9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

1 Anthony J. Ellrod (State Bar No. 136574) aje@manningllp.com Natalya Vasyuk (State Bar No. 307419) ndv@manningllp.com 3 MANNING & KASS ELLROD, RAMIREZ, TRESTER LLP 801 S. Figueroa St, 15th Floor Los Angeles, California 90017-3012 5 Telephone: (213) 624-6900 Facsimile: (213) 624-6999 Attorneys for Plaintiff WILLIAM JAMES MITCHELL 6 7

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CENTRAL DISTRICT

WILLIAM JAMES MITCHELL,

Plaintiff,

v.

TWIN GALAXIES, LLC,

Defendant.

Case No. 19STCV12592 [The Hon. WENDY CHANG DEPT. 36]

PLAINTIFF'S NOTICE OF MOTION AND MOTION FOR COSTS AND ATTORNEY FEES JOINTLY AND SEVERALLY AGAINST DEFENDANTS AND THEIR COUNSEL; MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES

DATE: April 5, 2022 TIME: 8:30 a.m. PLACE: Dept. 36

Reservation ID: 930998964344

Action Filed: 4/11/2019 Trial: Not set vet

TO THE COURT, ALL PARTIES AND THEIR COUNSEL OF RECORD:

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE THAT on April 5, 2022, at 8:30 a.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard, in Department 36 of the above-captioned Court, located at 111 N. Hill Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012, Plaintiff WILLIAM JAMES MITCHELL will move the court for an award of reasonable costs and attorney's fees under CCP § 425.16 (c)(1).

Under CCP § 425.16 (c)(1), the Court may award reasonable costs and attorney's fees to the prevailing plaintiff on an anti-SLAPP motion. "If the court finds that a special motion to strike is

frivolous or is solely intended to cause unnecessary delay, the court shall award costs and reasonable attorney's fees to a plaintiff prevailing on the motion, pursuant to [California Rules of Civil Procedure] Section 128.5." (CCP § 425.16 (c)(1).)

Plaintiff requests that Defendant TWIN GALAXIES, LLC and its counsel David A. Tashroudian and Tashroudian Law Group be held jointly and severally liable for paying Plaintiff's attorney's fees and costs in the lodestar amount of \$203,945 in attorney's fees, plus a .50 multiplier of \$21,480, plus \$598.96 in costs, for a total award and judgment of \$226,014.96.

This Motion consists of: (1) this Notice of Motion, (2) the Memorandum of Points and Authorities, (3) the Declaration of Anthony J. Ellrod, and such other documents, evidence, and arguments that the Court may accept at the hearing on this motion.

DATED: February 8, 2022

MANNING & KASS ELLROD, RAMIREZ, TRESTER LLP

By:

Anthony J. Ellrod Attorneys for Plaintiff, WILLIAM JAMES MITCHELL

MANNING & KASS ELLROD, RAMIREZ, TRESTER LLP ATTORENS AT LAW

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		<u>Page</u>
I.	Factual and Procedural History	8
III.	Under the Lodestar Method, Plaintiff May Recover The Reasonable Market Value for Attorneys' Services	14
IV.	The Declaration of Counsel is Sufficient Evidence	15
V.	PLAINTIFF'S' FEES AND COSTS ARE REASONABLE UNDER CALIFORNIA LAW	17
VI.	Defendant and Their Counsel are Jointly and Severally Liable	19
VII.	CONCLUSION	22

MANNING KASS ELLROD, RAMIREZ, TRESTER LLP

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

2	Page
3	FEDERAL CASES
5	Blackburn v. ABC Legal Servs., Inc. 2012 WL 1067632, at 2 (N.D. Cal. Feb. 24
6 7	Graham-Sult v. Clainos (2014) 756 F.3d at 751
8	Hill v. Berryhill 2018 WL 4039912, at 2 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 22, 2018)
9	In re High-Tech Employee Antitrust Litig. 2015 WL 5158730, at 9 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 2, 2015)
11	Masimo Corp v. Tyco Health Care Grp., L.P. 2007 WL 5279897 (C.D. Cal. Nov. 5, 2007)
12 13	Max Sound Corp. v. Google, Inc. 2017 WL 4536342, at 12 (N.D. Cal. Oct. 11, 2017)
14	Metabolife Intern., Inc. v. Wornick (2002) 213 F. Supp. 2d 1220
15 16	Nitsch v. DreamWorks Animation SKG Inc. 2017 WL 2423161, at 9 (N.D. Cal. June 5, 2017)
17	Open Source Security, Inc. v. Perens 2018 WL 2762637, at 7 (N.D. Cal. June 9, 2018)
18 19	ScripsAmerica, Inc. v. Ironridge Global LLC 2016 WL 6871280, at 5 (C.D. Cal. Jan. 12, 2016)
20	Universal Elecs., Inc. v. Univ. Remote Control, Inc. 130 F. Supp. 3d 1331, 1337 (C.D. Cal. 2015)
21 22	Wynn v. Chanos 2015 WL 3832561, at 2 (N.D. Cal. June 19, 2015)
23	STATE CASES
24	Balla v. Hall (2021) 59 Cal.App.5th 652
25 26	Carpenter v. Jack in the Box Corp. (2007) 151 Cal.App.4th 454
27 28	Chacon v. Litke (2010) 181 Cal.App.4th 1234

