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10 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**

11 **FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA '23CV1318 JES BGS**

12 LINDA SUNDERLAND and  
13 BENJAMIN BINDER individually and  
14 on behalf of all others similarly situated,

15 Plaintiffs,

16 v.

17 PHARMACARE U.S., INC., a  
18 Delaware Corporation, and  
19 PHARMACARE LABORATORIES  
20 PTY LTD., an Australian company,

21 Defendant.

Case No. [REDACTED]

**PLAINTIFFS' CLASS ACTION  
COMPLAINT**

**JURY TRIAL DEMANDED**

1 Plaintiffs Linda Sunderland and Benjamin Binder (collectively “Plaintiffs”),  
2 through their undersigned attorneys, file this Class Action Complaint against  
3 Defendant PharmaCare U.S., Inc. and Pharmacare Laboratories PTY Ltd.  
4 (“Defendants”), individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated, and allege  
5 upon personal knowledge as to themselves and their own acts and experiences and,  
6 as to all other matters, upon information and belief, including investigation  
7 conducted by their attorneys:

8 **NATURE OF THE ACTION**

9 1. This class action is brought individually by Plaintiffs on behalf of  
10 consumers who purchased Defendants’ Elderberry Original Syrup, Sambucol Black  
11 Elderberry Sugar Free, Sambucol Black Elderberry Syrup for Kids, Sambucol Black  
12 Elderberry Effervescent Tablets, Sambucol Black Elderberry Chewable, Sambucol  
13 Black Elderberry Pastilles, Sambucol Black Elderberry Daily Immune Drink  
14 Powder, and Sambucol Black Elderberry Advanced Immune Syrup (collectively the  
15 “Elderberry Products” or the “Products”) in California, New York, and nationwide  
16 (the “Class”).

17 2. Black elderberry, which is derived from a flowering plant called  
18 *Sambucus*, has become a popular dietary supplement in recent years. The increased  
19 popularity of “natural remedies” drives sales of elderberry products. According to a  
20 report published by the American Botanical Council in 2019, sales of elderberry  
21 supplements more than doubled in the United States between 2017 and 2018 to a  
22 total of nearly \$51 million. Between January and March of 2018, elderberry  
23 supplement sales were more than \$100 million dollars in the US alone. Elderberry  
24 sales in the first half of 2020 grew by triple digits compared to sales during the same  
25 period in 2019, showing the greatest growth in the mainstream dietary supplement  
26 market, where it is currently the third top-selling herbal ingredient. The mainstream  
27 dietary supplement market includes grocery stores, drug stores, and mass  
28

1 merchandisers such as club, dollar, and military stores.<sup>1</sup>

2 3. According to IRI (now known as Circana), a market research firm that  
3 tracks retail sales of supplements, in March 2020, sales of elderberry supplements  
4 increased by 415% over the prior year as consumers sought products that might offer  
5 protection from the novel coronavirus.<sup>2</sup> The “immune support” dietary supplement  
6 market, including supplements containing elderberry, is thus an extraordinarily fast-  
7 growing segment of the dietary supplement market, in part due to the Coronavirus  
8 Pandemic.

9 4. With hundreds of elderberry supplement options available for  
10 consumers to purchase, in order to stand out from the competition, Defendants  
11 promote its Elderberry Products as “the most trusted brand sold worldwide” and  
12 prominently displays a badge on its website proclaiming that its Products are the  
13 “No. 1 Best Selling Black Elderberry in the US.”<sup>3</sup>

14 5. To further stand out from the competition, on the labels of its Elderberry  
15 Products, as well as on its website and in other marketing directed at consumers,  
16 Defendants state: “*Developed by a world renowned virologist*, Sambucol is the  
17 *unique* black elderberry extract that has been used in scientific studies. By using a  
18 *proprietary method* of extraction, *only Sambucol can guarantee* consistent, immune  
19 supporting properties in every serving.” (Emphasis added). A reasonable consumer  
20 would understand such claims to mean that the Elderberry Products contain a unique  
21 elderberry extract, which has been developed by a virologist (thus, likely with anti-  
22 viral properties), using a method of extraction that cannot be found in other  
23 elderberry dietary supplements.

24  
25 <sup>1</sup> <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2020/08/31/2086400/0/en/US-Herbal-Supplement-Sales-Increase-by-8-6-in-2019-Record-Breaking-Sales-Predicted-for-2020.html>.

26  
27 <sup>2</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/23/well/live/coronavirus-supplements-herbs-vitamins-colds-flu.html>.

28 <sup>3</sup> <https://sambucolusa.com/>.

The image displays the packaging for Sambucol Black Elderberry Syrup. The box is dark blue with a cluster of purple elderberries and white flowers. Text on the box includes 'Sambucol BLACK ELDERBERRY', 'BLACK ELDERBERRY', 'GLUTEN FREE', 'Great Tasting Syrup', 'Scientifically Tested', 'Supports Immunity\*', 'High antioxidant levels', '7.8 Fl oz 230ml SYRUP', and 'Dietary Supplement'. To the right of the box is a promotional panel with the following text:

**Sambucol®**, the original Black Elderberry extract, provides strong immune system support to help you and your family stay healthy throughout the year. **Sambucol®** Black Elderberry extract conveniently arms you with some of the best protection nature has to offer.

Developed by a world renowned virologist, **Sambucol®** is the unique black elderberry extract that has been used in scientific studies. By using a proprietary method of extraction, only **Sambucol®** can guarantee consistent, immune supporting properties in every serving.\*

Trusted by millions worldwide, **Sambucol®** can be taken every day for continuous immune support.

**Satisfaction Guaranteed.**  
The PharmaCare name guarantees that this product is produced using the highest manufacturing standards, and PharmaCare stands behind every bottle of **Sambucol®** that you purchase. If you are dissatisfied, please visit our website for full details on our refund policy.

