

**CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE NINTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
COUNTY OF MCDONOUGH, STATE OF ILLINOIS**

H.K. and J.C., through their father and legal guardian CLINTON FARWELL, and M.W., through her mother and legal guardian ELIZABETH WHITEHEAD, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated,

Plaintiffs,

v.

GOOGLE LLC,

Defendant.

Case No. 2020LL00017

Judge: Hon. Heidi A. Benson

Filed
5/15/2025 2:00 PM
Ian A. Fischer
Circuit Clerk

**ORDER GRANTING PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF
CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT**

This matter having come before the Court on Plaintiffs' Motion and Memorandum in Support of Preliminary Approval of Class Action Settlement of the above-captioned matter (the "Action") between Plaintiffs H.K. and J.C., minor children, by and through their father and legal guardian Clinton Farwell, and M.W., a minor child, by and through her mother and legal guardian Elizabeth Whitehead ("Plaintiffs"), and Defendant Google LLC ("Defendant" or "Google"), as set forth in the Settlement Agreement and amendment thereto (collectively, "Settlement Agreement") between the Parties, due notice having been given and the Court having duly considered the papers and arguments of counsel, and being fully advised in the premises,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED as follows:

1. Unless defined herein, all defined terms in this Order shall have the respective meanings ascribed to the same terms in the Settlement Agreement.

2. The Court has conducted a preliminary evaluation of the Settlement set forth in the Settlement Agreement. Based on this preliminary evaluation, the Court hereby finds that the Parties have shown the Court it will likely be able to approve the proposed Settlement, as embodied in the Settlement Agreement, as being fair, reasonable and adequate to the Settlement Class under of Section 2-801 of the Illinois Code of Civil Procedure, subject to further consideration at the Final Approval Hearing to be conducted, as described below. The proposed Settlement appears to be the product of intensive, thorough, serious, informed, and non-collusive negotiations, which included participation in an all-day mediation on September 20, 2022 with the Honorable Stuart E. Palmer (Ret.) of JAMS and extensive negotiations thereafter under the supervision of Judge Palmer, has no obvious deficiencies, and does not improperly grant preferential treatment to the Class Representatives or any Settlement Class Member.

3. Class Definition. Pursuant to Section 2-801 of the Illinois Code of Civil Procedure, and for settlement purposes only, the Court certifies the following Settlement Class, consisting of: all Illinois residents who, while they were enrolled in a school in the State of Illinois, at any time between March 26, 2015 and the date of Preliminary Approval, had a voice model or face model created or had the Voice Match or Face Match feature enabled in their Google Workspace for Education or G Suite for Education (together, “GWFE”) account. Excluded from the Class are: (a) any judge, magistrate, or mediator presiding over the Action and members of their families; (b) Defendant, Defendant’s subsidiaries, parent companies, successors, predecessors, and any entity in which Defendant or its parents have a controlling interest; (c) Class Counsel; and (d) the legal representatives, successors or assigns of any such excluded persons.

4. Final Approval Hearing. A hearing will be held by this Court in the Courtroom of the Honorable Heidi A. Benson at the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court, McDonough County

Courthouse, One Courthouse Square Macomb, Illinois 61455 on **October 14, 2025, at 2:30 p.m.**, (which is a date that is at least one hundred twenty-five (125) days after entry of this Order) or at such other date and time later set by Court order for the following purposes: (a) to determine whether the Settlement on the terms and conditions provided for in the Settlement Agreement is fair, reasonable, and adequate to the Settlement Class, and should be approved by the Court; (b) to determine whether a Final Approval Order and Judgment should be entered in accordance with the material terms of the Settlement Agreement; (c) to determine whether Class Counsel's motion for an award of attorneys' fees and expenses and for Service Payments to the Class Representatives should be approved; and (d) to consider any other matters that properly may be brought before the Court in connection with the Settlement. Unless otherwise ordered following the entry of this Order, the hearing will be conducted via the Court's zoom link (<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/3098362777>). No password is required.

5. Certification. For settlement purposes only, the Court finds that the Settlement Agreement meets all applicable requirements of Section 2-801 of the Illinois Code of Civil Procedure, including that the Settlement Class is sufficiently numerous, that there are questions of law and fact common to members of the Settlement Class that predominate, that the proposed Class Representatives fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Settlement Class, and that class treatment is an appropriate method for the fair and efficient adjudication of the Action. The Court further finds that: (i) the Settlement is fair, reasonable, and adequate, (ii) the Settlement Agreement has been negotiated at arm's length between experienced attorneys familiar with the legal and factual issues of this case, and (iii) the Settlement warrants Notice of its material terms to the Settlement Class for their consideration and reaction. Therefore, the Court grants preliminary approval of the Settlement.

