

Deutsche Bank accused of illegally firing Sikh woman who had brain tumor

 1.next.westlaw.com/Document/I1ce4f4c04c1211e9ad1cdd1f5d82ac56/View/FullText.html

(Reuters) - Deutsche Bank AG was sued on Thursday by a Sikh woman who claims she was fired from her job as a program manager for complaining about discrimination, after she had taken a six-month leave following surgery for a brain tumor.

Rajnarind Kaur said she was fired in October 2018, ending nearly 8-1/2 years of employment, after her boss Sandro Boeri began baselessly painting her as a "mismatch" in response to her complaints to him and to human resources about discrimination.

She also said her case was not isolated, and that while she was on medical leave Deutsche Bank forced out the other two minority employees on Boeri's six-person team - - an Asian woman and a black man -- because they were also deemed a "mismatch."

Deutsche Bank spokesman Troy Gravitt declined to comment. The bank's lawyers on the case could not immediately be located.

David Gottlieb and Kenneth Walsh of the Wigdor law firm represent Kaur. Gottlieb had no immediate comment.

The lawsuit filed in Manhattan federal court seeks compensatory and punitive damages for alleged violations of the federal Family Medical Leave Act, and New York state and city human rights laws.

She alleged retaliation for her whistleblowing about alleged discrimination, and discrimination against her on the basis of disability, national origin, ethnicity or color. The complaint did not detail Kaur's compensation.

Major banks are often targets of lawsuits by whistleblowers who claim their careers were derailed because they came forward.

In 2016, Deutsche Bank agreed to settle sex discrimination and wrongful termination allegations by Shivani Mathur, its former global head of economic resources, who was fired after whistleblowing related to the alleged rigging by many banks of the Libor interest rate benchmark.

Kaur said she began working in 2016 in Deutsche Bank's group audit department, and in her first annual review there won praise for her performance and "'can do' positive and pragmatic approach," despite her lack of formal training as an auditor.

But she said her situation worsened after Boeri became her boss in January 2017, and she told him that April about medical problems that would lead to her July 2017 surgery.

She said Boeri branded her a "mismatch" and faulted her supposed "knowledge gap" from her lack of formal training.

Kaur said after she returned to work in January 2018, Boeri slashed her responsibilities and told other employees not to give her work, marginalizing her from the rest of the company and depriving her of a chance to succeed.

She also said she began complaining about discrimination by the bank toward other workers based on ethnicity, national origin or race, including in a training course that featured the character "Mr. Khan" and painted South Asians as "prone" to terrorism-related fraud.

Kaur said nothing was done, and that on Oct. 22, 2018, one month after she had asked in-house lawyers what her next steps should be, Boeri fired her, citing "integrity issues" and that "this isn't working out."

Kaur said an HR official later told her that Boeri believed she lacked "the appropriate skillset," and that there were concerns about her "performance and conduct related issues."

The case is Kaur v. Deutsche Bank AG et al, U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York, No. 19-02505.

For Kaur: David Gottlieb and Kenneth Walsh of the Wigdor law firm

For Deutsche Bank: Not available