**Sambucol®** is a registered trademark of PharmaCare Laboratories Pty Ltd.

**Kosher: Supervised by the Chief Rabbinate of BETH DIN DE PARIS**

On the right side of the promotional panel, there are four bullet points:

- ✓ Supports immune system
- ✓ Virologist developed
- ✓ Scientifically tested
- ✓ Great tasting syrup

Below these is the heading **Naturally flavored with the goodness of Elderberry** and the instruction **Use daily for maximum benefit**.

**Directions for use:**  
**For Daily Maintenance:**  
**Adults and Children over 4 years:**  
 Take 2 teaspoons (10ml) daily.  
**For Intensive Use:**  
**Adults and Children over 4 years:**  
 Take 2 teaspoons (10ml) four times daily. If desired, mix syrup in water, fruit juice, smoothies, yogurt, or most anything!  
 Sealed for your protection. Do not use if seal is broken or missing.  
 To preserve quality and freshness, keep tightly sealed and keep in a cool, dry place.  
 Keep out of reach of children.  
**See the full line of Sambucol® products at our website.**

15 Thus, Defendants warrant that all of the Products contain its proprietary, virologist  
 16 developed, elderberry extract. However, such claims are false and misleading.

17 6. Here, Defendants advertise that the Elderberry Products were  
 18 “developed by a world renowned virologist,” a reference to Dr. Madeleine  
 19 Mumcuoglu. Dr. Mumcuoglu and her company (Razei Bar Ltd.) originally  
 20 trademarked the “Sambucol” branding, the same trademark that is currently owned  
 21 by Defendants. *See* U.S. Trademark Nos. 75326070 and 74680785. Dr. Mumcuoglu  
 22 also applied for patents for her Trademarked “Sambucol” Elderberry Extract. *See*  
 23 U.S. Patent No. 4,742,046; Patent Application US2009/0186101 A1. This patented  
 24 formulation was based on a specific cold pressed Elderberry Extract that contains a  
 25 unique anti-viral compound, elderberry lectins.

26 7. While uniformly marketing the product as a unique formulation  
 27 developed by a world-renowned virologist, Defendants have argued that its “unique”  
 28 and “propriety” Elderberry Extract is simply run-of-the-mill Elderberry Juice during

1 an ancillary litigation. Accordingly, Plaintiffs’ counsel ordered testing to determine  
2 if the Defendants’ so-called “unique” and “propriety” Elderberry Extract was  
3 actually the same “unique” and “propriety” formula developed by Dr. Mumcuoglu.  
4 The results confirm it is not. There are no lectins in the Elderberry Products.

5 8. With knowledge of growing consumer demand for supplements  
6 containing elderberry, Defendants intentionally marketed and sold their illegal  
7 Elderberry Products using false and misleading labeling and advertising.  
8 Defendants’ prominent and systematic mislabeling of the Products and its false and  
9 deceptive advertising form a pattern of unlawful and unfair business practices that  
10 harms the public and, if unstopped, could lead to substantial societal harm.

11 9. Plaintiffs bring this suit to halt Defendants’ unlawful sales and  
12 marketing of its Elderberry Products and for damages they sustained as a result of  
13 the illegal sales and false and misleading marketing. Declaratory and injunctive  
14 relief is of particular importance given the likely consequences of Defendants’  
15 actions.

### 16 **PARTIES**

17 10. Plaintiff Linda Sunderland is a resident and citizen of New York.

18 11. Plaintiff Sunderland purchased Sambucol Black Elderberry Chewable  
19 Tablets over the last two years, with her last purchase in March 2023.

20 12. Prior to and at the time of each purchase of the Sambucol Black  
21 Elderberry Chewable Tablets, Plaintiff Sunderland was exposed to, saw, and relied  
22 upon Defendants’ materially misleading representations on the Products’ packaging  
23 and labelling. She reviewed the product’s labeling, where she saw and relied on  
24 Defendants’ claims that its elderberry ingredient was developed by a world  
25 renowned virologist and was unique and propriety.

26 13. By purchasing Defendants’ illegally sold and falsely advertised  
27 Elderberry Products, Plaintiff Sunderland suffered injury in fact and lost money.

28 14. Plaintiff Sunderland would like to continue purchasing Defendants’

1 Elderberry Products if they were legally sold supplements and if Defendants' false  
2 and misleading statements were true. Plaintiff Sunderland is, however, unable to rely  
3 on Defendants' representations in deciding whether to purchase Defendants'  
4 products in the future.

5 15. Plaintiff Benjamin Binder is a resident and citizen of California.

6 16. Plaintiff Binder purchased Sambucol Black Elderberry Original Syrup  
7 over the last four years, with his last purchase in June 2023.

8 17. Prior to and at the time of each purchase of the Sambucol Black  
9 Elderberry Original Syrup, Plaintiff Binder was exposed to, saw, and relied upon  
10 Defendants' materially misleading representations on the Products' packaging and  
11 labelling. He reviewed the product's labeling, where he saw and relied on  
12 Defendants' claims that its elderberry ingredient was developed by a world  
13 renowned virologist and was unique and propriety.

14 18. By purchasing Defendants' illegally sold and falsely advertised  
15 Products, Plaintiff Binder suffered injury in fact and lost money.

16 19. Plaintiff Binder would like to continue purchasing Defendants'  
17 Products if they were legally sold supplements and if Defendants' false and  
18 misleading statements were true. Plaintiff Binder is, however, unable to rely on  
19 Defendants' representations in deciding whether to purchase Defendants' products  
20 in the future.

21 20. Defendant PharmaCare U.S., Inc. is a Delaware corporation with its  
22 principal place of business at 5030 Camino de la Siesta, Suite 200, San Diego,  
23 California 92108. Defendant PharmaCare U.S., Inc. is responsible for the marketing  
24 and distribution of the Elderberry Products in the United States. Defendant  
25 PharmaCare U.S., Inc. is responsible for reviewing the accuracy of the Elderberry  
26 Products labels sold in the United States, and will make periodic changes to such  
27 labels.