6. Class Representatives and Class Counsel. For settlement purposes only, the Court hereby approves the appointment of Plaintiffs H.K. and J.C., through their father and legal Guardian Clinton Farwell, and M.W., through her mother and legal guardian, Elizabeth Whitehead as Class Representatives, and Robert Ahdoot and Theodore W. Maya of Ahdoot & Wolfson, PC, John C. Carey of Carey Rodriguez, LLP, Scott Bursor of Bursor & Fisher, P.A., and Frank S. Hedin of Hedin Hall LLP as Class Counsel. Solely for the purposes of effectuating the Settlement, Class Counsel are authorized to act on behalf of the Class Representatives, and all other Settlement Class Members with respect to all acts or consents required by or that may be given pursuant to the Settlement Agreement, including all acts that are reasonably necessary to consummate the Settlement.

7. Settlement Administrator. Pursuant to the Parties' Settlement Agreement, Eisner Amper (formerly Postlethwaite & Netterville) is hereby appointed as Settlement Administrator to supervise and administer the Notice Plan under the Settlement, as well as the processing of claims. Notice of the Settlement and the Final Approval Hearing shall be given by the Settlement Administrator pursuant to the terms and conditions of the Settlement Agreement.

8. Class Notice. The Court (a) approves, as to form and content, of the proposed Google Education BIPA Settlement Claim Form, Long Form Notice, Publication Notice, Summary Notices, and Reminder notice submitted by the Parties as Exhibits 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9, respectively, to the Settlement Agreement; and (b) finds and determines that Direct Notice to Settlement Class Members via U.S. Mail, and publication of the Settlement Agreement, Long Form Notice, Summary Notice, and Claim Form on the Settlement Website, supplemented by any Internet Campaign and Publication Notice deemed appropriate by the Parties, (i) constitutes the best notice practicable under the circumstances, (ii) constitutes notice that is reasonably calculated,

under the circumstances, to apprise Settlement Class Members of the pendency of the Action, their right to submit a Claim (if applicable) their right to exclude themselves from the Settlement Class, the effect of the proposed Settlement (including the Releases to be provided thereunder), Class Counsel's motion for an award of attorneys' fees and expenses and for Service Payments, their right to object to the Settlement, and their right to appear at the Final Approval Hearing; (iii) constitutes due, adequate, and sufficient notice to all Persons entitled to receive notice of the proposed Settlement; and (iv) satisfies the requirements of 735 ILCS 5/2-803 and due process and all other applicable laws and rules. The Court further finds that all of the notices are written in simple terminology, and are readily understandable by Settlement Class Members. The date and time of the Final Approval Hearing shall be included in all notices before they are disseminated. The Parties, by agreement, may revise the notices in ways that are appropriate to update those notices for purposes of accuracy and clarity, and may adjust the layout of those notices for efficient electronic presentation and mailing.

9. Notice Date. The Court hereby directs the Parties and Settlement Administrator to disseminate Notice no later than **June 18, 2025** ("Notice Date") (*i.e.* a date within thirty-five (35) days after the entry of this Order). The Court directs that the Settlement Administrator cause a copy of the Summary Notice be sent to all members of the Settlement Class who have been identified by Defendant through its records *via* U.S. mail, postage prepaid no later than the Notice Date. For any Summary Notice that has been mailed via U.S. mail and returned by the Postal Service as undeliverable, the Settlement Administrator shall re-mail the notice to the forwarding address, if any, provided by the Postal Service on the face of the returned mail or—if no forwarding address is provided on the returned mail—to the forwarding address, if any, in the United States Postal Service's National Change of Address Database. Prior to the dissemination of any Notice,

the Settlement Administrator shall cause copies of the Settlement Agreement, Long Form Notice, Summary Notice, and Claim Form, in forms available for download, to be posted on a website developed for the Settlement (“Settlement Website”). The Settlement Website shall also include a toll-free telephone number, email address, and mailing address through which Settlement Class Members may contact the Settlement Administrator directly.

10. Exclusion from the Settlement Class. A member of the Settlement Class may request to be excluded from the Settlement Class in writing by a request postmarked, or submitted electronically via the Settlement Website, or submitted to an e-mail address established by the Administrator for the purpose of receiving exclusion requests, on or before the Objection and Exclusion Deadline of **September 1, 2025** (*i.e.* seventy-five (75) days after the Notice Date). In order to exercise the right to be excluded via postal mail, a member of the Settlement Class must timely send a written request for exclusion to the Settlement Administrator providing his/her name, address, and telephone number; the name and number of this case; a statement that he/she wishes to be excluded from the Settlement Class; and a handwritten signature. A request to be excluded that is sent to an email address other than that designated in the Class Notice, or that is not electronically submitted or postmarked within the time specified, shall be invalid and the person serving such a request shall be considered a member of the Settlement Class and shall be bound as a Settlement Class Member by the Agreement, if approved. The request for exclusion must be personally signed by the person requesting exclusion (except for requests for exclusion by Settlement Class Members under the age of eighteen (18), which may be submitted and signed by the person’s parent or legal guardian so long as the request for exclusion indicates that the request is being made by such Settlement Class Member’s parent or legal guardian). So-called “mass” or “class” exclusion requests shall not be allowed.