Church of Scientology v. Wollersheim (1996) 42 Cal.App.4th 628	15, 18
Decker v. U.D. Registry, Inc. (2003) 105 Cal.App.4th 1382	9
Doe v. Luster (2006) 145 Cal.App.4th 139	9, 10
Dove Audio v. Rosenfeld, Meyer & Susman (1996) 47 Cal.App.4th 777	15
Evans v. Unkow (1995) 38 Cal.App.4th 1490	10
Foundation for Taxpayer & Consumer Rights v. Garamendi (2005) 132 Cal.App.4th 1375	9
Gerbosi v. Gaims, Weil, West & Epstein, LLP (2011) 193 Cal.App.4th 435	10
Grewal v. Jammu (2011) 191 Cal.App.4th 977	17
Ketchum v. Moses (2001) 24 Cal.4th 1122	15, 16
L.A. Taxi Cooperative, Inc. v. the Independent Taxi Owners Assn. of Los Angles (2019) 239 Cal.App.4th 918	9
Martino v. Denevi (1986) 182 Cal.App.3d 553	15
Moore v. Shaw (2004) 116 Cal.App.4th 182	10
Moriarty v. Laramar Management Corp. (2014) 224 Cal.App.4th 125	14
Navellier v. Sletten (2002) 29 Cal.4th 82	10
Nemecek & Cole v. Horn 208 Cal.App.4th at 652	15
New York Times Co. v. Sullivan (1964) 376 U.S. 254	11
Premier Med. Mgmt. Systs., Inc. v. Cal. Ins. Guarantee Ass'n 163 Cal. App. 4th 550, 561 (2008)	18
Reader's Digest Assn. v. Superior Court (1984) 37 Cal.3d 244	11
Rusheen v. Cohern (2006) 37 Cal.4th 1048	10

Kass	TRESTER LLP	
ANNING	RAMIREZ,	ATTORNETS AT LAW
X	ELLROD,	

<i>Serrano III</i> supra, 20 Cal. 3d at p. 49
Serrano IV supra, 32 Cal. 3d at p. 625
Soukup v. Law Offices of Herbert Hafif (2006) 39 Cal.4th 260
Steiny & Co. v. California Electric Supply Co. (2000) 79 Cal.App.4th 285
Syers Properties III v. Rankin (2014) 226 Cal.App.4th 691
Vargas v. City of Salinas (2011) 200 Cal. App. 4th 1331
Zamos v. Stroud (2004) 32 Cal.4th 958
STATUTES
Cal. Civ. Pro. Sec. 425.16(c)(1)
Cal.Civ. Pro. Sec. 128.5
CCP §§ 2031.310 and 2023.010
CCP §§ 396b (b), 2023.010, 2031.310

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

23

24

25

26

27

28

MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES

Plaintiff William J. Mitchell submits the following Memorandum of Points and Authorities under sections 425.16(c)(1) and 128.5 of the California Code of Civil Procedure, as the prevailing plaintiff on a special motion to strike under the strategic lawsuits against public participation statute (anti-SLAPP). Plaintiff seeks a lodestar amount of \$203,945 in attorney's fees, plus a .50 multiplier of \$21,480, plus \$598.96 in costs, for a total award and judgment of \$226,014.96. These fees were solely incurred in responding to defendant's anti-SLAPP motion and appeal; these fees were incurred while researching, drafting briefs, gathering and reviewing evidence, arguing the anti-SLAPP motion, preparing the appellate response, preparing an answer to a petition for review, and preparing this motion for attorney's fees. (See generally Ellrod Decl.) The request for attorney's fees is based on 356.5 hours of billable time (this includes 10 hours of anticipated time for a review of the opposition to this motion and preparation of a reply) at a blended market rate of \$600 per hour per attorney and \$250 per hour for a paralegal, which are reasonable rates for a downtown Los Angeles law firm. Attorneys at Manning & Kass, Ellrod, Ramirez, Trester worked on the anti-SLAPP motion, the appeal, the petition for review, and this attorney's fee motion: senior partner Anthony J. Ellrod, partner James Gibbons, partner Steven Renick, of Counsel Trisha Newman, Associate Natalya Vasyuk, Associate Chelsea Clayton, and paralegal Elaine G. Berman. (See generally, Ellrod Decl.)

The fees in this case were higher than average because defense counsel included voluminous exhibits and declarations, including improperly filing new evidence to support their reply to plaintiff's opposition, necessitating substantial document review as well as a sur-reply from plaintiff. In addition, plaintiff was forced to file an appellate respondent's brief, and an answer to petition for review in the California Supreme Court. Because an anti-SLAPP motion involves both a Demurrer component and a Summary Judgment component, Plaintiff's counsel was required to obtain and produce evidence and research to rebut defendant's evidence and arguments. Defendant filed a frivolous anti-SLAPP motion, elected to appeal that denial, and then seek further review (which was summarily denied).

Defendant's anti-SLAPP motion was utterly meritless, however after the court denied it

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

23

24

25

26

27

28

defendant appealed. After Defendant filed several extensions of time in the court of appeal, the briefing ultimately rehashed the same unmeritorious arguments focusing on attempting to have their own evidence as the sole basis for the decision in their opening brief, just as had been done in the original motion, in direct contravention to well established law. That Defendant requested extensions and then ultimately filed an appeal that mirrored the pleadings in the trial court supports the conclusion that the motion, the appeal, and the request for review were intended to delay. Defendant and his counsel have no one to blame but themselves if these costs are considered high. In addition, despite the delays on appeal, Defendant would not agree to release the undertaking while defendant's appellant's briefing was pending.

Under CCP sec. 425.16(c)(1), a finding of defendant's anti-SLAPP motion as frivolous or for purpose of delay, makes an award of fees to the prevailing plaintiff mandatory. As defendant's motion and subsequent seek of review were both frivolous and for the purpose of delay, and plaintiff having prevailed at both the trial and appellate level, plaintiff respectfully requests the court award attorney fees and costs in the total amount of \$226,014.96.