28 21. Defendant Pharmacare Laboratories Pty Ltd. (or Pharm-A-Care

1 Laboratories Pty. Ltd.) is an Australian company with its principal place of business  
2 at 18 Jubilee Ave Warriewood, 2102 Australia. Defendant Pharmacare Pty Ltd.  
3 (both individually and through its whole own subsidiaries) owns the Sambucol  
4 trademark, is responsible for the formulation and manufacturing of the Elderberry  
5 Products (both in the U.S. and internationally), and is responsible for the original  
6 labels on the Elderberry Products.

### 7 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

8 22. This Court has original jurisdiction over this controversy pursuant to 28  
9 U.S.C. § 1332(d). The amount in controversy in this class action exceeds  
10 \$5,000,000, exclusive of interest and costs, there are tens of thousands of Class  
11 members, and there are numerous Class members who are citizens of states other  
12 than Defendants' states of citizenship.

13 23. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant PharmaCare U.S.,  
14 Inc.'s in this matter because Defendant is a resident of California, and Defendants'  
15 acts and omissions giving rise to this action occurred in the state of California.

16 24. Venue is proper in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(2) and  
17 (c) because a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to Plaintiffs'  
18 claims occurred in this District and because Defendants transact business and/or has  
19 agents within this District and has intentionally availed themselves of the laws and  
20 markets within this district.

### 21 **FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

22 25. This dispute arises out of Defendants' marketing of the Sambucol  
23 branded dietary supplements, which contains as its primary dietary ingredient, Black  
24 Elderberry extract.

25 26. Black Elderberry (also known as *Sambucus nigra*) is a flowering plant  
26 that produces small clusters of small black berries. Elderberries have been used for  
27 hundreds of years. However, raw elderberries, as well as elderberry seeds, stems,  
28 and leaves, contain a toxin, cyanogenic glycosides, that can cause serious illness and

1 even death. Accordingly, elderberries have to be cooked before they can be used, in  
2 order to neutralize the cyanogenic glycosides. This is traditionally done by boiling  
3 the elderberries, using the resulting juice or mash. This method is also used to create  
4 traditional elderberry juices and extracts.

5 27. In May 3, 1988, a patent was filed by Madeleine Bliah (later known as  
6 Madeleine Mumcuoglu), U.S. Patent No. 4,742,046. Patent No. US4742046. This  
7 Patent described the use of *lectins* obtained from the *Sambucus nigra* plant for  
8 inhibiting the activity of enveloping viruses (particularly influenza virus type A).  
9 The Patent described the method of extraction for Dr. Mumcuoglu's therapeutic  
10 elderberry extract, which focused on isolating elderberry lectins (which Dr.  
11 Mumcuoglu claimed had anti-viral properties):

12 elderberries from *Sambucus nigra I* may be pressed without crushing  
13 the seeds and the extract recovered by centrifugation and filtration. The  
14 extract should then be ultra-centrifuged. The lectins may be recovered  
15 from the extract by affinity chromatography on a Sepharose-galactose  
16 column followed by elution. The lactose may be removed (for example,  
17 by passage through a Sephadex G25 column). The desorbed material is  
18 then resubjected to affinity chromatography on a Sepharose-galactose  
19 column. The first two peaks recovered during desorption are dialyzed  
20 against water and lyophilized. The first peak comprises *Sambucus nigra II*  
lectin which is not appreciably adsorbed on to the Sepharose-  
galactose column and the second peak comprises *Sambucus nigra I*  
lectin

21 *Id.* at p. 4. The Patent warns that “[d]uring the drug processing the temperature  
22 should not exceed 70° C. since some lectins are destroyed by heat at that level.” *Id.*

23 28. This temperature limitation is an important note, as most pasteurization  
24 process for commercial juice products will normally exceed this temperature. *See*  
25 FDA, Guidance for Industry: Juice Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point Hazards  
26 and Controls Guidance, First Edition (2004), available at  
27 [https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-](https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/guidance-industry-juice-hazard-analysis-critical-control-point-hazards-)  
28 [documents/guidance-industry-juice-hazard-analysis-critical-control-point-hazards-](https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/guidance-industry-juice-hazard-analysis-critical-control-point-hazards-)



1 and-controls-guidance-first (recommended pasteurization for fruit juice at a  
2 minimum of 71.1° C (160° F) for 6 seconds, but may be much higher). This is likely  
3 the reason for Dr. Mumcuoglu’s specific method of extraction.

4 29. Accordingly, the formula that Dr. Mumcuoglu developed, which  
5 Defendants touted in its marketing and labeling of the Elderberry Products, was not  
6 traditional elderberry juice. Instead, it was a method of isolating the lectins within  
7 elderberries for their anti-viral properties.

8 30. During this period, Dr. Mumcuoglu also started an Israeli health  
9 products company, Razei Bar Ltd., to market her elderberry extract. In April 1995,  
10 Razei Bar Ltd. applied for a U.S. trademark, No. 74680785, on the word “Sambucol”  
11 for “dietary supplements, namely liquid extracts and throat lozenges composed  
12 primarily of elderberry juice.” The “Sambucol” trademark would eventually  
13 become the property of Defendant PharmaCare Laboratories Pty Ltd.

14 31. In 2009, Dr. Mumcuoglu would file a patent application, No.  
15 US2009/0186101 A1, to test this same elderberry extract discussed in the above  
16 patent as a novel method for the treatment of the avian flu virus. Patent Application  
17 US2009/0186101 A1. In this patent application, Dr. Mumcuoglu would specifically  
18 refer to her previous patented therapeutic elderberry extract using the trademarked  
19 term “Sambucol.” *Id.* Additionally, there is no doubt that these patents describe the  
20 unique “Sambucol” elderberry extract that Dr. Mumcuoglu developed and  
21 trademarked.

