1 2 3 4 5 6 7 IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON 8 FOR THE COUNTY OF MULTNOMAH 9 KARI NELSON, individually and KIONO NELSON, as the Personal No.: 21CV40742 10 Representative of the ESTATE OF CORNERSTONE SECURITY FREDDY, NELSON, JR, GROUP'S RESPONSE TO 11 PLAINTIFFS' MOTION TO PERMIT Plaintiffs. FILING OF AMENDED COMPLAINT 12 AND TO ADD CLAIM FOR v. PUNITIVE DAMAGES 13 TMT DEVELOPMENT CO., LLC, an Motions Judge: The Honorable Leslie 14||Oregon corporation; D. PARK CORPORATION, and Oregon G. Bottomly 15 corporation, dba HAYDEN MEADOWS: Request for Telephonic Participation MATTHEW CADY, dba By Attorney Steve Wraith (UTCR 16 CORNERSTONE SECURITY GROUP; 5.05-(2)(b)JEFFREY JAMES, dba CORNERSTONE 17 SECURITY GROUP; TJ LATHROM, dba Counsel located more than 25 miles CORNERSTONE SECURITY GROUP; 18 and LOGAN GIMBEL from the court. Defendant. 19 OPPOSITION 20 Defendant Cornerstone Security Group, Matthew Cady, TJ Lathrom, and 21 Jeffrey James ("Cornerstone") opposes the Motion of Plaintiffs Kari Nelson and the 22 Estate of Freddy Nelson for Leave to Amend the Complaint to add a claim for 23 punitive damages, waive claims for economic damages, and increase damage claims 24 for emotional distress. This opposition is supported by the Declaration of attorney 25 CJ Martin, the following points and authorities, and the Court's own file. 26



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INTRODUCTION

Defendants Cornerstone seek to provide professional security services responsive to the needs of clients like the Delta Park Center, its management company, TMT, as well as Tenants such as Lowe's Home Center. Cornerstone's security services include trained security officers observing the requirements set out by the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) and open dialogue with management regarding the client's changing security needs.

Cornerstone hired experienced officers to serve as armed security for clients such as Defendants Delta Park and TMT. Cornerstone provided training consistent with the requirements of the DPSST with an emphasis on de-escalating any confrontation. Officer Logan Gimbel was no exception to this approach.

The May 29, 2021 shooting of plaintiff Freddy Nelson by Defendant Gimbel at the Delta Park Center occurred after a string of confrontations between Cornerstone officers and Mr. Nelson. He was clearly on notice that he was not permitted on the Delta Park property, that he had been "trespassed," and a notice circulated that he was not permitted on the property and subject to arrest as a trespasser if he did. At some point previously, Nelson was involved in a fist fight over pallets discarded by Lowe's and had unlawfully taken pallets from the Lowe's loading area without permission. He then scorned Cornerstone personnel at each encounter, refusing to leave the property despite demands that he do so.

However, Cornerstone received conflicting instructions and directions from Lowe's Home Centers, LLC and TMT management about Mr. Nelson and Cornerstone's duties at the property. Nelson repeatedly trespassed at Delta Park, mocking and harassing security when officers confronted him about his trespassing, claiming that Lowe's had given him permission to take discarded pallets from its loading area. In fact, Lowe's shipping manager had allowed him permission to take pallets. However, TMT clearly approved the trespass notice and confirmed with

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Lowe's corporate management that Nelson was not authorized to take pallets from Lowe's loading area at the Delta Park Center.

TMT further complicated Cornerstone's job at Delta Park by insisting on a "zero tolerance" policy for any activity on the property that violated TMT rules, no matter how minor the infraction. This included trespass. By zero tolerance, Cornerstone was expected to remove these violators from the property. Meanwhile, TMT opted to reduce security on the Delta Park property to a single officer after 6 p.m., with responsibility for the entire complex. On May 29, 2021, Gimbel had no backup when he confronted Mr. Nelson.

On May 8, 2023, a jury convicted Gimbel of the killing of Nelson, as well as the unlawful use of pepper spray on Mr. Nelson and his wife Kari Nelson.

Nonetheless, Nelson in this civil matter must also have his actions scrutinized.