Factual and Procedural History

On April 11, 2019, Mitchell filed this lawsuit against Twin Galaxies and filed a First Amended Complaint on March 12, 2020, set out in two causes of action: i) Defamation and ii) False Light. This lawsuit stemmed from Twin Galaxies' public statements on April 12, 2018, that Mitchell had achieved his long-standing world record video game scores by cheating. It stripped him of those records and banned him for life from submitting further records, as punishment. These statements were further published through Twin Galaxies's social media channels. Twin Galaxies statements resulted in articles in major news outlets such as the New York Times, The Washington Post, and Variety. In addition, in reliance on Twin Galaxies statements, William's video game records were removed from the Guinness Book of World Records. These records have since been reinstated by the Guinness Book of World Records, once it had been presented with evidence of William's legitimately earned video game scores.

On March 30, 2020, Twin Galaxies filed a special motion to strike under anti-SLAPP, essentially staying the litigation. After the anti-SLAPP motion was filed and pending ruling, on

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

September 22, 2020, defendants filed a motion for undertaking pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure section 1030(a). On October 26, 2020, the court denied defendant's anti-SLAPP motion and granted the motion for undertaking. On November 13, 2020, defendants filed a notice of appeal on the denial of the anti-SLAPP motion, resulting in litigation being further stayed in the trial court.

On December 3, 2020, plaintiff posted a substantial undertaking of \$81,225. On December 4, 2020, the court sent a notice of default to defendants for not filing a Case Information Statement. A briefing schedule for the appeal was then set.

Defendant filed three extensions of time on the opening brief: from January 28, 2021, to March 1, 2021, to April 1, 2021, and finally to April 8, 2021, respectively. Plaintiff opposed the third extension, indicating the financial harm of prolonging the appeal considering the economic disruptions of COVID-19 and defendant's refusal to agree to release the undertaking in light of these delays.

The court of appeal issued a published opinion affirming the denial of the motion on October 12, 2021, almost a full year after the ruling in the trial court on the anti-SLAPP motion and ten months since the posting of undertaking. Defendant then filed a petition for review in the California Supreme Court, to which plaintiff filed an answer. The Petition for review was summarily denied on January 26, 2022. Remittitur on the appeal was issued on January 31, 2022.

II. Attorney Fees May Be Awarded to a Prevailing Plaintiff on an Anti-SLAPP Motion

A prevailing plaintiff on an anti-SLAPP motion may be awarded costs and attorney fees pursuant to Cal. Civ. Pro. Sec. 425.16(c)(1), if the courts finds that a defendant's special motion to strike is frivolous or is solely intended to cause unnecessary delay. Costs and fees are awarded pursuant to the substantive standards established under Cal.Civ. Pro. Sec. 128.5. (Ibid.; see also Doe v. Luster (2006) 145 Cal. App. 4th 139, 143; Decker v. U.D. Registry, Inc. (2003) 105 Cal.App.4th 1382, 1292.) "[I]f a [special] motion [to strike] is determined to be frivolous, an award of attorney fees is mandatory." (L.A. Taxi Cooperative, Inc. v. the Independent Taxi Owners Assn. of Los Angles (2019) 239 Cal. App. 4th 918, 932; Foundation for Taxpayer & Consumer Rights v. Garamendi (2005) 132 Cal. App. 4th 1375, 1388.) "Frivolous in this context means that

any reasonable attorney would agree that the motion was totally devoid of merit." (*Gerbosi v. Gaims, Weil, West & Epstein, LLP* (2011) 193 Cal.App.4th 435, 450.)

"[A] court must use the procedures and apply the substantive standards of section 128.5 in deciding whether to award attorney fees under the anti-SLAPP statute.' [Citation.] Attorney fees under section 128.5 may be assessed against a party, the party's attorney, or both." (*Moore v. Shaw* (2004) 116 Cal.App.4th 182, 199 citing sec. 128.5 subd. (a).)

A plaintiff prevailing on an anti-SLAPP motion and any subsequent appeal, may file a timely motion for attorney fees any time prior to final entry of judgment. (*Carpenter v. Jack in the Box Corp.* (2007) 151 Cal.App.4th 454, 461, 468.) A prevailing party under 425.16 may move for attorney fees by a separate, subsequently filed motion after the costs incurred can be determined. (*Doe v. Luster, supra*, 145 Cal.App.4th at 144.) "Under section 425.16, subdivision (c), '[a]ppellate challenges concerning the [special] motion to strike are also subject to an award of fees and costs, which are determined by the trial court after the appeal is resolved." (*L.A. Taxi Cooperative, Inc., supra*, at 933, citing *Christian Research Institute v. Alnor* (2008) 165 Cal.App.4th 1315, 1320.) Cal. Civ. Pro. Sec. 425.16(c)(1) authorizes an award of attorney fees to a prevailing party without limitation, and appellate attorney fees are also recoverable. (*See Evans v. Unkow* (1995) 38 Cal.App.4th 1490, 1499-1500.)

Defendant's anti-SLAPP motion was both frivolous and for the purpose of delay. An award of attorneys' fees and costs would be mandatory.

A. Defendant's Motion and Subsequent Appeal Were Frivolous

To prevail on an anti-SLAP motion, a defendant must show that it was engaged in statutorily protected activity, and that plaintiff could not establish a probability of success on the causes of action. (*Rusheen v. Cohern* (2006) 37 Cal.4th 1048, 1056; *Navellier v. Sletten* (2002) 29 Cal.4th 82, 88.) The first prong was not at issue on either the motion or on appeal, leaving the focus solely on whether plaintiff had shown a probability of success of prevailing on his claims. This was a fact intensive analysis with a great deal of evidence produced by plaintiff.

