UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN GREEN BAY DIVISION

Nicole Cota, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated,

1:21-cv-01089

Plaintiff,

- against -

Class Action Complaint

Ralph Lauren Corporation,

Jury Trial Demanded

Defendant

Plaintiff alleges upon information and belief, except for allegations pertaining to plaintiff, which are based on personal knowledge:

1. Ralph Lauren Corporation ("defendant") manufactures, labels, markets, and sells clothing purporting to contain a specific amount and/or percentage of pima cotton under the Polo and Ralph Lauren brands ("Product").

I. IDENTIFYING FIBERS

- 2. Clothing is required to accurately disclose fiber composition under the Textile Fiber Products Identification Act ("Textile Act"), 15 U.S.C. §§ 70, et seq. See also 16 C.F.R. Part 303.
 - 3. The main criteria to identify the type of cotton or other fiber is the fiber length.
- 4. The length of cotton fibers affects its qualities and price the longer the fiber, the stronger, softer, and more durable the resulting fabric, and it costs more.
- 5. Pima cotton (*Gossypium barbadense L*) refers to extra-long staple ("ELS") cotton, which is between approximately 1.2 and 1.44 inches.¹
 - 6. Products made from pima cotton are costlier than those from shorter types of cotton.

¹ ASTM International, D7641, Standard Guide for Textile Fibers.

- 7. This creates incentives for manufacturers and suppliers to mix cotton byproducts and shorter fibers with higher value longer fibers, to gain additional profits at the expense of consumers.
- 8. However, the "Single-Fiber-Test" adopted by ASTM, a global standards body, can determine the length and length distribution of fibers used clothing.²

II. THE PRODUCT CONTAINS LESS PIMA COTTON THAN PROMISED

- 9. Plaintiff purchased one or more clothing items under Defendant's brands, which purported to contain a certain percentage of pima cotton.
- 10. Laboratory analysis of the Product and/or substantially similar products was performed in accordance with the ASTM D5103 standard.
- 11. The results revealed that between most, and all fibers were shorter than 1.200 inches (30.48 mm) and shorter than 1.080 inches (27.432 mm), below the range for pima cotton.
- 12. Even where an adjustment is made to the fiber lengths by assuming a twenty-five (25) percent reduction during the manufacturing, approximately fifty (50) percent of the fibers would fall under the pima classification.
- 13. These results support the strong inference that the percentage of pima cotton used in the Product is significantly less than the amount indicated on the label and tag.
- 14. The Product contains a significant amount of less expensive, shorter cotton fibers and/or cotton byproduct fibers.
- 15. No reasonable consumer will expect that clothing advertised as containing a percent or amount of pima cotton would contain significantly less pima cotton than promised.
 - 16. Whether a product contains the amount and/or percent of pima cotton indicated is

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² D5103.

basic information consumers rely on when making decisions at the store.

- 17. Reasonable consumers must and do rely on a company to honestly identify and describe the components, attributes, and features of a product, relative to itself and other comparable products or alternatives.
- The value of the Product that plaintiff purchased was materially less than its value as 18. represented by defendant.
- 19. Defendant sold more of the Product and at higher prices than it would have in the absence of this misconduct, resulting in additional profits at the expense of consumers.
- 20. Had Plaintiff and proposed class members known the truth, they would not have bought the Product or would have paid less for it.
- The Product is sold for a price premium compared to other similar products, no less 21. than approximately \$34.99, a higher price than it would otherwise be sold for, absent the misleading representations and omissions.

Jurisdiction and Venue

- Jurisdiction is proper pursuant to Class Action Fairness Act of 2005 ("CAFA"). 28 22. U.S.C. § 1332(d)(2).
- The aggregate amount in controversy exceeds \$5 million, including any statutory damages, exclusive of interest and costs.
 - 24. Plaintiff Nicole Cota is a citizen of Wisconsin.
- 25. Defendant Ralph Lauren Corporation is a Delaware corporation with a principal place of business in New York, New York County, New York.
 - 26. Plaintiff and defendant are citizens of different states.
 - 27. Venue is in this district because plaintiff resides in this district and the actions giving

rise to the claims occurred within this district.

