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Attorneys for Plaintiff,
California Department of Fair Employment and Housing

(Fee Exempt, Gov. Code, § 6103)

**IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA**

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FAIR
EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING, an agency of
the State of California,

Plaintiff,

vs.

CISCO SYSTEMS, INC., a California
Corporation; SUNDAR IYER, an individual;
RAMANA KOMPELLA, an individual,

Defendants.

Case No.: 20CV372366

**DECLARATION OF JOHN DOE IN
SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF FAIR EMPLOYMENT
AND HOUSING’S MOTION TO PROCEED
USING A FICTITIOUS NAME**

I, John Doe, under penalty of perjury, do hereby state as follows:

1. I am the complainant in the above-captioned lawsuit against defendants Cisco Systems, Inc. (Cisco), Sundar Iyer, and Ramana Kompella. I make this declaration in support of the Department of Fair Employment and Housing’s (DFEH) Motion to Proceed Using a Fictitious Name.

2. I make this declaration on the basis of my own personal knowledge, and if called upon to testify, I could do so competently.

3. I am Dalit Indian. I was born into India’s caste system as Dalit and will never be able to change my caste. In India, Dalits have historically been referred to as “Untouchable” or from the

1 “Scheduled Caste,” and are considered to be from the lowest caste in India’s caste system. Because of
2 this, I do not share my caste with others, even my close friends.

3 4. Growing up in India, other children called me “Untouchable” or “Dalit.” In primary
4 school through high school, a lot of my classmates knew about my caste and deliberately ostracized me.

5 5. In India, my father experienced caste-based discrimination at work. Schools in India
6 issue “school-leaving certificates” when a student graduates from one institution to another. This
7 certificate includes a student’s grades, whether he is in good standing, and his caste. My father’s
8 employers always requested copies of his “school-leaving certificates” and would therefore learn our
9 caste. My father told me that for years, his direct supervisor always found a reason not to promote him.

10 6. I also have extended family that shares my last name living in rural areas in India. Caste
11 segregation and anti-Dalit violence run rampant in these rural areas. Many of the news stories of caste-
12 based violence in India are about attacks that take place in rural villages where caste-based segregation
13 is prevalent.

14 7. My wife’s family changed their last name decades ago to avoid being identified as Dalit.
15 My wife’s family also moved to the state of Gujarat in the 1980s for better economic opportunities.
16 Even in the city, they are very careful about cooking meat at home because that would indicate they are
17 not vegetarians and, thus, of a lower caste. My mother-in-law recalls neighbors stopped interacting with
18 them when they learned that the family was cooking meat.

19 8. I am terrified that if my name is disclosed or if family members are linked to me, my
20 family in India will have to move again to avoid anti-Dalit attacks and ostracization, which would be
21 extremely difficult in their advanced age.

22 9. Upon information and belief, defendants Iyer and Kompella are of the highest caste,
23 Brahmin, or at least of a higher caste than me.

24 10. I am currently employed by Cisco, which has consistently been my employer since
25 October 2015. I live in Silicon Valley.

26 11. In or around October 2016, two of my Cisco colleagues told me that defendant Iyer
27 informed them that I am from the “Scheduled Caste,” meaning I am Dalit, and that I enrolled in the
28 Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) through affirmative action.

1 12. Due to the events as alleged in the DFEH’s complaint, on or around July 30, 2018, I filed
2 an administrative complaint against Cisco with the DFEH alleging discrimination and harassment based
3 on my caste, and that Cisco retaliated against me after I opposed the unlawful discrimination and
4 harassment. On or around October 9, 2018, I filed an amended administrative complaint against
5 defendants Cisco, Iyer, and Kompella alleging discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

6 13. I am deeply concerned that Cisco, Iyer, and Kompella will publicly disclose my identity
7 to people in our professional and social community. In late 2016 or 2017, an engineering friend who
8 works in Silicon Valley told me that another friend was considering approaching Iyer with a business
9 proposal. I realized then that Iyer and I work and live in a relatively small community, and that Iyer and
10 I share professional and social connections beyond Cisco. I am deeply worried that revealing my
11 identity as the complainant this lawsuit will significantly hinder my ability to obtain future
12 employment, free from caste-based discrimination, harassment, or retaliation, in companies that employ
13 predominately Indian engineers.

14 14. But my greatest concern is for the safety of my wife and children, and my family who
15 still live in India and share the same last name. I constantly read news stories about people being
16 viciously attacked and killed in India simply because they are Dalit. Since this lawsuit was filed, I have
17 seen a lot of mainstream news articles about the lawsuit in the United States and in India. I also have
18 seen the negative comments people have made in reaction to the lawsuit. I am terrified that people feel
19 so strongly about caste hierarchy, especially about Dalits being “Untouchable,” that they will attack me
20 or my family in retaliation for pursuing this lawsuit.

21 15. My wife’s job requires daily interactions with members of the public in the Indian
22 community. Her income depends on her relationships with members of the Indian community. Because
23 she shares my last name, I am very concerned that she will be professionally shunned or, worse,
24 subjected to anti-Dalit attacks or violence while she is working.

25 16. I am also fearful that my family—particularly my children—will be socially ostracized. I
26 estimate that approximately 80% of my family’s social activities, from attending Indian festivals to
27 temple ceremonies to events with Indian friends, are within the Indian community. I am scared that if
28 my identity is revealed, many of our Indian friends will refuse to socialize with us any further. The

1 thought that one of my young children will lose a friend or be treated as a social outcaste by other
2 children and their families they have grown up with, played with, and celebrated birthdays and holidays
3 with breaks my heart.

4 17. I filed the administrative complaint with the DFEH because I did not want to be known
5 through the filter of my caste, and I believe defendants Cisco, Iyer, and Kompella violated my civil
6 rights. However, because of the stigma associated with being Dalit, and because my family and I will be
7 subject to harm based on our caste, I do not wish to publicly reveal my true name and would like to
8 retain my right to privacy in connection with this lawsuit.

9 18. Due to the intensely personal and sensitive nature of my caste, I asked the DFEH not to
10 reveal my name in its complaint and to seek permission for me to participate in this litigation
11 anonymously.

12 19. I am fearful that, if my real name is used in the DFEH's lawsuit and our caste is revealed,
13 my wife, my children, my family in India, and I will be subject to anti-Dalit attacks, violence,
14 ostracization, professional exclusion, and social isolation. I am also afraid that, if my real name is used
15 in the DFEH's lawsuit, I will suffer additional discrimination, harassment, and retaliation because of my
16 caste.

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

19 Executed on this 27th day of October 2020, in San Jose, California.

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22 John Doe
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