1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Lori E. Andrus (SBN 205816) lori@andrusanderson.com Jennie Lee Anderson (SBN 203586) jennie@andrusanderson.com Audrey C. Siegel (SBN 286771) audrey.siegel@andrusanderson.com ANDRUS ANDERSON LLP 155 Montgomery Street, Suite 900 San Francisco, CA 94104 Telephone: (415) 986-1400 Facsimile: (415) 986-1474  Attorneys for Plaintiff							
9	UNITED STATES D	ISTRICT COURT						
10	FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA							
11								
12	R.R., a minor, through his guardian ad litem,	Case No. 4:20-cv-3392-LB						
13 14	Plaintiff,	COMPLAINT – DEFECTIVE PRODUCT						
15	VS.	DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL						
16	EVENFLO COMPANY, INC.,							
17	Defendant.							
18	<u>INTRODU</u>	<u>ICTION</u>						
19	1. In 2013 and 2014, Monique Chaves	s ("Guardian Chavez") used a dangerously						
20	defective Evenflo "Snugli Comfort" Baby Carrier	(the "Baby Carrier") to carry her son, R.R.						
21	("Plaintiff R.R."), which caused hip dysplasia in the infant. As a result of this preventable							
22								
23	ury, Plaintiff R.R. suffered greatly, having to wear a stiff brace for a minimum of 8 hours a day approximately one year. Plaintiff R.R. is treaters continue to monitor his hin dysplasia and							
24	for approximately one year. Plaintiff R.R.'s treaters continue to monitor his hip dysplasia and							
25	warn that surgery may be required.							
26								
27 28	<sup>1</sup> Concurrently with the filing of the Complaint, M recognized as Plaintiff R.R.'s guardian <i>ad litem</i> pt 17(c)(1).							
	-1-	Case No. 4:20-cv-3392						

COMPLAINT

- 2. The Baby Carrier is intended for parents to carry their infants for extended periods of time. It is worn on the front of the parent, with straps over the parent's shoulders and around the parent's waist. A child can be positioned in the Baby Carrier either facing the parent or facing away. In either direction, the infant's legs hang straight down, in an unsafe position of extension and abduction. Properly designed carriers have a wider, more structured bottom, which gives more support for the infant's hips. The Baby Carrier that is the subject of this lawsuit is defectively designed, however. It has a narrow bottom that does not provide sufficient support of the infant's hips. As a result, the Baby Carrier presents a dangerous risk of hip dysplasia, particularly with prolonged use.
- 3. From at least 2002, Evenflo was aware, or should have been aware, that the Baby Carrier's design carried with it a dangerous propensity to cause hip dysplasia in children.

## **PARTIES**

- 4. Plaintiff R.R. is a minor who, at all applicable times, resided, and still resides in in Pittsburg, California.
- 5. Defendant Evenflo Company, Inc. ("Evenflo") is incorporated in the state of Delaware. Evenflo conducts business throughout the United States, including in California, where it is registered with the California Secretary of State. Evenflo maintains its principal place of business in Ohio and maintains corporate offices in Massachusetts.

#### JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 6. The amount in controversy between Plaintiff and Defendant exceeds \$75,000, exclusive of interest and cost.
- 7. This Court has jurisdiction over Evenflo and this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332 because there is complete diversity of citizenship between Plaintiff and Defendant.

  Defendant is incorporated and has its principal place of business outside of the state in which Plaintiff resides. The Court has supplemental jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367.
- 8. Venue is proper within this district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391 in that a substantial part of the acts and/or omissions giving rise to these claims occurred within this district. Defendant is subject to personal jurisdiction in this district. Within the statutory time