To show a probability of success, plaintiff must present a legally sufficient claim, supported by a prima facie showing of evidence to support a favorable judgment, should the

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

23

24

25

26

27

28

evidence submitted be credited. (Zamos v. Stroud (2004) 32 Cal.4th 958, 965.) A court considers everything submitted by both parties but does not weigh the evidence, and accepts as true the evidence submitted by plaintiff to establish whether plaintiff has minimal merit to defeat the anti-SLAPP motion. (Soukup v. Law Offices of Herbert Hafif (2006) 39 Cal.4th 260, 291). For purposes of considering whether plaintiff could show a probability of success on claims of defamation, if the plaintiff happens to be a public figure, it must be shown by clear and convincing evidence that a false statement of fact was made with actual malice. (Reader's Digest Assn. v. Superior Court (1984) 37 Cal.3d 244, 256; New York Times Co. v. Sullivan (1964) 376 U.S. 254, 285-286.) For false light, a plaintiff must establish the same requirements as they would a defamation claim. (*Balla v. Hall* (2021) 59 Cal.App.5th 652, 657.)

Plaintiff easily met the minimal threshold required. Specifically, William's premier evidence of falsity and actual malice – Twin Galaxies' willful refusal to interview key witnesses, including its own referees who it had hired to verify plaintiff's records in the first place, and defendant's disregard of Nintendo Senior Engineer Wayne Shirt, who verified the hardware the game score was obtained on - clearly and easily met this minimal threshold of merit for an anti-SLAPP motion. Anything beyond this was defendant's attempt to have the court ignore these disputes of fact.

Further, in defendant's motion, it was argued that because Twin Galaxies began the published conclusion of William's alleged cheating "We now believe..." that they were merely stating opinion and not fact. This is disingenuous considering that defendants arguments also rely upon their extensive investigation to support their 'findings' as not being false. This was clearly more than their mere opinion. Defendant's claim to the contrary was meritless.

As pointed out in the ruling by the trial court "Considering the foregoing, a reasonable fact finder could conclude the published statement declares or implies a provably false assertion of fact...(Tr. Ct. Ruling, p. 14:2-3.) The trial court goes on to cite the extensive evidence provided regarding facts submitted by plaintiff to support the claim of falsity. (*Ibid.* p. 14:19-15:7.) Defendant had also offered evidence to contradict that evidence. (*Ibid.* p. 15:8-16.) This was at best a dispute of fact which defendants were asking the court to rule on as a matter of law, in spite

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

23

24

25

26

27

28

of the legal standard prohibiting such an undertaking, and of which defendant's counsel would be aware. No reasonable attorney would ask the court to disregard well-established law.

In spite of the clearly established law that the court is not to weigh the evidence as fact finder, defendant persisted attempting to do so on appeal. As stated in the appellate court published opinion: "The parties submitted extensive evidence in connection with the anti-SLAPP proceedings....it only serves to underscore our observation that there exist many factual disputes which may not be resolved on review of an anti-SLAPP ruling." (App. Opn. P. 11, [fn.2].) Defendant in this case has attempted to use the anti-SLAPP procedure to circumvent plaintiff's right to be heard on his claims, despite the clear dispute of facts regarding malice, and falsity.

Further, defendant filed a petition for review claiming error in the appellate court for considering circumstantial evidence, while pointing out that its own investigation was limited to video tapes it reviewed. This evidence has repeatedly been pointed to as being challenged for chain of custody and authenticity. Defendant has essentially stated that the appellate court has committed error by reviewing plaintiff's evidence, ignoring established law that this is the correct method of review of anti-SLAPP evidence to establish probability of plaintiff's success on the claims.

As is clear in the evidence submitted on the anti-SLAPP motion, defendant did not care what evidence William has. That in and of itself shows malice and supports the award of attorneys' fees. While defendant may not care, it is necessary for the trial court to take it into consideration and to credit plaintiff's evidence, and for an appellate court to also consider on review, de novo. This is the required legal standard for an anti-SLAPP motion and its review. This was clearly frivolous at both the trial and appellate level. Defendant then further filed a petition for review, making these same types of arguments.

As can be seen, the voluminous evidence presented by plaintiff clearly demonstrates that at the very least a factual dispute exists that defendant was simply trying to avoid by filing an anti-SLAPP motion. In spite of established law that requires crediting plaintiff's evidence for purposes of decision and ruling, defendant persisted in making these unmeritorious arguments. No reasonable attorney would find defendant's motion meritorious, and therefore it is frivolous and

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

13

14

15

16

23

24

25

26

27

28

1

plaintiff is entitled to his fees.

Defendant's Motion and Subsequent Appeal Were for Delay В.

In addition to being frivolous, defendant's anti-SLAPP motion, appeal and petition for further review have been for delay. There are a number of clear instances that demonstrate defendant's use of the anti-SLAPP motion proceedings for delay: 1) new voluminous records filed for the first time with defendant's *reply* in support of its motion; 2) the timing of the filing of its motion for undertaking; (3) the filing of an appeal; (4) the numerous requests by defendant for extensions to file its opening brief; and (5) the petition for review to the California Supreme Court.

That there were clear unfair tactics being used by defendant can be seen in the breadth of new evidence submitted by defendant in reply, all of which had been known at the time of filing their initial motion. Indeed, all of the evidence improperly presented by defendant with its reply was known to defendant even prior to initiation of the lawsuit. Plaintiff's evidence shows that defendant purposely avoided plaintiff's evidence regarding the veracity of his scores, and defendant then attempted to avoid the consequences of this lawsuit by providing evidence to the court in a manner that would have made plaintiff unable to reply. It required plaintiff to then file a sur-reply to answer all this new evidence, further delaying the motion on the merits, and incurring more legal fees.

