IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI WESTERN DIVISION

SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI JUL 18 2017 BY ARTHUR JOHNSTON DEPUTY

BETTY WEBB, on behalf of herself and others similarly situated

vs.

PLAINTIFF CASE NO.: 5:17CV ገበ

GRACE AND MERCY PERSONAL CARE and RESPITE SERVICES, LLC

DEFENDANT

COMPLAINT AND DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL (COLLECTIVE ACTION COMPLAINT)

COMES NOW Plaintiff, Betty Webb ("Plaintiff"), on her own behalf and on behalf of those similarly situated (collectively "Plaintiffs"), files this action against Defendant Grace and Mercy Personal Care and Respite Services, LLC. (hereinafter "Grace and Mercy") for unpaid overtime compensation, liquidated damages, declaratory relief and other relief under the Fair Labor Standards Act, as amended, 29 U.S.C. § 216(b) (the "FLSA").

NATURE OF SUIT

1. The FLSA was passed by Congress in 1938. The principal Congressional purpose in enacting the FLSA was to protect all covered workers from substandard wages and oppressive working hours, labor conditions that are detrimental to maintenance of minimum standards of living necessary for health, efficiency, and general well-being of workers. *Barrentine v. Arkansas-Best Freight System, Inc.*, 450 U.S. 728, 739, 101 S.Ct. 1437, 1444 (1981). The liquidated damage provision of the FLSA constitutes a Congressional recognition that failure to pay statutory minimum on time may be so detrimental to maintenance of minimum standard of living necessary for health, efficiency, and general well-being of workers and to the free flow of commerce, that double payment must be made in event of delay in order to insure restoration of worker to that minimum

standard of well-being. *Brooklyn v. Sav. Bank v. O'Neil*, 324 U.S. 697, 707-08, 65 S.Ct. 895, 902 (1945).

2. Plaintiff brings this action under the FLSA to recover from Defendant overtime compensation, liquidated damages, declaratory relief and reasonable attorney's fees and costs.

Additionally, Plaintiff seeks a declaration of rights pursuant to Fed.R.Civ.P.
 57 and the Federal Declaratory Judgment Act ("DJA"), 28 U.S.C. §2201.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

4. Jurisdiction in this Court is proper as the claims are brought pursuant to the FLSA, as amended 29 U.S.C. § 201, *et seq.* to recover unpaid overtime compensation, an additional equal amount as liquidated damages and reasonable attorneys' fees and costs.

5. The jurisdiction of the Court over this controversy is proper pursuant to 29 U.S.C. § 1331, as Plaintiff's claims arise under 29 U.S.C. § 216(b).

6. The Court has the authority to grant declaratory relief pursuant to the FLSA and the federal Declaratory Judgment Act ("DJA"), 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201-02.

7. Venue is proper in this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391 since all, or at least a substantial part of the events giving rise to Plaintiff's claims occurred in Franklin County, Mississippi.

PARTIES

8. Plaintiff, Betty Webb, is a non-exempt Personal Care Attendant (alternatively "PCA") who was employed by Defendant and performed assisted living services for Defendant in Franklin County Mississippi.

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9. Defendant Grace and Mercy is a company that operates and conducts business in Mississippi. It is headquartered in Hinds County, Mississippi at 317 Highway 80 East, Clinton, Mississippi 39056 and/or 102 Sandra Cove, Clinton, Mississippi 39056.

10. This action is intended to include each and every non-exempt personal care attendants who worked for the Defendant within the last three (3) years and who likewise were not paid overtime compensation at a rate of time and one-half their regular rate of pay for hours worked by them over forty (40) in a work week.

COVERAGE

11. At all material times hereto (2014 - 2017), Plaintiff was an "employee" within the meaning of the FLSA.

12. At all material times hereto (2014 - 2017), Defendant was the "employer" within the meaning of the FLSA.

13. At all material times hereto (2014 - 2017), Plaintiff was "engaged in commerce" within the meaning of §6 and §7 of the FLSA.

14. At all material times hereto (2014 · 2017), Defendant was, and continues to be, an "enterprise engaged in commerce" within the meaning of the FLSA.

15. At all material times hereto (2014 · 2017), Defendant was an enterprise covered by the FLSA, and as defined by 29 U.S.C. § 203(r) and 203(s).

16. At all material times hereto (2014 - 2017), Defendant employed two (2) or more employees engaged in interstate commerce in that said enterprise has had two (2) or more employees handling, selling, or otherwise working on goods or materials that have been moved in or produced for commerce by any person such as office supplies, building maintenance supplies, tools and equipment, etc.

17. At all material times hereto (2014 - 2017), Plaintiff was "engaged in commerce" and subject to individual coverage under the FLSA in that she:

a. Operated instrumentalities of commerce;

b. Transported goods in commerce;

c. Used channels of commerce;

d. Communicated across state lines; and/or

e. Performed work essential to any of the preceding activities.

18. At all material times hereto (2014 - 2017), the work performed by Plaintiff was directly essential to the operations performed by Defendant.

19. At all material times hereto (2014 - 2017), Defendant failed to comply with 29 U.S.C. §§ 201-209, because Plaintiff performed services for Defendant for which no provisions were made by Defendant to properly pay Plaintiff for those hours worked in excess of forty (40) within a work week.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

20. Plaintiff reincorporates and readopts by reference the above paragraphs as fully set forth herein.

21. Defendant is a privately owned, elderly assistance living company headquartered in Clinton, Mississippi.

22. Defendant operates a home health care company that provides in-home assisted living services to its patients.

23. Defendant earned at or above Five Hundred Thousand and 0/100 dollars (\$500,000.00) in annual gross sales or business during the relevant time period subject to Plaintiff's Complaint.

24. Plaintiff, Betty Webb, worked for Defendant from approximately January 1, 2014 to May 11, 2017. Her regular rate of pay was \$10.25 per hour.

25. Defendant purported to classify Plaintiff as an exempt employee for FLSA purposes.

26. Plaintiff routinely worked over forty (40) hours in a given workweek; however, she was not compensated at a rate of time and one-half for those overtime work hours.

27. Upon information and belief, Plaintiff, Betty Webb, typically worked up to fifty (50) hours per week. This includes ten (10) hours of overtime each workweek.

28. Rather than pay Plaintiff overtime compensation at a rate of time and onehalf for her overtime work hours, Defendant implemented and maintained a policy whereby it only paid Plaintiff and its other personal care attendants their regular rate of pay for all hours worked in a given workweek.

29. Plaintiff was not fully compensated for hours worked over forty (40) in a given workweek.

30. As such, Plaintiff and putative opt-in Plaintiffs are owed half-time back pay for all of their overtime hours.

31. Defendant knowingly, willfully, or with reckless disregard carried out its illegal pattern or practice of failing to pay overtime compensation with respect to Plaintiff. Defendant knowingly and willfully failed to fulfill its record keeping requirements with regard to Plaintiff under 29 C.F.R. 516.

32. Defendant did not act in good faith or reliance upon any of the following in formulating its pay practices: (a) case law, (b) the FLSA, 29 U.S.C. § 201, *et seq.*, (c) Department of Labor Wage & Hour Opinion Letters or (d) the Code of Federal Regulations.

COLLECTIVE ACTION ALLEGATIONS

33. Plaintiff and the class members performed the same or similar job duties as one another in that they provided in-home assisted living services for Defendant.

34. Further, Plaintiff and the class members were subjected to the same pay provisions in that they were not paid overtime pay calculated at a rate of at least time and

one-half their regular rate of pay for all hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours in a workweek during the time period they were employed; therefore, the class members are owed overtime wages for the same reasons as Plaintiff.

35. Defendant's failure to compensate employees for hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours in a workweek as required by the FLSA results from a policy or practice of ensuring that personal care assistants were not properly paid for all overtime hours worked in a workweek.

36. These policies or practices were applicable to each Plaintiff and the putative class members.

37. Application of these policies or practices does not depend on the personal circumstances of Plaintiff or those joining this lawsuit.

38. Rather, the same policies or practices that resulted in the non-payment of overtime to Plaintiff also applies to all class members.

39. Accordingly, the class members are properly defined as:

All personal care attendants who worked for Defendant within the last three (3) years who were not compensated the proper overtime rate of at least time-and-one-half their regular rate of pay for all hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours in a workweek.

40. Defendant knowingly, willfully, or with reckless disregard carried out its illegal pattern or practice of failing to pay overtime compensation with respect to Plaintiff and the class members.

41. Defendant did not act in good faith or reliance upon any of the following in formulating its pay practices: (a) case law, (b) the FLSA, 29 U.S.C. § 201, *et seq.*, (c) Department of Labor Wage & Hour Opinion Letters or (d) the Code of Federal Regulations.

42. During the relevant period, Defendant violated § 7(a)(1) and § 15(a)(2), by employing employees in an enterprise engaged in commerce or in the production of goods

for commerce within the meaning of the FLSA as aforesaid, for one or more workweeks without compensating such employees for their work at a rate of at least time and one-half their regular rate of pay for all hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours in a work week.

43. Defendant has acted willfully in failing to pay Plaintiff and the class members in accordance with the law.

COUNT I - RECOVERY OF OVERTIME COMPENSATION

44. Plaintiff readopts and reincorporates paragraphs 1 through 43 of the Complaint, as if fully set forth herein.

45. At all material times hereto, Plaintiff worked in excess of forty (40) hours per workweek for which Plaintiff was not compensated at the statutory rate of one and one-half times Plaintiff's regular rate of pay.

46. Plaintiff was, and is, entitled to be paid at the statutory rate of one and onehalf times Plaintiff's regular rate of pay for those hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours in a workweek.

47. At all times material hereto, Defendant failed, and continues to fail, to maintain proper time records as mandated by the FLSA.

48. Defendant's actions were willful and/or showed reckless disregard for the provisions of the FLSA, as evidenced by its failure to compensate Plaintiff at the statutory rate of one and one-half times Plaintiff's regular rate of pay for the hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours per workweek when they knew, or should have known, such was, and is, due.

49. Defendant failed to properly disclose or apprise Plaintiff of her rights under the FLSA.

50. Due to the intentional, willful, and unlawful acts of Defendant, Plaintiff suffered damages and lost compensation for time worked over forty (40) hours per week, plus liquidated damages.

51. Plaintiff is entitled to an award of reasonable attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to 29 U.S.C. §216(b).

52. At all times material hereto, Defendant failed to comply with Title 29 and United States Department of Labor Regulations, 29 C.F.R. §§516.2 and 516.4 with respect to Plaintiff by virtue of the management policy, plan or decision that intentionally provided for the compensation of such employees at a rate less than time-and-one-half for their overtime hours.

COUNT II - DECLARATORY RELIEF

53. Plaintiff readopts and reincorporates paragraphs 1 through 43 of the Complaint as if fully set forth herein.

54. Plaintiff and Defendant have a Fair Labor Standards Act dispute pending, which the Court has jurisdiction to hear pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331, as a federal question exists.

55. The Court also has jurisdiction to hear Plaintiff's request for declaratory relief pursuant to the Declaratory Judgment Act. 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201-2202.

- 56. Plaintiff may obtain declaratory relief.
- 57. Defendant employed Plaintiff.
- 58. Defendant is an enterprise.

59. Plaintiff was individually covered by the FLSA.

60. Plaintiff is entitled to overtime compensation pursuant to 29 U.S.C. §207(a)(1). 61. Defendant did not keep accurate time records pursuant to 29 U.S.C. §211(c) and 29 C.F.R. Part 516.

62. Defendant did not rely on a good faith defense in its failure to abide by the provisions of the FLSA.

63. It is in the public interest to have these declarations of rights recorded.

64. Plaintiff's declaratory judgment action serves the useful purpose of clarifying and settling the legal relations at issue.

65. The declaratory judgment action terminates and affords relief from uncertainty, insecurity, and controversy giving rise to the proceeding.

66. Plaintiff demands a trial by jury.

WHEREFORE, PREMISES CONSIDERED, Plaintiff respectfully requests that judgment be entered in her favor against Defendant:

- a. Declaring, pursuant to 29 U.S.C. §§2201 and 2202, that the acts and practices complained of herein are in violation of the maximum hour provisions of the FLSA;
- b. Awarding Plaintiff overtime compensation in the amount due to him for Plaintiff's time worked in excess of forty (40) hours per workweek;
- c. Awarding Plaintiff liquidated damages in an amount equal to the overtime award;
- d. Awarding Plaintiff reasonable attorneys' fees and costs and expenses of the litigation pursuant to 29 U.S.C. §216(b);
- e. Awarding Plaintiff pre-judgment interest;
- f. Ordering any other further relief the Court deems just and proper.

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JURY DEMAND

Plaintiff demands trial by jury on all issues so triable as a matter of right by jury.