22 32. In order to increase demand, the Elderberry Products’ labeling  
23 specifically advertises that the Products contained a “unique” and “proprietary”  
24 elderberry extract “developed by a world renowned virologist.” The virologist  
25 referenced was Dr. Mumcuoglu. Defendants originally included Dr. Mumcuoglu’s  
26 name on some of the Products’ labels, but this reference was removed. It appears  
27 that there is currently no connection between Dr. Mumcuoglu and Defendants or the  
28 current version of the Elderberry Products.

1 33. Nonetheless, Defendants continued to advertise on several of the  
2 Products' labels that the Products were in fact virologist developed. For example,  
3 the label of the Products contained statements, such as:

- 4 • the Products were "Virologist developed"
- 5 • "Developed by a [world renowned] virologist, Sambucol® is the  
6 unique black elderberry extract that has been used in scientific studies. By  
7 using a proprietary method of extraction, only Sambucol® can guarantee  
8 consistent, immune supporting properties in every serving."
- 9 • "Developed by a world renowned virologist, Sambucol® is the  
10 unique manufacturing process preserves and maximizes the naturally  
11 occurring health benefits of the Black Elderberry."
- 12 • "Developed by a world renowned virologist, Sambucol® has  
13 been trusted by millions worldwide."

14 It is believed that Defendants included this language to build trust in the Sambucol  
15 brand and gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

16 34. At all relevant times, Defendants marketed its Products in a consistent  
17 and uniform manner. Each of the Class Products' labels specifically reference that  
18 they were virologist developed and contained the same elderberry extracts.  
19 Defendants sell the Products in all 50 states on its website and through various  
20 distributors and retailers across the United States.

21 35. For the first time during an ancillary litigation, Defendants' counsel  
22 revealed that these claims may be false. During a discovery hearing, where the  
23 plaintiffs were seeking formulations for the Products, Defendants' counsel claimed  
24 that:

25 I don't know why plaintiff is saying he needs the formulation for it to  
26 determine chemical analysis. You literally have the manufacturing  
27 process for turning elderberries into elderberry juice, from which an  
28 expert should be able to opine on whether that results in any chemical  
alteration to the elderberry juice.

1 *Corbett et al. v. Pharmicare U.S., Inc.*, No: 3:21-cv-00137-JES-AHG, ECF No. 119,  
2 at p. 29:20-25. The import of this statement is significant, as it seems to be a judicial  
3 admission that the “unique” and “proprietary” Elderberry Extract in the Elderberry  
4 Products (touted to have been developed by a virologist), was simply elderberry  
5 juice.

6 36. Notably, with respect to the virologist developed extract that  
7 Defendants tout on its marketing and labeling, Dr. Mumcuoglu (the referenced  
8 virologist) applied for two Patents for the use of an extract containing the *lectins*  
9 obtained from the *Sambucus nigra* plant for inhibiting the activity of viruses, namely  
10 the flu. Lectins are the defining component of Dr. Mumcuoglu’s formula.

11 37. Plaintiffs testing of the Elderberry Products confirm that there are no  
12 elderberry lectins in the Products. Therefore, Defendants are not using Dr.  
13 Mumcuoglu’s unique and proprietary formulation, which was developed (in part) to  
14 retain the lectins. Accordingly, Defendants’ “virologist developed” claims are  
15 demonstrably false.

16 38. Defendants knew, or could not be unaware, of the falsity of the  
17 Elderberry Products’ labels as alleged herein. Defendants both reviewed and created  
18 the labels on the Elderberry Products, as well as their formulations. Defendants also  
19 purchased the ingredients within the Elderberry Products, including the Elderberry  
20 Extract. Finally, Defendants were also aware of Dr. Mumcuoglu’s Elderberry  
21 Extract formulation (as it was in a publicly available patent) and her involvement in  
22 the development of the Sambucol dietary supplements. Indeed, even during  
23 Defendants’ ownership of the Elderberry Products, some of the Products’ labels still  
24 referenced Dr. Mumcuoglu. Thus, Defendants could not have been unaware that the  
25 Elderberry Products did not contain an “unique” and “proprietary” Elderberry  
26 Extract, developed by a virologist. Instead, it contained simply elderberry juice.

27 39. Defendants continue to falsely label its Elderberry Products as being  
28 “virologist developed” and containing an “unique” and “proprietary” Elderberry

1 Extract. Yet, without complex and costly scientific testing, consumers would be  
2 unable to determine that Defendant’s labels are false. Without injunctive relief,  
3 consumers will be unable to determine if Defendants’ labels remain incorrect or if  
4 the Elderberry Products actually use Dr. Mumcuoglu’s formulation. Additionally,  
5 Plaintiffs and other consumers continue to be injured by Defendants’ fraudulent  
6 business practices.

7 40. Additionally, Defendants cause consumers to suffer a monetary injury.  
8 Each of the Elderberry Products do not contain the “unique” and “proprietary”  
9 virologist developed Elderberry Extract, as advertised and warranted. Accordingly,  
10 Plaintiffs and other claims members are entitled to the difference between the  
11 Elderberry Products provided and the Elderberry Products as warranted.

12 **TOLLING AND ESTOPPEL ALLEGATIONS**

13 41. Defendants have actual knowledge, or should have actual knowledge,  
14 that its Elderberry Products do not contain the “unique” and “proprietary” virologist  
15 developed Elderberry Extract, as advertised and warranted for the reasons stated  
16 above.

17 42. Although Defendants were aware of the deception in their advertising,  
18 marketing, packaging, and sale of the Elderberry Products chemicals, it took no steps  
19 to disclose to Plaintiffs or Class Members that their Products do not contain the  
20 “unique” and “proprietary” virologist developed Elderberry Extract.

21 43. Despite their knowledge otherwise, Defendants have fraudulently  
22 misrepresented the Elderberry Products contain the “unique” and “proprietary”  
23 virologist developed Elderberry Extract, actively concealing this fact from Plaintiffs  
24 and other Class Members.

