

# Greenberg Shareholder Accused of Sexual Harassment by Ousted Grammys Chief

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By Ross Todd

Joel Katz, the founding chairman of Greenberg Traurig's global entertainment and media practice and the founding shareholder of the firm's Atlanta office, is at the center of sexual harassment allegations that rocked Hollywood on Tuesday afternoon.

Deborah Dugan, the recently suspended president and CEO of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, filed charges of discrimination with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on Tuesday based in part on allegations that she was put on leave from her position last week after complaining that Katz had sexually harassed her in the run-up to her taking the position.

In the EEOC filing drafted by Dugan's lawyers at Wigdor, she claims Katz, the former chair of the academy's board who serves as the organization's outside general counsel, repeatedly called her "baby" and commented on her appearance during a May 2019 business dinner.

Dugan's lawyers wrote that Katz suggested that the two of them "spend time together" and travel to one of his "many homes." The court papers claim that, although Dugan made it clear she wasn't interested in Katz's advances, he attempted to lean in and kiss her at the conclusion of the meal.

"Despite the fact that Ms. Dugan rejected all of Mr. Katz's advances, he continued to act inappropriately towards her," the Wigdor lawyers wrote. "Indeed, in every one-on-one conversation Ms. Dugan had with Mr. Katz following the May 18, 2019, dinner, he told her that she was pretty and referred to her as 'baby.'"

Dugan's lawyers claim that she was placed on leave by the organization Jan. 16 after she complained to the human resources department about Katz and the alleged "boys' club" approach to governance at the academy. The EEOC complaint asserts that her predecessor, Neil Portnow, "allegedly raped a female recording artist," who is not named. Portnow had not publicly responded to the filing by late Tuesday.

According to the filing, Katz is paid a \$250,000 annual retainer, plus travel and expenses that do not require prior approval, on top of fees charged by the firm on a "transactional basis." Dugan claims that the firm has billed the organization's board more than \$15 million in just a few years' time.

Katz's email generated an automatic response Tuesday evening saying that he was out of the office with an illness and would not be checking messages or responding until he is well. Katz's [bio on the firm's website](#) says that, as the Recording Academy's GC, he "worked with the officers and the management team in establishing the task force designed to improve 'female advancement' and assisted in commencing the search for a new CEO and president to succeed Neil Portnow, after the expiration of his term." Dugan replaced Portnow last year.

In an email statement provided by Greenberg Traurig spokesperson Richard Rosenbaum, executive chairman of the firm, called Katz "legendary in the music industry" and said he helped the academy "achieve previously unprecedented business results."

"The personal allegations recently made were not previously known to us and, if true, would of course offend our culture and values." Rosenbaum said. "But our values also require a full and fair investigation before conclusions are reached. We understand this investigation is being conducted by the Academy and await the results."

The academy said in a statement that it had "immediately launched independent investigations to review both Ms. Dugan's potential misconduct and her subsequent allegations. Both of these investigations remain ongoing."

Dugan, according to the statement, was placed on administrative leave after offering to step down and demanding \$22 million from the academy, which is a not-for-profit organization. "Our loyalty will always be to the 21,000 members of the Recording Academy. We regret that music's biggest night is being stolen from them by Ms. Dugan's actions, and we are working to resolve the matter as quickly as possible," the organization said.