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**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO**

NONI GOTTI,

Plaintiff,

v.

**GUILLERMO BENITEZ;
ELIZABETH BENITEZ GARCIA DBA
SAN YSIDRO AUTO SALES; And
DOES 1 THROUGH 10, Inclusive**

Defendants.

Case No. 37-2008-00070661-CU-CR-SC

CIVIL COMPLAINT:
DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES IN
PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS
[42 U.S.C. 12182(a) ET. SEQ; CIVIL
CODE 51, 52, 54, 54.1, 54.3]

**UNLIMITED CIVIL CASE –
PERMANENT INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

NAMED DEFENDANTS AND NAMED PLAINTIFF

1. Plaintiff is informed, believes and thereon alleges that Defendants are, and, at all times mentioned herein, were, a business or corporation or franchise organized and existing and/or doing business under the laws of the State of California. Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that Defendants GUILLERMO BENITEZ; ELIZABETH BENITEZ GARCIA DBA SAN YSIDRO AUTO SALES are the owner, operator, and/or lessor/lessee of the real property and the public accommodation located thereon at the Property Address: 165-71 SAN YSIDRO BLVD W, SAN YSIDRO, CA 92173-2555; Assessor's Parcel Number: 666-030-08. Defendant GUILLERMO BENITEZ is located at 209 COTTONWOOD RD, SAN YSIDRO, CA

1 92173. Defendant ELIZABETH BENITEZ GARCIA DBA SAN YSIDRO AUTO SALES is
2 located at 171 SAN YSIDRO BLVD W, SAN YSIDRO, CA 92173.

3 2. The words Plaintiff and Plaintiffs as used herein specifically include NONI GOTTI.

4 3. Defendants Does 1 through 10, were at all times relevant herein subsidiaries, employers,
5 employees, agents, of Defendants GUILLERMO BENITEZ; ELIZABETH BENITEZ GARCIA
6 DBA SAN YSIDRO AUTO SALES. Plaintiff is ignorant of the true names and capacities of
7 Defendants sued herein as Does 1 through 10, inclusive, and therefore sues these Defendants by
8 such fictitious names. Plaintiff will pray leave of the court to amend this complaint to allege the
9 true names and capacities of the Does when ascertained.

10 4. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges, that Defendants and each of them
11 herein were, at all times relevant to the action, the owner, lessor, lessee, franchiser, franchisee,
12 general partner, limited partner, agent, employee, representing partner, or joint venturer of the
13 remaining Defendants and were acting within the course and scope of that relationship. Plaintiff
14 is further informed and believe, and thereon allege, that each of the Defendants herein gave
15 consent to, ratified, and/or authorized the acts alleged herein to each of the remaining Defendants.

16 **CONCISE SET OF FACTS**

17 5. Plaintiff NONI GOTTI (hereinafter "Plaintiff") has physical and mental impairments and
18 due to these impairments she has successfully learned to walk with a service animal. Plaintiff
19 said physical and mental impairments substantially limit one or more of the following major life
20 activities including but not limited to: walking and clinical depression. Plaintiff has a long
21 history of mental impairments. Plaintiff's doctor required her to travel with a service dog as a
22 non-medicated treatment for her conditions. Defendants refused Plaintiff entrance due to the dog
23 or have a policy prohibiting service dogs.

24 6. Plaintiff has physical and mental impairments because their conditions affect one or more
25 of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, and/or
26 cardiovascular. Further, Plaintiff said physical impairments substantially limits one or more of
27 the following major life activities. In addition, Plaintiff cannot perform one or more of the said
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1 major life activities in the manner, speed, and duration when compared to the average person.
2 Moreover, Plaintiff has a history of or has been classified as having a physical impairment as
3 required by 42 U.S.C. § 12102(2)(A).

4 7. On May 18, 2008, Plaintiff NONI GOTTI desired to visit Defendants' public
5 accommodation facilities located at Property Address: 165-71 SAN YSIDRO BLVD W, SAN
6 YSIDRO, CA 92173-2555; Assessor's Parcel Number: 666-030-08 to utilize their goods and/or
7 services. When Plaintiff NONI GOTTI desired to patronize Defendants' public accommodation
8 facilities, she was unable to use and/or had difficulty using the public accommodations' facilities
9 including but not limited to the barriers to access listed herein and said facilities were not
10 accessible because they failed to comply with ADA Access Guidelines For Buildings and
11 Facilities (hereafter referred to as "ADAAG" and codified in 28 C.F.R. Part 36, App. A) and/or
12 California's Title 24 Building Code Requirements. Defendants failed to remove barriers to equal
13 access within their public accommodation facilities as required.