25 44. Defendants have made, and continue to make, affirmative false  
26 statements and misrepresentations to consumers, regarding the inclusion of the  
27 purported “unique” and “proprietary” virologist developed Elderberry Extract in the  
28 Elderberry Products.

1 45. The exact formulation of the Elderberry Extract in the Elderberry  
2 Products is not reasonably detectible to Plaintiffs and Class Members.

3 46. At all times, Defendants actively and intentionally misrepresented the  
4 qualities and characteristics of the Elderberry Products, while concealing the true  
5 nature of the Elderberry Extract in its Products. Accordingly, Plaintiffs' and Class  
6 Members' lack of awareness was not attributable to a lack of diligence on their part.

7 47. Defendants misrepresented the Elderberry Products and concealed the  
8 true nature of the Elderberry Extract in their Products for the purpose of delaying  
9 Plaintiffs and Class Members from filing a complaint on their causes of action.

10 48. As a result of Defendants' intentional misrepresentations and active  
11 concealment of the true nature of the Elderberry Extract in their Elderberry Products,  
12 any and all applicable statutes of limitations otherwise applicable to the allegations  
13 herein have been tolled. Furthermore, Defendants are estopped from relying on any  
14 statutes of limitations in light of its intentional misrepresentations and active  
15 concealment of the true nature of the Elderberry Extract in their Elderberry Products.

16 49. Further, the causes of action alleged herein did not occur until Plaintiffs  
17 and Class Members discovered that the Products contained PFAS chemicals.  
18 Plaintiffs only became aware of the true nature of the Elderberry Extract in their  
19 Products through Defendants' admission at a recent hearing before this Court.  
20 *Corbett et al. v. Pharmicare U.S., Inc.*, No: 3:21-cv-00137-JES-AHG, ECF No. 119,  
21 at p. 29:20-25. Prior to this admission, there was no publicly available information  
22 regarding the exact formulation of the Elderberry Extract in Defendants' Elderberry  
23 Products which would contradict Defendants' assertion that the Elderberry Extract  
24 in their Elderberry Products was a "unique" and "proprietary" virologist developed  
25 formulation.

26 **CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS**

27 50. Plaintiffs bring this action individually and as representatives of all  
28 those similarly situated, pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23, on behalf

1 of the below-defined Classes:

2 **National Class:**

3 All persons in the United States who, during the relevant statute of limitations,  
4 purchased the Elderberry Original Syrup, Sambucol Black Elderberry Sugar  
5 Free, Sambucol Black Elderberry Syrup for Kids, Sambucol Black Elderberry  
6 Effervescent Tablets, Sambucol Black Elderberry Chewable Tablets,  
7 Sambucol Black Elderberry Pastilles, Sambucol Black Elderberry Daily  
8 Immune Drink Powder, and Sambucol Black Elderberry Advanced Immune  
9 Syrup for personal or household use and not for resale.

8 **California Subclass:**

9 All persons in California who, during the relevant statute of limitations,  
10 purchased the Elderberry Original Syrup, Sambucol Black Elderberry Sugar  
11 Free, Sambucol Black Elderberry Syrup for Kids, Sambucol Black Elderberry  
12 Effervescent Tablets, Sambucol Black Elderberry Chewable Tablets,  
13 Sambucol Black Elderberry Pastilles, Sambucol Black Elderberry Daily  
14 Immune Drink Powder, and Sambucol Black Elderberry Advanced Immune  
15 Syrup for personal or household use and not for resale.

13 **New York Subclass:**

14 All persons in New York who, during the relevant statute of limitations,  
15 purchased the Elderberry Original Syrup, Sambucol Black Elderberry Sugar  
16 Free, Sambucol Black Elderberry Syrup for Kids, Sambucol Black Elderberry  
17 Effervescent Tablets, Sambucol Black Elderberry Chewable Tablets,  
18 Sambucol Black Elderberry Pastilles, Sambucol Black Elderberry Daily  
19 Immune Drink Powder, and Sambucol Black Elderberry Advanced Immune  
20 Syrup for personal or household use and not for resale.

21 Specifically excluded from these definitions are: (1) Defendants, any entity in which  
22 Defendants have a controlling interest, and its legal representatives, officers,  
23 directors, employees, assigns and successors; (2) the Judge to whom this case is  
24 assigned and any member of the Judge’s staff or immediate family; and (3) Class  
25 Counsel. Plaintiffs reserve the right to amend the Class definition and Subclass  
26 definitions as necessary.

27 51. Certification of Plaintiffs’ claims for class-wide treatment are  
28 appropriate because Plaintiffs can prove the elements of the claims on a class-wide  
basis using the same evidence that individual Class members would use to prove  
those elements in individual actions alleging the same claims.

1           52. The Members of the Class are so numerous that joinder of all members  
2 is impracticable. While the exact number of Class Members is presently unknown,  
3 it likely consists of hundreds of thousands of consumers. The number of Class  
4 Members can be determined by sales information and other records. Moreover,  
5 joinder of all potential Class Members is not practicable given their numbers and  
6 geographic diversity. The Class is readily identifiable from information and records  
7 in the possession of Defendants and its authorized retailers.

8           53. The claims of the representative Plaintiffs are typical in that Plaintiffs,  
9 like all Class Members, purchased the Elderberry Products that were manufactured,  
10 marketed, advertised, distributed, and sold by Defendants. Furthermore, the factual  
11 basis of Defendants' misconduct is common to all Class Members because  
12 Defendants have engaged in systematic fraudulent behavior that was deliberate,  
13 includes negligent misconduct, and results in the same injury to all Class Members.

