

Maria DiLorenzo, who worked for the clothier since 2015, worked on the day she underwent surgery

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J. Crew corporate lawyer who helped the struggling preppy clothing brand dig out of \$1.6 billion in debt is suing after she claims she was mocked and fired after going deaf in one ear

- **Maria DiLorenzo filed in Manhattan federal court on Thursday**
- **The lawyer says she was humiliated and sidelined after helping the mid-market brand dig out of its crushing debt**
- **CEO Libby Wadle has boasted an 'accessible and inclusive environment for everyone'**
- **In a statement to the DailyMailOnline.com J.Crew denied discrimination or retaliation**

By [Janon Fisher For Dailymail.Com](#)

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Corporate lawyer Maria DiLorenzo helped J. Crew shed its \$1.6 billion bankruptcy problem only to be fired when she suffered sudden hearing loss

Maria DiLorenzo, who has worked for the company since 2015, said she was a diligent and dutiful attorney representing the mid-market fashion company in a 2020 do-or-die bankruptcy, but they refused to fully accommodate her affliction, she claims.

In June last year, the lawyer woke up deaf in her right ear and unable to walk without help, she said.

Overnight she was afflicted with Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss, which left her with hearing loss and suffering from vertigo, ringing in the ear and other complications, according to court papers.

DiLorenzo asked COO Michael Nicholson for a reasonable accommodation, she says, to have a week off around Thanksgiving 2020 to recover from cochlear implant surgery.

But on the day of the operation, Nicholson called her, she said, and instructed her to work that day and the next week.

'They forced Ms. DiLorenzo to work through her medical leave after surgery and refused to engage with her about her accommodations requests, as required by law," her lawyer, Valdi Licul wrote in the civil complaint.

In August, the company won a court decision to restructure its debt and bring it back from bankruptcy.

When new CEO Libby Wadle took over, she touted the company's 'fair and decent working conditions, the freedom of opinion and expression' and promised 'an accessible and inclusive environment for everyone,' according to the complaint.

But DiLorenzo says was instantly pressured to commute to New York from her home in Chicago despite her ailment.

She eventually negotiated only traveling to Manhattan for board meeting, but had to tell to her underlings the details of her medical condition to explain her absence.

'Ms. DiLorenzo broke down in tears as she explained her plight to her colleagues,' according to Licul's complaint.

During a 2021 board meeting in which she was tasked with recording the minutes, she was corralled to a side table where she could not hear nor read the lips of the board members.

Wadle's chief of staff, Tracy Bay, apparently mocked her condition during the meeting by saying 'in a loud mocking tone,' according to the complaint, 'can you hear?'

She said the experience left her humiliated, but her complaint to the Human Resource department was ignored.

Though she was repeatedly told that there was no issues with her performance, Nicholson told her that they were going in a 'different direction,' according to the complaint.

On Dec. 7 she wrote a memo to the executives complaining of the retaliation, and a week later she was fired because she had 'asserted a claim against the company.'

The clothing company denied that DiLorenzo was discriminated against.

'J. Crew Group is committed to fostering an equitable, safe and inclusive workplace' spokesman Nat Garnick said. 'We believe these allegations are without merit and we will defend ourselves vigorously.'

Licul said DiLorenzo has not settled on a dollar amount for her claim.