

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT COURT OF PUERTO RICO**

ELÍAS SÁNCHEZ-SIFONTE, ET AL.
PLAINTIFFS

CASE NO. 22-cv-01444 (RAM-HRV)

V.

JOSUÉ FONSECA, ET AL.
DEFENDANTS

**PLAINTIFFS DEMANDS A TRIAL BY
JURY**

**MOTION IN OPPOSITION OF DEFENDANTS' PETITION
FOR ATTORNEYS' FEES [D.E. 287] and [D.E. 288]**

TO THE HON. RAÚL M. ARIAS MARXUACH:

COMES NOW, Plaintiffs, Elías Sánchez-Sifonte and Valerie Rodríguez-Erazo (hereafter, “**Plaintiffs**”) by and through the undersigned attorney, and very respectfully states, alleges, and prays as follows:

I. INTRODUCTION.

On March 6, 2026, United States Magistrate Judge Héctor L. Ramos-Vega filed a Report and Recommendation regarding Defendants TPR, TNG, and NBC's Motion to Compel at Docket No. 191, which had been filed to resolve months-long discovery disputes with Plaintiffs. On March 23, 2026, the Honorable Judge Raúl M. Arias-Marxuach adopted the Report and Recommendation in its entirety, including the Magistrate Judge's determination that attorneys' fees should be awarded to Defendants in connection with the granted motion to compel. Following several subsequent procedural incidents, on May 8, 2026, Defendants' lead counsel, Shullman Fugate PLLC, a law firm based in the State of Florida, together with their local co-counsel, Casellas

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Alcover & Burgos, PSC, filed their *Motion for Attorney Fees and Expenses and Incorporated Memorandum of Law* [D.E. 285–288].

Plaintiffs very respectfully submit that the amounts requested by Defendants are excessive and must be reduced in accordance with the criteria established by the applicable case law. As set forth in detail below, the fee petition suffers from multiple, independent deficiencies that warrant a substantial downward adjustment: (1) a significant portion of the billing entries are extensively redacted, preventing any meaningful judicial review of their reasonableness; (2) the billing records reveal pervasive duplicative work, with multiple attorneys from both Shullman Fugate PLLC and local co-counsel performing the same tasks on the same documents during the same time periods; (3) numerous entries reflect clerical or ministerial tasks billed at attorney rates; (4) several entries are internally inconsistent and facially incongruent; and (5) critically, the hourly rates requested by Defendants' out-of-state counsel far exceed the prevailing rates in the District of Puerto Rico, the forum to which Defendants themselves chose to remove this case.

Due to all of the foregoing, Plaintiffs very respectfully request that this Honorable Court substantially reduce the claimed legal fees.

II. LEGAL STANDARD.

A. Calculating fees.

As stated in Hensley v. Eckerhart, 461 U.S. 424 (1983), “[t]he most useful starting point for determining the amount of a reasonable fee is the number of hours reasonably expended on the litigation multiplied by a reasonable hourly rate. This calculation provides an objective basis on which to make an initial estimate of the value of a lawyer's services.” *Id.* at 433. This is what is referred to as the “lodestar.” Though the lodestar is of great importance in the determination of proper attorney’s fees it is not the sole factor to be taken into consideration when awarding said

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fees, “[t]he product of reasonable hours times a reasonable rate does not end the inquiry.” *Id*; see also Pérez-Sosa v. Garland, 22 F.4th 312, 321 (1st Cir. 2022). In calculating the lodestar, the district court must take into consideration various factors which, if present, may lead to an appropriate reduction in attorney’s fees. To determine the number of hours reasonably expended by the attorneys seeking payment, a court excludes or discounts “those hours that are ‘excessive, redundant, or otherwise unnecessary’” from the actual amount of hours spent on the litigation. Cent. Pension Fund of the Int’l Union of Operating Eng’rs & Participating Emps. et al. v. Ray Haluch Gravel Co. et al., 745 F.3d 1, 5 (1st Cir. 2014) (*quoting* *Hensley v. Eckerhart*, *supra*, at 434; see also Grendel’s Den, Inc. v. Larkin, 749 F.2d 945, 950 (1st Cir. 1984) (hours that are “duplicative, unproductive, excessive, or otherwise unnecessary” should be discounted).