In addition to the attempt to prevent plaintiff from responding to defendant's evidence submitted with its reply, defendant filed a motion for undertaking for a substantial amount, after it had filed its anti-SLAPP motion, but prior to the court ruling on it. The timing on this implies bad faith tactics being taken by defense counsel. Notably, had defendant been successful on their anti-SLAPP they would have been entitled to attorney's fees at the time of ruling on the motion. No motion for undertaking would have been necessary as the case would have been dismissed and defendant could have sought their fees at that point. However, if defendant lost the motion, an appeal would automatically stay the proceedings while the appeal was pending, forcing defendant to deposit money up front for proceedings that would likely take the better part of a year to conclude. These tactics were pointed out by plaintiff's counsel in their opposition to the motion for undertaking. The combination of plaintiff having to deposit a large amount of money, while

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

not being able to pursue his claims on the merits for the length of the appeal, and then for however long thereafter the case will take in the trial court in order to actually reach the merits, was clearly a strategy to make plaintiff's continued pursuit of his claims so onerous that he might consider foregoing his case because of the financial burden.

It is worth noting that the defendant, who was becoming increasingly irrelevant in the gaming world, profits from the very existence of this lawsuit and the resulting attention by the press. On the other hand, plaintiff, an individual, must continue to fight to clear his name, with the financial burden of doing so constantly increasing.

This delay was further pointed out in plaintiff's opposition to defendant's third request for extension in the court of appeal. The delays caused by defendant worked a severe economic burden considering the motion for undertaking, which defendant would not release pending decision on appeal.

The courts of appeal are sensitive to the burdens and costs associated with meritless anti-SLAPP motions. "Another appeal in an anti-SLAPP case. Another appeal by a defendant whose anti-SLAPP motion failed below. Another appeal that, assuming it has no merit, will result in an inordinate delay of the plaintiff's case and cause him to incur more unnecessary attorney fees." (Moriarty v. Laramar Management Corp. (2014) 224 Cal. App. 4th 125, 128.) This intentional delay and these 'strategic' tactics have already worked an unfair burden on a plaintiff attempting to have his case properly heard, and has increased his legal fees based on defendant's continued pursuit of a frivolous anti-SLAPP motion and appeal. Plaintiff should be awarded his attorney fees in defending against the anti-SLAPP proceedings, while he awaits his case being resolved.

III. Under the Lodestar Method, Plaintiff May Recover The Reasonable Market Value for Attorneys' Services

Plaintiff is entitled to recover the "reasonable market value" of his attorneys' services. The proper measure of this value is the reasonable hourly rate prevailing in the market. And the court must apply the market rate, regardless of whether the attorneys have charged their client the full market rate for their services, a discounted below-market rate, or have represented their client pro bono and free of charge. (Syers Properties III v. Rankin (2014) 226 Cal. App. 4th 691, 701; Chacon

v. Litke (2010) 181 Cal.App.4th 1234, 1260; Nemecek & Cole v. Horn, 208 Cal.App.4th at 652.)

Courts have repeatedly held that an award of attorney's fees is not limited to a volume-discounted "insurance" rate. Rather the proper measure of fees is the "reasonable rate" within the community. (Nemecek & Cole v. Horn (2012) 208 Cal.App.4th 641, 652.) In this case, an award of fees and costs is mandatory upon a finding of frivolousness or purpose of delay. (CCP § 425.16(c)(1).) Moreover, section 425.16 has been interpreted to mean all fees and costs associated with the preparation of an anti-SLAPP motion. (Dove Audio v. Rosenfeld, Meyer & Susman (1996) 47 Cal.App.4th 777, 785 [affirming award of \$27,000 after granting a special motion to strike]; Church of Scientology v. Wollersheim (1996) 42 Cal.App.4th 628, 658-659 [affirming an award of more than \$130,000 in attorneys' fees and costs after granting a special motion to strike].)

Generally, hours considered spent on an anti-SLAPP motion is construed broadly. This includes not only briefing and preparation in support of the anti-SLAPP motion, but also briefing and research done in connection with the fee motion. (See *Ketchum*, 24 Cal. 4th at 1141 ("[A]n award of fees may include not only the fees incurred with respect to the underlying claim, but also the fees incurred in enforcing the right to mandatory fees under Code of Civil Procedure section 425.16."); *Blackburn v. ABC Legal Servs., Inc.*, No. 11-cv-01298, 2012 WL 1067632, at 2 (N.D. Cal. Feb. 24, 2012) (reciting the *Ketchum* rule).

IV. The Declaration of Counsel is Sufficient Evidence

For the purposes of establishing the hours billed and fees incurred, "[a]n attorney's testimony as to the number of hours worked is sufficient evidence to support an award of attorney fees, even in the absence of detailed time records." (*Steiny & Co. v. California Electric Supply Co.* (2000) 79 Cal.App.4th 285, 293; *Martino v. Denevi* (1986) 182 Cal.App.3d 553, 559.)

The trial court must apply a lodestar approach (i.e., the number of hours reasonably expended multiplied by the reasonable hourly rate in the community for similar work) in setting a fee award under Section 425.16. (*Ketchum v. Moses* (2001) 24 Cal.4th 1122, 1136.) This lodestar amount may be adjusted by such factors as the moving party's attorney's experience and abilities and the novelty and difficulty of the issues involved in the motion. (*Id.* at p. 1132-1133.)

"Under Serrano III, the lodestar is the basic fee for comparable legal services in

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

the community; it may be adjusted by the court [using a multiplier] based on factors including, as relevant herein, (1) the novelty and difficulty of the questions involved, (2) the skill displayed in presenting them, (3) the extent to which the nature of the litigation precluded other employment by the attorneys, (4) the contingent nature of the fee award. (Serrano III, supra, 20 Cal. 3d at p. 49.) The purpose of such adjustment is to fix a fee at the fair market value for the particular action." (Ketchum, 24 Cal.4th at p. 1132.)

"In Serrano IV, applying the same principles to the statutory fee award under Code of Civil Procedure section 1021.5, we reiterated that fee awards should be fully compensatory. We approved the calculation of attorney fees beginning with a lodestar figure based on the reasonable hours spent, multiplied by the hourly prevailing rate for private attorneys in the community conducting noncontingent litigation of the same type. (Serrano IV, supra, 32 Cal. 3d at p. 625.) We remarked that the reasonable value of attorney services is variously defined as the "hourly amount to which attorneys of like skill in the area would typically be entitled.' (Id. at p. 640, fn. 31; see also id. at p. 643 ['Services compensable under [Code of Civil Procedure] section 1021.5 are computed from their reasonable market value'].)" (*Ketchum*, 24 Cal.4th at p. 1133.)

Here, the attorneys who analyzed the case and the pleadings, gathered, and reviewed the relevant evidence, researched, and drafted the opposition and sur-reply to the anti-SLAPP motion, reviewed and responded to defendant's appellate arguments, wrote an answer to defendant's petition for review in the California Supreme Court, and prepared the present attorney's fees motion, all have extensive experience in the practice of law related to tort law, appellate practice, and anti-SLAPP issues. The degree of complexity was high and the records voluminous. Compared to more routine motions, anti-SLAPPs require a higher degree of academic precision to understand, evaluate, and draft. They are time-consuming because they involve a Summary Judgment component.

The Summary Judgment aspect involves a high level of detail, facts, evidence, and analysis relating to plaintiff's causes of action in light of defendant's presented arguments and supporting evidence, but without the benefit of discovery. Counsel had to research and analyze issues relating to defamation, as well as complex and specialized anti-SLAPP issues relating to the very involved history of plaintiff and defendant's relationship, and defendant's alleged defenses under the anti-SLAPP statute. Counsel had to interview the client and gather supporting evidence.

Finally, the loss of a complex anti-SLAPP motion involves a high degree of financial risk,

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

23

24

25

26

27

28

because there is no guarantee that the Court will agree with plaintiff's analysis of the legal issues, and a prevailing defendant is entitled to mandatory attorney fees. Plaintiff's counsel was successful based ultimately on showing the potential of prevailing on the merits of this case, in both the trial court and on appeal.

In addition, while defendant has delayed this case, plaintiff has had to post a substantial undertaking solely to retain his rights to seek proper redress of his defamation and false light claims, after already facing tremendous loss prior to the filing of this lawsuit based on defendant's actions (and thus the basis of this case). "And we affirm with the observation that, however efficacious the anti-SLAPP procedure may be in the right case, it can be badly abused in the wrong one, resulting in substantial cost-and prejudicial delay. It is time for plaintiff's case to be heard on the merits." (Grewal v. Jammu (2011) 191 Cal.App.4th 977, 980-981.) Plaintiff deserves his day in court without resorting to tactics that unnecessarily attempt to pressure him to give up his meritorious claims. Plaintiff has spent a year and a half focusing on opposing defendant's anti-SLAPP motion which has repeatedly been denied, all while having to take on a significant financial burden, solely so that he can be heard and have his day in court.

As such, the Court should award Defendants and their counsel a .50 X multiplier to compensate them for the complexity of the matter, the risk of potential failure, the excessive delay by defendant, the quality of the legal work performed, and the degree of success achieved.

PLAINTIFF'S' FEES AND COSTS ARE REASONABLE UNDER CALIFORNIA **LAW**

The total amount of fees requested by Plaintiff is reasonable in terms of the blended billable rate of \$600 and the total time billed of 356.5 hours (of which 10 hours are anticipated to be billed to review the Opposition and draft the Reply to this Motion for Fees). California appellate courts, both state and federal, have routinely awarded fee amounts in the range requested. Although some of the following opinions are unpublished, they are cited not as binding precedent, but as examples of fee awards deemed reasonable for a prevailing party on anti-SLAPP motions. This shows that Plaintiff's fee request is reasonable and "in the ballpark" given the difficulty and complexity of the motion.

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

23

24

25

26

27

28

Courts consider fee applications "on [their] own merits . . . taking into account what is reasonable under the circumstances." (Graham-Sult, 756 F.3d at 751-52 (citing Premier Med. Mgmt. Systs., Inc. v. Cal. Ins. Guarantee Ass'n, 163 Cal. App. 4th 550, 561 (2008)) (rejecting an argument that fees were unreasonable because the award was greater than fees other courts awarded to successful anti-SLAPP defendants in other cases).

The lodestar amount requested is well within the range of fees other courts have found reasonable. In Church of Scientology v. Wollersheim (1996) 42 Cal.App.4th 628, 658-659, the Second District affirmed an award of \$130,506.71 in attorneys' fees and costs on a special motion to strike. (See also, e.g., Graham-Sult v. Clainos (2014) 756 F.3d at 751 (affirming an award of \$240,506 for an anti-SLAPP motion and attorney's fee motion eight years ago); Metabolife Intern., Inc. v. Wornick (2002) 213 F. Supp. 2d 1220 at 1228 (awarding \$318,687 under section 425.16 twenty years ago); Vargas v. City of Salinas (2011) 200 Cal. App. 4th 1331, 1338, (affirming award of \$226,928 under section 425.16 eleven years ago).)

The 356.5 hours spent working on these anti-SLAPP related tasks are prima facie reasonable. Courts have found similar amounts of hours reasonable in other cases. (See, e.g., Premier Med. Mgmt. Systs., 163 Cal. App. 4th at 560, 565 (finding 345 hours spent by counsel working on a joint motion to strike was reasonable); Open Source Security, Inc. v. Perens, No. 17-cv-04002, 2018 WL 2762637, at 7 (N.D. Cal. June 9, 2018) (granting fees for 446 hours, including for motions to strike and other briefs.) Here, counsel expended only the number of hours necessary to preserve Plaintiff's rights. Counsel should be compensated for the total hours requested.

