

Charter NY1 plaintiffs protest alleged arbitration move

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STAMFORD — The seven women who have sued cable giant Charter Communications for [alleged gender discrimination](#) at its Spectrum News NY1 channel said in an open letter Tuesday that they objected to the company’s bid to force three of them to settle out of court.

In their letter to Charter CEO and Chairman Tom Rutledge, the seven women said they objected to Charter’s attempt to force the claims of NY1 journalist Vivian Lee and two of her former colleagues, Thalia Perez and Michelle Greenstein, out of court and into a “private, secretive arbitration forum.” They argued that forced-arbitration agreements unfairly prohibit employees from using the courts and that arbitrations’ private settings severely limit claimants’ rights.

“It is completely hypocritical to ask your viewers to believe that Charter is committed to empowering the public with information, when you conceal these claims behind closed doors,” the plaintiffs wrote in the letter. “Ms. Lee, Ms. Perez and Ms. Greenstein should be entitled to have their claims heard in court — with the fair and impartial processes which govern such proceedings — with the rest of us.”

In a court filing last week, Bettina Plevan, one of the attorneys representing Charter, said the company was moving to “compel” arbitration because she said Perez and Greenstein had agreed to arbitrate their claims.

At the same time, she said the company was seeking the same venue for Lee’s claims. An arbitration agreement was outlined in Lee’s contract, according to Plevan.

Charter, which took over NY1 through its \$55 billion acquisition of Time Warner Cable in 2016, has denied the plaintiffs’ allegations, which are outlined in two lawsuits filed in the past two months.

“As we have previously said, we take these allegations seriously, but these lawsuits have no merit,” Charter said in a statement Tuesday. “We plan to defend against these accusations. We have no additional comment at this time.”

Manhattan-based Wigdor LLP, which is representing the seven plaintiffs, also represented an executive of Stamford-based hedge fund Point72 Asset Management in a similar complaint, which [ended up going to arbitration](#) nearly a year ago.

In the Point72 case, plaintiff Lauren Bonner and the firm agreed to settle the case out of court, after the hedge fund’s lawyers had fought to move it to arbitration.

Filed last month in federal court, Greenstein and Perez’s lawsuit accuses the station of discriminating against and later firing them because they were in their 40s and had become pregnant.

Their complaint followed the complaint [filed in June](#) by Lee, an 11-year NY1 veteran, and four other female journalists at NY1 who are older than 40.

Among NY1’s on-air talent, 57 percent are women, 55 percent are older than 40 and 25 percent are

women older than 40, according to Charter data.