UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

Case Nos. 1:20-cv-24111-KMW and 1:20-cv-24407-PCH (Judge Kathleen M. Williams and Magistrate Judge Chris M. McAliley, & Judge Paul C. Huck and Magistrate Judge Jacqueline Becerra, respectively.)

CITY OF RIVIERA BEACH GENERAL EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated,	Case No. 1:20-cv-24111-KMW-CMM
Plaintiff,	
v.	
ROYAL CARIBBEAN CRUISES LTD., RICHARD FAIN, JASON LIBERTY, and MICHAEL BAYLEY,	
Defendants.	
THOMAS ALTOMARE, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated,	Case No. 1:20-cv-24407-PCH-JB
Plaintiff,	
v.	
ROYAL CARIBBEAN CRUISES LTD., RICHARD FAIN, JASON LIBERTY, and MICHAEL BAYLEY,	
Defendants.	

MEMORANDUM OF LAW IN SUPPORT OF MICHAEL GRECO'S MOTION FOR CONSOLIDATION OF THE RELATED ACTIONS, APPOINTMENT AS LEAD <u>PLAINTIFF, AND APPROVAL OF SELECTION OF COUNSEL</u>

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PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

Michael Greco ("Movant") respectfully submits this memorandum of law in support of his motion for: (a) consolidation of the above-captioned actions (the "Related Actions"); (b) appointment as Lead Plaintiff pursuant to the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995, as amended (the "PSLRA"), 15 U.S.C. §78u-4(a)(3)(B); (c) approval of his selection of Levi & Korsinsky LLP ("Levi & Korsinsky") as Lead Counsel and Cullin O'Brien Law, P.A. ("Cullin O'Brien") as Liaison Counsel; and (d) for such other relief as the Court deems proper.

The Related Actions presently pending before this Court are brought on behalf of all persons who purchased or otherwise acquired securities of Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. ("Royal Caribbean" or the "Company") between February 4, 2020 and March 17, 2020, inclusive (the "Class Period"). The plaintiffs in the Related Actions allege violations of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 ("Exchange Act") against the Company, Richard Fain ("Fain"), Jason Liberty ("Liberty"), and Michael Bayley ("Bayley") (collectively, the "Defendants").

The PSLRA provides that the Court appoint as lead plaintiff the movant with the largest financial interest in the litigation that has also made a prima facie showing that it is a typical with the other class members and an adequate class representative under Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure ("Rule 23"). See *Mulvaney v. Geo Group, Inc.*, 2016 WL 10519276, *1 (S.D. Fla. Nov. 21, 2016).

Movant satisfies both requirements. With losses of approximately \$322,357.68,¹ Movant believes that he has the largest financial interest in the outcome of the Related Actions and also satisfies the requirements of Rule 23 in that his claims are typical of the claims of the Class, and

¹ Movant's certification identifying his transactions in Royal Caribbean, as required by the PSLRA, as well as a chart detailing his losses, are attached to the Declaration of Cullin O'Brien, dated December 7, 2020 (the "O'Brien Declaration"), as Exhibits A and B, respectively.

he will fairly and adequately represent the interests of the Class. Thus, Movant is the presumptive lead plaintiff under the PSLRA and should be appointed lead plaintiff.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

Royal Caribbean is the world's second largest cruise company. $\P 2^2$. The Company is headquartered in Miami, Florida and is incorporated in the Republic of Liberia. $\P 23$. Royal Caribbean's stock trades on the New Yok Stock Exchange (NYSE) under the ticker symbol "RCL". *Id.* The Company controls and operates four global cruise brands: Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises, Azamara, and Silversea Cruises. $\P 2$. Together, all of the Company's brands operate a combined 61 cruise ships, visiting over 1,000 destinations across all seven continents. *Id.* Based on 2019 results, Royal Caribbean generated 58%, 18%, and 14% of its revenues from customer bookings originating in North America, Europe, and Asia/Pacific, respectively. *Id.*

During the Class Period, Defendants made false and/or misleading statements and failed to disclose material adverse facts about the Company's decrease in bookings outside China, and its inadequate policies and procedures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 on its ships. As a result of these misrepresentations, Defendants caused Royal Caribbean stock to trade at artificially high prices during the Class Period. ¶ 7.