Plaintiff requests a blended billing rate of \$600 an hour, which is well within the range of rates that courts have deemed reasonable, especially in the Los Angeles market. (See, e.g.: *Universal* Elecs., Inc. v. Univ. Remote Control, Inc., 130 F. Supp. 3d 1331, 1337 (C.D. Cal. 2015) (explaining certain "partners at major law firms" billed up to \$1,100 per hour seven years ago); Hill v. Berryhill, No. 16-2426, 2018 WL 4039912, at 2 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 22, 2018) (finding an hourly rate of \$1,067) reasonable); Max Sound Corp. v. Google, Inc., No. 14-cv-04412, 2017 WL 4536342, at 12 (N.D. Cal. Oct. 11, 2017) (holding rates up to \$950 per hour were "in line with the billing rates for attorneys with similar qualifications" in the area five years ago); Nitsch v. DreamWorks Animation

MANNING&KASS ELLROD, RAMIREZ, TRESTER LLP

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

SKG Inc., No. 14-cv-04062, 2017 WL 2423161, at 9 (N.D. Cal. June 5, 2017) (finding rates between \$870 and \$1,200 per hour for senior attorneys "fair and reasonable" five years ago); ScripsAmerica, Inc. v. Ironridge Global LLC, No. 14-03962, 2016 WL 6871280, at 5 (C.D. Cal. Jan. 12, 2016) (granting fees based upon \$950 per hour for partners, \$700 per hour for associates, and \$350 per hour for paralegals at Gibson Dunn six years ago); In re High-Tech Employee Antitrust Litig., No. 11-cv-02509, 2015 WL 5158730, at 9 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 2, 2015) (awarding, for the years 2011 through 2015, partner rates up to \$975 per hour, non-partner attorney rates up to \$800 per hour, and paralegal rates up to \$430 per hour); Wynn v. Chanos, No. 14-cv-04329, 2015 WL 3832561, at 2 (N.D. Cal. June 19, 2015) (finding a rate of \$1,085 per hour for a partner and \$710 per hour for associates reasonable seven years ago); · Masimo Corp v. Tyco Health Care Grp., L.P., No. 02-4770, 2007 WL 5279897 (C.D. Cal. Nov. 5, 2007) (finding \$1,000 per hour reasonable for a partner fourteen years ago).

As can be seen above, \$600 as an hourly rate is more than reasonable considering the experience of counsel involved, in the Los Angeles market, and the results achieved.

VI. **Defendant and Their Counsel are Jointly and Severally Liable**

Defendant and their counsel should be held jointly and severally liable for paying Plaintiff's fees and costs. Defendant's counsel should have weighed the risks of filing an unmeritorious anti-SLAPP motion, followed by an unmeritorious appeal, and further, a petition for review, and should have disclosed those risks to their clients, along with the financial consequences of losing the anti-SLAPP motion. Defense counsel is at fault, along with his client, for filing the motion and then appeal on an unmeritorious anti-SLAPP motion.

Cal. Civ. Pro. Sec. 425.16(c)(1) does not limit who must pay Plaintiff's fees and does not prohibit the trial court from holding defendant's counsel jointly and severally liable to pay Plaintiff's fees. CCP §§ 128.5, 128.7, 396b (b), 1021.4, and 1021.5, expressly provides for payment to be made by the losing party or its counsel. CCP §§ 396b (b), 2023.010, 2031.310, all show the Legislature's intent that under the Code of Civil Procedure there are always two parties who are liable to pay fees -- the losing party and his counsel. This is because they may be jointly responsible for causing harm to the prevailing party in the instant action.

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

23

24

25

26

27

28

In contrast to the Code of Civil Procedure, the Civil Code contains attorney's fees provisions that compensate prevailing parties for harm caused by the losing party, but not by counsel. This is because violations of the Civil Code are typically committed by the client, long before any attorneys have been hired. Under the Code of Civil Procedure, attorney's fees provisions typically prohibit counsel from filing frivolous pleadings or raising frivolous objections. If counsel makes procedural decisions that harm the prevailing party, then counsel are equally liable to pay fees to compensate for that procedural harm. The anti-SLAPP statue is a procedural statute that requires both the losing party and their counsel to pay fees.

Comparable statutes in the Code of Civil Procedure show that where the attorneys' decision to file a pleading causes harm, a trial court does have discretion to order counsel to pay fees. For example, CCP § 396b (b) provides that:

(b) In its discretion, the court may order the payment to the prevailing party of reasonable expenses and attorney's fees incurred in making or resisting the motion to transfer whether or not that party is otherwise entitled to recover his or her costs of action.

In determining whether that order for expenses and fees shall be made, the court shall take into consideration (1) whether an offer to stipulate to change of venue was reasonably made and rejected, and (2) whether the motion or selection of venue was made in good faith given the facts and law the party making the motion or selecting the venue knew or should have known.

As between the party and his or her attorney, those expenses and fees shall be the personal liability of the attorney not chargeable to the party. Sanctions shall not be imposed pursuant to this subdivision except on notice contained in a party's papers, or on the court's own noticed motion, and after opportunity to be heard.

The California Legislature made it clear in section 396b (b) that when a prevailing party on a motion to transfer venue is awarded his attorney's fees, there are two parties who may normally be held liable – the client who caused the Complaint to be filed and the attorney who filed it in the wrong venue. But because venue is a complex legal issue, exclusively within the attorney's professional knowledge, fees should be paid only by the attorney, even though the client would normally be jointly responsible.