1 period, Evenflo sold, marketed, and/or distributed the Baby Carriers within the Northern District 2 of California. Having systematically and purposefully directed products to the State of 3 California, which products gave rise to Plaintiff's causes of actions herein, Defendant is subject to 4 the personal jurisdiction of this Court. 5 **FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS** 6 9. Evenflo designed, manufactured, labeled, marketed, sold and distributed the Baby 7 Carrier giving rise to the Plaintiff's injuries. 8 10. Guardian Chaves carried Plaintiff R.R. in the Baby Carrier beginning in 2013, 9 from the time he was approximately two weeks old on a daily basis, multiple times per day, and 10 often for extended periods of time during each use, until Plaintiff R.R. was approximately eight 11 months old. 12 11. Guardian Chaves' use of the Baby Carrier was consistent with the intended use for 13 which it was designed, marketed, and sold. 14 12. Despite Guardian Chaves' use of the Baby Carrier in the manner intended by 15 Evenflo and reasonably foreseeable by Evenflo, the Baby Carrier caused Plaintiff R.R. to develop 16 hip dysplasia. Plaintiff R.R. has experienced and will continue to suffer on an ongoing basis 17 significant mental and physical pain and suffering, and permanent injury, which have required or 18 may require corrective surgery. 19 As a result of the hip dysplasia, Plaintiff R.R. had to be put into a stiff body brace 13. 20 at one year of age. He was confined to that body cast for 8-12 hours a day for a year. 21 **History of Evenflo and Its Baby Carriers** 22 Evenflo, then known as Pyramid Rubber Company, began manufacturing products 14. for babies in 1920.<sup>2</sup> The company formally became known as Evenflo Company, Inc. in 1995, 23 following the merger of Evenflo Juvenile Products and Evenflo Juvenile Furniture Company.<sup>3</sup> 24 25 // 26 // 27 // 28 <sup>2</sup> See https://www.evenflo.com/about/about-us.html. <sup>3</sup> *Id*.

1 15. According to its website, www.evenflo.com, Evenflo is a "top supplier" of infant 2 and juvenile products, including baby carriers. Evenflo's advertisements state: "It's babywearing made simple."<sup>4</sup> 3 The instruction manuals for Evenflo's baby carrying products warn that small 4 16. 5 children may fall through the carrier's leg openings, and that putting items into the carrier with a child may impede the child's ability to breathe.<sup>5</sup> There is no mention of the potential for hip 6 7 damage. Moreover, the illustrations in the manuals depicts infants with their legs dangling from the bottom of the carriers.<sup>6</sup> 8 9 Evenflo's "Snugli Comfort" carrier was originally invented by Ann Moore in 17. 1964. Ms. Moore earned a patent on her invention in 1969. She later sold the rights to the Baby 10 11 Carrier to Gerry Baby Products. The Gerry Baby Products Company was purchased by Evenflo in 1997.8 Evenflo discontinued the "Snugli Comfort" Baby Carrier sometime in the last few 12 13 years. 14 18. Evenflo claims: "To the Evenflo family nothing is more important than the safety, wellbeing, and development of children."9 15 16 What Evenflo Knew or Should Have Known 17 19. Baby-carrying is an ancient practice. For baby-carrying to be safe, infants must be carried in a particular way. The thighs must be supported, and the hips must be bent into an "M" 18 19 position. 10 Abduction of 35 to 40 degrees and flexion of 90 to 120 degrees is the ideal position of 20 an infant's hips for optimal development.<sup>11</sup> 21 // 22 23 <sup>4</sup> See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zqzma AJjo0. <sup>5</sup> See https://www.evenflo.com/support/instruction-manuals.html. 24 <sup>6</sup> *Id.*, Evenflo Breathable Carrier Instruction Manual pp. 1-3. <sup>7</sup> See https://magazine.uc.edu/issues/0810/moore.html. 25 <sup>8</sup> See https://www.nytimes.com/1997/04/23/business/gerry-baby-products-sold-to-evenflo-for-73-26 million.html. <sup>9</sup> See www.evenflo.com/about/about-us.html. 27 <sup>10</sup> https://hipdysplasia.org/developmental-dysplasia-of-the-hip/prevention/baby-carriers-seatsand-other-equipment/. 28 <sup>11</sup> See Regine A. Schon, & Maarit Silven, Natural Parenting--Back to Basics in Infant Care, 5(1)

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Evolutionary Psychology 102, 118 (2007).

