

Former Avon Employee Claims She Was Fired for Being Pregnant

 [law.com/newyorklawjournal/2018/10/03/former-avon-employee-claims-she-was-fired-for-being-pregnant](https://www.law.com/newyorklawjournal/2018/10/03/former-avon-employee-claims-she-was-fired-for-being-pregnant)

By Colby Hamilton

Avon's next call will need to be to its attorneys after an employee filed a wrongful termination suit against the women's beauty and personal care products company Wednesday, claiming the company's public posture of female empowerment belies its discriminatory practices internally.

Caroline Ruiz's claims go beyond claiming she was illegally fired shortly after alerting her boss, who was male, that she was enduring a high-risk pregnancy that required time away from the office. Her complaint paints Avon as perpetuating a false image of itself as a champion for and of women, despite its leadership consisting largely of men whose policies directly and negatively impacted her.

In a statement, her attorney, Wigdor LLP partner Jeanne Christensen, rhetorically asked what the all-male leadership at Avon would do to right this wrong against a female employee. According to the complaint, Avon's top corporate leadership are all white males.

"Avon boasts that it is a company dedicated to empowering women. But as alleged in the complaint, Avon abhorrently fired our client simply because she disclosed her pregnancy," Christensen said. "Such overt discrimination is intolerable by any company, but is even more disturbing when the company is Avon—an alleged leader for women."

According to the complaint, Ruiz received a right to sue notice from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in August. Ruiz came to work at Avon in January 2018. Toward the end of that same month, she says she was rushed to the emergency room where she was told she was considered at high risk of suffering a miscarriage. Her doctor recommended a week of bed rest.

After taking a couple days off, Ruiz said she returned to work, despite experiencing continued medical issues, to inform Avon's human resources that she was both pregnant and facing medical concerns. A day later she says she was "bombarded" with "fabricated 'performances issues'" from her manager. She claims it was the first time she'd heard any criticism over her performance, and she asked for guidance on what the specific issues were.

When she reiterated her recently realized health issues to management at the time, Ruiz says she was told by her manager that her health wasn't his concern—"but your performance is."

Shortly after communicating with her manager about her medical situation as well as her performance, Ruiz says she was denied a request to work remotely—something she claims was a widespread and regular practice among her co-workers. Days later, after returning to

work after a weekend, Ruiz said she was unexpectedly called into the office of a separate vice president's office and told she was terminated immediately over "performance deficiencies." She'd worked for the company for less than four weeks.

A spokeswoman for Avon declined to comment on the suit.

Ruiz brought 10 causes of action against the company, under both the federal Pregnancy Discrimination Act, as well as New York state and city human rights laws.