28. Venue is in the Green Bay Division because plaintiff resides in Manitowoc County, which is where the events giving rise to the present claims occurred.

<u>Parties</u>

- 29. Plaintiff Nicole Cota is a citizen of Manitowoc, Manitowoc County, Wisconsin.
- 30. Defendant Ralph Lauren Corporation, is a Delaware corporation with a principal place of business in New York, New York, New York County.
 - 31. Defendant is one of the largest sellers of clothing in the world.
- 32. Defendant's products are sold from its own stores and outlets, third-parties such as T.J. Maxx, Kohl's, Macy's, and available online.
- 33. Defendant's brand is synonymous with the highest quality, so that consumers trust the representations it makes.
- 34. Manufacturers of textile products, like Defendant, must maintain records sufficient to substantiate the claims on its fiber content tags and labels. See *id*. at §70d.
- 35. Any guarantee of fiber content by a supplier is insufficient for Defendant to rely on when selling clothing to the public. *See* 16 C.F.R. § 303.39.
- 36. Plaintiff bought the Product on one or more occasions within the statute of limitations for each cause of action alleged, at stores including T.J. Maxx, 4421 Dewey St, Manitowoc, WI 54220, between September 2019 and September 2020, among other times.
- 37. Plaintiff bought the Product because she expected it would contain the amount and/or percent of pima cotton it indicated, and not a significant percentage less.
- 38. Plaintiff did not expect the Product to contain a significant percent less of pima cotton.

- 39. Plaintiff knew that Defendant was a brand with an established reputation for quality and expected it would live up to its word on the Product's composition.
 - 40. Plaintiff bought the Product at or exceeding the above-referenced price.
 - 41. Plaintiff relied on the representations identified here.
- 42. Plaintiff would not have purchased the Product if she knew the representations were false and misleading.
- 43. Plaintiff chose between Defendant's Product and other similar products which were represented similarly, but which did not misrepresent their attributes and/or lower-priced products which did not make the statements and claims made by Defendant.
- The Product was worth less than what Plaintiff paid and she would not have paid as much absent Defendant's false and misleading statements and omissions.
- 45. Plaintiff intends to, seeks to, and will purchase the Product again when she can do so with the assurance that Product's representations are consistent with its composition.

Class Allegations

Plaintiff seeks certification under Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(b)(2) and (b)(3) of the following 46. classes:

> Wisconsin Class: All persons in the State of Wisconsin who purchased the Product during the statutes of limitations for each cause of action alleged.

> Consumer Fraud Multi-State Class: All persons in the States of Iowa and Arkansas who purchased the Product during the statutes of limitations for each cause of action alleged.3

Common questions of law or fact predominate and include whether defendant's 47.

³ The States in the Consumer Fraud Multi-State Class are limited to those States with similar consumer fraud laws under the facts of this case: Iowa (Consumer Fraud and Private Right of Action for Consumer Frauds Act, Iowa Code Ann. § 714.16 et seq.); Arkansas (Arkansas Deceptive Trade Practices Act, Ark. Code § 4-88-101, et. seq.).

representations were and are misleading and if plaintiff and class members are entitled to damages.

- Plaintiff's claims and basis for relief are typical to other members because all were 48. subjected to the same unfair and deceptive representations and actions.
- 49. Plaintiff is an adequate representative because her interests do not conflict with other members.
- 50. No individual inquiry is necessary since the focus is only on defendant's practices and the class is definable and ascertainable.
- 51. Individual actions would risk inconsistent results, be repetitive and are impractical to justify, as the claims are modest relative to the scope of the harm.
- Plaintiff's counsel is competent and experienced in complex class action litigation 52. and intends to protect class members' interests adequately and fairly.
 - Plaintiff seeks class-wide injunctive relief because the practices continue. 53.