Additionally, courts have consistently held that time records that are “too generic” and “insufficient as a practical matter to permit a court to answer questions about excessiveness, redundancy, and the like” should be discounted or disallowed by a district court. Pérez-Sosa v. Garland, *supra*, at 330 (*quoting* Torres-Rivera v. O’Neill-Cancel, 524 F.3d 331, 336 (1st Cir. 2008)). Time entries that involve block-billing, or the use of a single block of time to bill multiple discrete tasks, may also be discounted. See Bd. of Trs. v. ILA Loc. 1740, AFL-CIO, 2022 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 179791, 2022 WL 4591843, at *5 (D.P.R. Sept. 30, 2022) (reducing block-billed entries by 35 percent). The First Circuit has held that hours categorized with vague titles such as "Meeting with Client" or "Telephone Conference [with] Client" may be discounted under this standard. *Id.* at 329. Also clerical or secretarial tasks ought not to be billed at lawyers’ rates, even if a lawyer performs them. Lipsett v. Blanco, 975 F.2d 934, 940 (1st Cir. 1992).

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B. Reasonable Hourly Rate.

Courts applying the lodestar method “normally use local rates so long as local lawyers were available and competent to handle the work.” Libertad v. Sanchez, 134 F. Supp. 2d 218, 235 (D.P.R. 2001) (awarding Puerto Rico rate for New York lawyer); Skytec, Inc. v. Logility, Inc., 2019 WL 1271459, at *5–6 (D.P.R. Mar. 19, 2019) (awarding Puerto Rico rates for Seattle attorneys). As the First Circuit has held: “Where it is unreasonable to select a higher priced outside attorney, as, for example, in an ordinary case requiring no specialized abilities not amply reflected among local lawyers, the local rate is the appropriate yardstick.” Maceira v. Pagan, 698 F.2d 38, 40 (1st Cir. 1983). This Court recently reaffirmed those principles in Carrero v. Molina Healthcare of P.R., Inc., 2024 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 111169, at *13–15 (D.P.R. 2024), stating:

"[T]he reasonable hourly rate in any given case 'will vary depending on the nature of the work, the locality in which it is performed, the qualifications of the lawyers, and other criteria.'" Pérez-Sosa, 22 F.4th at 325 (citation omitted). The appropriate rate is usually "that prevailing in the community for similar work" done by "lawyers of like qualifications, experience, and competence." Maceira v. Pagan, 698 F.2d 38, 40 (1st Cir. 1983) (citation omitted); Pérez-Sosa, 22 F.4th at 321 (citation omitted). "Most often, there is not a single reasonable rate for legal services but, rather, a range of reasonable rates." Pérez-Sosa, 22 F.4th at 326 (citation omitted).

To determine reasonable rates in this case, the Court considers the parties' briefing on this issue, as well as examples of fee awards from other cases in this district. The Court also relies on its own understanding of prevailing rates in Puerto Rico and its knowledge this particular case, over which the Court has presided since it began. *See* Pérez-Sosa, 22 F.4th at 326-27 & n.5 (citations omitted)

In the District of Puerto Rico, an approximate range of typical rates for **highly experienced attorneys** is **\$250-300**, for **associates** **\$150-200**, and for **paralegals and law clerks** **\$50-100**. *See* Skytec, Inc., 2019 WL 1271459, at *4-5 (citations omitted); Civil No. 21-1605 (RAM) 15 Bd. of Trs. v. ILA Loc. 1740, 2022 WL 4591843, at *3 (D.P.R. 2022) (citation omitted); Arelene Ocasio v. Comision Estatal de Elecciones, 2023 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 229742, 2023 WL 8889653, at *3 n.5 (D.P.R. 2023) (citations omitted); Concilio de Salud Integral, 2023 WL 3081964, at *2 (citations omitted). However, courts sometimes award fees at higher rates. *See, e.g., J. Walter Thompson P.R., Inc. v. Latin Am. Music Co.*, 2018 WL 7246980, at *5 (D.P.R. 2018), *report and recommendation adopted in part*,

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rejected in part, 355 F. Supp. 3d 110 (D.P.R. 2019) (finding \$350 a reasonable hourly rate)¹; Rivera-Molina v. Casa La Roca, LLC, 2022 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 56061, 2022 WL 897145, at *1 (D.P.R. 2022) (same)².

