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Dentons Ignored Managing Director's Harassment, Suit Says

By **Braden Campbell**

Law360 (June 11, 2018, 4:52 PM EDT) -- Dentons ignored a female business development specialist who complained that the male managing director of the firm's venture technology group repeatedly groped her and hit on her using graphic come-ons, according to a suit filed Monday in New York state court.

Krunali Parekh told the New York State Supreme Court for New York County that instead of protecting her, the firm violated state and city civil rights laws by dissuading her from talking about the harassment she says she faced from Alton Delane, her direct boss. She also names Delane, who is not an attorney, as a defendant.

"Ms. Parekh hopes to send a message to not only Dentons, but to all law firms, that the legal profession must embrace women as equals and not treat them as objects," the complaint said. "Moreover, the public — including Dentons' wealthy corporate clients — should demand genuine leadership and accountability from the legal profession."

Parekh, who develops material for the firm's corporate and venture technology practice groups and manages various marketplace campaigns, says Delane has been harassing her since last fall.

She claims Delane followed her from a networking event to a nearby bar in September, flirting with her and grabbing her before he became "so inebriated that he lost consciousness" in the bar. She reported this incident to her supervisor in the corporate group, but the supervisor "did nothing to address or escalate" her complaint, she says.

Parekh claims Delane continued to harass her over the next several months and that she complained again after Delane allegedly called her repeatedly following an April client event. She claims human resources officials called her to a meeting at which they told her not to discuss her allegations against Delane with anyone, which she says she took as the firm trying to silence her. She told the officials she would not pursue her complaint further out of fear "Dentons did not want to deal with Mr. Delane's behavior or address her concerns," the complaint said.

Parekh further claims that in May, Delane told her he loved her and described intimate acts he wanted to perform with her. The firm interviewed other workers about Delane earlier this month after Parekh filed a complaint through her attorney, telling these witnesses not to speak to her or anyone else, she claims.

The complaint claims Dentons frames itself as a "leader" in gender equality, but falls short of this mark.

"Law firms such as Dentons should set an example for how to provide a safe workplace for women," said Wigdor LLP attorney David Gottlieb, who represents Parekh. "It is unfortunate that Dentons has failed to be a leader in this #MeToo era, and has instead attempted to silence women who raise

harassment complaints and intimidate witnesses who support those women.”

A firm spokesperson said Monday that the firm is “deeply troubled” by the allegations, which it described as “contrary to our values and culture of respect.”

“We take any concern about discrimination or unfair treatment seriously,” the spokesperson said. “The firm is committed to a workplace free from discrimination and harassment, and to fostering an inclusive and diverse culture.”

Delane has been on leave since the firm learned “of the the detailed allegations through threatened litigation,” and the firm is investigating Parekh's claims, according to the spokesperson.

Parekh’s suit alleges discrimination under the New York State Human Rights Law and New York City Human Rights Law. She has filed a federal charge with the [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#), she said.

Parekh is represented by David Gottlieb and Hilary Orzick of Wigdor LLP.

Counsel information for Dentons was not available Monday.

The case is Krunali Parekh v. Dentons US LLP et al., in the New York State Supreme Court for the County of New York. The case number was not available.

--Editing by Alanna Weissman.