14           54. Common questions of law and fact exist as to all Members of the Class.  
15 These questions predominate over questions that may affect only individual Class  
16 Members because Defendants have acted on grounds generally applicable to the  
17 Class. Such common legal or factual questions include, *inter alia*:

18           a. Whether the Elderberry Products are advertised and warranted as  
19 containing a "unique" and "propriety" Elderberry Extract, developed by a virologist;

20           b. Whether the claims Defendants made and is making regarding the  
21 Products are unfair or deceptive, specifically, whether the Elderberry Products  
22 actually contain "unique" and "propriety" Elderberry Extract, developed by a  
23 virologist;

24           c. Whether Defendants knew or should have known that the  
25 representations and advertisements regarding the Products were false and  
26 misleading;

27           d. Whether Defendants have breached express warranties in the sale and  
28 marketing of the Elderberry Products;

1 e. Whether Defendants' conduct violates public policy;

2 f. Whether Defendants' acts and omissions violate California law;

3 g. Whether Defendants' acts and omissions violate New York law;

4 h. Whether the Plaintiffs and the Class Members suffered monetary  
5 injury, and, if so, what is the measure of the appropriate damages or, in the  
6 alternative, restitution;

7 i. Whether Plaintiffs and the Class Members are entitled to an injunction,  
8 damages, restitution, equitable relief, and other relief deemed appropriate, and, if so,  
9 the amount and nature of such relief.

10 55. Plaintiffs will fairly and adequately protect the interests of Class  
11 Members. They have no interests antagonistic to those of Class Members. Plaintiffs  
12 retained attorneys experienced in the prosecution of class actions, including  
13 consumer and product defect class actions, and Plaintiffs intend to prosecute this  
14 action vigorously.

15 56. The elements of Rule 23(b)(2) are met. Defendants will continue to  
16 commit the unlawful practices alleged herein, and Class Members will remain at an  
17 unreasonable and serious safety risk as a result of the Defect. Defendants have acted  
18 and refused to act on grounds that apply generally to the Class, such that final  
19 injunctive relief and corresponding declaratory relief is appropriate respecting the  
20 Class as a whole.

21 57. The elements of Rule 23(b)(3) are also met. Plaintiffs and Class  
22 Members have all suffered and will continue to suffer harm and damages as a result  
23 of Defendants' unlawful and wrongful conduct. A class action is superior to other  
24 available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the controversy. Absent  
25 a class action, Class Members would likely find the cost of litigating their claims  
26 prohibitively high and would therefore have no effective remedy at law. Because of  
27 the relatively small size of Class Members' individual claims, it is likely that few  
28 Class Members could afford to seek legal redress for Defendants' misconduct.



1 Absent a class action, Class Members will continue to incur damages, and  
2 Defendants’ misconduct will continue without remedy. Class treatment of common  
3 questions of law and fact would also be a superior method to multiple individual  
4 actions or piecemeal litigation in that class treatment will conserve the resources of  
5 the courts and the litigants and will promote consistency and efficiency of  
6 adjudication.

7 58. Plaintiffs know of no difficulty to be encountered in the maintenance  
8 of this action that would preclude its maintenance as a class action.

9 59. Defendants have acted or refused to act on grounds generally applicable  
10 to the Class, thereby making appropriate final injunctive relief or corresponding  
11 declaratory relief with respect to the Class appropriate.

12 **CAUSES OF ACTION**

13 **COUNT I**

14 **California’s Unfair Competition Law**  
15 **Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 17200 et seq. (“UCL”)**  
16 **(On Behalf of the National Class and California Subclass)**

17 60. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference the allegations  
18 contained in the preceding paragraphs as though set forth fully herein.

19 61. Plaintiffs bring this claim individually and on behalf of all members of  
20 the National Class and Plaintiff Binder brings this claim individually and on behalf  
21 of California Subclass against Defendants.

22 62. The UCL prohibits any “unlawful, unfair or fraudulent business act or  
23 practice.” Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 17200.

24 63. The acts, omissions, misrepresentations, practices, and non-disclosures  
25 of Defendants as alleged herein constitute business acts and practices.

26 64. Unlawful: The acts alleged herein are “unlawful” under the UCL in  
27 that they violate at least the following laws: the False Advertising Law, Cal. Bus. &  
28 Prof. Code §§ 17500 et seq. and the Consumers Legal Remedies Act, Cal. Civ. Code

1 §§ 1750 *et seq.*;

2 65. Unfair: Defendants’ conduct with respect to the labeling, advertising,  
3 and sale of the Products was “unfair” because Defendants’ conduct was immoral,  
4 unethical, unscrupulous, or substantially injurious to consumers and the utility of  
5 their conduct, if any, does not outweigh the gravity of the harm to their victims.

6 66. Defendants’ conduct with respect to the labeling, advertising, and sale  
7 of the Products was and is also unfair because it violates public policy as declared  
8 by specific constitutional, statutory or regulatory provisions, including but not  
9 limited to the applicable sections of the Consumers Legal Remedies Act and the  
10 False Advertising Law.

11 67. Defendants’ conduct with respect to the labeling, advertising, and sale  
12 of the Products was and is unfair because the consumer injury was substantial, not  
13 outweighed by benefits to consumers or competition, and not one consumer  
14 themselves could reasonably have avoided.

15 68. Fraudulent: A statement or practice is “fraudulent” under the UCL if it  
16 is likely to mislead or deceive the public, applying an objective reasonable consumer  
17 test. As set forth in detail above, Defendants have fraudulently labeled its Products  
18 as they have made false and misleading statements that are likely to mislead  
19 reasonable consumers.

20 69. Defendants profited from its sale of the falsely, deceptively, and  
21 unlawfully advertised and packaged Products to unwary consumers.

22 70. Plaintiffs seek an order enjoining Defendant from continuing to  
23 conduct business through fraudulent or unlawful acts and practices and to commence  
24 a corrective advertising campaign.

25 71. Defendant’s conduct is ongoing and continuing, such that prospective  
26 injunctive relief is necessary, especially given Plaintiffs’ desire to purchase the  
27 Products in the future if they can be assured that the Products are properly labeled  
28 and actually contain a virologist developed elderberry extract.