Wisconsin Deceptive Trade Practices Act ("DTPA"), Wis. Stat. § 100.18

(Consumer Protection Statute)

- 54. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all preceding paragraphs.
- 55. Plaintiff and class members desired to purchase a product that contained the amount and/or percent of pima cotton indicated and not a significant amount or percent less.
- 56. Defendant's false and deceptive representations and omissions about the percentage and/or amount of pima cotton in its products are material in that they are likely to influence consumer purchasing decisions.
- Defendant misrepresented the Product through statements, omissions, ambiguities, 57. half-truths and/or actions.
 - Defendant's conduct violates Wis. Stat. § 100.18(1), which provides that no "firm, 58.

corporation or association ... with intent to sell, distribute, increase the consumption of ... any... merchandise ... directly or indirectly, to the public for sale ... shall make, publish, disseminate, circulate, or place before the public ... in this state, in a ... label ... or in any other way similar or dissimilar to the foregoing, an advertisement, announcement, statement or representation of any kind to the public ... which ... contains any assertion, representation or statement of fact which is untrue, deceptive or misleading."

- Plaintiff "suffer[ed] pecuniary loss because of a violation" by Defendant of 100.18. 59. Wis. Stat. § 100.18(11)(b)(2).
 - 60. Plaintiff relied on the representations.
- Plaintiff and class members would not have purchased the Product or paid as much if the true facts had been known, suffering damages.
- Plaintiff is entitled to damages, including "costs, including reasonable attorney fees," 62. and other relief which the court deems proper. Wis. Stat. § 100.18(11)(b)(2).
 - 63. Plaintiff is entitled to punitive damages. Wis. Stat. § 100.20(5).

Violation of State Consumer Fraud Acts

(On Behalf of the Consumer Fraud Multi-State Class)

- 64. The Consumer Fraud Acts of the States in the Consumer Fraud Multi-State Class prohibit the use of unfair or deceptive business practices in the conduct of trade or commerce.
- Defendant intended that plaintiff and each of the other members of the Consumer 65. Fraud Multi-State Class would rely upon its deceptive conduct, and a reasonable person would in fact be misled by this deceptive conduct.
- As a result of defendant's use or employment of artifice, unfair or deceptive acts or business practices, plaintiff, and each of the other members of the Consumer Fraud Multi-State

Class, have sustained damages in an amount to be proven at trial.

In addition, defendant's conduct showed malice, motive, and the reckless disregard of the truth such that an award of punitive damages is appropriate.

Breaches of Express Warranty, Implied Warranty of Merchantability and Magnuson Moss Warranty Act. 15 U.S.C. §§ 2301, et sea.

- The Product was manufactured, labeled, and sold by defendant and expressly and 68. impliedly warranted to plaintiff and class members that it contained the amount and/or percent of pima cotton indicated and not a significant amount or percent less.
- Defendant had a duty to disclose and/or provide non-deceptive descriptions and marketing of the Product.
 - 70. This duty is based on Defendant's outsized role in the market for this type of product.
- Plaintiff provided or will provide notice to defendant, its agents, representatives, 71. retailers, and their employees.
- Defendant received notice and should have been aware of these issues due to complaints by regulators, competitors, and consumers, to its main offices.
- 73. The Product did not conform to its affirmations of fact and promises due to defendant's actions and was not merchantable because it was not fit to pass in the trade as advertised.
- 74. Plaintiff and class members would not have purchased the Product or paid as much if the true facts had been known, suffering damages.

Negligent Misrepresentation

- 75. Defendant had a duty to truthfully represent the Product, which it breached.
- This duty is based on defendant's position, holding itself out as having special 76. knowledge and experience this area, as custodians and owners of the Ralph Lauren brand, known

for the highest quality clothing.

- The representations took advantage of consumers' cognitive shortcuts made at the point-of-sale and their trust in defendant, a nationally recognized and trusted brand.
- 78. Plaintiff and class members reasonably and justifiably relied on these negligent misrepresentations and omissions, which served to induce and did induce, their purchase of the Product.
- 79 Plaintiff and class members would not have purchased the Product or paid as much if the true facts had been known, suffering damages.

