

Wigdor LLP Represents Former J. Crew General Counsel in Disability Discrimination and Retaliation Lawsuit

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On Thursday, December 16, 2021, Wigdor LLP filed a disability discrimination and retaliation lawsuit in the Southern District of New York against J. Crew Group, LLC (“J. Crew”) on behalf of Maria DiLorenzo, the company’s former Senior Vice President, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary. Also named Defendants in the lawsuit are Michael Nicholson and Libby Wadle, J. Crew’s Chief Operating Officer and Chief Executive Officer, respectively.

As set forth in the lawsuit, Ms. DiLorenzo successfully led J. Crew’s legal team through the company’s debt restructuring and a Chapter 11 bankruptcy. However, in June 2020 — in the middle of the bankruptcy proceedings — Ms. DiLorenzo suffered Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss, a disabling medical condition that not only caused her to become deaf in her right ear, but also caused her to develop vertigo and tinnitus, among other symptoms.

Despite her disability, Ms. DiLorenzo continued to perform well in her job, the lawsuit states; J. Crew emerged from bankruptcy in less than six months and was able to significantly lighten its debt load by converting more than \$1.6 billion of debt into stock. Nevertheless, Ms. DiLorenzo needed simple, reasonable accommodations to continue performing her job.

As alleged, J. Crew and its senior executives, including Ms. Wadle and Mr. Nicholson, did not care. They forced Ms. DiLorenzo to work through her medical leave after cochlear implant surgery and refused to engage with her about her accommodation requests, as required by law, according to the lawsuit. Moreover, Defendants humiliated Ms. DiLorenzo because of her condition, physically segregating her from her colleagues during a board meeting so that she could not hear what was going on, as alleged.

As set forth in the Complaint, Ms. DiLorenzo complained to Mr. Nicholson and Human Resources about the way she was treated at the board meeting. Her decision to protest Defendants’ unlawful conduct and assert her rights only made things worse, as alleged.

A few short months later, on November 30, 2021, J. Crew unlawfully fired Ms. DiLorenzo without any substantive reason, claiming that it was going in a “different direction,” the lawsuit alleges. Mr. Nicholson admitted that he did not have any issues with her performance and praised her for being a “really awesome partner,” the lawsuit states.

Mr. Nicholson told Ms. DiLorenzo that she would remain General Counsel and continue her duties until December 31, 2021, according to the Complaint. Ms. DiLorenzo protested in writing that she was the victim of discrimination and retaliation on December 7, 2021, and protested in writing through counsel a

few days later, the lawsuit states. J. Crew then promptly retaliated against Ms. DiLorenzo by terminating her employment early because she “ha[d] now asserted claims against the Company,” the lawsuit alleges.

Ms. DiLorenzo is represented by Wigdor LLP Founding Partner [Douglas H. Wigdor](#) and Partner [Valdi Licul](#).

Statement from Valdi Licul, Partner at Wigdor LLP:

“J. Crew wants to reinvent itself post-bankruptcy as a modern, inclusive brand, but the way it treated Ms. DiLorenzo after she became disabled represents the complete antithesis of those ideals. This is precisely why Congress enacted the ADA and the FMLA decades ago: to protect individuals with disabilities from workplace discrimination and abuse. We look forward to aggressively protecting Ms. DiLorenzo’s rights during one of the most challenging times in her life.”

[Read the Full Complaint Here](#)

Law360

“J. Crew GC Says She Was Belittled, Fired After Hearing Loss”

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Reuters

“Top lawyer sues J. Crew, saying she was fired after losing hearing”

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Bloomberg

“Ex-J. Crew Lawyer Claims She Was Fired Over Hearing Loss”

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Daily Mail

“J. Crew corporate lawyer who helped the struggling preppy clothing brand dig out of \$1.6 billion in debt is suing after she claims she was mocked and fired after going deaf in one ear”

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Corporate Counsel

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