

Former Chief Of Staff To WeWork's Ex-Ceo Adam Neumann Files Class Action Pregnancy And Gender Discrimination Complaint

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On October 31, 2019, Wigdor LLP filed a Class Action Complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC") on behalf of Medina Bardhi, former Chief of Staff to embattled and recently ousted WeWork CEO Adam Neumann, alleging claims of pregnancy discrimination, gender discrimination, unequal pay, and retaliation against WeWork, Mr. Neumann and WeWork's Chief Legal Officer Jennifer Berrent. Ms. Bardhi has filed the complaint on behalf of herself and a class of similarly situated female WeWork employees.

As alleged, during Ms. Bardhi's more than five years at WeWork, she gave birth to two children while serving as Mr. Neumann's Chief of Staff. Like clockwork, each time Ms. Bardhi returned to work following her maternity leave, WeWork's management transparently and systematically marginalized and discriminated against her by drastically and materially reducing her role and/or demoting her outright, according to the Class Action Complaint. Moreover, as alleged, each time Ms. Bardhi disclosed her pregnancy to Mr. Neumann, WeWork began to search for a permanent replacement for Ms. Bardhi (and not merely temporary coverage while she was on legally protected leave), and ultimately replaced her with less-experienced and under-qualified males.

The Class Action Complaint also alleges that Mr. Neumann repeatedly disparaged and characterized Ms. Bardhi's maternity leave as "retirement" and "vacation" – comments that were often made in the presence of other WeWork executives as well as fellow pregnant employees or new mothers, and which clearly demonstrated Mr. Neumann's discriminatory attitude towards women who become pregnant and take maternity leave while employed at WeWork.

Ms. Bardhi also alleges that WeWork's female employees are systematically paid less than male employees despite performing the same or substantially same jobs, and in fact, a male employee who replaced Ms. Bardhi as Mr. Neumann's Chief of Staff while she was on maternity leave received a salary that was nearly three times as much as Ms. Bardhi was earning for performing the same position.

Ms. Bardhi was terminated on October 2, 2019 just weeks after she raised concerns to multiple WeWork executives of unlawful discrimination she had experienced on the basis of her pregnancy and maternity leave.

Finally, the Class Action Complaint alleges that WeWork systematically pays women less than equally or lesser-qualified male peers, and harbors sustained discriminatory bias and retaliatory animus against

female employees who become pregnant, take maternity leave, and/or complain about gender-based discrimination.

The Class Action Complaint requests that the EEOC investigate not only Ms. Bardhi's claims, but that of other similarly situated female WeWork workers, some of whom are referenced in the filed complaint as having themselves endured gender and pregnancy discrimination, gender-based pay disparity, and retaliation for complaining about these unlawful and discriminatory practices.

A former chief of staff to WeWork co-founder Adam Neumann says in a new complaint that she was repeatedly punished after she became pregnant, saying she couldn't go along on business trips "due to his penchant for bringing marijuana on chartered flights" <https://t.co/INylq8WFWy> – The New York Times (@nytimes) [October 31, 2019](#)

Ms. Bardhi and the Proposed Class are represented by Wigdor LLP Founding Partner [Douglas H. Wigdor](#), Partners [Jeanne M. Christensen](#) and [Lawrence M. Pearson](#).

"It is astonishing that WeWork could reward Adam Neumann's blatant sexist behavior with a staggering and unprecedented golden parachute worth over a reported \$1 Billion, while the Company has subjected Ms. Bardhi and other women to repeated and systematic marginalization, lesser pay than their male colleagues, and retaliation for having the courage to raise legitimate complaints of gender and pregnancy discrimination. Our hope is that this class action complaint will send a loud and clear message to WeWork and other startups that pregnant women cannot be forced out of their jobs, that women must be paid fairly and afforded equal opportunities, and that you cannot retaliate against any person who voices a complaint of discrimination."

[Read the Full Class Action Complaint Here](#)

The New York Times

"WeWork's Ousted C.E.O. Adam Neumann Is Accused of Pregnancy Discrimination"

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CNBC

"Ex-WeWork CEO accused of gender discrimination, smoking marijuana in front of pregnant staffer"

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ABC News

"WeWork hit with EEOC complaint alleging gender discrimination"

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CNN

"WeWork and its ousted CEO accused of pregnancy discrimination"

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Business Insider

"Adam Neumann demoted his chief of staff for being pregnant, according to a new complaint against the ousted CEO and WeWork"

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Financial Times

"Former chief of staff to WeWork founder claims discrimination"

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BBC

"WeWork ex-boss had 'penchant to smoke marijuana'"

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The Guardian

"WeWork's ex-CEO accused of pregnancy discrimination by former chief of staff"

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Fast Company

"WeWork's Adam Neumann has now been accused of pregnancy discrimination"

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New York Magazine

"Adam Neumann's Time at WeWork Is Over, But His Troubles Aren't"

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Law360

"WeWork, Ex-CEO Biased Vs. Pregnant Women, EEOC Told"

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New York Business Journal

"Ousted WeWork CEO sued by former chief of staff for pregnancy discrimination"

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The Washington Post

"WeWork and ex-CEO Neumann accused of pregnancy discrimination by former employee"

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CBS News

"WeWork and former CEO Adam Neumann accused of gender discrimination"

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TIME

"WeWork's Ex-CEO Faces Pregnancy Discrimination Complaint"

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Reuters

"WeWork, former CEO Adam Neumann accused of pregnancy discrimination"

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Forbes

"Former WeWork Staffer Sues Ousted CEO Adam Neumann For Pregnancy Discrimination"

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VICE

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The Daily Beast

"WeWork CEO's Chief of Staff Alleges Gender Discrimination in New Lawsuit"

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Gizmodo

"WeWork, Former CEO Adam Neumann Accused of Rampant Pregnancy and Gender Discrimination"

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The Hill

"Former WeWork employee alleges pattern of discrimination against women"

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Daily Mail

"WeWork CEO Adam Neumann's chief of staff was fired after he 'called her maternity leave a vacation and she stopped traveling on his plane because he smoked marijuana'"

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