

Employees of One Kings Lane Sue Private Equity Firm Over Pregnancy Discrimination

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Just a few weeks after [an executive sued SoulCycle](#) for firing her mid-maternity leave, two corporate employees of the home decor business One Kings Lane have filed a lawsuit claiming the private equity firm CSC Generation discriminated against them based on their pregnancies. The suit alleges the employees were indefinitely furloughed just weeks before their scheduled maternity leaves, and that an HR manager was “laughed at” by CSC leadership when she requested the company honor previously negotiated benefits.

One Kings Lane, a trendy home boutique, was until recently owned by Bed Bath & Beyond. In April, it was acquired by the private equity firm CSC Generation, a private equity firm that’s also recently bought up DirectBuy and the intellectual property of the bankrupted Bon-Ton. On its website, the firm purports to be “[saving retail](#)” by preventing poorly performing brands from liquidating and “saving 800 jobs in the process.”

In the suit, filed Thursday in the Southern District of New York as well as with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the two employees allege that shortly after their company was acquired by CSC the firm “began making unlawful changes to the company’s policies and practices with respect to employees,” including violating New York’s sick leave rules. Both women were well into their third trimesters at the time of the acquisition. A week after the CSC took over, according to the complaint, the pregnant employees were placed on indefinite furlough, a decision interpreted as one to “permanently terminate two female employees because of their pregnancies and expected maternity leaves.” (Though other employees were furloughed, the women were allegedly the only ones chosen from their respective teams.)

Though the employees say they had negotiated ample maternity leave through the company’s previous ownership structure, they allege an HR manager was “laughed at” by CSC executives when she asked if the company would honor those agreements, and told the women would not be eligible for short-term disability or other programs based on the “pre-existing” condition of their pregnancies.

Oddly, when the women approached CSC with the help of legal counsel, the suit alleges, the company offered to immediately reinstate the employees, expecting them “to return to work within days-notice, only weeks after giving birth,” without mentioning maternity benefits or leave:

Belatedly, in a transparent effort to cover its tracks, on Saturday, June 27, 2020, CSC Generation demanded that Ms. van der Does return to work that coming Monday, June 29, and on Wednesday, July 7, 2020, CSC Generation demanded that Ms. Marinaro return to work the very next day – i.e., Thursday, July 8 – even though they each had recently given birth to their children and needed time off for maternity leave.

In a statement to Business Insider, CSC and One Kings Lane denied that they had discriminated against the women based on their pregnancies, telling the outlet more than 30 employees had been furloughed around the same time.

CSC Generation’s founder, Justin Yoshimura, is named personally in the suit and is believed by the plaintiffs to have made the decision to furlough them.

As is noted in the suit, Yoshimura’s LinkedIn account warns that “if you are easily offended (ie, by “Trader Jose” or by the fact that I do not have my “gender pronoun” in my title), it is probably best that we refrain from connecting.” He also notes that he started his career by escaping the “bureaucracy and negativity of Palos Verdes High School” to begin his first venture, CellsWholesale.com.