1 72. Additionally, Plaintiffs seek restitution if monetary damages are not  
2 available. Indeed, restitution under the UCL can be awarded in situations where the  
3 entitlement to damages may prove difficult. But even if damages were available,  
4 such relief would not be adequate to address the injury suffered by Plaintiffs and the  
5 Class. Unlike damages, the Court's discretion in fashioning equitable relief is very  
6 broad. Thus, restitution would allow recovery even when normal consideration  
7 associated with damages would not.

8 73. On behalf of themselves and the Class, Plaintiffs also seek an order for  
9 the restitution of all monies from the sale of the Products, which were unjustly  
10 acquired through acts of fraudulent, unfair, or unlawful competition.

11  
12 **COUNT II**  
13 **California's False Advertising Law**  
14 **Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 17500 ("FAL")**  
15 **(On Behalf of the National Class and California Subclass)**

14 74. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference the allegations  
15 contained in the preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

16 75. Plaintiffs bring this claim individually and on behalf of all members of  
17 the National Class and Plaintiff Binder brings this claim individually and on behalf  
18 of California Subclass against Defendants.

19 76. The FAL provides that "[i]t is unlawful for any person, firm,  
20 corporation or association, or any employee thereof with intent directly or indirectly  
21 to dispose of real or personal property or to perform services" to disseminate any  
22 statement "which is untrue or misleading, and which is known, or which by the  
23 exercise of reasonable care should be known, to be untrue or misleading." Cal. Bus.  
24 & Prof. Code § 17500.

25 77. As alleged in detail above, the advertisements, labeling, policies, acts,  
26 and practices of Defendants relating to the Elderberry Products misled consumers  
27 acting reasonably regarding the ingredients within said Products.  
28

1           78. Plaintiffs and the Class Members suffered injury in fact as a result of  
2 Defendants' actions as set forth herein because they purchased the Products in  
3 reliance on Defendants' labeling claims, when such claims were false.

4           79. Defendants' business practices as alleged herein constitute deceptive,  
5 untrue, and misleading advertising pursuant to the FAL because Defendants have  
6 advertised the Products in a manner that is untrue and misleading, which Defendants  
7 knew or reasonably should have known, and omitted material information from its  
8 advertising. For example, Defendants advertised that its Elderberry Products  
9 contained a virologist developed extract, when it did not.

10           80. Defendants profited from its sale of the falsely and deceptively  
11 advertised Products to unwary consumers.

12           81. Plaintiffs seek an order enjoining Defendant from continuing to  
13 conduct business through fraudulent or unlawful acts and practices and to commence  
14 a corrective advertising campaign.

15           82. Defendant's conduct is ongoing and continuing, such that prospective  
16 injunctive relief is necessary, especially given Plaintiffs' desire to purchase the  
17 Products in the future if they can be assured that the Products are properly labeled  
18 and actually contain a virologist developed elderberry extract.

19           83. Additionally, Plaintiffs seek restitution if monetary damages are not  
20 available. Indeed, restitution under the FAL can be awarded in situations where the  
21 entitlement to damages may prove difficult. But even if damages were available,  
22 such relief would not be adequate to address the injury suffered by Plaintiffs and the  
23 Subclass. Unlike damages, the Court's discretion in fashioning equitable relief is  
24 very broad. Thus, restitution would allow recovery even when normal consideration  
25 associated with damages would not.

26           84. On behalf of themselves and the Class, Plaintiffs also seek an order for  
27 the restitution of all monies from the sale of the Products, which were unjustly  
28 acquired through acts of fraudulent, unfair, or unlawful competition.

**COUNT III**

**California’s Consumer Legal Remedies Act  
Cal. Civ. Code § 1750 et seq. (“CLRA”)  
(On Behalf of the California Subclass)**

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4 85. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference the allegations  
5 contained in the preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

6 86. Plaintiff Binder brings this claim individually and on behalf of the  
7 members of the California Subclass against Defendants.

8 87. Defendants are a “person” under the CLRA, Cal. Civ. Code § 1761(c).

9 88. Plaintiff Binder and California Subclass members are “consumers”  
10 under the CLRA, Cal. Civ. Code § 1761(d).

11 89. The CLRA prohibits deceptive practices in connection with the conduct  
12 of a business that provides goods, property, or services primarily for personal,  
13 family, or household purposes.

14 90. Defendants’ false and misleading labeling and other policies, acts, and  
15 practices were designed to, and did, induce the purchase and use of the Products for  
16 personal, family, or household purposes by Plaintiff Binder and California Subclass  
17 Members, and violated and continue to violate the following sections of the CLRA:

18 a. § 1770(a)(5): representing that goods have characteristics, uses,  
19 or benefits which they do not have;

20 b. § 1770(a)(7): representing that goods are of a particular standard,  
21 quality, or grade if they are of another;

22 c. § 1770(a)(9): advertising goods with intent not to sell them as  
23 advertised; and

24 d. § 1770(a)(16): representing the subject of a transaction has been  
25 supplied in accordance with a previous representation when it has not.

26 91. Defendants profited from the sale of the falsely, deceptively, and  
27 unlawfully advertised Products to unwary consumers.

28 92. Defendants’ wrongful business practices constituted, and constitute, a

1 continuing course of conduct in violation of the CLRA.

2 93. Pursuant to the provisions of Cal. Civ. Code § 1782(a), concurrently  
3 with the filing of this Complaint, Plaintiff Binder, through counsel, mailed  
4 Defendants a letter by certified mail addressed to its headquarters (with a copy sent  
5 to Defendants’ counsel as well), providing notice of Defendants’ alleged violations  
6 of the CLRA, demanding that Defendants correct such violations, and providing  
7 Defendants with the opportunity to correct its business practices. Plaintiff Binder  
8 specifically identified which provisions of Cal. Civ. Code § 1770 Defendants had  
9 violated.

