

Goldman Sachs VP Fired After Being Told He 'Sounds Too Gay': Suit

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NEW YORK — A former Goldman Sachs executive was fired after he complained about homophobic harassment from his supervisors at the prestige Wall Street firm, a new lawsuit says.

William Littleton, once one of Goldman's most senior gay employees, lost his job months after he reported his colleagues' persistent teasing about his sexuality, according to the complaint filed Wednesday in Manhattan Supreme Court. Other employees allegedly remarked that he "sounds too gay" and that he missed work because of a post-Pride parade hangover.

Littleton was axed despite glowing reviews from other employees — including one of the managers who allegedly harassed him, the lawsuit says.

The case is just one example of how a major financial institution with few LGBT executives has failed to take discrimination against its gay employees seriously, according to the complaint.

"Wall Street continues to struggle to create an environment that is inclusive and accepting of LGBTQ+ employees," David E. Gottlieb, a partner at the law firm Wigdor LLP who is handling the case, said in a statement. "Mr. Littleton's experiences demonstrate that Goldman Sachs in particular has failed to embrace this important responsibility."

A Goldman Sachs official slammed the suit as meritless.

"Goldman Sachs has a sustained and proven commitment to diversity, and we are proud of the vibrant and diverse LGBTQ community at the firm. We strongly encourage all of our employees to bring their authentic selves to work, because it makes us a better firm," Patrick J. Scanlan, Goldman's vice president of corporate communications, said in an email. "This suit is without merit and we plan to defend ourselves against these baseless claims."

Littleton started working as an analyst at Goldman right after he graduated college in 2010, the complaint says. He became a rising star and was promoted to vice president at age 27, overseeing a team that handled a \$13 billion portfolio, according to the suit.

But that didn't stop his colleagues from allegedly lobbing homophobic remarks at him. In March 2014, the complaint says, he heard that he had been excluded from a conference call because the moderator thought that "he sounds too gay."

When Littleton was out of the office the Monday after the city's LGBT Pride parade in June 2015, one of his bosses, Rachel Schnoll, said that he "must be hungover from pride festivities," the suit says. She made the remark even though Littleton had told his supervisor, Sirion Skulpone, that he would be absent, according to the complaint.

In May 2016, Littleton and Skulpone got into a dispute over her sharing an unfinished analysis of his with a partner at Goldman, the suit says. When Littleton tried to clear the air, Skulpone allegedly told him, "What's wrong with you? Do you act this way because you're gay?"

Littleton complained about the alleged harassment to Goldman's Employee Relations office in May 2018, but the office found the allegations unsubstantiated after Schnoll and Skulpone denied making comments about his sexuality, according to the lawsuit.

Later that year, the two managers told Littleton he was being fired because of "performance issues" — even though his peers praised him as "driven" and "extremely knowledgeable," the complaint says.

"In short, Mr. Littleton was retaliated against for finally having the courage to pursue his complaints of discrimination internally with Goldman's (Employee Relations)," the complaint reads.

The lawsuit notes that just 1 percent of Goldman's 500 partners are LGBT and that the company's LGBT Network does not have formal initiatives that advocate for gay employees.