Period)	\$INSERT (Individual PAGA Payment)

Based on Defendants’ records, and the Parties’ current assumptions, your Individual Class Payment (less withholding) and your Individual PAGA Payment are shown in the chart above, along with the Pay Periods you are credited with working during the Class Period and PAGA Period, according to Defendants’ records. 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 Defendants’ records you are not eligible for an Individual PAGA Payment under the Settlement because you didn’t work during the PAGA Period.)

If you believe that you worked more Pay Periods during either period than Defendants’ records show, you can submit a challenge by the March 9, 2023 (the “Response Deadline”). 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 Plaintiff and Plaintiff’s attorneys (“Class Counsel”). The Court will also decide whether to enter a judgment that requires Defendants 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 Defendants during the Class Period and/or the PAGA Period, you have a few options as shown in the Chart below:

<b>YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS AND OPTIONS IN THIS SETTLEMENT</b>	
<b>DO NOTHING &amp; PARTICIPATE IN THE SETTLEMENT</b>	If you want to receive your settlement payment, then no further action is required on your part. You will automatically receive your settlement payment from the Settlement Administrator if the Settlement receives final approval by the Court. You will be bound by the terms of the Settlement Agreement and will give up your right to sue on the Released Class Claims described below.
<b>OPT-OUT (EXCLUDE YOURSELF)</b>  <b>RESPONSE DEADLINE: MARCH 9, 2023</b>	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. If you opt-out, you will no longer be a Class Member, and you will (1) <u>not</u> receive an Individual Class Payment, but you will preserve your right to pursue the Released Class Claims described below subject to applicable statutes of limitations, and (2) be barred from filing an objection to the settlement.  You cannot opt-out of the PAGA portion of the proposed Settlement. Defendants must pay Individual PAGA Payments to all Aggrieved Employees and the Aggrieved Employees must give up their rights to pursue PAGA Released Claims. See Section 6 of this Notice.
<b>OBJECT</b>  <b>RESPONSE DEADLINE: MARCH 9, 2023</b>	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 Plaintiff 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 Plaintiff reduces the overall amount paid to Participating Class Members. You can object to the amounts requested by Class Counsel or Plaintiff if you think they are unreasonable. See Section 7 of this Notice.
<b>DISPUTE YOUR PAY PERIODS WORKED</b>  <b>RESPONSE DEADLINE: MARCH 9, 2023</b>	If you believe that your number of Pay Periods Worked listed above is incorrect, you may challenge it. The amount of your Individual Class Payment and PAGA Payment (if any) depend on how many Pay Periods you worked during the Class Period and how many Pay Periods you worked during the PAGA Period, respectively. The number you are credited are shown in the chart on the first page, and are based on Defendant's records. If you disagree with either of these numbers, you must challenge it by the deadline. See Section 4 of this Notice.

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

<b>YOU MAY ATTEND THE FINAL APPROVAL HEARING, BUT ITS NOT REQUIRED</b>	
<b>DATE:</b> <b>MAY 12, 2023</b> <b>TIME:</b> <b>10:30 A.M.</b>	At the Final Approval Hearing, the Court will decide whether to finally approve the Settlement. You don't have to attend but you do have the right to appear (or hire an attorney to appear on your behalf at your own cost), in person, by telephone or by using the Court's virtual appearance platform. Participating Class Members can verbally object to the Settlement at the Final Approval Hearing. See Section 8 of this Notice.

## **1. WHAT IS THE ACTION ABOUT?**

Plaintiff is a former DMA employee. The Action accuses Defendants of violating California labor laws by failing to pay overtime wages, minimum wages, meal and rest period premiums, and wages due upon termination, and reimbursable expenses, and failing to provide meal periods, rest breaks and accurate itemized wage statements. Based on the same claims, Plaintiff has also asserted a claim for civil penalties under the California Private Attorneys General Act (Labor Code §§ 2698, et seq.) (“PAGA”).

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

Plaintiff is represented by attorneys in the Action (“Class Counsel”). See Section 9 below for their contact information.

