

Ex-Bloomberg Employee Joins EEOC's Pregnancy Suit

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Wednesday, Nov 14, 2007 --- A woman who hit Bloomberg LP with a civil rights complaint alleging that she was treated so badly at the media and financial services giant that she had to seek psychiatric care will drop that case and join three other women in the pregnancy discrimination suit that the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission brought against the company in September, according to her attorney.

Once former Bloomberg employee Monica Prestia's motion to intervene in the EEOC's case is granted, she will voluntarily dismiss the case she lodged against Bloomberg on June 25, Prestia's attorney, Richard Roth, said Wednesday. Roth added that both cases involved similar allegations.

"Bloomberg made these women feel alone," Roth said. "Now that they have found each other, the tables have turned."

Prestia began working for Bloomberg as an account executive in 1997, rose to become Bloomberg Television's Latin American Sales Manager, and was terminated on Dec. 31, 2006, according to the complaint filed in June. Around the time Prestia became pregnant with her first child in February 2005, her immediate supervisor began reporting to Carole Kaschak, who the plaintiff says was unable to have children.

By August 2005, Prestia's pregnancy was noticeable, and Kaschak began to show "extreme hostility" towards her, Prestia alleged.

"Whenever Kaschak approached plaintiff around that time period, Kaschak would subject plaintiff to ridicule, scorn, and anger for no apparent reason," according to the complaint. Kaschak wasn't hostile towards Prestia's non-pregnant fellow employees, nor was she hostile towards Prestia before her pregnancy became physically noticeable, the complaint says.

Prestia claimed that her treatment at the hands of Kaschak caused her severe stress and anxiety, which led her to take maternity leave early. When Prestia returned in February 2006, Kaschak's hostile behavior toward her got worse, according to the complaint.

Kaschak wouldn't respond to or even look at Prestia, and exhibited "severe outward antagonism" toward her, the suit says.

Kaschak met with the plaintiff at Bloomberg's human resources department in March 2006, and Prestia complained that she was being singled out for

abuse because of her pregnancy and her newborn, according to Prestia. A woman named Pria Varindani of Bloomberg's HR department pledged to investigate Prestia's allegations, but Prestia never heard any more about the promised investigation, according to the complaint. Prestia had an attorney send correspondence to Bloomberg, requesting that Prestia no longer be required to report to Kaschak and that Kaschak be given anti-discrimination training, the complaint says.

Later in March 2006, Prestia received the worst performance review of her career and was told that her salary would not increase in the upcoming year, though it had in the past, and that the number of "certificates" (an additional form of compensation) would decrease, according to the complaint.

In May, as a result of the treatment she allegedly received at Bloomberg, Prestia sought psychiatric care and was diagnosed with major depression, which caused her to take disability leave in June 2006, the complaint says. Prestia was terminated on Dec. 31, 2006, and around that time, Kaschak was demoted, the lawsuit claims.

Bloomberg spokesperson Judith Czelusniak said Wednesday that the company treated its employees well, and was particularly generous with respect to doling out benefits to families.

"The company feels strongly that the EEOC allegations are unfounded," Czelusniak said.

Monica Prestia is represented by the Roth Law Firm PLLC.

The other three intervenor plaintiffs in the EEOC case are represented by Dealy & Silberstein LLP.

Bloomberg is represented by Willkie Farr & Gallagher.

The case is EEOC v. Bloomberg LP, case number 07-8383, in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.