14 8. Plaintiff NONI GOTTI personally experienced difficulty with said access barriers as listed
15 herein to the present Complaint at Defendants' public accommodation facilities located on the
16 Property and/or has knowledge of said access barriers and is presently deterred from accessing
17 the public accommodation. Plaintiff alleges that these known barriers to access are not an
18 exhaustive list of the barriers to access that exist at Defendants' facilities.

19 9. Defendants failed to provide auxiliary aids and services that are necessary to ensure equal
20 access to the goods, services, privileges, or accommodations that it offers. Title 28, part 36.303
21 of Code of Federal Regulations states:

22 (a) General. A public accommodation shall take those steps that may be necessary to ensure that
23 no individual with a disability is excluded, denied services, segregated or otherwise treated
24 differently than other individuals because of the absence of auxiliary aids and services, unless the
25 public accommodation can demonstrate that taking those steps would fundamentally alter the
26 nature of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations being offered
27 or would result in an undue burden, i.e., significant difficulty or expense.
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1 (b) Examples. The term "auxiliary aids and services" includes:

2 (1) Qualified interpreters, notetakers, computer-aided transcription services, written
3 materials, telephone handset amplifiers, assistive listening devices, assistive listening
4 systems, telephones compatible with hearing aids, closed caption decoders, open and
5 closed captioning, telecommunications devices for deaf persons (TDD's), videotext
6 displays, or other effective methods of making aurally delivered materials available to
7 individuals with hearing impairments;

8 (2) Qualified readers, taped texts, audio recordings, Brailled materials, large print
9 materials, or other effective methods of making visually delivered materials available to
10 individuals with visual impairments;

11 (3) Acquisition or modification of equipment or devices; and

12 (4) Other similar services and actions.

13 (c) Effective communication. A public accommodation shall furnish appropriate auxiliary aids
14 and services where necessary to ensure effective communication with individuals with
15 disabilities.

16 10. Plaintiff can prove these barriers as Plaintiff conducted a preliminary survey of
17 Defendants' facility. Plaintiff specifically alleges that Defendants knew, to a substantial
18 certainty, that the architectural barriers precluded equal access. First, Plaintiff will prove that
19 Defendants had actual knowledge that the architectural barriers precluded equal access and that
20 the noncompliance with ADAAG as to accessible entrances was intentional. Second, due to the
21 abundance of ADA information and constant news covers of ADA lawsuits, Defendants had
22 actual knowledge of the ADA and decided deliberately not to remove architectural barriers.
23 Third, Defendants have no plans to remodel. Fourth, Defendants had actual knowledge of ADA
24 given all the ADA public awareness campaigns, the abundance of free ADA information and the
25 media's constant ADA coverage. Fifth, a human being acting for the defendants made a
26 conscious decision as to how to proceed given the presence of the architectural barriers. Plaintiff
27 alleges any alternative methods preclude integration of disabled patrons, as it requires them to use
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1 second-class facilities. Also, expert testimony will show the facility contained inaccessible
2 features. Plaintiff alleges businesses often state that they have few customers with disabilities.
3 Plaintiff alleges such customers avoid patronizing inaccessible businesses and are deterred from
4 patronizing such businesses.

5 11. The Plaintiff went to the property 171 SAN YSIDRO BLVD W, SAN YSIDRO. The
6 property has no International Symbol of Accessibility signage. Also, there's no ramp leading to
7 the office and the steps lack the slip resistance surface.

8 12. Plaintiff intends to return to Defendants' public accommodation facilities in the immediate
9 future. Plaintiff was deterred and is presently deterred from returning due to her knowledge of
10 the barriers to access that exist at Defendants' facilities.

11 13. Pursuant to federal and state law, Defendants are required to remove barriers to their
12 existing facilities. Further, Defendants had actual knowledge of their barrier removal duties
13 under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Civil Code before January 26, 1992. Also,
14 Defendants should have known that individuals with disabilities are not required to give notice to
15 a governmental agency before filing suit alleging Defendants failed to remove architectural
16 barriers.

17 14. Plaintiff believes and herein alleges Defendants' facilities have access violations not
18 directly experienced by Plaintiff which would preclude or limit access by Plaintiff potentially
19 including but not limited to violations of the ADA, ADA Accessibility Guidelines (Codified in 28
20 C.F.R. Part 36, App. A) and Title 24 of the California Building Code. Plaintiff alleges
21 Defendants are required to utilize the ADA checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal
22 approved by the United States Department of Justice and created by Adaptive Environments.
23 Plaintiff is entitled to injunctive relief to remove all barriers to access that are related to her
24 disability even those barriers that are only known to exist but are not directly experienced by
25 plaintiff. *Doran v 7-Eleven Inc*, 2007 U.S.App.Lexis 26143 (9th Cir 2007).