11. Objections. Any Settlement Class Member may comment in support of, or in opposition to, the Settlement Agreement at his or her own expense. Any objection to this Settlement Agreement, and any papers submitted in support of said objection, shall be valid and entertained by the Court at the Final Approval Hearing only if, on or before the Objection and Exclusion Deadline of **September 1, 2025** (*i.e.* seventy-five (75) days after the Notice Date), the person making an objection: (i) files his/her objection with the Clerk of Court; (ii) files copies of such papers he/she proposes to submit at the Final Approval Hearing with the Clerk of Court; and (iii) sends copies of such papers *via* United States mail, hand delivery, or overnight delivery to Class Counsel and Defendant's Counsel. A copy of the objection must also be mailed to the Settlement Administrator at the address that the Settlement Administrator will establish to receive requests for exclusion or objections, Claim Forms, and any other communication relating to the Settlement.

12. Any Settlement Class Member who intends to object to the Settlement must include in any such objection: (i) his/her full name, address and current telephone number; (ii) the case name and number of the Action (*i.e.* *H.K. et al. v. Google LLC*, Case No. CC 20LL00017); (iii) proof that he/she is in the Settlement Class; (iv) a statement of the legal and factual basis for the stated objection, including any supporting materials; and (v) the objector's signature. If represented by counsel, the objecting Settlement Class Member must also provide the name and telephone number of his/her counsel, in addition to the information set forth in (i) through (v) above. If the objecting Settlement Class Member intends to appear at the Final Approval Hearing, either with or without counsel, he/she/they must so state in the written objection, and must also identify any witnesses he/she/they may call to testify at the Final Approval Hearing and all exhibits

he/she/they intends to introduce into evidence at the Final Approval Hearing, which must also be attached to, or included with, the written objection.

13. Final Approval Briefing. No later than **September 15, 2025** (*i.e.* 14 days after the Objection and Exclusion Deadline), Plaintiffs shall move for: (i) final approval of the Settlement Agreement; (ii) final certification of the Settlement Class, including for the entry of a Final Approval Order; (iii) respond to any objections or comments from Settlement Class Members; and (iv) file memorandums in support of the motion for final approval and in response to objections or comments from Settlement Class Members, if any. No later than 14 days prior to the Objection and Exclusion Deadline, Plaintiffs must file their papers in support of Class Counsel's application for attorneys' fees and expenses and for Service Payments.

14. Release. Upon the Effective Date, the Releasing Parties, and each of them, shall be deemed to have, and by operation of the Final Order and Judgment shall have, fully, finally, and forever released, relinquished, and discharged all Released Claims against the Released Parties, and each of them.

15. The Settlement Agreement and the proceedings and statements made pursuant to the Settlement Agreement and papers filed relating to the Settlement or this Order, are not and shall not in any event be described or construed as, and/or used, offered or received against Google or any other Released Parties as, evidence of and/or deemed to be evidence of any presumption, concession, or admission by any Released Party of the truth of any fact alleged by the Plaintiffs; the validity of any Released Claim; the appropriateness of class certification; the deficiency of any defense that has been or could have been asserted in the Action or in any litigation; the violation of any law or statute; or any liability, negligence, fault, or wrongdoing of any of the Released Parties. Google has denied and continues to deny the claims asserted by Plaintiffs.

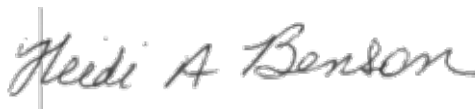
Notwithstanding, nothing contained herein shall be construed to prevent a Party from offering the Settlement Agreement into evidence for the purpose of enforcing the Settlement.

16. The certification of the Settlement Class shall be binding only with respect to the Settlement of the Action. In the event that the Settlement Agreement fails to become effective, is overturned on appeal, or does not become final for any reason, the Parties shall be restored to their respective positions in the Action as of the date of the signing of the Settlement Agreement, and no reference to the Settlement Class, the Settlement Agreement, or any documents, communications, or negotiations related in any way thereto shall be made for any purpose.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

5/15/2025

DATED: _____

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heidi A. Benson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE