


Avon fired executive after she revealed high-risk pregnancy: suit

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Avon fired a female executive less than a month into her new job after she asked to work from home temporarily because of a high-risk pregnancy, according to a lawsuit. 

The door-to-door cosmetics giant — which boasts in its marketing about standing “above all, for women” — canned its new global head of procurement in February just days after she disclosed her pregnancy to her boss, according to the suit filed Tuesday in Manhattan federal court.

Caroline Ruiz claims that three weeks into her new job in late January, she began to experience heavy bleeding and was rushed to the emergency room. Doctors told her there was “an exceedingly high likelihood that she would suffer a miscarriage,” according to the suit.

Against her doctor’s recommendation and despite continued physical pain, Ruiz came into work at Avon’s Manhattan offices the following week — only to be confronted the next day by her boss, Raj Nath, over unspecified “performance issues,” according to the suit.

When Ruiz told Nath at the meeting that she was concerned she might have a miscarriage that week, Nath responded, “Your health isn’t my concern, but your performance is,” the suit alleges.

That’s despite the fact that Avon employees — including Nath — “routinely worked from home or away from the office,” according to the suit.

Ruiz then spent an entire weekend preparing a presentation for the following week because she was “determined to do a good job,” the suit says.

But when Ruiz, against doctor’s orders, showed up to the office on Monday, Feb. 5, she was called into a meeting with senior Avon exec Jacklyn Marcus and abruptly fired for “performance deficiencies,” the suit says.

The “proximity between plaintiff’s hospital stay, request for a day off and to work from home, coupled with her disclosure of her high-risk pregnancy undeniably create an inference of discrimination,” according to the complaint.

The suit likewise jabs Avon for a dearth of women in senior management roles — just 27 percent — despite its “champion of women’ mantra.”

Avon did not immediately respond for comment.

Prior to Avon, Ruiz worked for Estee Lauder as an executive in charge of global packaging and procurement. She was also an executive for Japanese beauty company Shiseido.

In 2015, Avon spun off its North American business into a limited liability company controlled by Cerberus Capital Management, the buyout firm run by billionaire Steve Feinberg.

In February, Avon named its first male CEO in two decades, Jan Zijderveld.