20. If an infant's hips are forced into a straight, stretched-out position too early, there is a risk that the ball of the hips may deform the edges of the socket, or slip out of the socket altogether. The risk of developing these disorders is greatest in the first six months of an infant's life.<sup>12</sup> To prevent this, the International Hip Dysplasia Institute advises that "[w]hen babies are carried, especially for prolonged periods of time, the hips should be allowed to spread apart with

Not Recommended for prolonged use during babywearing (narrow based carrier): HIP DYSPLASIA HIP DYSPLASIA Thigh NOT supported to the knee joint. The resulting forces on the hip joint may be inappropriate for prolonged use when infants have loose hip joints or hip dysplasia.

**Baby Carriers** 



https://hipdysplasia.org/developmental-dysplasia-of-the-hip/prevention/baby-carriers-seats-and-other-equipment/.
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the thighs supported and the hips bent."13 The diagram above illustrates the problem, and the safe 1 position.<sup>14</sup> 2 3 21. According to Dr. Charles Price from the International Hip Dysplasia Institute, 4 "The first six months of life is the only time that [hip dysplasia] can be easily prevented. 5 Numerous research studies have shown that positioning of the baby's hips during this time has 6 tremendous influence on hip development. Incorrect positioning can prevent natural 7 improvement or even cause the hips to dislocate. Straightening the legs and binding them together can cause serious harm."15 8 9 22. The International Hip Dysplasia Institute notes that: "[t]here is evidence that 10 carrying a baby on the mother's body (or father's body) is likely to influence hip development 11 during the first six months of life when the baby is carried for many hours each day for purposes of bonding, or infant care." Given the known propensity for infants to develop hip dysplasia if 12 13 not carried in a safe manner, the International Hip Dysplasia Institute has acknowledged certain 14 models of baby carriers as "hip healthy." Notably, the Evenflo Baby Carrier is not a "hip 15 healthy" product. 16 FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF NEGLIGENCE – NEGLIGENT DESIGN 17 23. 18 Plaintiff hereby incorporates and realleges each and every preceding paragraph of 19 this Complaint as if the same were set forth at length herein. 20 Evenflo had a duty to individuals, including Plaintiff R.R., to use reasonable care 24. 21 in designing, testing, manufacturing, marketing, labeling, packaging, and selling the Baby 22 Carrier. Evenflo's duty of care to Plaintiff R.R. was heightened since he is a child. 23 25. 24 26. Evenflo was negligent in failing to use reasonable care in designing, testing, 25 manufacturing, marketing, labeling, packaging and selling the Baby Carrier. 26 27  $^{13}$  Id. 28 15 https://boba.com/blogs/boba-reads/an-interview-with-dr-charles-price-from-the-internationalhip-dysplasia-institute.

### FOURTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF STRICT LIABILITY – DESIGN DEFECT

- 47. Plaintiff hereby incorporates and realleges each and every preceding paragraph of this Complaint as if the same were set forth at length herein.
- 48. At the time the Baby Carrier left Evenflo's control, the Baby Carrier was defective in design and unreasonably dangerous for its intended use, for any reasonably foreseeable use, and it created a risk of harm that would not be contemplated by any foreseeable user.
- 49. The harm caused by the Baby Carrier far outweighed any benefit, rendering Evenflo's product dangerous to an extent beyond that which an ordinary consumer would contemplate. The Baby Carrier was and is more dangerous than alternative products, and Evenflo could have designed the Baby Carrier to make it less dangerous. At the time Evenflo designed, marketed, and sold the Baby Carrier, the state of the industry's knowledge was such that a less risky design or formulation was attainable.
- 50. The Baby Carrier's design was defective because the Baby Carrier did not perform as safely as an ordinary consumer would have expected it to perform when it was used in an intended or reasonably foreseeable way.
- 51. At the time the Baby Carrier left Evenflo's control, there was a practical, technically feasible and safer alternative design that would have prevented the harm to Plaintiff without substantially impairing the reasonably anticipated or intended function of the Baby Carrier.
- 52. The benefits of the Baby Carrier's design are outweighed by the risks of the design. The gravity of the potential harm resulting from the use of the Baby Carrier is great, and the likelihood that this harm would occur is significant. At the time of manufacture, there existed feasible, alternative, safer designs that were not overly costly and did not have disadvantages.
- 53. The Baby Carrier's design and/or its failure to perform safely was a substantial factor in causing Plaintiff's harm.
- 54. As a direct and proximate result of the Baby Carrier's design defects, Plaintiff has suffered and in the future will continue to suffer on an ongoing basis severe personal injuries,

pain and suffering, severe emotional distress, financial or economic loss, including, but not limited to, obligations for medical services and expenses, lost income and earning capacity, and other damages.

