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Attorneys for Plaintiffs

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

KYLE MCMAHON, LOREN MASH, SANTOS HERNANDEZ, SHERRY CARDOSO, and EMI HOWARD

Index No.:

COMPLAINT

Plaintiffs,

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

v.

BROOKLYN FARE KITCHEN CORP. d/b/a CHEF'S TABLE AT BROOKLYN FARE, CESAR RAMIREZ, and MOE ISSA,

Defendants.

Plaintiffs allege as follows:

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. This Court has original federal question jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1331 because this case is brought under the Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 U.S.C. §§ 201, et seq. ("FLSA") and 42 U.S.C. § 1981 ("Section 1981"). This Court has supplemental jurisdiction over the New York state law claims, as they are so related to the claims in this action within the Court's original jurisdiction that they form part of the same case or controversy under Article III of the United States Constitution.

2. Venue is proper in this District because Defendants conduct business in this District, and the acts and/or omissions giving rise to the claims herein alleged took place in this District.

PARTIES

- 3. All Defendants are hereinafter collectively referred to as "Defendants."
- 4. Defendant Brooklyn Fare Kitchen Corp. is a New York corporation that owns and operates Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare ("Chef's Table"), a restaurant located at 200 Schermerhorn St., Brooklyn, NY. Upon information and belief, Brooklyn Fare Kitchen Corp. has an annual gross volume of sales in excess of \$500,000.
- 5. Defendant Cesar Ramirez manages employees at Chef's Table and exercises sufficient control of Chef's Table's day to day operations to be considered Plaintiffs' employer under the FLSA and New York law.
- 6. Defendant Ramirez had the ability to hire and fire employees at Chef's Table. For example, he hired and terminated Plaintiffs Sherry Cardoso and Santos Hernandez.
- 7. Defendant Ramirez had control over employees' pay. For example, he told Plaintiffs Cardoso and Hernandez how much they would be paid for working at Chef's Table.
- 8. Defendant Ramirez had authority with respect to scheduling at Chef's Table. For example, Defendant Ramirez responded to Plaintiff Hernandez' request for two days off by telling him that if he took the day off, his employment was over. When Mr. Hernandez took the day off, his employment at Chef's Table ended.
 - 9. Defendant Moe Issa is an owner and manager at Chef's Table.
- 10. Defendant Issa has authority to hire and fire employees at Chef's Table. For example, Mr. Issa hired Plaintiff Howard and terminated Plaintiffs Howard and McMahon.

- 11. Defendant Issa had and exercised authority with respect to how employees were paid, including but not limited to the distribution of tips at Chef's Table.
- 12. Defendants Issa is responsible for maintaining employment/payroll records at Chef's Table.
- 13. Plaintiff Kyle McMahon was employed by Defendants as a server from August 2014 until November 2014.
- 14. Plaintiff Sherry Cardoso was employed by Defendants as a sous chef from January 2014 until September 2014.
- 15. Plaintiff Emi Howard was employed by Defendants as a server from July 2013 until June 2014.
- 16. Plaintiff Santos Hernandez was employed by Defendants as a prep cook in 2011, and as a back server for several months in 2014.
- 17. Plaintiff Loren Mash was employed by Defendants as a back server from March 2014 until June 2014.

FACTS

Wage and Hour Claims

- 18. Defendants claim on their website that "Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare, Brooklyn's only *three Michelin-starred* restaurant, is unlike any other."
- 19. At Chef's Table, 18 customers per night (occasionally twice per night) are seated around a large kitchen counter, with Defendant Ramirez at the center. Customers are served prix-fixe meal consisting of fifteen small plate courses.
- 20. The current prix-fixe price is \$255 per person plus New York tax and a 20% service charge.

- 21. Throughout Plaintiffs' employment, Defendants charged this roughly \$51 service charge and did not distribute any of it to service employees, such as Plaintiffs McMahon, Howard, and Mash.
- 22. Chef's Table's prix-fixe does not include wine, which was sold separately. Customers who purchased wine at the restaurant often left additional tips (*i.e.* on top of the service charge) for the service employees.
- 23. When customers paid extra tips, Defendants illegally withheld significant portions of these tips, without distributing them in their entirety to service employees, such as Plaintiffs McMahon, Howard, and Mash.
- 24. With the exception of Plaintiff Hernandez in 2011, Plaintiffs worked over 10 hours almost every shift that they worked during their employment with Defendants.
 - 25. Defendants did not pay Plaintiffs New York's "spread of hours" premium.
- 26. Defendants did not provide Plaintiffs with the appropriate wage notices required by New York Labor Law § 195.
 - 27. Plaintiff Cardoso frequently worked over 70 hours per week for Defendants.
- 28. Defendants paid Plaintiff Cardoso a weekly fixed amount without any additional pay for overtime.
- 29. During the period of time in 2011 that Plaintiff Hernandez worked as a prep cook, he worked about 9 hours per day, 6 days per week.
- 30. In 2011, Defendants paid Plaintiff Hernandez \$400 per week, with no additional pay for overtime.

- 31. When Mr. Ramirez returned in 2014 as a back server, he worked 5 to 6 days per week, with workdays lasting at least 10 hours. For this period, Defendants paid Mr. Ramirez \$750 per week, with no additional pay for overtime.
- 32. Plaintiff Mash worked 5 to 6 days per week, with workdays lasting at least 10 hours. Defendants paid Plaintiff Mash an amount equal to the tip credit minimum wage for her hours worked.
- 33. However, Defendants were not entitled to pay Ms. Mash pursuant to federal or state tip credits because (a) Defendants did not give Ms. Mash proper notice of the tip credit, and (b) Defendants retained portions of Ms. Mash's tips.
- 34. Defendants did not pay Plaintiff Mash the appropriate overtime rate for overtime worked.

Discrimination Claims

- 35. Plaintiff Emi Howard is Asian American.
- 36. When speaking with Ms. Howard and other employees, Defendant Ramirez routinely referred to Asian customers as "shit people."
- 37. Defendant Ramirez many times instructed Ms. Howard not to place "shit people," *i.e.*, Asian customers, at the parts of the kitchen counter that were closest in proximity to his own place, the center.
- 38. When a large piece of meat was cut into many pieces for the guests, Defendant Ramirez instructed Ms. Howard to give the worst pieces of meat to the "shit people," *i.e.*, Asian people, and to "Upper West Siders."
- 39. Ms. Howard several times complained to Defendant Ramirez about his disgusting treatment of Asian people, but to no avail.

- 40. On one occasion, Ms. Howard "violated" Defendant Ramirez' discriminatory rule by seating Asian individuals close to his spot at the center of the kitchen counter.
- 41. In response, Defendant Ramirez subjected Ms. Howard to a wild verbal tirade. In addition, Mr. Ramirez from then on took control of the seating, so that he could ensure that no Asians be sat next to his place.
- 42. Ultimately, in June 2014, Defendants discriminated/retaliated against Plaintiff Howard by terminating her employment.
- 43. In November 2014, Plaintiff McMahon complained to Defendant Issa about Defendants' illegal retention of employees' tips.
- 44. On or about November 20, 2014, Defendants retaliated against Plaintiff McMahon by terminating her employment.

FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF (FLSA Minimum Wage Violations, 29 U.S.C. §§ 201, et seq. Brought By Plaintiff Mash)

- 45. Plaintiff Mash realleges and incorporates by reference all preceding paragraphs as if they were set forth again herein.
- 46. At all relevant times, Defendants have been, and continue to be, "employers" engaged in interstate "commerce" and/or in the production of "goods" for "commerce," within the meaning of FLSA, 29 U.S.C. § 203. At all relevant times, Defendants have employed, "employee[s]," including Plaintiffs.
- 47. Throughout the statute of limitations period covered by these claims, Defendants knowingly failed to pay Plaintiff Mash the federal minimum wage for each hour worked.

48. Plaintiff Mash seeks damages in the amount of her unpaid compensation, liquidated (double) damages as provided by the FLSA for minimum wage violations, attorneys' fees and costs, and such other legal and equitable relief as this Court deems just and proper.

SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF (FLSA Overtime Violations, 29 U.S.C. §§ 201 et seq. Brought By Plaintiffs Hernandez, Cardoso and Mash)

- 49. Plaintiffs Hernandez, Cardoso and Mash reallege and incorporate by reference all preceding paragraphs as if they were set forth again herein.
- 50. Throughout the statute of limitations period covered by these claims, Plaintiffs Hernandez, Cardoso and Mash regularly worked in excess of forty (40) hours per workweek.
- 51. At all relevant times, Defendants willfully, regularly and repeatedly failed to pay Plaintiffs Hernandez, Cardoso and Mash at the required overtime rate for hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours per workweek.
- 52. Plaintiffs seek damages in the amount of their respective unpaid overtime compensation, liquidated (double) damages as provided by the FLSA for overtime violations, attorneys' fees and costs, and such other legal and equitable relief as this Court deems just and proper.

