

# USA Today sued by fired digital sales director for pregnancy discrimination

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**New York (CNN Business)** — A former USA Today digital sales director has sued the newspaper for allegedly discriminating and retaliating against her after she told her managers that she was pregnant.

In the complaint filed Thursday in the Southern District of New York, Serena Bhaduri alleges that USA Today's parent company [Gannett \(GCI\)](#) as well as sales executives Estee Cross and Anna Riddle interfered with her rights under federal and New York state employment laws and retaliated against her for her decision to exercise those rights.

According to the lawsuit, Bhaduri was fired in August after disclosing her pregnancy to supervisors at USA Today. Bhaduri claims that one of her supervisors Anna Riddle said that "the termination was based on Ms. Bhaduri's 'negative attitude' which she alleged was contributing to a 'toxic' workplace," while also vaguely asserting that "Ms. Bhaduri 'did not take direction well.'" A Human Resources representative "confirmed that Ms. Bhaduri's termination was not related to performance," the lawsuit reads.

"She notified them that she was pregnant and within days was terminated. That's unacceptable. I think what makes this case worse is they did that knowing the background," Bhaduri's lawyer, Jeanne Christensen from Wigdor LLP, told CNN Business. "Apparently, if you get pregnant more than one time in a two-year span that's a problem."

The lawsuit comes just two days after [Gannett closed its merger](#) with GateHouse, creating the largest US newspaper company by circulation. Neither Gannett, Cross nor Riddle responded to CNN Business' request for comment.

Bhaduri's pregnancy and the subsequent firing came after she "suffered a personal tragedy," the lawsuit reads. In November 2018, Bhaduri gave birth to a son who then passed away in January.

When Bhaduri returned to her job in February, her direct supervisor Estee Cross allegedly accused her of contributing to "low morale." The lawsuit claims Bhaduri reported Cross' "micromanagement and heightened criticism" to Riddle, who "brushed aside" the accusations. In May, Bhaduri elected to take a one-month bereavement leave for the loss of her child.

"During her bereavement leave, Ms. Bhaduri learned that she was pregnant again," the lawsuit said. "She feared that Ms. Cross and Ms. Riddle would discriminate and retaliate against her even more after they heard. As she feared, after they learned about Ms. Bhaduri's pregnancy, Ms. Cross and Ms. Riddle ramped up their campaign of discrimination and retaliation against her in an effort to generate pretextual justifications for her eventual firing."

The suit says Bhaduri is looking to be awarded for damages to be determined at trial, including compensation for "emotional distress."