Id. (emphasis added).

Finally, the attorneys seeking payments redactions leave the court with no way of analyzing the reasonableness of the underlying charges. The court will not speculate as to these matters and therefore will not consider those entries. *See Rhode Island v. Town of Coventry*, 2009 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 124165, at *10-*11 (D.R.I. Dec. 7, 2009) (court reduced attorneys' fees where entries were significantly redacted to point where court could not fully analyze them)

III. ARGUMENT.

This Honorable Court issued an Opinion and Order granting Defendants' Motion to Compel and directing Plaintiffs to pay the attorneys' fees incurred by Defendants in connection therewith. Defendants have now submitted a fee petition seeking approximately \$70,000 in attorneys' fees. For the reasons set forth herein, Plaintiffs respectfully submit that this amount must be significantly reduced.

¹ In J. Walter Thompson P.R., Inc. v. Latin Am. Music Co., the attorneys were requesting attorney's fees based on New York state rates for lawyers with their experience in such cases. Specifically, the attorneys requested the following rates: (1) Barry Slotnick (Partner, law license since 1972) - \$780.13; (2) Frank D'Angelo (Senior Litigation Associate, law license since 2010) - \$619.61; (3) Erin Smith Dennis (Litigation Associate, law license since 2014) - \$595.00; (4) Daniel Besikof (Partner, law license since 2005) - \$697.79; (5) Bethany Simmons (Associate, law license since 2013) - \$595.00; among other rates for paralegals and a librarian. After a Report and Recommendation by United States Magistrate Judge Camille L. Vélez-Rivé, the Court adjusted the rates to the following amounts: (1) Partner Mr. Slotnick: \$350.00; (2) Partner Mr. Besikof: \$350.00; (3) Senior Associate Mr. D'Angelo: \$200.00; (4) Associates: \$150.00; (5) Paralegals: \$100.00; and (6) Librarian: \$75.00. As a result, the total amount of attorney's fees and cost was reduced from \$295,985.19 to approximately \$107,181.00.

² In Rivera-Molina v. Casa La Roca, LLC, the Court made the following determination: "The attorneys' hourly rates are appropriate in light of the prevailing community rate, their qualifications, and their experience. Our initial lodestar is \$28,781.25. *See* Figure 2. However, we adjust the lodestar downwards because we do not believe that an efficacious handling of this matter required such a great expenditure of time and labor. The amount of oversight, review, and conferencing and the number of drafts of each motion reflected in the fee exhibit are unreasonably high. We reduce the billed hours of Attorneys Indiano, Vásquez, and Vicens by 20% each. So the lodestar is \$23,181.25." The prevailing party had requested the amount of \$32,456.25 in attorney's fees.

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The fee petition suffers from multiple, independent deficiencies that warrant a substantial downward adjustment: (1) a significant portion of the billing entries are extensively redacted, preventing any meaningful judicial review of their reasonableness; (2) the billing records reveal pervasive duplicative work, with multiple attorneys from both the Shullman Fugate PLLC firm and local co-counsel performing the same tasks on the same documents during the same time periods; (3) various entries reflect clerical or ministerial tasks billed at attorney rates; (4) other entries contain insufficient detail to permit evaluation of their reasonableness; and (5) critically, the hourly rates requested by Defendants' out-of-state counsel far exceed the prevailing rates in the District of Puerto Rico, the forum to which Defendants themselves chose to remove this case.

As this Court has recognized, an award of attorneys' fees must be grounded in reasonableness. The amount requested here falls far short of that standard.

