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Printer Jam: Employee Sues Over COVID-19 Expenses And Wage Violations

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This week's spotlight on [COVID-19 related workplace litigation](#) involves a persistent trend: a plaintiff bringing a class action alleging that she and her fellow employees were not properly reimbursed for necessary business expenses. The plaintiff further alleges that she and her fellow employees were not provided with lawful meal breaks, lawful rest breaks, accurate itemized wage statements, and payment of wages upon termination. This complaint is yet another chapter in the same old story—a plaintiff combining COVID-19 related allegations with [unrelated wage and hour allegations](#).

In [Gonzalez v. Fisher Printing, Inc.](#), the plaintiff brought a class action on behalf of herself and all non-exempt employees. With regard to COVID-19, the plaintiff alleges the defendant pressured, encouraged, and required employees to purchase masks to prevent transmission from COVID-19 and to perform their jobs, but failed to reimburse employees for the expense. According to the plaintiff, by not reimbursing employees for this purported business expense, the defendant violated the California Labor Code.

Unrelated to the COVID-19 claims, again on behalf of a putative class of non-exempt employees, the plaintiff also brings a host of California state law wage and hour violations, including meal break and rest break violations, inaccurate wage statements, and failure to pay employee wages upon termination.

Over the last year, we have seen how COVID-19 claims can expose

employers to potential liability for all kinds of other workplace employment issues. As COVID-19 restrictions begin to change, employers should be engaging counsel to review their employment policies and practices to avoid similar jams.

The Barnes & Thornburg Wage and Hour Practice Group will continue to monitor employment-related COVID-19 litigation, and will provide updates as more developments emerge. [Join us Wednesday, June 2](#), as we host our next webinar. As always, stay tuned.