55. Evenflo is strictly liable to Plaintiff for designing, testing, manufacturing, marketing, labeling, packaging and selling a defective Baby Carrier.

# FIFTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF STRICT LIABILITY – FAILURE TO WARN

- 56. Plaintiff hereby incorporates and realleges each and every preceding paragraph of this Complaint as if the same were set forth at length herein.
- 57. The Baby Carrier was not accompanied by sufficient warnings to inform users, such as Guardian Chaves and Plaintiff R.R., of the risks of harm not readily recognizable while using the Baby Carrier in a reasonably foreseeable manner.
- 58. At the time of manufacture, Evenflo could have provided warnings or instructions regarding the full and complete risks of the Baby Carrier, because Evenflo knew or should have known of the unreasonable risks of harm associated with the use of the product.
- 59. The known risks presented a substantial danger to Plaintiff when the Baby Carrier was used in an intended or foreseeable way.
- 60. Guardian Chaves and Plaintiff R.R. could not have reasonably discovered the defects and risks associated with the Baby Carrier prior to or at the time of use. Guardian Chaves and Plaintiff R.R. relied upon the skill, expertise, and judgment of Evenflo.
- 61. Had Evenflo provided adequate warnings and instructions and properly disclosed and disseminated the risk associated with the Baby Carrier, Plaintiff could have avoided the risk of developing injuries and could have obtained or used an alternative product.
- 62. Evenflo's failure to warn Plaintiff was a substantial factor in causing Plaintiff's harm.
- 63. As a direct and proximate result of the Baby Carrier's defects, Plaintiff has suffered and in the future will continue to suffer on an ongoing basis severe personal injuries, pain and suffering, severe emotional distress, financial or economic loss, including, but not

limited to, obligations for medical services and expenses, lost income and earning capacity, and 1 2 other damages. Evenflo is strictly liable to Plaintiff for designing, testing, manufacturing, 3 64. 4 marketing, labeling, packaging and selling the defective Baby Carrier. 5 // 6 // 7 // 8 // 9 // 10 // // 11 12 // // 13 14 // 15 // // 16 17 // 18 // 19 // 20 // 21 // 22 // 23 // // 24 25 // 26 // 27 // 28 // Case No. 4:20-cv-3392

PRAYER FOR RELIEF 1 2 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendant and, as appropriate to each cause of action, as follows: 3 compensatory damages, including but not limited to, pain, suffering, emotional 4 1. distress, loss of enjoyment of life, and other non-economic damages, in an amount to be 5 determined at trial; 6 7 2. economic damages in the form of medical expenses, cost of future medical care, out of pocket expenses, lost earnings and earning capacity, and other economic damages in an 8 9 amount to be determined at trial; 3. restitution and/or disgorgement; 10 4. an award of costs; 11 4. pre-judgment interest; 12 13 5. post-judgment interest; and any other relief as this Court may deem just and proper. 14 6. 15 ANDRUS ANDERSON LLP DATE: May 4, 2020 16 17 Lori E. Andrus 18 Lori E. Andrus (SBN 205816) 19 lori@andrusanderson.com ANDRUS ANDERSON LLP 20 155 Montgomery Street, Suite 900 San Francisco, CA 94104 21 Telephone: (415) 986-1400 Facsimile: (415) 986-1474 22 23 Attorneys for Plaintiff 24 25 26 27 28

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**DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL** Plaintiff demands a jury trial in this action for all claims so triable. DATE: May 14, 2020 ANDRUS ANDERSON LLP Lori E. Andrus (SBN 205816) lori@andrusanderson.com ANDRUS ANDERSON LLP 155 Montgomery Street, Suite 900 San Francisco, CA 94104 Telephone: (415) 986-1400 (415) 986-1474 Facsimile: Attorneys for Plaintiff -13-

**COMPLAINT** 

**DEFENDANTS** 

JS-CAND 44 (Rev. 07/19)

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS-CAND 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 in its original form by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the Clerk of Court to initiate the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

