

Fired Recording Academy Chief Deborah Dugan Adds Retaliation Charges To Her EEOC Claims

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Deborah Dugan, the Recording Academy president and CEO who was formally fired Monday by the organization, has added new charges of retaliation and discrimination to the EEOC complaint she filed in January.

The original complaint accused Academy officials of sexual harassment, gender bias and “egregious conflicts of interest, improper self-dealing by board members, and voting irregularities with respect to nominations for Grammy Awards,” all of which she claimed, were “made possible by the ‘boys’ club’ mentality and approach to governance at the Academy.”

Her new allegations claim that since she filed her original complaint on January 21, “the Academy has subjected her to repeated, ongoing and egregious retaliation” after conducting a “bogus investigation” of her charges.

Dugan, who was hired last May, was placed on administrative leave January 16 – 10 days before the Grammy Awards – “In light of concerns raised to the Recording Academy Board of Trustees, including a formal allegation of misconduct by a senior female member of the Recording Academy team.” Dugan was formally fired yesterday.

“The decision to terminate Ms. Dugan’s employment was a blatant act of retaliation,” she says in the supplemental complaint she filed today with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. “Worse, it is a message to women and minorities of all walks of life that the Academy is more interested in protecting itself than remedying sexual harassment, discrimination and voting irregularities, and that anyone who dares to stand against the Academy’s unlawful conduct will be harshly punished.”

Her latest claim also asserts that less than two weeks after she filed her original complaint, the Academy sued her, “asserting outrageous, false and frivolous allegations.” That suit was filed on behalf of the Academy by the Proskauer Rose law firm, which Dugan now says “has a despicable history of bringing malicious and retaliatory suits against women and other minorities who dare to speak out against sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace. The suit is completely without merit.”

On February 3, the Academy sued Dugan by filing a Statement of Claim against her with the American Arbitration Association, which alleged that she breached her employment contract and fiduciary duties, and improperly accessed Academy information.

“To be clear, the AAA Complaint is completely and utterly meritless and was filed for the sole purpose of further retaliating against Ms. Dugan,” she said in her latest complaint. “The AAA Complaint is a farce and its filing was clearly orchestrated by Proskauer” and Harvey Mason, the chair of the Academy’s board and interim president and CEO, “with the hope that Ms. Dugan would feel threatened and intimidated and decide to drop her claims against the Academy.”

“Indeed, the very day after the AAA Complaint was filed,” she claims, “Mr. Mason sent Ms. Dugan a letter in which he agreed to lift the veil of confidentiality over any arbitration proceedings. The threat was clear: if Ms. Dugan would not agree to stay silent, the Academy would further defame and disparage her and destroy her reputation with false and malicious lies. Ms. Dugan will not succumb to such threats and has agreed to have a public arbitration.”

“The real reason that Ms. Dugan has been terminated is clear: she was willing to stand up and fight against the Academy’s boys’ club environment, sexual harassment, gender and race discrimination, self-dealing, conflicts of interest and award nomination voting irregularities, among other misogynistic misconduct,” she said in her supplemental complaint.

The Academy has vehemently denied all of her allegations, with Recording Academy chair and interim CEO Harvey Mason Jr claiming she demanded “millions of dollars” to withdraw her complaints – an allegation she has denied.

Yesterday, after her firing, Mason said: “After weighing all of the evidence from two independent investigations, the Board of Trustees of the Recording Academy voted to terminate Ms. Dugan from her role as President/CEO,” adding that as part of its “search for a new leader... “we will look carefully to see where the last one led us astray and make any necessary changes going forward.”