A. Duplicative, unproductive, excessive, or otherwise unnecessary.

The most striking deficiency in Defendants' fee petition is the systemic duplication of effort among their attorneys. A review of the billing records reveals that multiple timekeepers – both from the Shullman Fugate PLLC firm and from local co-counsel Casellas Alcover & Burgos, PSC – performed identical or near-identical tasks on the same filings, at the same time, without any discernible division of labor that would justify the redundancy. As the First Circuit and this Court have made clear, hours that are “duplicative, unproductive, excessive, or otherwise unnecessary” must be discounted from any fee award. Grendel's Den, Inc. v. Larkin, *supra*, at 950; *see also Hensley v. Eckerhart*, *supra*, at 434. Having multiple attorneys review the same document or work product, attend the same hearings, or revise the same brief does not serve the client's interests it merely multiplies the cost to the adverse party without adding corresponding legal value.

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The following entries from the billing records of the Shullman Fugate PLLC timekeepers illustrate the pervasive duplication:

Timekeeper	Date	Description	Hours	Basis for Reduction
DKS	4/12/2025	Review Plaintiffs' response to discovery (multiple sets of RFPs and ROGs) and outline deficiencies.	1.30	Duplicative
DKS	4/14/2025	Confer with Y. Escalona regarding plaintiffs' discovery response; review discovery response from Plaintiffs	1.0	Duplicative
YXE	4/14/2025	Review of Rodriguez and Sanchez response to written discovery request and identify deficiencies in responses	1.8	Duplicative
DKS	04/22/2025	Review and revise deficiency letters regarding discovery responses; review revised deficiency letter and send to clients for review	3.00	Duplicative
YXE	04/22/2025	Research in cases [...] review and revised draft deficiency letter	.40	Duplicative
DKS	04/23/2025	Review deficiency letter per client comments and send to opposing counsel	.30	Duplicative
DKS	06/04/2025	Review and revise motion to compel and send to clients for review	1.1	Duplicative
YXE	06/24/2025	Review Plaintiffs' response to motion to compel [...]	.30	Duplicative
DKS	07/02/2025	Review and revise reply in support of motion to compel and send to clients for review	1.1	Duplicative
DKS	10/08/2025	[...] multiple emails with opposing counsel regarding meeting and confer	.40	Excessive
DKS	10/22/2025	Revise joint motion to court per 10/16 call [...]	.20	Duplicative
DKS	11/10/2025	Briefly review plaintiffs' second amended discovery responses;	.80	Duplicative
YXE	11/12/2025	Analyze Sanchez's second supplemental responses to RFPs and identify remaining deficiencies	.60	Duplicative
DKS	1/14/2026	Review amended discovery response and Y. Escalona memo regarding the same	1.6	Duplicative & Excessive
YXE	11/17/2025	Prepared chart of deficiencies in RFP responses by Rodriguez and Sanchez; begin drafting filing regarding remaining discovery deficiencies	3.8	Excessive
YXE	11/18/2025	Continue preparing chart of deficiencies in Plaintiffs' responses to Defendants' interrogatories (6 sets); continue preparing filing regarding outstanding discovery	5.10	Excessive

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Timekeeper	Date	Description	Hours	Basis for Reduction
YXE	11/19/2025	Review second amended responses to interrogatories served by Plaintiffs (x5) (1.3); revise chart of deficiencies and filing regarding outstanding discovery issues to reflect deficiencies in second amended responses (2.9)	4.20	Excessive
GMG	12/22/2025	Appear and attend discovery hearing	1.1	Duplicative
DKS	01/14/2026	Briefly skim discovery responses; REDACTED; review plaintiff's status report to court.	.30	Duplicative
GMG	01/15/2026	Review Plaintiffs' amended interrogatory and request for production responses and compare to chart for completion [...]	.50	Duplicative
GMG	01/27/2026	Review and revise informative motion regarding the outstanding deficiencies in Plaintiffs' responses (3.9). Review amended responses and revised exhibit 2 chart concerning amended responses as well as remaining deficiency in same (2.8). Research case law regarding waived privileges objection and inability to elect to be deposed vs. answer interrogatories for inclusion in chart and motion (0.7)	7.4	Excessive
DKC	01/30/2026	Review and revise informative motion.	.30	Duplicative
GMG	02/18/2026	Review outline in preparation for the hearing; Appear and argue at discovery hearing	1.70	Duplicative
DKS	02/18/2026	Prepare for and attend hearing on motion to compel further proceedings and confer with defense counsel regarding same	2.1	Duplicative
GMG	03/06/2026	Review report and recommendation order to determine what was granted or denied and prepare correspondence to client regarding findings, objection timing and order on limited discovery.	.60	Duplicative
DKS	03/06/2026	Review report and recommendation on motion to compel and confer with G. Girones regarding same (.4)	.40	Duplicative

