


SoulCycle accused of 'blatant pregnancy discrimination' by former employee

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SoulCycle has been accused of “blatant pregnancy discrimination and retaliation”, in a new lawsuit filed by former employee Jordan Kafenbaum.

The former senior director of instructor programming and talent management says she was fired by the New York-based spin brand in April 2020, just 32 days after giving birth and only four weeks into her maternity leave.

The charges filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, allege that she was in line for a promotion before eventually being fired during the pandemic, according to *Forbes*.

In charge of over 400 instructors before losing her job, Kafenbaum states that CPO Adrienne Gemperle announced her pregnancy in front of more than 100 employees at a conference while talking about a newly launched paternity leave policy.

It claims that Gemperle told staff: “Jordan Kafenbaum’s mother actually just called to thank me for changing our policy because when we did Jordan finally got pregnant!”

According to the lawsuit, the CPO called the comment a joke when Kafenbaum raised her grievances.

It then states that she was excluded from big meetings and was told she would be moved into a new position which she claimed was a demotion.

Kafenbaum’s complaint says she was told her termination was as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, but states that other inconsistent excuses were offered at the time the decision was made, such as “department re-organisation, performance concerns, position elimination”.

The complaint also alleges that the former SoulCycle CEO Melanie Whelan previously told an employee that “paternity leave is for pussies” in August 2019.

To bolster her claims, Kafenbaum’s lawsuit points to the fact that three other people were let go shortly after or before giving birth in 2020.

A spokesperson for SoulPsyche told *Refinery29*: "The company strongly disagrees with the accusations contained in Kafenbaum's claim and intends to vigorously defend itself."

They added: "Ms. Kafenbaum was unfortunately laid off as part of a necessary restructuring due to the impact of COVID-19. She was paid for the entirety of her maternity leave and offered severance."

The lawsuit comes after two instructors quit the company over concerns it did not practice the inclusion and equality they say it preached externally.

Publicly denouncing the company on Instagram in July, Soeuraya Wilson said: "I can no longer allow my image to be used by a company that performs its activism when it is convenient for their bottom line or their seasonal campaign." While Mary Kate Hurlbutt echoed her views in another recent post.

The Independent has contacted SoulCycle for comment.