THIRD CLAIM FOR RELIEF (New York State Minimum Wage Violations, N.Y. Lab. L. §§ 650 et seq. Brought By Plaintiff Mash)

- 53. Plaintiff Mash realleges and incorporates by reference all preceding paragraphs as if they were set forth again herein.
- 54. Defendants knowingly paid Plaintiff Mash less than the New York State minimum wage.

- 55. Defendants did not pay Plaintiff Mash the New York minimum wage for all hours worked.
- 56. Defendants' failure to pay Plaintiff Mash the New York minimum wage was willful.
- 57. As a result of Defendants' willful and unlawful conduct, Plaintiff Mash is entitled to an award of damages, including liquidated damages, in amount to be determined at trial, preand post-judgment interest, costs and attorneys' fees, as provided by N.Y. Lab. Law § 663.

FOURTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF

(New York State Overtime Violations, N.Y. Lab. L. §§ 650 et seq. N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. Tit. 12, §§ 146-1.4, Brought By Plaintiffs Hernandez, Cardoso and Mash)

- 58. Plaintiffs Hernandez, Cardoso and Mash reallege and incorporate by reference all preceding paragraphs as if they were set forth again herein.
- 59. It is unlawful under New York law for an employer to suffer or permit a non-exempt employee to work without paying overtime wages for all hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours in any workweek.
- 60. Defendants willfully, regularly and repeatedly failed to pay Plaintiffs Hernandez, Cardoso and Mash at the required overtime rate for hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours per workweek.
- 61. As a result of Defendants' willful and unlawful conduct, Plaintiffs Hernandez, Cardoso and Mash are entitled to an award of damages, including liquidated damages, in amount to be determined at trial, pre- and post-judgment interest, costs and attorneys' fees, as provided by N.Y. Lab. Law § 663.

FIFTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF

(Illegal Deductions from Gratuities, N.Y. Lab. L. §§ 193, 196-d and 198-b Brought by Plaintiffs McMahon, Howard, Hernadez and Mash)

62. Plaintiffs McMahon, Howard, Hernandez and Mash reallege and incorporate by reference all preceding paragraphs as if they were set forth again herein.

63. Defendants willfully retained portions of Plaintiffs McMahon, Howard, Hernandez and Mash's tips.

64. As a result of Defendants' willful and unlawful conduct, Plaintiffs McMahon, Howard, Hernandez and Mash are entitled to an award of damages, including liquidated damages, in amount to be determined at trial, pre- and post-judgment interest, costs and attorneys' fees, as provided by N.Y. Lab. Law § 663.

SIXTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF
(New York Spread of Hours Provisions, N.Y. Lab. L. § 650 et seq.,
N.Y. Comp. Code R. & Regs. tit. 12, §§ 146-1.6,
Brought by All Plaintiffs)

- 65. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference all preceding paragraphs as if they were set forth again herein.
 - 66. Plaintiffs' workdays regularly lasted more than ten (10) hours.
- 67. Defendants willfully and intentionally failed to compensate Plaintiffs one hour's pay at the basic New York minimum hourly wage rate when their workdays exceeded ten (10) hours, as required by New York law.
- 68. As a result of Defendants' willful and unlawful conduct, Plaintiffs are entitled to an award of damages, including liquidated damages, in amount to be determined at trial, pre- and post-judgment interest, costs and attorneys' fees, as provided by N.Y. Lab. Law § 663.

SEVENTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF (New York Notice Requirements, N.Y. Lab. L. §§ 195, 198 Brought by All Plaintiffs)

- 69. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference all preceding paragraphs as if they were set forth again herein.
- 70. Defendants did not provide Plaintiffs with the notices required by N.Y. Lab. Law § 195.
- 71. As a result of Defendants' unlawful conduct, Plaintiffs are entitled to an award of damages pursuant to N.Y. Lab. Law § 198, in amount to be determined at trial, pre- and post-judgment interest, costs and attorneys' fees, as provided by N.Y. Lab. Law § 663.

EIGHTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF (42 U.S.C. § 1981 Brought by Plaintiff Howard)

- 72. Plaintiff Howard incorporates by reference each allegation of each preceding paragraph.
- 73. In violation of Section 1981, Defendants intentionally discriminated against Plaintiff Howard on the basis of her race and by subjecting Plaintiff Howard to a hostile work environment that was severe or pervasive enough to alter the terms and conditions her his employment and discharging Plaintiff her.
- 74. Defendants' conduct was outrageous and malicious, was intended to injure, and was done with reckless indifference to Plaintiff Howard's statutorily-protected civil rights.
- 75. As a result of Defendants' unlawful conduct, Plaintiff Howard is entitled to compensatory damages, including but not limited to lost wages and damages for emotional distress, punitive damages, post-judgment interest, attorneys' fees and costs, and such other legal and equitable relief as this Court deems just and proper.

NINTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF

(New York City Human Rights Law ("NYCHRL") N.Y. Admin. L. §§ 8-101 et seq. – Race and National Origin Discrimination Brought by Plaintiff Howard)

- 76. Plaintiff Howard incorporates by reference each allegation of each preceding paragraph.
- 77. In violation of the NYCHRL, Defendants discriminated against Plaintiff on the basis of her race and national origin, and terminated her in retaliation for complaining about the discrimination.
- 78. As a direct and proximate consequence of Defendants' race and national origin discrimination against Plaintiff Howard, she has suffered, and continues to suffer, substantial monetary damages, including, but not limited to, a loss of income, including past and future salary.
- 79. As a direct and proximate consequence of Defendants' race and national origin discrimination against Plaintiff Howard, she has suffered, and continues to suffer, substantial non-monetary damages, including, but not limited to, emotional distress and physical pain and suffering.
- 80. Defendants' conduct was outrageous and malicious, was intended to injure, and was done with reckless indifference to Plaintiff Howard's statutorily-protected civil rights.
- 81. As a result of Defendants' unlawful conduct, Plaintiff Howard is entitled to compensatory damages, including but not limited to lost wages and damages for emotional distress, punitive damages, post-judgment interest, attorneys' fees and costs, and such other legal and equitable relief as this Court deems just and proper.

TENTH CLAIM FOR RELEIF (New York Labor Law Retaliation New York Labor Law § 215)

- 82. Plaintiff McMahon incorporates and realleges each preceding paragraph as though set forth in full herein.
- 83. Defendants willfully and unlawfully retaliated against Plaintiff McMahon for engaging in protected activities, namely, her complaint of tip theft.
- 84. In retaliating against Plaintiff McMahon, Defendants knowingly or recklessly acted in deliberate disregard of Plaintiff McMahon's rights.
- 85. As a direct and proximate consequence of Defendants' intentional, unlawful, and discriminatory employment policies and practices, Plaintiff McMahon has suffered, and continues to suffer, monetary damages including, but not limited to, a loss of income, including past salary, future salary, and company-sponsored benefits.
- 86. As a direct and proximate consequence of the Defendants' intentional, unlawful, and discriminatory employment policies and practices, Plaintiff McMahon has suffered, and continues to suffer, non-monetary damages including, but not limited to, humiliation and mental and physical pain and suffering.
- 87. As a result of Defendants' unlawful conduct, Plaintiff McMahon is entitled to compensatory damages, including but not limited to lost wages and damages for emotional distress, punitive damages, post-judgment interest, attorneys' fees and costs, and such other legal and equitable relief as this Court deems just and proper.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs pray for relief as follows:

- A. An award of damages, according to proof, including liquidated damages under relevant statutes, to be paid by Defendants;
- B. Penalties available under applicable laws;
- C. Costs of action incurred herein, including expert fees;
- D. Attorneys' fees, including fees pursuant to 29 U.S.C. § 216, N.Y. Lab. L. § 663 and other applicable statutes;
- E. Pre-judgment and post-judgment interest, as provided by law; and
- F. Such other and further legal and equitable relief as this Court deems necessary, just and proper.

Dated: New York, New York
December 1, 2014

Respectfully submitted,

JOSEPH & KIRSCHENBAUM LLP

By:

D. Maimon Kirschenbaum

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5th Floor

New York, NY 10279

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Attorneys for Plaintiffs

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiffs hereby demand a jury trial on all causes of action and claims with respect to which they have a right to a jury trial.

JS 44 (Rev. 1/2013)