The pattern is unmistakable. On April 14, 2025, both DKS and YXE billed time to review the same discovery responses and identify deficiencies, substantively identical tasks. On April 22, 2025, DKS billed 3.0 hours to review and revise deficiency letters while YXE simultaneously billed 0.4 hours for the same task. On February 18, 2026, both GMG and DKS billed time for attending and preparing for the same discovery hearing. On March 6, 2026, both GMG and DKS

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billed time to review the same Report and Recommendation. These examples are precisely the type of duplicative staffing that courts consistently reject in fee petitions.

The duplication extends further to the work performed by local co-counsel. The entries below reflect local counsel billing time to review the same motions, responses, and discovery materials already being reviewed, and in many instances already billed, by lead counsel at Shullman Fugate PLLC:

Timekeeper	Date	Description	Hours	Basis for Reduction
NME	04/22/2025	Review/analyze email communication from Deanna Shullman, Esq. and deficiency letter.	.30	Unnecessary
NME	06/04/2025	Review/analyze draft of motion to compel.	.50	Duplicative / Unnecessary
NME	06/24/2025	Review/analyze plaintiffs'; response to motion to compel.	.30	Duplicative / Unnecessary
NME	07/03/2025	Review/analyze draft reply in support of motion to compel.	.50	Duplicative / Unnecessary
NME	10/22/2025	Review/analyze draft of joint motion re outstanding discovery.	.20	Duplicative / Unnecessary
NME	11/10/2025	Review/analyze Sanchez' supplemental answers to discovery requests. Review/analyze Rodriguez' supplemental answers to discovery requests.	1.0	Duplicative / Unnecessary
NME	11/19/2025	Review/analyze Rodriguez' second amended answers to TNG's interrogatories. Review/analyze Rodriguez' second amended answers to NBC's interrogatories. Review/analyze Sanchez' second amended answers to NBC's interrogatories. Review/analyze email communications with defendants' attorneys re status of discovery. Review/analyze Rodriguez' second amended answers to TPR's interrogatories. Review/analyze Sanchez' second amended answers to TNG's interrogatories.	2.3	Duplicative / Unnecessary
RFC	12/22/2025	Defended Telemundo at discovery conference; debrief with Giselle Girones.	2.00	Duplicative / Unnecessary
NME	01/15/2026	Review/analyze Sanchez' amended answers to TPR interrogatories. Review/analyze Sanchez' amended answers to TNG interrogatories. Review/analyze Sanchez' amended answers to NBC interrogatories.	1.6	Duplicative / Unnecessary

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Timekeeper	Date	Description	Hours	Basis for Reduction
		Review/analyze Rodriguez' amended answers to TPR interrogatories. Review/analyze plaintiffs' informative motion re amended responses. Review/analyze Rodriguez' second amended response to defendants' request for production of documents.		
NME	01/30/2026	Review/analyze informative motion re status of discovery	.30	Duplicative / Unnecessary
NME	02/18/2026	Appear in person at discovery hearing	1.00	Duplicative / Unnecessary

The local co-counsel’s role appears to have been limited entirely to reviewing documents already analyzed by lead counsel. NME, for example, billed time on April 22, June 4, June 24, July 3, October 22, November 10, November 19, January 15, January 30, and February 18, each time reviewing materials that lead counsel was simultaneously reviewing and billing for. RFC appeared at the same December 22, 2025 discovery conference as GMG. This kind of parallel, duplicative staffing has no place in a reasonable fee award.

Courts in this District regularly reduce fees for exactly this type of overbilling. *See Rivera-Molina v. Casa La Roca, LLC*, 2022 WL 897145, at *1 (D.P.R. 2022) (reducing billed hours by 20% across all attorneys due to “unreasonably high” amount of “oversight, review, and conferencing”); *Bd. of Trs. v. ILA Loc. 1740*, 2022 WL 4591843, at *5 (D.P.R. 2022) (applying 35% reduction to block-billed entries reflecting similar redundancy). Plaintiffs respectfully submit that a meaningful reduction is warranted with respect to all duplicative entries identified above.

B. Multiple Entries Reflect Clerical Tasks Improperly Billed at Attorney Rates

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A court awarding attorney's fees must ensure that clerical or secretarial tasks are not compensated at attorney billing rates, regardless of whether a licensed attorney performed them. Lipsett v. Blanco, *supra*, at 940; *see also* Action on Smoking & Health v. Civil Aeronautics Bd., 724 F.2d 211, 222 (D.C. Cir. 1984). Tasks such as compiling exhibits, preparing document indices, cite-checking, and drafting routine correspondence are clerical in nature and do not require legal training or judgment.

The following entries in Defendants' fee petition fall squarely within this category:

Timekeeper	Date	Description	Hours	Category
YXE	06/02/2025	Draft and send correspondence to Plaintiffs' counsel regarding failure to address discovery deficiencies	.90	Clerical
YXE	06/05/2025	Compile all exhibits to motion to compel (0.5); confer with A. Lovelady regarding redactions to exhibits (0.3); prepare and revise proposed redactions (0.6).	1.4	Clerical
YXE	07/07/2025	Cite check and compile all exhibits to reply ISO motion to compel	.70	Clerical
YXE	07/07/2025	Review redactions to exhibits to reply ISO motion to compel	.30	Clerical
YXE	12/17/2025	Review of documents produced and indices of same to assist in preparation for upcoming discovery hearing.	.40	Clerical
YXE	12/18/2025	Further review of documents produced and indices of same in preparation for upcoming discovery hearing.	.30	Clerical
EVB	01/28/2026	Compiled Plaintiffs' deficient responses to discovery requests for purposes of attaching same as exhibit to informative motion.	.20	Clerical

Compiling exhibits, reviewing document indices, and cite-checking are tasks routinely assigned to paralegals or legal assistants. Billing for these tasks at attorney's rates, even associate rates, is improper. These entries should either be excluded entirely or, at a minimum, compensated at paralegal rates consistent with the District of Puerto Rico scale (\$50–\$100 per hour).

C. Heavily Redacted and Vague Entries Cannot Be Evaluated and Must Be Reduced

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Plaintiffs submit that it is highly improper for Defendants to have redacted the invoice almost in its entirety, thereby depriving the Court and the party obligated to pay off the opportunity to objectively evaluate the amount of time expended. This problem is further compounded by internal inconsistencies within the billing records themselves that cast doubt on their overall reliability. For instance, the entry dated October 3, 2025, describes a single task as “Prepared a joint motion regarding outstanding motion to compel (.3)””; yet bills 0.40 hours for that same entry, an unexplained discrepancy. Similarly, the entry dated October 2, 2025, purports to account for 0.40 hours through two described tasks totaling 0.40 hours – “Review court order regarding conferral on motion to compel (.1); confer with opposing counsel regarding same (.3)” – yet contains an additional REDACTED task of unknown duration. It is therefore impossible to determine whether the time billed for the described tasks is accurate, whether the redacted task consumed additional time beyond the stated total, or whether the entire entry was inflated. These are not minor clerical errors; they are facially incongruent entries that undermine the credibility of the entire invoice.

In view of the foregoing, the Court should reduce the amounts requested. As previously noted, a court cannot evaluate the reasonableness of time entries that are so heavily redacted or vague as to prevent meaningful review. *See Rhode Island v. Town of Coventry, supra*, at *10–11. A party seeking fees “bears the burden of establishing entitlement to an award and documenting the appropriate hours expended.” *Hensley v. Eckerhart, supra*, at 437. Where that documentation is inadequate — and here it is both inadequate and internally contradictory — the court is entitled to reduce the award accordingly.

Additionally, the following entries contain insufficient information to permit the Court to analyze their reasonableness:

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Timekeeper	Date	Description	Hours
DKS	01/30/2026	Review and revise informative motion	.30
NME	10/02/2025	Reviewed motion to compel, latest order, exchange between lead counsel and suggestions to expedite discovery.	1.00
NME	03/04/2026	Review/analyze court order for plaintiffs re discovery	.10
DKS	10/02/2025	Review court order regarding conferral on motion to compel (.1); confer with opposing counsel regarding same (.3); REDACTED	.40
DKS	10/03/2025	Prepared a joint motion regarding outstanding motion to compel (.3)	.40

These entries, and any other entries that are similarly redacted or vague, must be excluded or substantially reduced.