Similarly, CCP §§ 2031.310 and 2023.010 make it clear that under the discovery statutes, both a losing party and its counsel may be held liable for paying monetary sanctions. It is mandatory for the court to award sanctions, but the court has discretion whether to impose sanctions on the

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

losing party or their counsel. Under the discovery statutes, both the losing party and/or its counsel may have engaged in misconduct that caused harm to the prevailing party. Thus, section 2031.310 (h) provides that:

Except as provided in subdivision (j), the court shall impose a monetary sanction under Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 2023.010) against any party, person, or attorney who unsuccessfully makes or opposes a motion to compel further response to a demand, unless it finds that the one subject to the sanction acted with substantial justification or that other circumstances make the imposition of the sanction unjust.

Because lawyers know the rules of discovery and civil procedure, but clients generally do not, lawyers can be held responsible for abusing the discovery rules. For example, lawyers may fail to meet and confer, may raise frivolous objections, or may use discovery methods to annoy, embarrass, or oppress. Thus, under the Code of Civil Procedure, the California Legislature has stated its intent that lawyers shall be held liable to pay attorney's fees if their procedural misconduct causes harm.

Section 1987.2 (a) deals with motions to enforce subpoenas. It provides that the court may impose sanctions on one who unsuccessfully makes or opposes a motion to enforce a subpoena. Like section 425.16 (c)(1), section 1987.2 (a) is silent as to whether fees may be awarded only against the client, or against the client and counsel jointly. But section 1987.2 (a) is slightly different in that it requires a showing that the losing party or attorney acted in bad faith or without substantial justification.

Except as specified in subdivision (c), in making an order pursuant to motion made under subdivision (c) of Section 1987 or under Section 1987.1, the court may in its discretion award the amount of the reasonable expenses incurred in making or opposing the motion, including reasonable attorney's fees, if the court finds the motion was made or opposed in bad faith or without substantial justification or that one or more of the requirements of the subpoena was oppressive.

If attorneys are not required to pay fees, they can file unmeritorious anti-SLAPP pleadings with impunity. This would give attorneys a perverse incentive to shoot the moon, because clients would foot the bill for the attorney's frivolous filing. The attorney is better situated than the client to draft a proper pleading that is meritorious.

As a matter of public policy, clients and attorneys bear equal responsibility for filing frivolous strike motions. Cal. Civ. Pro. Sec. 425.16(c)(1) does not exempt client or counsel from In order to secure his rights to be heard by discouraging unmeritorious delay, plaintiff's fees should be paid in this case.

VII. CONCLUSION

Denying the anti-SLAPP motion and awarding plaintiff the full market value of his attorney's fees is the only way to prevent injustice, to relieve plaintiff of a crushing financial burden, and to protect plaintiff against unfair tactics meant to make litigation too burdensome to continue.

Therefore, Plaintiff asks that the trial court award attorney's fees in the lodestar amount of \$203,945 in attorney's fees, plus a .50 multiplier of \$21,480, plus \$598.96 in costs, for a total award and judgment of \$226,014.96, and order Defendant and his counsel, jointly and severally, to pay this amount to Plaintiff's counsel within 30 days after the motion is granted.

DATED: February 8, 2022

MANNING & KASS ELLROD, RAMIREZ, TRESTER LLP

By:

ANTHONY J. ELLROD Attorneys for Plaintiff William J. Mitchell

MANNING KASS ELLROD, RAMIREZ, TRESTER LIP ATTORGES AT LAY

PROOF OF SERVICE

STATE OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

At the time of service, I was over 18 years of age and not a party to this action. I am employed in the County of Los Angeles, State of California. My business address is 801 S. Figueroa St, 15th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90017-3012.

On February 8, 2022, I served true copies of the following document(s) described as **PLAINTIFF'S NOTICE OF MOTION AND MOTION FOR COSTS AND ATTORNEY FEES JOINTLY AND SEVERALLY AGAINST DEFENDANTS AND THEIR COUNSEL; MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES** on the interested parties in this action as follows:

BY MAIL: I enclosed the document(s) in a sealed envelope or package addressed to the persons at the addresses listed in the Service List and placed the envelope for collection and mailing, following our ordinary business practices. I am readily familiar with the practice of Manning & Kass, Ellrod, Ramirez, Trester LLP for collecting and processing correspondence for mailing. On the same day that correspondence is placed for collection and mailing, it is deposited in the ordinary course of business with the United States Postal Service, in a sealed envelope with postage fully prepaid. I am a resident or employed in the county where the mailing occurred. The envelope was placed in the mail at Los Angeles, California.

ONLY BY ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION: Only by emailing the document(s) to the persons at the e-mail address(es). This is necessitated during the declared National Emergency due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic because this office will be working remotely, not able to send physical mail as usual, and is therefore using only electronic mail. No electronic message or other indication that the transmission was unsuccessful was received within a reasonable time after the transmission. We will provide a physical copy, upon request only, when we return to the office at the conclusion of the National Emergency.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on February 8, 2022, at Los Angeles, California.

Shyla hangon

Angela Thompson

Court Reservation Receipt

Reservation	
Reservation ID: 930998964344	Status: RESERVED
Reservation Type: Motion for Attorney Fees	Number of Motions:
Case Number: 19STCV12592	Case Title: WILLIAM JAMES MITCHELL vs TWIN GALEXIES, LLC
Filing Party: William James Mitchell (Plaintiff)	Location: Stanley Mosk Courthouse - Department 36
Date/Time: April 5th 2022, 8:30AM	Confirmation Code: CR-UM59S8WIYFWVDJRMT

Fees			
Description	Fee	Qty	Amount
Motion for Attorney Fees	60.00	1	60.00
Credit Card Percentage Fee (2.75%)	1.65	1	1.65
TOTAL \$61.65		\$61.65	

Payment	
Amount: \$61.65	Type: MasterCard
Account Number: XXXX6677	Authorization: 017843



Copyright © Journal Technologies, USA. All rights reserved.