Fraud

- Defendant misrepresented and/or omitted the attributes and qualities of the Product, that it contained the amount and/or percent of pima cotton indicated and not a significant amount or percent less.
- Defendant possesses specialized knowledge regarding the fiber content of its 81. products and is in a superior position to learn about this.
- Moreover, the records Defendant is required to maintain provide it with actual and/or 82. constructive knowledge of the falsity of the representations.
- 83. Defendant's fraudulent intent is evinced by its knowledge that the Product was not consistent with its representations.

Unjust Enrichment

Defendant obtained benefits and monies because the Product was not as represented and expected, to the detriment and impoverishment of plaintiff and class members, who seek restitution and disgorgement of inequitably obtained profits.

Jury Demand and Prayer for Relief

Plaintiff demands a jury trial on all issues.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for judgment:

1. Declaring this a proper class action, certifying plaintiff as representative and the

undersigned as counsel for the class;

2. Entering preliminary and permanent injunctive relief by directing defendant to correct the

challenged practices to comply with the law;

3. Injunctive relief to remove, correct and/or refrain from the challenged practices and

representations, and restitution and disgorgement for members of the class pursuant to the

applicable laws;

4. Awarding monetary damages, statutory and/or punitive damages pursuant to any statutory

claims and interest pursuant to the common law and other statutory claims;

5. Awarding costs and expenses, including reasonable fees for plaintiff's attorneys and

experts; and

6. Other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Dated: September 19, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Sheehan & Associates, P.C.

/s/Spencer Sheehan

60 Cuttermill Rd Ste 409

Great Neck NY 11021

Tel: (516) 268-7080

spencer@spencersheehan.com

RECEIPT #

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.)

Place an "X" in the appropr	iate hox (required):	Green Bay Division	Пмі	lwaukee Division						
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS	iate box (required).	Green Bay Division		DEFENDAN'	TC					
Nicole Cota, individual	y and on behalf of all c	thers similarly situa	ated	Ralph Lauren C		ation				
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Manitowoc (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, Sheehan & Associates 11021-3104 (516) 268	s, P.C., 60 Cuttermill R	*	eck NY	Attorneys (If Kno	wn)					
II. BASIS OF JURISD	ICTION (Place an "X" in	One Box Only)	III. CI	TIZENSHIP OI	FPRI	NCIPA				
1 U.S. Government Plaintiff			Citize	(For Diversity Cases Or en of This State	nly) PTF	DEF 1	Incorporated or Pri of Business In T		Defendant) PTF 4	DEF
2 U.S. Government Defendant	X 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenshi)	ersity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)		en of Another State	_ 2	_ 2	Incorporated and P of Business In A		5	X 5
			Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country		3	3	Foreign Nation		6	6
IV. NATURE OF SUIT	(Place an "X" in One Box On	ly)			Cl	ick here	for: Nature of S	uit Code De	scription	<u>1S</u> .
CONTRACT		RTS	FC	ORFEITURE/PENALT	Y	BAN	KRUPTCY	OTHER	R STATUT	ES
110 Insurance 120 Marine 130 Miller Act 140 Negotiable Instrument 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment	PERSONAL INJURY 310 Airplane 315 Airplane Product Liability 320 Assault, Libel & Slander 330 Federal Employers' Liability 340 Marine 345 Marine Product Liability 350 Motor Vehicle Product Liability 360 Other Personal	PERSONAL INJURY 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability 367 Health Care/ Pharmaceutical Personal Injury Product Liability 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability PERSONAL PROPERTY 370 Other Fraud 371 Truth in Lending 380 Other Personal Property Damage		625 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881 690 Other LABOR 710 Fair Labor Standards Act 720 Labor/Management Relations		422 Appeal 28 USC 158 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157 PROPERTY RIGHTS 820 Copyrights 830 Patent 835 Patent - Abbreviated New Drug Application 840 Trademark 880 Defend Trade Secrets Act of 2016 SOCIAL SECURITY 861 HIA (1395ff)		375 False Claims Act 376 Qui Tam (31 USC 3729(a)) 400 State Reapportionment 410 Antitrust 430 Banks and Banking 450 Commerce 460 Deportation 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations 480 Consumer Credit (15 USC 1681 or 1692) 485 Telephone Consumer Protection Act 490 Cable/Sat TV		
151 Medicare Act 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excludes Veterans) 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits 160 Stockholders' Suits 190 Other Contract 195 Contract Product Liability			71							
196 Franchise	Injury 362 Personal Injury - Medical Malpractice	385 Property Damage Product Liability	75	0 Railway Labor Act 1 Family and Medical Leave Act		862 Blac 863 DIV 864 SSI	ek Lung (923) VC/DIWW (405(g)) D Title XVI	850 Securi Excha 890 Other	ities/Comm ange Statutory A	Actions
REAL PROPERTY 210 Land Condemnation 220 Foreclosure 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment 240 Torts to Land 245 Tort Product Liability 290 All Other Real Property	CIVIL RIGHTS 440 Other Civil Rights 441 Voting 442 Employment 443 Housing/ Accommodations 445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other 448 Education	PRISONER PETITION Habeas Corpus: 463 Alien Detainee 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence 530 General 535 Death Penalty Other: 540 Mandamus & Othe 550 Civil Rights 555 Prison Condition 560 Civil Detainee - Conditions of Confinement	79	0 Other Labor Litigation 1 Employee Retirement Income Security Act IMMIGRATION 2 Naturalization Applica 5 Other Immigration Actions		FEDERA 870 Tax or I 871 IRS	L TAX SUITS s (U.S. Plaintiff efendant) —Third Party USC 7609	891 Agricultural Acts 893 Environmental Ma 895 Freedom of Inform Act 896 Arbitration 899 Administrative Pre Act/Review or App Agency Decision 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes		Matters rmation Procedure appeal of
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VI. CAUSE OF ACTIO	28 11 5 C & 1332	tute under which you ar	re filing (I	Do not cite jurisdictional	l statute.	s unless di	versity):			
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:		IS A CLASS ACTION 3, F.R.Cv.P.	•	EMAND \$,000,000.00	_		HECK YES only URY DEMAND:		n complai	
VIII. RELATED CASI IF ANY	(See instructions):	JUDGE				DOCKE	T NUMBER			
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FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	Case 1:21-cv-010	89-MCG File	4 Ua/	19/21 Page	1 of	1 D	ocument 1 ₋	1		

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Eastern District of Wisconsin

Nicole Cota, individually and others similarly situated,	on behalf of all)))
Dlaintiff(a)		,)
Plaintiff(s) V.) Civil Action No. 1:21-cy-01089
v.)
Ralph Lauren Corporation,		<i>)</i>)
)
Dejenaani(s)	,
	SUMMONS IN A	A CIVIL ACTION
To: (Defendant's name and address)	Ralph Lauren Corporation	on
	c/o The Corporation Tru	st Company
	1209 N Orange St	
	Wilmington DE 19801-1	1120
are the United States or a United P. 12 (a)(2) or (3) — you must the Federal Rules of Civil Process whose name and address are:	rvice of this summons on you describe serve on the plaintiff an answer or motion. The answer or motion Sheehan & Associates, P. 3104 (516) 268-7080	u (not counting the day you received it) — or 60 days if you r or employee of the United States described in Fed. R. Civ. wer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of must be served on the plaintiff or plaintiff's attorney, C., 60 Cuttermill Rd Ste 409 Great Neck NY 11021-
		CLERK OF COURT
Date:		Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk
		Signature of Clerk of Deputy Clerk

Civil Action No. 1:21-cv-01089

PROOF OF SERVICE

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

	This summons for (nan	ne of individual and title, if any)							
was rec	ceived by me on (date)								
	☐ I personally served	the summons on the individual	at (place)						
		on (date)							
	☐ 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)								
	☐ I served the summo	I served the summons on (name of individual)							
	designated by law to accept service of process on behalf of (name of organization)								
			on (date)	; or					
	☐ I returned the sumn	nons unexecuted because		; or					
	☐ Other (specify):								
	My fees are \$	for travel and \$	for services, for a total of \$						
	I declare under penalty of perjury that this information is true.								
Date:									
		Server's signature							
			Printed name and title						
			Server's address						

Additional information regarding attempted service, etc: