

WeWork's Adam Neumann is accused of pregnancy discrimination

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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'

- **Medina Bardhi filed a class action complaint in New York with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on Thursday**
- **She has accused WeWork's Adam Neumann of pregnancy discrimination**
- **Bardhi claims she was demoted after returning from maternity leave and later fired for complaining to executives**
- **She claims the discrimination started after she stopped traveling with Neumann on work trips because he smoked marijuana on his plane**
- **Bardhi also alleges that Neumann referred to her maternity leave as 'retirement' and 'vacation'**
- **WeWork said in a statement that they would vigorously defend the allegations in the lawsuit and they have a zero tolerance for discrimination**

WeWork's ousted CEO Adam Neumann is being sued for pregnancy discrimination after his former chief of staff claimed she was demoted after giving birth and later fired when she raised her concerns to executives.

Medina Bardhi filed a class action complaint in New York with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on Thursday alleging that Neumann discriminated against her repeatedly in the five years she worked at WeWork as his chief of staff.

She says in the complaint, obtained by DailyMail.com, that she gave birth to her two children in the five years she worked at WeWork.

Bardhi says she first became pregnant in March 2016 after working at WeWork for two years.

She claims she was forced to tell Neumann earlier than she wanted to because she needed to explain why she could no longer accompany him on business travel on his private plane.

The complaint states that Neumann was known to smoke marijuana on his private plane and that 'Bardhi obviously could not expose her unborn child to marijuana smoke, much less in such an enclosed space for hours at a time'.

Bardhi alleges that Neumann also made derisive public and private comments to her in the workplace that disparaged her maternity leave as 'retirement' and 'vacation'.

She has alleged that Neumann penalized her for taking maternity leave.

Bardhi claims that each time she returned to work after maternity leave, her role was drastically reduced, she was demoted and she had male employees elevated over her.

The complaint says that each time Bardhi told Neumann she was pregnant, WeWork started looking for permanent replacements for her role. She claims she was ultimately replaced by a 'less-experienced and under-qualified' male.

She said after being sidelined when she returned from maternity leave in March 2019, Bardhi claims she had no choice but to complain to multiple executives about the alleged discrimination.

Bardhi claims she was fired without notice on October 2, which she alleges came just weeks after she had raised concerns with management regarding discrimination in connection with her pregnancy and maternity leave.

In the lawsuit, Bardhi says she was told her firing was the result of the company terminating her role.

WeWork said in a statement that they would vigorously defend the allegations in the lawsuit.

'We have zero tolerance for discrimination of any kind,' a spokesperson said. 'We are committed to moving the company forward and building a company and culture that our employees can be proud of.'

Bardhi's attorney, Douglas H. Wigdor, of Wigdor LLP said: '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.'

Neumann stepped down as the company's CEO on September 24 and has since been given a \$1.7 billion exit package.

His resignation came just weeks after WeWork's splashy initial public offering derailed. The IPO was abandoned in September as investors balked at sky-high valuations.

Investors had been questioning both whether its business model was sustainable given big losses it was suffering and the way that Neumann was running the company.

WeWork's largest shareholder, SoftBank Group Corp, has since provided a \$9.5 billion lifeline and taken over the company.

That commitment adds to the roughly \$10 billion SoftBank has already sunk into the startup.