

Former WeWork Staffer Sues Ousted CEO Adam Neumann For Pregnancy Discrimination

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Topline: Adam Neumann, the former CEO of WeWork, is being sued by his former chief of staff for pregnancy discrimination, adding to the complaints against the ousted executive, who has faced criticism for his treatment of women at the company before, along with his lavish expenses and eccentric management style that led to the dramatic unraveling of the real estate startup.

- Neumann's former chief of staff, Medina Bardhi, filed a lawsuit on Thursday alleging that the former CEO penalized her for taking maternity leave.
- The complaint is intended to become a class action lawsuit on behalf of other women who may have experienced similar issues at the company.
- The lawsuit alleges that Neumann called Bardhi's maternity leave "retirement" and "vacation." Bardhi added in the complaint that the company's chief legal officer, Jennifer Berrent, called her pregnancy "a problem" that needed "to be fixed."
- Bardhi says that after she came back from maternity leave—twice for both of her children—her role was reduced and male employees were elevated over or replaced her.
- After those male employees were promoted, she says, they were paid more than her for doing the same job.
- Bardhi says she was eventually fired on October 2—amid WeWork's failed IPO attempt—because she raised concerns about discrimination stemming from her maternity leave.

A WeWork spokesperson said the company "intends to vigorously defend itself against this claim."

Key background: This is the second lawsuit related to gender discrimination lodged against WeWork. A former human resources executive at the company alleged gender discrimination, harassment and equal pay violations in a [lawsuit](#) filed in June.

News peg: WeWork has been imploding after a [disastrous IPO attempt](#) and the [ouster](#) of Neumann. The startup, which has been bleeding money, accepted a [\\$9.5 billion bid](#) from its biggest shareholder, SoftBank Group, that forced Neumann to also leave the company's board in an exit package worth more than \$1 billion (although he [remains](#) a board observer). Most recently, following the takeover, WeWork was reportedly planning to [slash 4,000 jobs](#)—or 30% of its workforce—in an effort to [further cut costs](#).