(b) County of Residence o			Evenflo Company, Inc.  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.  Attorneys (If Known)			
Andrus Anderson I	Address, and Telephone Number) LP St., Ste. 900, S.F., CA 94104		rttomeys (1) Know	,		
II. BASIS OF JURIS	SDICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)	III. CII	TIZENSHIP OF I Diversity Cases Only)			lox for Defendant)
1 U.S. Government Plaintif	(U.S. Government Not a Party)		Citizen of This State PTF  Citizen of Another State 2		DEF 1 Incorporated or Princi of Business In This Sta 2 Incorporated and Princi	tate
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IV. NATURE OF SU	UIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only)					
CONTRACT	TORTS		FORFEITURE/PE		BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES
110 Insurance 120 Marine 130 Miller Act	PERSONAL INJURY PERSONAL 310 Airplane X 365 Personal In 315 Airplane Product Liability Liability		625 Drug Related Se Property 21 US 690 Other		422 Appeal 28 USC § 158 423 Withdrawal 28 USC § 157	375 False Claims Act 376 Qui Tam (31 USC § 3729(a))
140 Negotiable Instrument	320 Assault, Libel & Slander 367 Health Car	re/	LABOR		PROPERTY RIGHTS	400 State Reapportionment
150 Recovery of Overpayment Of Veteran's Benefits 151 Medicare Act 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excludes Veterans)	330 Federal Employers' Liability 340 Marine 345 Marine Product Liability 350 Motor Vehicle 355 Motor Vehicle Product 371 Truth in Londing		710 Fair Labor Standards Act 720 Labor/Management Relations 740 Railway Labor Act 751 Family and Medical Leave Act		830 Patent	410 Antitrust 430 Banks and Banking 450 Commerce 460 Deportation 470 Racketeer Influenced & Corrupt Organizations
153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits	360 Other Personal Injury 362 Personal Injury - Medical Damage	sonal Property	/90 Other Labor Litigation		861 HIA (1395ff) 862 Black Lung (923)	480 Consumer Credit 485 Telephone Consumer Protection Act 490 Cable/Sat TV
160 Stockholders' Suits	Malpractice 385 Property L Liability	Damage Product			863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g))	
190 Other Contract	CIVIL RIGHTS PRISONER P	PETITIONS	462 Naturalization		864 SSID Title XVI 865 RSI (405(g))	850 Securities/Commodities/ Exchange
195 Contract Product Liability	440 Other Civil Rights HABEAS		Application 465 Other Immigration	ion	FEDERAL TAX SUITS	890 Other Statutory Actions
196 Franchise	441 Voting 463 Alien Deta		Actions	ion	870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or	891 Agricultural Acts
210 Land Condemnation 220 Foreclosure 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment 240 Torts to Land 245 Tort Product Liability 290 All Other Real Property	442 Employment 443 Housing/ Accommodations 445 Amer. w/Disabilities— Employment 446 Amer. w/Disabilities—Other 448 Education 510 Motions to Va Sentence 530 General 535 Death Penalty OTHER 540 Mandamus & 550 Civil Rights 555 Prison Conditi	alty IER s & Other ts		Defendant)  871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC  § 7609	893 Environmental Matters 895 Freedom of Information Act 896 Arbitration 899 Administrative Procedure Act/Review or Appeal of Agency Decision 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes	
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V. ORIGIN (Place an X 1 Original Proceeding 2		Reop	0.000	her District	t (specify) Litigation–Tran	8 Multidistrict ssfer Litigation–Direct File
ACTION 22	2 U.S.C. § 1332 lief description of cause: Baby carriers designed by Defend					
VII. REQUESTED II COMPLAINT:	N CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER RULE 23, Fed. R. Civ. P.	ON DEM	IAND \$		CHECK YES only if dem JURY DEMAND:	nanded in complaint:  X Yes No
VIII. RELATED CAS IF ANY (See instr.	JUDGE		DOCKET N	UMBER		
IX. DIVISIONAL A (Place an "X" in One Box O	ASSIGNMENT (Civil Local Rule 3- only) × SAN FRANCISCO/O		SA	N JOS	E EUREKA	-MCKINLEYVILLE
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