



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Press Release

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EEOC Sues Two Employers for Sex Discrimination

Federal Agency Charges That the Companies Discriminated Against Employees Because of Their Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identity

MOBILE, Ala. and CHICAGO – Harmony Hospitality LLC, which operates a Home2 Suites by Hilton hotel in Dothan, Alabama, and LAS Hardwoods, a hardwood flooring company in the Chicago area, violated federal civil rights law when they each discriminated against an employee because of his sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or failure to adhere to gender stereotypes, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in two separate lawsuits filed today.

According to the Alabama lawsuit, Harmony fired a night auditor after management observed him styled and dressed in a manner they perceived to be feminine and that differed from management’s preferred appearance for male employees. The agency claims that the company’s management learned about the employee’s sexual orientation and gender identity when his supervisor opposed asking the employee to change his appearance to align with management’s gender stereotypes. In its complaint, the agency alleges that Harmony’s management terminated the night auditor mere hours after the supervisor informed them that the employee is gay and identifies as “more feminine.”

And, in the Illinois lawsuit, the EEOC alleges that LAS Hardwoods created a hostile work environment for a sales associate because of his sexual orientation. The

agency alleges that the employee was harassed, including being subject to the frequent use of gay slurs, because of his perceived feminine style of dress, speech and mannerisms. The agency claims that the company ignored the employee's complaints and did nothing to stop the harassment by various managers and employees.

“During this Pride month, we want workers to know that they should be able to work in any job without fear of being harassed or fired because of who they are or who they love,” said EEOC General Counsel Karla Gilbride. “Federal civil rights law, as interpreted by the Supreme Court in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, makes it illegal to discriminate against an employee for their sexual orientation or gender identity, and the EEOC will vigorously enforce those protections.”

Such alleged conduct violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination because of sex, including discrimination because of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender stereotypes. The EEOC filed suit in U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama (*EEOC v. Harmony Hospitality LLC*, case no. 1:24-cv-00357) and U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois (*EEOC v. LAS Hardwoods, Inc.*, Civil Action No. 1:24-cv-04899) after first attempting to reach pre-litigation settlements through its administrative conciliation process.

EEOC Birmingham District Director Bradley Anderson said, “It is illegal for an employer to fire an employee because of their sex. Title VII’s prohibition on sex discrimination bars discrimination based on an employee’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or departure from gender stereotypes.”

Marsha Rucker, regional attorney for the EEOC’s Birmingham District, said, “Federal law guarantees all employees equal employment opportunity regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. As the federal agency charged with enforcing Title VII, the EEOC will always work to protect Americans from unlawful sex-based discrimination.”

Amrith Kaur Aakre, district director of the Chicago District Office, added, “The EEOC is committed to making our country’s workplaces safe for all employees, regardless of their sexual orientation.”

“Just like other forms of harassment, workplace harassment because of an individual’s sexual orientation violates federal law,” said Gregory Gochanour, regional attorney for the EEOC’s Chicago District Office. “Our agency will hold

employers accountable if they allow this type of inexcusable conduct to occur.”

For more information on sex-based discrimination, please visit <https://www.eeoc.gov/sex-based-discrimination> (<https://www.eeoc.gov/sex-based-discrimination>).

The EEOC’s Birmingham District Office is responsible for processing charges of discrimination, administrative enforcement and the conduct of agency litigation in Alabama, Mississippi (except 17 northern counties) and the Florida Panhandle, with an Area Office in Jackson and a Local Office in Mobile.

The EEOC’s Chicago District Office is responsible for processing charges of discrimination, administrative enforcement and the conduct of agency litigation in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and North and South Dakota, with Area Offices in Milwaukee and Minneapolis.

The EEOC prevents and remedies unlawful employment discrimination and advances equal opportunity for all. More information is available at www.eeoc.gov (<http://www.eeoc.gov>). Stay connected with the latest EEOC news by subscribing to our [email updates](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new) (<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new>).

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