10 94. Pursuant to California Civil Code § 1780, Plaintiff Binder seeks  
11 injunctive relief, his reasonable attorneys’ fees and costs, and any other relief that  
12 the Court deems proper. Should Defendant not respond to Plaintiff Binder’s CLRA  
13 Demand Letter, Plaintiff will amend his complaint to seek additional monetary  
14 relief, which may include statutory damages.

15 **COUNT IV**

16 **Violation of New York Deceptive Acts and Practices Law**  
17 **(New York General Business Law §§ 349 and 350)**  
18 **(On Behalf of Plaintiff Sunderland and the New York Subclass)**

19 95. Plaintiff Sunderland reallege and repeat the allegations set forth in the  
20 preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

21 96. By the acts and conduct alleged herein, Defendants committed  
22 deceptive acts and practices in the State of New York by making the above alleged  
23 misrepresentations directed to consumers in New York

24 97. Plaintiffs and other members of the New York Class are “consumers”  
25 in accordance with New York General Business Law (“GBL”) § 349.

26 98. Defendants’ statements concerning the nature of the Elderberry Extract  
27 in the Elderberry Products, alleged above, were advertisements in accordance with  
28 GBL § 350.

1 99. Defendants’ statements concerning the nature of the Elderberry Extract  
2 in the Elderberry Products, alleged above, were misleading in violation of GBL §§  
3 349 and 350.

4 100. At all relevant times, Defendants conducted trade and commerce in  
5 New York and elsewhere within the meaning of GBL § 349, and profited from the  
6 sale of the Elderberry Products within New York.

7 101. Section 349 allows a plaintiff to recover “actual damages or fifty  
8 dollars, whichever is greater.” N.Y. Gen. Bus. L. §349(h). Section 350 allows a  
9 plaintiff to recover “actual damages or five hundred dollars, whichever is greater.”  
10 Id. §350-e.

11 102. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants’ conduct, Plaintiffs and  
12 other members of the Class have suffered damages.

13 103. Accordingly, Plaintiffs and the New York Subclass seek to enjoin the  
14 unlawful acts and practices described herein, to recover actual damages or statutory  
15 damages of fifty dollars and five hundred dollars under GBL §§ 349 and 350,  
16 respectively, whichever is greater, as well punitive damages and reasonable  
17 attorneys’ fees and costs.

18 **COUNT VI**  
19 **Breach of Express Warranties**  
20 **(On Behalf of the National Classes and Subclasses)**

21 104. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference the preceding  
22 paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

23 105. Plaintiffs bring this claim individually and on behalf of the members of  
24 the National Class and the California and New York Subclasses against Defendants.

25 106. Through the Products’ labels and advertising, Defendants made  
26 affirmations of fact or promises, or description of goods, described above, which  
27 were “part of the basis of the bargain,” in that Plaintiffs and the Class Members  
28 purchased the Products in reasonable reliance on those statements.

107. Plaintiffs and the Class Members have privity of contract with

1 Defendants through their purchase of the Elderberry Products, and through the  
2 express warranties that Defendants issued to its customers. Defendants’ warranties  
3 accompanied the Elderberry Products and were intended to benefit end-users of the  
4 Elderberry Products. To the extent that Plaintiffs and/or the Class Members  
5 purchased the Elderberry Products from third-party retailers, privity is not required  
6 because Plaintiffs and the Class Members are intended third-party beneficiaries of  
7 the contracts between Defendants and third-party retailers, and because the express  
8 warranty is intended to benefit purchasers or owners subsequent to the third-party  
9 retailers. In other words, the contracts are intended to benefit the ultimate consumer  
10 or user of the Elderberry Products.

11 108. Defendants breached the express warranties by selling Elderberry  
12 Products that contain a “unique” and “propriety” Elderberry Extract, developed by  
13 a virologist.

14 109. Plaintiffs and the Class Members would not have purchased the  
15 Elderberry Products had they known that the Products are falsely labeled. Plaintiffs  
16 and the Class Members relied on Defendants’ misrepresentations and misstatements.

17 110. That breach actually and proximately caused injury in the form of a  
18 portion of the purchase price that Plaintiffs and Class members paid for the  
19 Elderberry Products.

20 111. Furthermore, Defendants had actual knowledge that the Elderberry  
21 Products were falsely labeled because it has actual knowledge of the formulation of  
22 the Elderberry Products.

23 112. Plaintiffs provided Defendants with notice of the alleged breach within  
24 a reasonable time after they discovered the breach or should have discovered it.

25 113. As a result of Defendants’ breach of warranty, Plaintiffs and the Class  
26 Members have been damaged in the amount of the purchase price of the Products  
27 and any consequential damages resulting from the purchases.

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**PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs pray that this case be certified and maintained as a class action and for judgment to be entered against Defendants as follows:

- A. Enter an order certifying the proposed Class (and subclasses, if applicable), designating Plaintiffs as the class representatives, and designating the undersigned as class counsel;
- B. Enter an order awarding Plaintiffs and the class members their actual damages, treble damages, and/or any other form of monetary relief provided by law;
- C. Declare that Defendants are financially responsible for notifying all Class members of the mislabeling and misbranding of the Products;
- D. Declare that Defendants must disgorge, for the benefit of the Class, all or part of the ill-gotten profits it received from the sale of the Products, or order Defendants to make full restitution to Plaintiffs and the members of the Class;
- E. Defendants shall audit and reassess all prior customer claims regarding the Products, including claims previously denied in whole or in part;
- F. An order awarding Plaintiffs and the Classes pre-judgment and post-judgment interest as allowed under the law;
- G. Grant reasonable attorneys' fees and reimbursement of all costs for the prosecution of this action, including expert witness fees; and
- H. Grant such other and further relief as this Court deems just and appropriate.

**JURY DEMAND**

Plaintiffs hereby demand a trial by jury on all issues so triable.

1 Dated: July 18, 2023

Respectfully Submitted,

2  
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*Counsel for Plaintiffs and the Class*

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