


Employee fired after revealing high-risk pregnancy to boss

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IN JANUARY, mum-to-be Caroline Ruiz was rushed to hospital after experiencing heavy bleeding.

There, she received devastating news — she had “an exceedingly high likelihood” of suffering a miscarriage.

Doctors advised her to rest and to steer clear of work.

But Ms Ruiz had only started a new position as global head of procurement at cosmetics giant Avon three weeks beforehand, and didn’t want to take time off so soon into a new role.

She returned to work the following week, against medical advice and in physical pain.

The day after her return to work, boss Raj Nath confronted her over unspecified “performance issues”.

During that meeting, Ms Ruiz told her boss about her diagnosis.

According to court documents filed on Tuesday in New York, he allegedly responded by saying: “Your health isn’t my concern, but your performance is.”

However, the *New York Post* reported Avon workers, including Mr Nath himself, regularly worked from home or away from the office.

After that meeting, Ms Ruiz spent the weekend preparing for a presentation which was due the following week, because she was “determined to do a good job”, court documents claimed.

But when she went in to work on February 5, she was sacked by senior Avon executive Jacklyn Marcus, who again cited “performance issues”.

Ms Ruiz claims Avon, which markets itself as being “above all, for women”, discriminated against her and “intentionally and recklessly” put her health at risk.

In a statement provided to *Jezebel*, Ms Ruiz’s lawyer Jeanne Christensen said Avon “abhorrently fired our client simply because she disclosed her pregnancy. Such overt discrimination is intolerable by any company, but is even more disturbing when the company is Avon — an alleged leader for women.”

However, an Avon spokesperson denied Ms Ruiz’s claims in a statement provided to the publication, and said it was “company policy” not to comment on legal matters.

“We are very proud of our reputation as ‘the company for women’ and our strong and ongoing commitment to empowering women since our founding over 130 years ago,” the statement reads.

“As a pre-eminent employer of women, with a workforce comprised of more than two-thirds women, we understand the particular needs working mothers have, and we are committed to supporting them before, during and after maternity leave.”

However, legal documents filed on behalf of Ms Ruiz also criticise the company for having just 27 per cent of women in management roles.

Earlier this year, Avon announced it would permanently leave Australian and New Zealand shores by the end of 2018, leaving 220 staff members and more than 21,400 representatives in the lurch.

The decision was made “as part of the company’s strategy to return Avon to long-term sustainable profitable growth”.

Founded in New York in 1886, the cosmetics company is famous for its direct-selling method.

It has branches around the globe, and reached Australia in 1963.

In 2016 the company had annual worldwide sales of \$US5.7 billion — but the brand has struggled with plummeting sales for the past five years.

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