Nelson clearly knew he was not permitted on the property but parked in the parking lot in any case. Video of the shooting shows him grabbing a canister of pepper spray when Gimbel confronted him. He then attempted to drive his pick-up into Gimbel, then reversed the vehicle before placing it in drive again and turning the wheels towards Gimbel with apparent intent to speed the vehicle towards Gimbel for a second time.

Cornerstone has not been charged with any criminal conduct regarding the incident.

Considering these circumstances, Cornerstone maintains that it committed no negligent act, let alone a reckless or intentional act, that led to Mr. Gimbel's deployment of pepper spray or the shooting of Mr. Nelson, and plaintiffs provide no relevant evidence to the contrary. Cornerstone therefore opposes the motion for leave to amend the complaint to add punitive damages and to increase the amount claimed for general damages.

The court should also consider the prejudice caused by the timing of this motion in relation to the current trial date of November 8, 2023. The Defendants have, to date, been denied records of the police investigation due to the pending criminal trial. There have been no depositions taken in the case. Moreover, as plaintiffs seek to add Lowe's as a party, Cornerstone counsel anticipates that Lowe's counsel will seek a continuance given the limited time available before the trial.

FACTS

A. Cornerstone sought to provide professional security service as governed by the DPSST and Oregon law.

Defendants Cornerstone's mission statement is instructive of Cornerstone's mission plan from its founding:

Cornerstone Security Group was founded in 2017 on the principle of reinventing the security industry in the State of Oregon and abroad. Our founding principles are based on raising the security industry standard. We bring professionalism, honesty, integrity, loyalty, and combined 25 years of experience to the table.

Declaration of CJ Martin in Support of Response to Motion to Amend, Ex. 1, TMT/Cornerstone Email Exchange, TMT 1001. Security services include trained security officers observing the requirements set out by the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) and open dialogue with management regarding the client's changing security needs. *Id.*, Ex. 2, Cornerstone Offer Letter, TMT 1166-1170.

In their motion, plaintiffs file selective correspondence from Cornerstone to argue that Cornerstone management advocated violence even murder by its officers (Plaintiffs' Motion to Amend Complaint, pp. 13-14). The reality is Cornerstone management stressed non-violent de-escalation of confrontation, including Delta

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Park that experienced more crime than other areas around Portland. *Id.* Ex. 3,¹ Cornerstone Policy Notice, December 4, 2020 (Redacted) Def. 1337. In the face of increasing attacks on law enforcement and security by potentially armed subjects, Cornerstone management cautioned against escalating confrontations with subjects, emphasizing the need to confirm that the subject was armed and dangerous. Otherwise, a side arm was not to be un-holstered. The

AT NO TIME SHOULD AN OFFICER(S) DRAW THEIR FIREARM AND USE IT AS A COMPLIANCE TOOL. THIS HAS BEEN HAPPENING AND IT NEEDS TO CEASE IMMEDIATELY. LOUD AND CLEAR VERBAL COMMANDS, OC APPLICATION AND IF THAT IS INEFFECTIVE VERBAL WARNING OF BATON STRIKES AND BATON STRIKES UNTIL THE SUBJECT COMPLIES.

Id.

directive states:

Plaintiffs' counsel's brief is misleading in citing to exaggerated language within intra-company communications of Cornerstone. Plaintiffs' Motion, pp. 13-14. In fact, these internal communications simply track instructions contained within DPSST training manuals. Plaintiffs' quotation of "Have a Plan to Kill Everyone you Meet . . . " fails to put that statement in the context of language adopted in DPSST training manuals:

You Must Answer These Questions:

Before (not after) you accept the responsibility of carrying a gun as an armed private security officer, you must examine the following questions and decided if you are willing to shoot and, if necessary, kill if the situation demands it. If you have doubts or a sense of indecision, then you are not prepared to carry the gun in the performance of your job.

Are you willing to shoot and possibly kill someone who threatens

¹ Exhibit 3 is subject to the Court's Protective Order and is therefore no filed with this motion. Cornerstone has contemporaneously filed a motion to file Exhibit 3 under seal.

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your life or the life of another person?

This decision is critical to your ability to safely and effectively carry out your role as an armed officer. You must think about and resolve this question before accepting the responsibility of carrying a gun and potentially using it. You must be willing to shoot and, if necessary, kill if the situation demands it. When the confrontation occurs, it will be too late to decide whether you can or cannot shoot. Failing to make this decision now will place you and the people you work with in danger. You must decide now. Your employee cannot do it for you. Neither can family, friends or advisors. This is your decision and yours alone.

Id., Ex. 4, DPPST Training Manual Excerpts, p. 11 (emphasis in original).

Both Cornerstone and the DPPST give the same instruction, in short: "Be prepared!" Cornerstone is not advocating murder but is emphasizing in exact accordance with DPPST instruction the tremendous responsibility of carrying a weapon.

Note also that the DPPST instruction emphasizes the responsibility for use of a side arm does not lie with the employer but with the security officer and his decision whether or not to use the weapon.

B. Logan Gimbel had completed the course work to become an armed security guard.

In hiring Logan Gimbel, Cornerstone learned that he was not yet licensed as an armed security guard. However, they specifically required him to complete the training and obtain his certification, which he completed prior to May 29, 2021. Plaintiffs' Motion, Ex. 14, Request for Production to Cady No. 3, p. 4. The delay in obtaining the physical certificate was due entirely to the failure of DPSST's processing of the application and was only a clerical matter. There is no question raised that Mr. Gimbel had not qualified for the certificate.

Given this circumstance, Cornerstone's conduct does not rise to malicious and reckless conduct required under ORS 31.730(1).

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C. Cornerstone was given conflicting policy instructions from TMT and Delta Park.

Cornerstone was given conflicting instructions and information by TMT and Delta Park that placed Cornerstone in the difficult, if not nearly impossible, position when enforcing TMT rules. First, TMT demanded a zero-tolerance policy requiring Cornerstone to enforce every infraction, no matter how inconsequential. CJ Martin Declaration, Ex. 3 TMT 1167-1170. Meanwhile, TMT insisted on limiting the number of man-hours TMT was willing to pay Cornerstone to patrol the property.

Much of Cornerstone officer time was spent patrolling the lines of patrons returning bottles to the "BottleDrop," or the Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative ("OBRC"), a non-profit corporation that administers the State's recycle law. But the BottleDrop operation at Delta Park was problematic in that the patrons returning bottles would line up on property belonging to other tenants, requiring Cornerstone to police the line so that it did not encroach on other businesses. Moreover, patrons were often unruly, creating repeated confrontations between Cornerstone officers and BottleDrop patrons. This situation led to Cornerstone officers having to spend disproportionate resources on supervising the BottleDrop patron line at the expense of patrolling elsewhere at the property.

Second, Lowe's and TMT failed to adequately communicate regarding Nelson's authority to take discarded pallets. Nelson repeatedly trespassed at the property, mocking and harassing security when officers confronted him about his trespassing, claiming that Lowe's had given him permission to take discarded pallets from its loading area. In fact, Lowe's local management had allowed him permission to take pallets. However, TMT clearly approved the trespass notice against Nelson and confirmed with Lowe's corporate management that Nelson was not authorized to take pallets from Lowe's at the Delta Park Center. *Id.*, Ex. 4, Def.

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1303-1305. But by this point, Nelson and Cornerstone security officers had had multiple encounters.

The litany of minor infractions that TMT wanted enforced under its zerotolerance policy included trespass. Id., Ex. 3, 1167-1170. By zero-tolerance, Cornerstone was expected to remove these violators from the property. Meanwhile, TMT opted to reduce security at Delta Park to a single officer with responsibility for the entire complex after 6:00 p.m. This was the case on May 29, 2021, as Gimbel had no backup when he confronted Mr. Nelson.

D. Defendants will be prejudiced in their preparation for trial.

Trial in this matter is currently set for November 8, 2023. At this point in the litigation, defendants still have not been given access to all relevant documents from the police due to the criminal investigation and trial. There have been no depositions. Meanwhile, plaintiffs seek to add claims for punitive damages and increased non-economic damages totaling \$150,000,000. Moreover, the amendments seek to add Lowe's Home Center as a defendant. Lowe's has not participated in the case, and it is expected that it will take time for plaintiffs to serve Lowe's, and for Lowe's to appear and answer the complaint.

It will be months before all that is concluded and only then can the parties pursue depositions permitted under Oregon law. There simply is inadequate time to complete preparation given the current trial date.