26 15. Based on these facts, Plaintiff alleges she was discriminated against each time he
27 patronized and/or was deterred from patronizing Defendants' facilities. Plaintiff was extremely
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1 upset due to Defendants' conduct.

2 16. Plaintiff is not required to provide notice to the defendants prior to filing a complaint
3 and/or to recover attorney fees and costs. *Botosan v. Paul McNally Realty*, 216 F.3d 827, 832
4 (9th Cir 2000). *Skaff v Meridien*, 2007 U.S. App. LEXIS 25516 (9th Cir 2007).

5 **WHAT CLAIMS ARE PLAINTIFF ALLEGING AGAINST EACH NAMED**

6 **DEFENDANT**

7 17. Defendants GUILLERMO BENITEZ; ELIZABETH BENITEZ GARCIA DBA SAN
8 YSIDRO AUTO SALES and Does 1 through 10 will be referred to collectively hereinafter as
9 "Defendants."

10 18. Plaintiff avers that the Defendants are liable for the following claims as alleged below:

11 **DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES IN PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

12 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION AGAINST ALL DEFENDANTS- Claims Under The Americans**

13 **With Disabilities Act Of 1990**

14 **Claim I**

15 19. Based on the facts stated above, Defendants discriminated against Plaintiff on the basis of
16 disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages,
17 or accommodations of any place of public accommodation as Defendants own, lease (or lease
18 to), or operate a place of public accommodation in violation of 42 U.S.C. §12182.

19 **Claim II**

20 20. Based on the facts stated above, Defendants discriminated against Plaintiff directly, or
21 through contractual, licensing, or other arrangements, to a denial of the opportunity of the
22 individual or class to participate in or benefit from the goods, services, facilities, privileges,
23 advantages, or accommodations of an entity in violation of 42 U.S.C. §12182.

24 **Claim III**

25 21. Based on the facts stated above, Defendants discriminated against Plaintiff as it is
26 discriminatory to afford an individual or class of individuals, on the basis of a disability or
27 disabilities of such individual or class, directly, or through contractual, licensing, or other
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1 arrangements with the opportunity to participate in or benefit from a good, service, facility,
2 privilege, advantage, or accommodation that is not equal to that afforded to other individuals in
3 violation of 42 U.S.C. §12182.

4 Claim IV

5 22. Based on the facts stated above, Defendants discriminated against Plaintiff as it is
6 discriminatory to provide an individual or class of individuals, on the basis of a disability or
7 disabilities of such individual or class, directly, or through contractual, licensing, or other
8 arrangements with a good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, or accommodation that is
9 different or separate from that provided to other individuals.

10 Claim V

11 23. Based on the facts stated above, Defendants discriminated against Plaintiff as Defendants
12 failed to afford to an individual with a disability in the most integrated setting appropriate to
13 the needs of the individual in violation of 42 U.S.C. §12182.

14 Claim VI

15 24. Based on the facts stated above, Defendants discriminated against Plaintiff as Defendants
16 utilized standards or criteria or methods of administration that have the effect of discriminating on
17 the basis of disability; or that perpetuate the discrimination of others who are subject to common
18 administrative control in violation of 42 U.S.C. §12182.

19 Claim VII

20 25. Based on the facts stated above, Defendants discriminated against Plaintiff as it is
21 discriminatory to exclude or otherwise deny equal goods, services, facilities, privileges,
22 advantages, accommodations, or other opportunities to an individual or entity because of the
23 known disability of an individual with whom the individual or entity is known to have a
24 relationship or association in violation of 42 U.S.C. §12182. See Niece v. Fitzner 922 F. Supp.
25 1208 (1996)

26 Claim VIII

27 26. Based on the facts stated above, Defendants discriminated against Plaintiff as Defendants
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1 engaged in the specific prohibitions as stated in 42 U.S.C. §12182.

2 Claim IX

3 27. Based on the facts stated above, Defendants discriminated against Plaintiff as Defendant
4 failed to demonstrate that the removal of a barrier is not readily achievable, and made such goods,
5 services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations available through alternative
6 methods in a segregated manner in violation of 42 U.S.C. §12182. Plaintiff is entitled to
7 injunctive relief to remove all barriers to access that are related to his disability even those
8 barriers that are only known to exist but are not directly experienced by plaintiff. *Doran v 7-*
9 *Eleven Inc*, 2007 U.S.App.Lexis 26143 (9th Cir 2007).

10 Claim X

11 28. Based on the facts stated above, Defendants discriminated against Plaintiff as Defendants
12 altered the use of their establishment in a manner that affected or could have affected the usability
13 of the facility or part thereof and failed to make alterations in such a manner that, to the maximum
14 extent feasible, the altered portions of the facility are readily accessible to and usable by
15 individuals with disabilities in violation of 42 U.S.C. §12183.

16 29. WHEREFORE, Plaintiff pray for judgment and relief as hereinafter set forth.

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18 **SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION AGAINST ALL DEFENDANTS - CLAIMS UNDER**
19 **CALIFORNIA ACCESSIBILITY LAWS**

20 **CLAIM I: Denial Of Full And Equal Access**

21 30. Based on the facts plead above and elsewhere in this complaint, Plaintiff was denied full
22 and equal access to Defendants' goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or
23 accommodations within a public accommodation owned, leased, and/or operated by Defendants
24 as required by Civil Code Sections 54 and 54.1.

25 **CLAIM II: Failure To Modify Practices, Policies And Procedures**

26 31. Based on the facts plead above and elsewhere herein this complaint, Defendants failed and
27 refused to provide a reasonable alternative by modifying its practices, policies, and procedures in
28 that they failed to have a scheme, plan, or design to assist Plaintiff and/or others similarly situated

1 in entering and utilizing Defendants' services as required by Civil Code § 54.1. Thus, Plaintiff
2 was subjected to discrimination in violation of Civil Code § 54.1.

3 **CLAIM III: Violation Of The Unruh Act**

4 32. Based on the facts plead above and elsewhere herein this complaint and because
5 Defendants violated the Civil Code § 51 by failing to comply with 42 United States Code §
6 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv) and 42 U.S.C. § 12183(a)(2), Defendants did and continue to knowingly
7 discriminate against Plaintiff and persons similarly situated in violation of Civil Code §§ 51, 52,
8 and 54.1. Plaintiff alleges the access violations alleged here are so obvious as to implicate at least
9 a prima facie case of discriminatory intent.

10 33. Based on the facts plead above, Claims I, II, and III of Plaintiffs' Second Cause Of
11 Action above, and the facts elsewhere herein this complaint, Plaintiff will suffer irreparable harm
12 unless Defendants are ordered to remove architectural, non-architectural, and communication
13 barriers at Defendants' public accommodation. Plaintiff alleges that Defendants' discriminatory
14 conduct is capable of repetition, and this discriminatory repetition adversely impacts Plaintiff and
15 a substantial segment of the disability community. Plaintiff alleges there is a state and national
16 public interest in requiring accessibility in places of public accommodation. Plaintiff has no
17 adequate remedy at law to redress the discriminatory conduct of Defendants. Plaintiff desires to
18 return to Defendants' places of business in the immediate future. Accordingly, the Plaintiff
19 alleges that a structural or mandatory injunction is necessary to enjoin compliance with state civil
20 rights laws enacted for the benefit of individuals with disabilities.

21 34. Wherefore, Plaintiff prays for damages and relief as hereinafter stated.
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1 DEMAND FOR JUDGMENT FOR RELIEF:

- 2 A. For injunctive relief pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12188(a).
- 3 B. For general damages pursuant to Cal. Civil Code §§ 52 or 54.3;
- 4 C. For \$4,000 in damages pursuant to Cal. Civil Code § 52 for each and every offense of
- 5 Civil Code § 51, Title 24 of the California Building Code, ADA, and ADA Accessibility
- 6 Guidelines (Codified in 28 C.F.R. Part 36, App. A);
- 7 D. In the alternative to the damages pursuant to Cal. Civil Code § 52 in Paragraph C above,
- 8 for \$1,000 in damages pursuant to Cal. Civil Code § 54.3 for each and every offense of Civil
- 9 Code § 54.1, Title 24 of the California Building Code, ADA, and ADA Accessibility Guidelines;
- 10 E. For treble damages pursuant to Cal. Civil Code §§ 52(a) or 54.3(a);
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- 12 F. For attorneys fees pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1988, 42 U.S.C. § 12205, and Cal. Civil Code
- 13 § 52; 54.3;
- 14 G. A Jury Trial and;
- 15 H. For such other further relief as the court deems proper.

16 Respectfully submitted:

17 Dated: May 19, 2008

PINNOCK & WAKEFIELD, A.P.C.

18 By: 
19 THEODORE A. PINNOCK, ESQ.
20 DAVID C. WAKEFIELD, ESQ.
21 Attorneys for Plaintiff