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

So far, the Court has made no determination whether Defendants or Plaintiff is correct on the merits. In the meantime, Plaintiff and Defendants hired an experienced, neutral mediator in an effort to resolve the Action by negotiating an 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, Plaintiff and Defendants 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, Defendants do not admit any violations or concede the merit of any claims.

Plaintiff and Class Counsel strongly believe the Settlement is a good deal for you because they believe that: (1) Defendants have agreed to pay a fair, reasonable and adequate amount considering the strength of the claims and the risks and uncertainties of continued litigation; and (2) Settlement is in the best interests of the Class Members and Aggrieved Employees. 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. Defendants Will Pay \$750,000 as the Gross Settlement Amount (Gross Settlement). Defendants have 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, Defendants 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, Plaintiff 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 \$250,000 (one-third of the Gross Settlement) to Class Counsel for attorneys’ fees and up to \$20,000 for their litigation expenses. To date, Class Counsel have worked and incurred expenses on the Action without payment.
  - B. Up to \$10,000 as a Class Representative Award for filing the Action, working with Class Counsel and representing the Class. A Class Representative Award will be the only monies Plaintiff will receive other than Plaintiff’s Individual Class Payment and any Individual PAGA Payment.
  - C. Up to \$6,000 to the Administrator for services administering the Settlement.

- D. Up to \$75,000 for PAGA Penalties, allocated 75% to the LWDA PAGA Payment and 25% in Individual PAGA Payments to the Aggrieved Employees based on their share of Pay Periods Worked.

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 Pay Periods Worked during the Class Period.
4. Taxes Owed on Payments to Class Members. Plaintiff and Defendants are asking the Court to approve an allocation of 20% of each Individual Class Payment to taxable wages (“Wage Portion”) and 80% to penalties and interest (“Non-Wage Portion.”). The Wage Portion is subject to withholdings and will be reported on IRS W-2 Forms. Defendants 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 Plaintiff and Defendants 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 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 the Response Deadline, 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 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 Defendants 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. Plaintiff and Defendants have agreed that, in either case, the Settlement will be void: Defendants will not pay any money and Class Members will not release any claims against Defendants.

8. Administrator. The Court has appointed a neutral company, Phoenix Class Action Administration (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 Pay Periods Worked, 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 Defendants have 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 Defendants or related entities for wages based on the facts alleged in the Action for the duration of the Class Period and PAGA Period, which are 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 the Released Parties from all claims that were alleged, or reasonably could have been alleged, based on the facts stated in the Operative Complaint, including claims for failure to provide meal and rest breaks, failure to pay for meal and rest break premiums pay in lieu thereof and at the correct rates paid for same, pay overtime wages and the correct rates paid for same, pay minimum or regular wages for all hours worked, pay timely wages during employment, pay all earned and accrued wages to discharged/separated employees, furnish accurate itemized wage statements, maintain required payroll records, and indemnify employees for business expenses, and based on violations of Labor Code sections 200-204, 208, 210, 218.6, 226, 226.2, 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512, 558, 1174, 1174.5, 1194, 1194.2, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 1198.5, 1199, 2802, or Industrial Welfare Commission Order #4, or Business and Professions Code section 17200, et seq., which are premised on the same allegations, and Cal. Code Regs., tit. 8, section 11090 (the “Released Class Claims”). The operative release period for the Released Class Claims is the Class Period. Participating Class Members do not release any other claims, including claims for vested benefits, wrongful termination, violation of the Fair Employment and Housing Act, unemployment insurance, disability, social security, workers’ compensation, or claims based on facts occurring outside the Class Period.

10. Aggrieved Employees’ PAGA Release. After the Court’s judgment is final, and Defendants have paid the Gross Settlement (and separately paid the employer-side payroll taxes), all Aggrieved Employees will be barred from asserting PAGA claims against Defendants, 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 Defendants or its related entities based on the PAGA Period facts alleged in the Action and resolved by this Settlement.