LEGAL STANDARD

A. Plaintiffs have failed to show specific facts supporting a claim for punitive damages against Cornerstone by admissible evidence.

After a responsive pleading has been filed, "a party may amend the pleading only by leave of court or by written consent of the adverse party." ORCP 23 A. Although leave shall be freely given when justice so requires, "the court retains 26 discretion to deny the motion." C.O. Homes, LLC v. Cleveland, 366 Or 207, 215, 460

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P3d 494, 499 (2020); ORCP 23 A. The court may deny the motion based on factors such as prejudice to the opposing party or whether the proposed amendment is futile. *Eklof v. Persson*, 369 Or 531, 533, 543-44, 508 P3d 468 (2022).

As for punitive damages, a party may amend the pleading to assert a claim only upon motion to the court. ORS 31.725(2). The court "shall deny" the motion if:

(a) The court determines that the affidavits and supporting documentation submitted by the party seeking punitive damages **fail to set forth specific facts supported by admissible evidence** adequate to avoid the granting of a motion for a directed verdict to the party opposing the motion on the issue of punitive damages in a trial of the matter; or

b) The party opposing the motion establishes that the timing of the motion to amend prejudices the party's ability to defend against the claim for punitive damages.

ORS 31.725(3) (emphasis added).

Plaintiffs cite to no specific fact that would implicate Cornerstone in the shooting of May 29, 2021. ORS 31.730(1) states:

Punitive damages are not recoverable in a civil action unless it is proven by clear and convincing evidence that the party against whom punitive damages are sought has acted with malice or has shown a reckless and outrageous indifference to a highly unreasonable risk of harm and has acted with a conscious indifference to the health, safety and welfare of others.

Cornerstone did not instruct Logan Gimbel to pull the trigger under the circumstances he faced at the time of the shooting. Cornerstone did not compel Mr. Nelson in the actions he took when facing an armed security guard. At worst, Cornerstone did nothing but attempt to enforce the policies of TMT.

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B. Cornerstone's defense is not limited by Gimbel's criminal conviction.

Cornerstone's defense in this civil matter is not compromised by Mr. Gimbel's convictions in the criminal case as argued in plaintiffs' motion (Plaintiffs' Motion, p.

9). Cornerstone was not a party to the action, and the jury verdict is inadmissible evidence here. *Underwood v. City of Portland*, 319 Or App 648, 510 P3d 918 (2022).

Issue preclusion arises in subsequent proceedings when an "issue of ultimate fact has been determined by a valid and final determination in a prior proceeding." *Nelson v. Emerald People's Utility Dist.*, 318 Or 99, 103, 862 P2d 1293 (1993). If a tribunal has decided an issue,

"the decision on that issue may preclude relitigation of the issue in another proceeding if five requirements are met:

- "1. The issue in the two proceedings is identical.
- "2. The issue was actually litigated and was essential to a final decision on the merits in the prior proceeding.
- "3. The party sought to be precluded has had a full and fair opportunity to be heard on that issue.
- "4. The party sought to be precluded was a party or was in privity with a party to the prior proceeding.
- "5. The prior proceeding was the type of proceeding to which this court will give preclusive effect."

Id. at 654-55 (emphasis added).

Cornerstone is free to contest the factual basis of the May 19, 2021 shooting, and plaintiffs' citing to the conviction as a basis to allow claims for punitive damages in the civil matter is therefore improper. The conviction is irrelevant to the court's consideration of the evidence of allegedly malicious conduct by Cornerstone.

C. Cornerstone would be highly prejudiced by the Amendments.

Pursuant to both ORS 31.725(3) and ORCP 23, courts must consider the prejudice to the opposing party from allowing proposed amendments. *See also Eklof*, 369 Or at 533, 508 P3d 468. Cornerstone would be highly prejudiced by the proposed amendments at this late date as they would substantially alter the case.