Starting in January 2020, as the situation in China escalated, cruise companies, including Royal Caribbean, cancelled voyages in that region. ¶ 5. Customer bookings were also declining in regions outside China as vacationers were worried about the global spread of the virus. *Id.* In early

² Citations to "¶ __" are to paragraphs of the Class Action Complaint (the "*City of Riviera* Complaint") filed in the first-filed Action captioned *City Of Riviera Beach General Employees Retirement System v. Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., et al.* C.A. No. 1:20-cv-24111-KMW-CMM (S.D. Fla.). The facts set forth in the *City of Riviera* Complaint are incorporated herein by reference.

February 2020, despite this slowdown to Royal Caribbean's overall bookings, the Company assured investors that it was only experiencing a slowdown from bookings in China. *Id.* For example, on February 4, 2020, Royal Caribbean stated that they were "[not] seeing a big impact on overall bookings [outside China]." *Id.*

On February 13, 2020, Royal Caribbean issued a press release stating that it had cancelled 18 voyages in Southeast Asia due to recent travel restrictions. ¶ 9. The Company also warned that "[w]hile the early impact due to concerns about the coronavirus is mainly related to Asia, recent bookings for our broader business have also been softer." *Id.* Despite this warning, Defendants conditioned investors to believe that Royal Caribbean's overall financial performance had not been materially impacted by COVID-19 concerns. *Id.* Defendants also assured investors that it had implemented adequate measures to protect its guests and crew. *Id.* On this news, Royal Caribbean's stock **dropped more than 3 percent** over the following trading session. *Id.*

On February 25, 2020, the Company filed its 2019 Form 10-K, indicating that COVID-19 concerns were negatively impacting its overall business. ¶ 10. Specifically, the filing stated that "efforts by China and other countries . . . to contain the spread of the disease have adversely impacted our business, including a drop in demand for cruises." *Id.* The Company continued, stating: "These concerns and restrictions over the outbreak are impacting our bookings and are having, and are likely to continue to have, **a material impact on our overall financial performance.**" On this news, Royal Caribbean stock dropped more than 14 percent over the following two trading sessions. *Id.*

On March 10, 2020, the Company withdrew its 2020 financial guidance, increased its revolving credit facility by \$550 million, and announced that it would take cost-cutting actions due to the proliferation of COVID-19, revealing that COVID-19 was severely impacting Royal

Caribbean's 2020 customer booking and that its safety measures were completely inadequate to prevent the spread of the virus on its ships. \P 11. On this news, Royal Caribbean stock **dropped more than 14 percent** over the next trading session. *Id*.

The next day, March 11, 2020, Carnival Corporation ("Carnival"), the Company's largest competitor, announced a 60-day suspension of all operations, prompting concern that Royal Caribbean would follow suit. ¶ 12. Royal Caribbean also cancelled two cruises, beginning a series of cancellations and suspensions to follow. *Id.* On this news, Royal Caribbean stock **dropped almost 32 percent** over the next trading session. *Id.*

Then on March 13, 2020, the Company announced a suspension of all U.S. cruises for 30 days. ¶ 13. The next day, on March 14, 2020, Royal Caribbean announced that it would suspend global operations for 30 days. *Id.* Nevertheless, the Company failed to disclose that resumption of operation in 30 days was unrealistic and impossible given Royal Caribbean's inability to control the virus on its ships. *Id.* On this news, Royal Caribbean stock **dropped more than 7 percent** over the next trading session. *Id.*

On March 16, 2020, the Company revealed that its global operations could be suspended longer than anticipated, announcing the cancellations of two additional cruises throughout April and into May. On this news, Royal Caribbean stock **dropped more than 7 percent** over the following trading session. ¶ 14.

Lastly, the financial impact of the Company's false and misleading statements and/or omissions was revealed as analysts downgraded Royal Caribbean's stock and slashed their price targets. ¶ 15. For example, on March 18, 2020, before trading opened, Stifel Nicolaus ("Stifel") cut its one-year price target on Royal Caribbean from \$161 to \$40. On this news, Royal Caribbean stock **dropped more than 19 percent** over the following trading session. *Id*.

As a result of Defendants' wrongful acts and omissions, and the precipitous decline in the market value of the Company's securities, Plaintiff and other Class members have suffered significant losses and damages. ¶ 17.

ARGUMENT

I. CONSOLIDATION OF THE RELATED ACTIONS IS APPROPRIATE

The PSLRA provides that "[i]f more than one action on behalf of a class asserting substantially the same claim or claims arising under this [sub-]chapter has been filed," the Court shall not make the determination of the most adequate plaintiff until "after the decision on the motion to consolidate is rendered." 15 U.S.C. §78u-4(a)(3)(B)(ii). Thereafter, the Court "shall appoint the most adequate plaintiff for the consolidated actions." *Id*.