DATED, this the 18th day of July, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

WEBB, PLAINTIFF BETTY Christopen W. Espy, Esq. (MSB# 102424) MORGAN & MORGAN PLLC 4450 Old Canton Road, Suite 200

Jackson, Mississippi 39211 Phone: 601-718-2087 Fax: 601-718-2102 Email: cespy@forthepeople.com

ATTORNEY FOR PLAINTIFF

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CIVIL COVER SHEET

JS 44 (Rev. 12/12)

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.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS				DEFENDANTS		
BETTY WEBB, on behalf of herself and others similarly situated				GRACE AND MERCY PERSONAL CARE and RESPITE SERVICES, LLC		
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Hinds County MS (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF GARSSTHERN DISTACT OF MISSISSIPP FILED.						
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, J Christopher W. Espy, Esc 4450 Old Canton Road, S Lackson, Missioning 202	q. Morgan & Morgan Suite 200	r) i		Attorneys (If Known)		
Jackson, Mississippi 392						
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	CTION (Place an "X" in O	ne Box Only)		IZENSHIP OF P For Diversity Cases Only)	RINCIPAL PARTIES	(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintij and One Box for Defendant)
U.S. Government Plaintiff	S Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)		Citizen	PTF DEF PTF DEF Citizen of This State C 1 C 1 Incorporated or Principal Place C 4 4 of Business In This State		
2 U.S. Government Defendant			Citizen	Citizen of Another State 🗇 2 🗇 2 Incorporated and Principal Place 🗇 5 🗇 5 of Business In Another State		
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IV. NATURE OF SUIT		ily) PRTS	FO	RFEITURE/PENALTY	BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES
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 120 Marine 130 Miller Act 	 310 Airplanc 315 Airplanc Product 	□ 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability		of Property 21 USC 881	423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157	 400 State Reapportionment 410 Antitrust
140 Negotiable Instrument	Liability	367 Health Care/	5 070	Guidi		430 Banks and Banking
150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment	320 Assault, Libel & Slander	Pharmaceutical Personal Injury			PROPERTY RIGITS 820 Copyrights	450 Commerce 460 Deportation
 151 Medicare Act 152 Recovery of Defaulted 	330 Federal Employers' Liability	Product Liability 368 Asbestos Persona	1		830 Patent 840 Trademark	470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations
Student Loans	🗇 340 Marine	Injury Product	'			480 Consumer Credit
(Excludes Veterans) 153 Recovery of Overpayment	345 Marine Product Liability	Liability PERSONAL PROPEI	RTY 2 710	LABOR Fair Labor Standards	SOCIAL SECURITY 861 HIA (1395ff)	 490 Cable/Sat TV 850 Securities/Commodities/
of Veteran's Benefits 160 Stockholders' Suits	350 Motor Vehicle 355 Motor Vehicle	 370 Other Fraud 371 Truth in Lending 	720	Act Labor/Management	 862 Black Lung (923) 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g)) 	Exchange 890 Other Statutory Actions
190 Other Contract	Product Liability	380 Other Personal		Relations	3 864 SSID Title XVI	891 Agricultural Acts
 195 Contract Product Liability 196 Franchise 	360 Other Personal Injury	Property Damage 385 Property Damage		Railway Labor Act Family and Medical	□ 865 RSI (405(g))	 893 Environmental Matters 895 Freedom of Information
	362 Personal Injury - Medical Malpractice	Product Liability	790	Leave Act Other Labor Litigation		Act 896 Arbitration
REAL PROPERTY	CIVIL RIGHTS	PRISONER PETITIO	NS 🖸 791	Employee Retirement	FEDERAL TAX SUITS	899 Administrative Procedure
 210 Land Condemnation 220 Foreclosure 	 440 Other Civil Rights 441 Voting 	Ilabeas Corpus: 463 Alien Detainee		Income Security Act	870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant)	Act/Review or Appeal of Agency Decision
 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment 240 Torts to Land 	442 Employment	D 510 Motions to Vacate	c		□ 871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC 7609	950 Constitutionality of State Statutes
245 Tort Product Liability	443 Housing/ Accommodations	Sentence 530 General			20 030 7009	State Statures
290 All Other Real Property	445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment	535 Death Penalty Other:		IMMIGRATION Naturalization Application	-	
	446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other	 540 Mandamus & Oth 550 Civil Rights 		Other Immigration Actions		
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VI. CAUSE OF ACTION	use: compensation					
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:		IS A CLASS ACTION	N DE	MAND S	CHECK YES only JURY DEMAND	y if demanded in complaint:
VIII. RELATED CASI IF ANY	E(S) (See instructions):	JUDGE			DOCKET NUMBER	
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ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>Grace and Mercy Personal Care and Respite Services Hit with FLSA Suit</u>