

Bloomberg Law News 2024-04-24T13:55:3789845409-04:00

Former United Way Executive Files Sexual Harassment Lawsuit (1)

By Riddhi Setty 2024-04-24T11:59:44000-04:00

- Former executive said she faced harassment, retaliation
- UWW CEO retired shortly after harassment investigation

United Way Worldwide allowed a male official to sexually harass a female executive and then unlawfully fired her after she complained, according to a lawsuit filed Wednesday in a Virginia state court.

Lisa Bowman, the nonprofit's former executive vice president and chief marketing and communications officer, [alleged](#) that a colleague, William Browning, repeatedly leered at her, made inappropriate comments about her appearance, and behaved in an intimidating manner.

After complaining about Browning's behavior toward her and other women, Bowman was told, "You and your girls need to get along with him," according to the complaint filed in an Alexandria, Va., circuit court. She said she experienced retaliation that included reduced resources for her team, a lower performance rating, and termination.

"I lost my job for following policy and doing what I was supposed to do," Bowman said at a press conference in Alexandria on Wednesday. "Our policy stated, and I quote, 'All supervisors of United Way Worldwide are required to immediately report any incident of potentially harassing discriminatory or retaliatory conduct of which they become aware. Failure to immediately report such conduct is grounds for discipline up to and including termination of employment.'"

The lawsuit alleges violations of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and seeks \$12 million in compensation, as well as \$30,000 in damages and attorneys' fees.

"After I spoke out, more than 20 women stepped forward telling the board that they too had experienced or witnessed this during their tenure at the organization," said Bowman. "One of the women came forward with allegations of having been assaulted."

United Way has previously been accused of permitting sexual harassment of female executives. Its former CEO, Brian Gallagher, [resigned](#) in 2021 amid those allegations.

United Way didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on the newly filed lawsuit.

The case is [Bowman v. United Way Worldwide](#), Va. Cir. Ct., Docket Number Unavailable, complaint 4/24/24 .

(Updated with additional reporting throughout and statements from Bowman.)

To contact the reporter on this story: Riddhi Setty in Washington at rsetty@bloombergindustry.com

To contact the editors responsible for this story: Jay-Anne B. Casuga at jcasuga@bloomberglaw.com; Rebekah Mintzer at rmintzer@bloombergindustry.com

Related Documents

[Complaint](#)