D. Hourly Rates Must Be Adjusted to Prevailing Puerto Rico Rates

Perhaps the most significant basis for reducing the fee petition is the hourly rates charged by Defendants' out-of-state counsel. Defendants have claimed fees at rates that appear to reflect those of mainland law firms, without any justification for why Puerto Rico local rates should not apply. This argument is particularly compelling given that it was Defendants themselves who removed this case to the District of Puerto Rico. Having affirmatively chosen to litigate in this forum, Defendants cannot now seek fee reimbursement at rates exceeding those that prevail here.

The law is clear: when local counsel with equivalent qualifications is available and capable of handling the work, out-of-state rates are not appropriate. Maceira v. Pagan, *supra*, at 40; Libertad v. Sanchez, *supra*, at 235. This District is home to a robust bar of highly experienced civil rights and commercial litigators fully capable of handling discovery motions in cases of this nature. Defendants have presented no evidence that the Shullman Fugate PLLC attorneys possess specialized expertise that could not have been obtained from qualified Puerto Rico counsel. Accordingly, Puerto Rico prevailing rates must apply.

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The applicable rate ranges in this District are firmly established: highly experienced attorneys \$250–\$300 per hour; associates \$150–\$200 per hour; and paralegals and law clerks \$50–\$100 per hour. Carrero v. Molina Healthcare of P.R., *supra*, at 14–15. The instructive precedent of J. Walter Thompson P.R., Inc. v. Latin Am. Music Co., 2018 WL 7246980, at *5 (D.P.R. 2018), is directly on point: in that case, attorneys billing at rates of \$595 to \$780 per hour (New York rates) had their fees reduced to a maximum of \$350 per hour for partners and \$200 per hour for associates, reducing the total award from \$295,985.19 to approximately \$107,181.00, a reduction of over 63%.

The same result is warranted here. The fee petition must be recalculated applying Puerto Rico prevailing rates across all timekeepers: (1) senior and highly experienced partners: no more than \$300 per hour; (2) associates: no more than \$200 per hour; and (3) paralegals and law clerks: no more than \$100 per hour. Applying these rates to a properly reduced number of hours, after excising duplicative, clerical, redacted, and otherwise unreasonable entries, will produce a fee award that is genuinely “reasonable” within the meaning of the governing legal standards.

IV. CONCLUSION.

For all of the foregoing reasons, Plaintiffs Eliás Sánchez-Sifonte and Valerie Rodríguez-Erazo respectfully request that this Honorable Court substantially reduce the attorneys’ fees awarded to Defendants. Specifically, Plaintiffs request that the Court: (1) reduce or eliminate all billing entries that are duplicative, reflecting multiple attorneys performing the same tasks on the same documents and at the same hearings, including but not limited to the entries identified in the tables above; (2) reduce or eliminate all billing entries reflecting clerical or ministerial tasks, including compiling exhibits, reviewing document indices, cite-checking, and preparing routine correspondence, or at minimum compensate such tasks at paralegal rates; (3) exclude or

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substantially reduce all billing entries that are so heavily redacted or vague as to prevent meaningful judicial review of their reasonableness; (4) recalculate all allowable fees using the prevailing hourly rates in the District of Puerto Rico – no more than \$300 per hour for highly experienced attorneys, \$200 per hour for associates, and \$100 per hour for paralegals and law clerks – given that Defendants themselves elected to litigate in this forum; and (5) grant any other and further relief that this Honorable Court deems just and proper.

WHEREFORE, it is respectfully requested that this Honorable Court take notice of the information and discussion provided herein and, based on the grounds set forth herein, reduce the amount sought by Plaintiffs for attorneys' fees.

IT IS HEREBY CERTIFIED that the foregoing motion was electronically filed with the Clerk of the Court using the CM/ECF system, which will send notification of such filing to all counsel of record participating in the same.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on May 22, 2026.

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