

Former WeWork employee alleges pattern of discrimination against women

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WeWork CEO Adam Neumann's former chief of staff has filed a federal complaint against him and other executives at the company, alleging that she was discriminated against and ultimately fired because she became pregnant.

The Associated Press reported Thursday that Medina Bardhi has filed a Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) complaint, arguing that she was demoted after announcing her pregnancy, criticized by Neumann and others for going on maternity leave and fired after raising concerns to management.

In one instance, Bardhi alleges that Neumann himself told her: "I hope you are going to have fun on your vacation while we're here working," referring to her upcoming maternity leave.

WeWork's chief legal officer Jennifer Berrent is also accused in the complaint of referring to Bardhi's pregnancy as a "problem" that needed to be "fixed."

The complaint also alleges that women are generally paid less than men at the startup, and they are subjected to demeaning sexual conduct at company events.

"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," her attorney told the AP.

WeWork's spokeswoman Gwen Rocco told the news outlet that the company would "vigorously defend itself against" the EEOC complaint's allegations.

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