

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

PAULA BIRD, <i>et al.</i> ,)	
)	
Plaintiffs,)	Civil Action No. 19-cv-1581 (JMC)
)	
v.)	Judge: Jia M. Cobb
)	
MERRICK GARLAND, Attorney General of the United States, named in his official Capacity, as head of the Department of Justice,)	
)	
Defendant.)	

FINAL APPROVAL ORDER

Upon consideration of Plaintiffs’ Unopposed Motion to Certify the Class for Settlement Purposes and to Grant Final Approval of the Class Action Settlement, ECF 108, Plaintiffs’ Unopposed Motion for Attorneys’ Fees and Costs, ECF 101, the papers filed in support of the Motions, and argument offered before the Court at a February 5, 2025 hearing, the Court hereby **FINDS, CONCLUDES and ORDERS** as follows:

1. The Court hereby affirms its preliminary determinations in the Preliminary Approval Order, ECF 104, that the Settlement Class meets the requirements for certification under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(a) and (b)(3), and finally certifies, for purposes of settlement only, the Settlement Class as defined in the Settlement Agreement:

The Settlement Class is comprised of all female New Agent Trainees who received suitability notations and were dismissed from the FBI’s BFTC (previously New Agent training program) after appearing before a Trainee Review Board (“TRB”) or New Agent Review Board (“NARB”) between April 17, 2015, and August 10, 2024, excluding any individual whose dismissal was based solely on an Honor Code violation and any individual who previously signed a settlement agreement with Defendant waiving any and all claims arising from her time at the BFTC as of the effective date of her settlement agreement.

2. The Court hereby re-affirms its determinations in the Preliminary Approval Order and finally certifies that Paula Bird, Clare Coetzer, Lauren Rose, Danielle Snider, “D.A.”, “S.B.”, “D.C.”, “P.E.”, “W.M.”, “C.S.”, “L.S.”, “G.T.”, and “T.S.” as the Settlement Class Representatives and Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll PLLC and David Shaffer Law PLLC as Class Counsel for the Settlement Class. The Court finds that Class Counsel have decades of class action experience collectively and are more than qualified to lead this class for these purposes.

3. The Court finds that the method for disseminating Notice to the Settlement Class, as provided for in the Settlement Agreement and previously approved and directed by this Court’s Preliminary Approval Order, has been implemented by the Parties. The Court finds that the method for disseminating the Notice was adequate.

4. The Court finds that all Settlement Class Members and all persons who fall within the definition of the Settlement Class have been adequately provided with an opportunity to exclude themselves from the Settlement by submitting a request for exclusion in conformity with the Agreement and this Court’s Preliminary Approval Order. No Settlement Class Members have excluded themselves or filed objections.

5. The Court hereby finally approves the Settlement and finds that the Settlement is, in all respects, fair, reasonable, and adequate and in the best interests of the Plaintiffs and Settlement Class.

6. The Parties are accordingly directed to consummate and implement the Agreement, and the claims filed against Defendant by Plaintiffs Paula Bird, Clare Coetzer, Lauren Rose, Danielle Snider, “D.A.”, “S.B.”, “D.C.”, “P.E.”, “W.M.”, “C.S.”, “L.S.”, “G.T.”, and “T.S.” in this case are dismissed in their entirety, with prejudice.

7. The Court finds that the time expended by Class Counsel was, and will continue to be, reasonable and fully compensable. Class Counsel's representations regarding the time each attorney and other staff spent on this matter do not appear to reflect inflated hours or unnecessary duplication of work.

8. The Court finds Class Counsel's hourly rates are reasonable. This includes Mr. Shaffer's rate of \$1,057 per hour; his law clerk and paralegal's rate of \$239 per hour; Cohen Milstein attorneys' rate of between \$550 and \$1,240 per hour based on the experience of the attorney; and Cohen Milstein's paralegal rate of \$380 per hour.

9. The Court finds reasonable Class Counsel's expenses incurred. This includes \$65,373.86 in costs and litigation expenses for both firms.

10. The Court hereby finds reasonable the total fees and expenses sought by Class Counsel and awards Class Counsel \$2,700,000 in attorneys' fees and costs. The Court reviewed the supporting declaration from Ossai Miazad regarding the rates and amounts requested in making its findings. The Court notes that this amount is about 12% of the \$22,600,000 that Defendant has agreed to settle these claims and that this sum compensates Class Counsel for nearly six years of litigation.

11. Without affecting the finality of this Final Approval Order and the accompanying Judgment in any way, the Court expressly retains for a period of eight months from today continuing and exclusive jurisdiction over the Parties to this Agreement for the purpose of administering and enforcing the payment provisions of the Agreement and the Claims Process.

Accordingly, Plaintiffs' Unopposed Motion to Certify the Class for Settlement Purposes and to Grant Final Approval of the Class Action Settlement, ECF 108, is **GRANTED**, and Plaintiffs' Unopposed Motion for Attorneys' Fees and Costs, ECF 101, is **GRANTED**.

SO ORDERED.

DATE: February 5, 2025

JIA M. COBB
United States District Judge