Courts have discretion to deny a proposed amendment where it would "substantially change the cause of action or interject an entire new element of damage." Cutsforth v. Kinzua Corp., 267 Or 423, 434, 517 P2d 640, 645 (1973). For instance, in Sanford v. Hampton Res., Inc., 298 Or App 555, 577, 447 P3d 1192, 1204–05 (2019), plaintiff sought to amend the complaint to "substantially increase the amount of damages sought and to add new specifications of negligence." The trial court denied the amendments and the appellate court affirmed. It held, "allowing those amendments would be unfairly prejudicial to defendants under the circumstances." Id. The parties had already prepared their case and conducted discovery based on previous allegations, and the new allegations would have required additional discovery and expert analysis. Id.; see also Deep Photonics Corp. v. LaChapelle, 368 Or 274, 302, 491 P3d 60, 76 (2021) (trial court did not abuse discretion in denying late request for amendment when it would have been prejudicial to defendants).

Like in *Sanford*, plaintiffs' proposed amendments substantially change the cause of action and interject a huge new element of damages. Courts are well within their discretion to deny proposed amendments under these circumstances.

Further, the court should consider "whether the movant knew or reasonably should have known earlier in the case of the need to amend their pleadings." *Cutsforth*, *supra*, 267 Or at 434. The documentation on which plaintiffs rely here has been available to plaintiffs for months. Yet, plaintiffs unreasonably delayed the filing of this motion until June. Trial is now approaching on November 6, 2023.

Given the upcoming trial date and the fact that plaintiffs knew or should have known earlier of the desire to amend the pleadings, taken together with the prejudice that would result to Defendants from the amendments, this Court should deny the motion to amend.

D. The Amendments would be futile.

This proposed amendment should be denied because it would be futile. "An amendment is futile if the claim as amended 'could not prevail on the merits due to some failing in the pleadings or some unavoidable bar or obstacle." *Nationstar Mortg., LLC v. Hinkle,* 321 Or App 300, 312, 516 P3d 718 (2022) (quoting *Slagle, supra,* 176 Or App at 543-44). Plaintiffs' allegations do not support claims for punitive damages.

The Court "shall deny" a motion to add punitive damages if "[t]he court determines that the affidavits and supporting documentation submitted by the party seeking punitive damages fail to set forth specific facts supported by admissible evidence adequate to avoid the granting of a motion for a directed verdict to the party opposing the motion on the issue of punitive damages in a trial of the matter." ORS 31.725(3). Plaintiffs' motion fails to set forth the facts necessary to avoid the granting of a motion for directed verdict and thus must be denied.

Plaintiffs cannot recover punitive damages unless they prove by clear and convincing evidence that Defendants acted with malice or have shown a reckless and outrageous indifference to a highly unreasonable risk of harm and have acted with a conscious indifference to the health, safety and welfare of others. ORS 31.730. Plaintiffs' complaint currently states a claim for negligence, which cannot support punitive damages. "In Oregon, punitive damages cannot be awarded for ordinary negligence." Wilson v. Tobiassen, 97 Or App 527, 532, 777 P2d 1379, 1383 (1989); Badger v. Paulson Inv. Co., 311 Or 14, 28, 803 P2d 1178, 1186 (1991) ("The

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prerequisite for imposition of punitive damages is a degree of culpability greater than inattention or simple negligence.").

Plaintiffs' attempt to add allegations of malice or reckless and outrageous indifference to support punitive damages should be rejected for a second, independent reason—there is no evidence to support them. "In civil cases malice has been held to mean the intentional doing of [an] injurious act without justification or excuse." *Linkhart v. Savely*, 190 Or 484, 505–06, 227 P2d 187 (1951) (emphasis added). Punitive damages are only authorized for torts "committed with a bad motive or so recklessly as to be in disregard of social obligations, or an act wantonly, maliciously or wickedly done." *Id.*; *Johannesen v. Salem Hosp.*, 336 Or 211, 217–18, 82 P3d 139, 141–42 (2003) (approving of definition). Punitive damages are not warranted here because Cornerstone's actions were limited to enforcing the rules and regulations of TMT and Delta Park and in the training of Gimbel. At worst, Cornerstone's actions amount to negligence rather than malice or recklessness.

Andor by Affatigato v. United Air Lines, Inc., 303 Or 505, 739 P2d 18 (1987) is instructive. In that case, the Court of Appeals reversed a jury's award of punitive damages against United Airlines after an airline accident. A pilot heard a noise when the landing gear extended, but the gear was in position and locked. The pilot circled the airport while consulting with the control tower, who advised him to land. While circling, the fuel ran out, the engines failed and the pilot had to crash-land the plane. Id. at 507-508. The court reasoned that the pilot's decision to not trust that the landing gear was engaged, and instead circle the airport, "may show negligence, misjudgment, even stubbornness on the pilot's part, but there is no evidence that the pilot or anyone else disregarded or was indifferent to the safety of the plane and its passengers." Id. at 515. As for United, the court held, "mere failure to foresee the pilot's reactions is not enough for punitive damages. If this

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sufficed, it would support a claim for punitive damages whenever some persons within an organization failed to anticipate foreseeable risks of substandard performance by others in the organization." *Id.* at 517.

Punitive damages are also not warranted because the evidence does not show a causal relationship between Cornerstone's acts and the May 29, 2021 incident. As stated by one court considering whether punitive damages could be awarded against the company for the acts of its driver, "the absence of a causal relationship prevents an award of punitive damages." Williamson v. Munsen Paving, LLC, No. 09-CV-736-AC, 2010 WL 4340473, at *7 (D Or Oct. 22, 2010). In that case, the plaintiff made various allegations that the company failed to hold safety meetings or document its safety plan. But there was no evidence that even with these acts, the accident would not have occurred. Similarly, plaintiffs cite a variety of so-called failings by Cornerstone, such as the language of its internal communications. But there is no causal connection between these things and Gimbel's actions. Plaintiffs are merely attempting to paint Cornerstone as an unsavory business, hoping this will suffice to claim punitive damages. But this approach has been forbidden by United States Supreme Court case law. "A defendant should be punished for the conduct that harmed the plaintiff, not for being an unsavory individual or business." Id. (quoting State Farm Mutual Automobile Ins. Co. v. Campbell, 538 US 408, 423 (2003)). /// /// /// ///

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Defendants Cornerstone requests that the court deny Plaintiffs' Motion for Leave to Amend to add punitive damages and to increase the amount claimed for general damages.

DATED: June 12, 2023

MALONEY LAUERSDORF REINER, PC

By /s/ CJ Martin

Katie D. Buxman OSB #061452 Email: kb@mlrlegalteam.com Candice J. Martin, OSB #106141 Email: cjm@mlrlegalteam.com

Of Attorneys for Defendants Matthew Cady, Jeffrey James, TJ Lathrom, dba Cornerstone Security Group

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE 1 I hereby certify that on June 12, 2023, I served the foregoing 2 CORNERSTONE SECURITY GROUP'S RESPONSE TO PLAINTIFF'S MOTION 3 TO PEREMIT FILING OF AMENDED COMPLAINT AND TO ADD CLAIM FOR 4 PUNITIVE DAMAGES on the following party at the following address: 5 Thomas D'Amore Mr. Carey Caldwell 6 Hart Wagner LLP Ben Turner 1000 SW Broadway Ste 2000 D'Amore Law Group 7 4230 Galewood St Ste 200 Portland OR 97205 P: 503-222-4499 Lake Oswego OR 97035 8 P: 503-222-6333 F: 503-222-2301 F: 503-224-1895 cpc@hartwagner.com 9 Of Attorneys for Defendants TMT & D. tom@damorelaw.com ben@damorelaw.com Park 10 Of Attorneys for Plaintiff 11 **Andrew Burns** Kirsten L. Curtis Shavna Rogers Thenell Law Group 12 Cosgrave Vergeer Kester LLP 12909 SW 68th Pkwy Ste 290 900 SW 5th Ave Fl 24 Portland OR 97223 13 Portland OR 97204 P: 503-372-6450 P: 503-323-9000 F: 503-372-6496 14 kirsten@thenelllawgroup.com F: 503-323-9019 aburns@cosgravelaw.com Of Attorneys for Logan Gimbel 15 srogers@cosgravelaw.com along@cosgravelaw.com 16 Steven Wraith 17 Lee Smart PS Inc 701 Pike St Ste 1800 18 Seattle WA 98101 P: 206-624-7990 19 F: 206-624-5944 sgw@leesmart.com 20 Of Attorneys for Cornerstone *Defendants* 21 22 /// 23 /// 24 /// 25

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1	by emailing a true and correct copy thereof, certified by me as such, on said day.
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