Under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 42(a), consolidation is appropriate when the actions involve common questions of law or fact. See Fed. R. Civ. P. 42(a). "Consolidation of shareholder class actions is recognized as benefitting the court and the parties by expediting pretrial proceedings, reducing case duplication, and minimizing the expenditure of time and money by all persons concerned." *Newman v. Eagle Bldg. Techs.* 209 F.R.D. 499, 501-02 (S.D. Fla. 2002) (citing *In re Olsten Corp. Sec. Lit.*, 3 F. Supp.2d 286, 294 (E.D.N.Y. 1998)). Consolidation is particularly appropriate in securities class action litigation such as the Related Actions. *Id.* at 502. See also *Mitchell v. Complete Mgmt., Inc.*, No. 99-CV-1454 (DAB), 1999 WL 728678, at *1 (S.D.N.Y. Sept. 17, 1999) ("In securities actions where the complaints are based on the same 'public statements and reports' consolidation is appropriate if there are common questions of law and fact ") (citation omitted); *In re Sunbeam Sec. Litig.*, 1998 WL 1990884, *2 (S.D. Fla. Dec. 4, 1998). Courts thus routinely find that consolidating multiple securities cases is an efficient solution where the complaints arise generally from the same alleged false and misleading statements.

The Related Actions present similar factual and legal issues, as they all involve the same subject matter and are based on the same wrongful course of conduct asserted against the same defendants. Because the Related Actions arise from the same facts and circumstances and involve the same subject matter, consolidation under Rule 42(a) is appropriate. See *Eagle Bldg. Techs.*, 209 F.R.D. at 501-02.

II. APPOINTING MOVANT AS LEAD PLAINTIFF IS APPROPRIATE

A. The Procedure Required by the PSLRA

The PSLRA establishes the procedure for appointment of the lead plaintiff in "each private action arising under [the Exchange Act] that is brought as a plaintiff class action pursuant to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure." 15 U.S.C. §78u-4(a). The plaintiff who files the initial action must publish notice to the class within 20 days after filing the action, informing class members of their right to file a motion seeking appointment as lead plaintiff. 15 U.S.C. §78u-4(a)(3)(A). The PSLRA requires the Court to consider within 90 days all motions filed within 60 days after publication of that notice by any person or group of persons who are members of the proposed class to be appointed lead plaintiff. 15 U.S.C. §§78u-(a)(3)(A)(i)(II) and (a)(3)(B)(i).

The PSLRA provides a presumption that the most "adequate plaintiff" to serve as lead plaintiff is the "person or group of persons" that:

(aa) has either filed the complaint or made a motion in response to a notice;

(bb) in the determination of the court, has the largest financial interest in the relief sought by the class; and

(cc) otherwise satisfies the requirements of Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(3)(B)(iii)(I). The presumption may be rebutted only upon proof by a class member that the presumptively most adequate plaintiff "will not fairly and adequately protect

the interests of the class" or "is subject to unique defenses that render such plaintiff incapable of adequately representing the class." 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(3)(B)(iii)(II).

As set forth below, Movant satisfies the foregoing criteria and is not aware of any unique defenses that defendants could raise against him. Therefore, Movant is entitled to the presumption that he is the most adequate plaintiff to represent the Class and, as a result, should be appointed lead plaintiff in the Related Actions.

B. Movant Satisfies the Lead Plaintiff Provisions of the PSLRA

As described in further detail below, Movant should be appointed lead plaintiff because he satisfies all of the requirements set forth by the PSLRA. Movant filed a timely motion to be appointed lead plaintiff, to his knowledge holds the largest financial interest in the relief sought by the Class, and satisfies the typicality and adequacy requirements of Rule 23

1. Movant Timely Filed His Application to Be Appointed Lead Plaintiff

On October 7, 2020, counsel in the *City of Riviera* Action caused a notice (the "Notice") to be published pursuant to Section 21D(a)(3)(A) of the Exchange Act, which announced that a securities class action had been filed against Royal Caribbean and certain of its officers, advising putative class members that they had until December 7, 2020 to file a motion seeking appointment as a lead plaintiff in the action.³ Movant has reviewed the complaint filed in the *City of Riviera* Action and has timely filed this motion pursuant to the Notice.

2. Movant Has the Largest Financial Interest in the Relief Sought by the Class

According to 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(3)(B)(iii), the Court shall appoint as lead plaintiff the movant with the largest financial loss in the relief sought by the action. Damages are calculated

³ The *City of Riviera* Action was filed in this Court on October 7, 2020. On that same day, the Notice was published over *Business Wire*, a widely-circulated national wire service. See O'Brien Decl. Ex. C.

under the PSLRA based on: (i) the difference between the purchase price paid for the shares and the average trading price of the shares during the 90-day period beginning on the date the information correcting the misstatement was disseminated; or (ii) the difference between the purchase price paid for the shares and the average trading price of the shares between the date when the misstatement was corrected and the date on which the plaintiff sold their shares, if they sold their shares before the end of the 90-day period. 15 U.S.C. §78u-4(e).

During the Class Period, Movant purchased securities of Royal Caribbean during the Class Period in reliance upon the materially false and misleading statements issued by Defendants and, as a result, suffered a substantial loss of approximately \$322,357.68. See O'Brien Decl. Ex. B. To the best of his knowledge, there is no other applicant who has sought, or is seeking, appointment as lead plaintiff that has a larger financial interest in this litigation. Accordingly, Movant is the presumptive lead plaintiff under the PSLRA.

3. Movant Satisfies the Requirements of Rule 23(a)

In addition to possessing the largest financial interest in the outcome of the litigation, the lead plaintiff must also "otherwise satisfy the requirements of Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure." 15 U.S.C. § 78u-4(a)(3)(B)(iii)(I)(cc). Rule 23(a) provides that a class may be certified only if the following four requirements are satisfied: (1) the class is so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable; (2) there are questions of law or fact common to the class; (3) the claims or defenses of the representative party are typical of the claims or defenses of the class; and the representative party will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class. Of these four prerequisites, only two—typicality and adequacy—directly address the personal characteristics of the lead plaintiff movant. Consequently, in deciding a lead plaintiff motion, the Court should limit its inquiry to the typicality and adequacy prongs of Rule 23(a) and defer examination of the

remaining requirements until a class certification motion is filed. See *Sheet Metal Workers Local* 28 Pension Fund v. Office Depot, Inc., Nos. 07-81038-CIV, 07-14348, 2008 WL 1943955, at *2 (S.D. Fla. May 2, 2008); Dillard v. Platform Specialty Products Corporation, 2016 WL 10586300, *3 (S.D. Fla. June 30, 2016); Miller v. Dyadic Intern., Inc., et al., 2008 WL 2465286, *6 (S.D. Fla. April 18, 2008) (considering only typicality and adequacy on a motion for designation as lead plaintiff); see generally Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a)(3)-(4). At the lead plaintiff stage, a movant need only make a preliminary showing that he/she/it satisfies the typicality and adequacy requirements of Rule. 23. *Id*.

As detailed below, Movant satisfies both the typicality and adequacy requirements of Rule 23, thereby justifying his appointment as lead plaintiff.

a. Movant's Claims Are Typical of the Claims of the Class

Under Rule 23(a)(3), the claims or defenses of the representative parties must be typical of those of the class. A plaintiff satisfies the typicality requirement if the plaintiff has: (a) suffered the same injuries as the absent class members; (b) the injuries are as a result of the same course of conduct by defendants; and (c) the plaintiff's claims are based on the same legal issues that prove the defendant's liability. See *Dyadic*, 2009 WL 2465286 at *6;. *Geo Group, Inc.*, 2016 WL 10519276, at *2 (citing *Dyadic*, 2008 WL 2465286, at *6). Rule 23 does not require that the named plaintiffs be identically situated with all class members. It is enough if their situations share a common issue of law or fact. See *Prado-Steinman ex rel. Prado v. Bush*, 221 F.3d 1266, 1279 & n.14 (11th Cir. 2000) (finding typicality satisfied as long as the named plaintiffs share the "same essential characteristics of the claims" as the class).

Movant meets the typicality requirement of Rule 23. Movant, like the other members of the Class, acquired Royal Caribbean securities during the Class Period at prices artificially inflated by the Defendants' materially false and misleading statements, and was damaged thereby. Thus, his claims are typical, if not identical, to those of the other members of the Class. Accordingly, Movant satisfies the typicality requirement of Rule 23(a)(3). See *Jahm v. Bankrate, Inc.*, 2015 WL 13650037, *2 (S.D. Fla. Jan. 16, 2015).

b. Movant Will Fairly and Adequately Protect the Interests of the Class

Movant is an adequate representative for the Class. Under Rule 23(a)(4), representative parties must also "fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class." Adequate representation will be found if the representative has: (a) retained able and experienced counsel; and (b) the representative has no fundamental conflicts of interest with the interests of the class as a whole. Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a)(4). The PSLRA directs the Court to limit its inquiry regarding the adequacy of the movant to whether the interests of the movant are clearly aligned with the members of the putative Class and whether there is evidence of any antagonism between the interests of the movant and other members of the Class. 15 U.S.C. §78u-4(a)(3)(B).

Movant's interests are aligned with those of the other members of the Class. Not only is there no evidence of antagonism between Movant and the other Class members, but Movant has a significant, compelling interest in prosecuting the Related Actions to a successful conclusion based upon the very large financial losses he has suffered as a result of the wrongful conduct alleged in these Related Actions. This motivation, combined with Movant's identical interest with the members of the Class, demonstrates that Movant will vigorously pursue the interests of the Class. In addition, Movant has selected Levi & Korsinsky to represent him and the Class as Lead Counsel and Cullin O'Brien as Liaison Counsel, law firms that are highly experienced in prosecuting securities class actions.

Moreover, Movant is a sophisticated investor. Movant, who resides in Dearborn, MI, has

a Master's Degree in Business Administration and has been investing in securities for 40 years. Movant will also have no issues understanding the complex securities issues and allegations in this action as he used to be employed as a financial analyst at Ford Motor Company. Movant is also currently retired, and will be able to dedicate the time needed to oversee the litigation of the Related Actions. *See* O'Brien Decl., Ex. A, PSLRA Certification, filed herewith.

In sum, because of Movant's common interests with the Class members, his clear motivation and ability to vigorously pursue the Related Actions, and his competent counsel, the typicality and adequacy requirements of Rule 23(a)(3) and (4) are met. Because Movant meets those typicality and adequacy requirements and has sustained the largest amount of losses from Defendants' alleged wrongdoing, Movant is the presumptive Lead Plaintiff in accordance with 15 U.S.C. §78u-4(a)(3)(B)(iii)(I), and should be appointed as such to lead the Related Actions.

III. APPROVING MOVANT'S CHOICE OF COUNSEL IS APPROPRIATE

The PSLRA vests authority in the lead plaintiff to select and retain lead counsel, subject to Court approval. 15 U.S.C. \$78u-4(a)(3)(B)(v). The Court should interfere with the lead plaintiff's selection of counsel only when necessary "to protect the interests of the class." 15 U.S.C. \$78u-4(a)(3)(B)(iii)(II)(aa).

Movant has selected and retained Levi & Korsinsky as the proposed Lead Counsel for the Class and Cullin O'Brien Law as proposed Liaison Counsel. Each firm has extensive experience in successfully prosecuting complex securities class actions such as this one and are well-qualified to represent the Class. See O'Brien Decl. Exhibits D and E (firm résumés of proposed counsel). Thus, the Court should approve Movant's choice of counsel. See, e.g., *Dillard*, 2016 WL 10586300, at *4 (approving and appointing movant's choice of co-lead counsel); *Biver v. Nicholas Fin., Inc.*, 2014 WL 1763211, at *7 (M.D. Fla. Apr. 30, 2014) (same).

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CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Movant respectfully requests that this Court: (1) consolidate the Related Actions; (2) appoint Movant as Lead Plaintiff for the class; (3) approve Levi & Korsinsky as Lead Counsel and Cullin O'Brien as Liaison Counsel for the Class; and (4) grant such other relief as the Court may deem proper.

Dated: December 7, 2020

Respectfully submitted,

<u>/s/ Cullin O'Brien</u> Cullin O'Brien Florida Bar No. 0597341 CULLIN O'BRIEN LAW, P.A. 6541 NE 21st Way Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33308 Tel: (561) 676-6370 Fax: (561) 320-0285 E-mail: cullin@cullinobrienlaw.com

Proposed Liaison Counsel for Movant and the Class

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Proposed Counsel for Movant and the Class

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY certify that on December 7, 2020, I electronically filed the foregoing

document with the Clerk of the Court CM/ECF.

<u>/s/ Cullin O'Brien</u> Cullin O'Brien