The Aggrieved Employees’ Releases are as follows:

All Aggrieved Employees are deemed to release, on behalf of themselves 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 facts stated in the Operative Complaint and the PAGA Notice, including violations premised on violation of Labor Code sections 200-204, 208, 210, 218.6, 221-223, 226, 226.2, 226.3, 226.7, 510, 512, 558, 1174, 1174.5, 1194, 1194.2, 1197, 1197.1, 1198, 1198.5, 1199, and 2802,

and IWC Wage Order #4, and Cal. Code Regs., tit. 8, section 11090 (the “Released PAGA Claims”). The operative release period for the Released PAGA Claims is the PAGA Period.

#### 4. WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT TERMS OF THE PROPOSED SETTLEMENT?

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 during the Class Period, and (b) multiplying the result by the number of Pay Periods Worked by each individual Participating Class Member during the Class Period.
2. Individual PAGA Payments. The Administrator will calculate Individual PAGA Payments by (a) dividing \$18,750 by the total number of Pay Periods Worked by all Aggrieved Employees during the PAGA Period and (b) multiplying the result by the number of Pay Periods Worked by each individual Aggrieved Employee during the PAGA Period.
3. Pay Period Challenges. The number of Pay Periods you worked during the Class Period as recorded in Defendant’s records, are stated in the first page of this Notice. You have until the Response Deadline 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 Defendants’ 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 Defendants’ 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 and Aggrieved Employees. 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) and Aggrieved Employee. The single check will combine the Individual Class Payment and the Individual PAGA Payment.
2. Aggrieved Employees Only. If you opted out of the Class settlement, but qualify as an Aggrieved Employee, then the Administrator will send, by U.S. mail, a single Individual PAGA Payment check to every Aggrieved Employee, including those who opt out of the Class Settlement.

**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 *Merritt v. DMA Claims*, 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. **Send your request to be excluded to the Administrator by March 9, 2023 (the “Response Deadline”), 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 Plaintiff and Defendants are asking the Court to approve. At least 16 court days before the May 12, 2023 Final Approval Hearing, Class Counsel and/or Plaintiff 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 Plaintiff is 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 <https://www.phoenixclassaction.com/merritt-v-dma-claims/> or the Court's website <http://www.lacourt.org/casesummary/ui/index.aspx>.

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 Plaintiff are too high or too low. **The deadline for sending written objections to the Administrator is March 9, 2023 (the "Response Deadline").** 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 *Merritt v. DMA Claims* and include your name, current address, telephone number, and approximate dates of employment for Defendants 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 May 12, 2023 at 10:30 a.m. in Department 1 of the Los Angeles Superior Court, located at 312 North 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 comment 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 <https://www.phoenixclassaction.com/merritt-v-dma-claims/> 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 Defendants and Plaintiff 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 Phoenix's website at <https://www.phoenixclassaction.com/merritt-v-dma-claims/>. 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. 21STCV31200. 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.**

The contact information for Class Counsel and the Settlement Administrator are below:

<b><u>Class Counsel:</u></b>	
Brian Mankin, Esq. <i>brian@lmlfirm.com</i> Peter Carlson, Esq. <i>peter@lmlfirm.com</i> Lauby Mankin Lauby LLP 5198 Arlington Ave, PMB 513 Riverside, CA 92504 Tel: (951) 320-1444	Mehrdad Bokhour, Esq. <i>mehrdad@bokhourlaw.com</i> Bokhour Law Group, P.C. 1901 Avenue of the Stars, Ste 450 Los Angeles, CA 90067 Tel: (310) 975-1493

<b><u>Settlement Administrator:</u></b>
Phoenix Class Action Administration <i>notice@phoenixclassaction.com</i> P.O. Box 7208 Orange, CA 92863 Telephone: (800) 523-5773 Fax: (949) 209-2503 <a href="https://www.phoenixclassaction.com/merritt-v-dma-claims/">https://www.phoenixclassaction.com/merritt-v-dma-claims/</a>

#### **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 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.