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

purpose of initiating the civil d	ocket sheet. (SEE INSTRUC	TIONS ON NEXT PAGE O	F THIS FO	DRM.)	•	
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS Kyle McManon, Loren Mash, Santos Hernandez, Sherry Cardoso, an Emi Howard				DEFENDANTS Brooklyn Fare Kitchen Corp. d/b/a Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare, Cesar Ramirez, and Moe Issa		
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)				County of Residence of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY) NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.		
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Joseph & Kirschenbaum, 233 Broadway, 5th FI, Ne 212-688-5640		r)		Attorneys (If Known)		
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	ICTION (Place an "X" in C	ne Box Only)	III. CI	TIZENSHIP OF P	PRINCIPAL PARTIES	(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff
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VIII. RELATED CASI						
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exclusiv	e of intere	ation Rule 83.10 provides that with certain exceptions, actions seeking money damages only in an amount not interest and costs, are eligible for compulsory arbitration. The amount of damages is presumed to be below that the contrary is filed.		
I,ineligil	ole for c	, counsel for, do hereby certify that the above carefor compulsory arbitration for the following reason(s):	aptioned civil action is	
monetary damages sought are in excess of \$150,000, exclusive of interest and costs,				
the complaint seeks injunctive relief,				
1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		the matter is otherwise ineligible for the following reason		
		DISCLOSURE STATEMENT - FEDERAL RULES CIVIL PROCEDURE	<u> </u>	
villet ur villet		Identify any parent corporation and any publicly held corporation that owns 10% or more or	its stocks:	
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		RELATED CASE STATEMENT (Section VIII on the Front of this Form	<u>n)</u>	
provides because same jud case: (A	that "A c the cases lge and m) involves	cases that are arguably related pursuant to Division of Business Rule 50.3.1 in Section VIII on the front of th "A civil case is "related" to another civil case for purposes of this guideline when, because of the similarity cases arise from the same transactions or events, a substantial saving of judicial resources is likely to result from magistrate judge." Rule 50.3.1 (b) provides that "A civil case shall not be deemed "related" to another civil case identical legal issues, or (B) involves the same parties." Rule 50.3.1 (c) further provides that "Presumption determine otherwise pursuant to paragraph (d), civil cases shall not be deemed to be "related" unless both cases are cased to be "related" unless both cases ar	of facts and legal issues or om assigning both cases to the ril case merely because the civil ively, and subject to the power	
		NY-E DIVISION OF BUSINESS RULE 50.1(d)(2)		
1.)	Is the county	the civil action being filed in the Eastern District removed from a New York State Court located in unty: No	Nassau or Suffolk	
2.)	a) Did t	you answered "no" above: Did the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in unty? No	Nassau or Suffolk	
b) Did the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in the Eastern District?				
Suffolk	County, olk Coun	ver to question 2 (b) is "No," does the defendant (or a majority of the defendants, if there is more thanty, or, in an interpleader action, does the claimant (or a majority of the claimants, if there is more county?	than one) reside in Nassau	
.1.	(N	(Note: A corporation shall be considered a resident of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the most significant of the County in which it has the county in	cant contacts).	
BAR ADMISSION				
I am cu	rrently ac	ly admitted in the Eastern District of New York and currently a member in good standing of the ba Yes No	r of this court.	
Are you	currentl	rently the subject of any disciplinary action (s) in this or any other state or federal court? Yes (If yes, please explain) No		
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,		accuracy of all information provided above.		
Signatu	re:			

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT for the Eastern District of New York Kyle McMahon, Loren Mash, Santos Hernandez, Sherry Cardoso, and Emi Howard Plaintiff Civil Action No. Brooklyn Fare Kitchen Corp. d/b/a Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare, Cesar Ramirez, and Moe Issa Defendant 34.3 SUMMONS IN A CIVIL ACTION Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare; To: (Defendant's name and address) Cesar Ramirez; Moe Issa. 200 Schermerhorn St. Brooklyn, NY 11201 A lawsuit has been filed against you. Within 21 days after service of this summons on you (not counting the day you received it) — or 60 days if you are the United States or a United States agency, or an officer or employee of the United States described in Fed. R. Civ. P. 12 (a)(2) or (3) — you must serve on the plaintiff an answer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. The answer or motion must be served on the plaintiff or plaintiff's attorney, whose name and address are: If you fail to respond, judgment by default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint. You also must file your answer or motion with the court. rea:

Çiyê Ang	CLERK OF COURT
Date:	
	Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

AO 440 (Rev. 12/09) Summons in a Civil Action (Page 2)

Civil Action No.

PROOF OF SERVICE

(This section should not be filed with the court unless required by Fed. R. Civ. P. 4 (1))

•	This summons for <i>(name)</i>	ne of individual and title, if any)					
was re	ceived by me on (date)	•					
	☐ I personally served	the summons on the individual at (place)	on (date)	; or			
1 44 88	☐ I left the summons:	at the individual's residence or usual pla					
•	☐ I left the summons at the individual's residence or usual place of abode with (name) , a person of suitable age and discretion who resides there,						
	on (date)		d mailed a copy to the individual's last known address; or				
	☐ I served the summo	ns on (name of individual)		, who is			
	designated by law to a	accept service of process on behalf of (no					
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	I declare under penalty	of perjury that this information is true.					
Date:			Server's signature				
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			Server's address				

Additional information regarding attempted service, etc: