

Top lawyer sues J. Crew, saying she was fired after losing hearing

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By Daniel Wiessner

- Company pressured top lawyer to return from medical leave
- She claims she was fired for complaining about mistreatment

(Reuters) - J. Crew Group LLC on Thursday was hit with a lawsuit by its former general counsel, who accuses the retailer of firing her after she suffered hearing loss.

Maria Di Lorenzo and her lawyers at Wigdor said in a complaint filed in Manhattan federal court that J. Crew last year forced her to work through medical leave after she abruptly went deaf in one ear and then fired her, claiming the company was going "in a different direction."

New York-based J. Crew did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Valdi Licul of Wigdor said in a statement that the way J. Crew treated Di Lorenzo goes against the company's efforts to reinvent itself as a "modern, inclusive brand."

DiLorenzo became disabled in June 2020, according to her complaint, about a month after J. Crew filed for bankruptcy protection amid widespread store closures triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. A bankruptcy judge approved the company's reorganization plan in August 2020.

Di Lorenzo, who was hired by J. Crew in 2015, says senior executives pressured her to return to work shortly after having cochlear implant surgery.

Once she had returned, she was marginalized and humiliated, according to the complaint. At a July board meeting, Di Lorenzo says she was segregated from other attendees so she could not hear what they were saying.

She says she was fired last month after complaining to J. Crew's chief operating officer about the treatment.

Di Lorenzo accused J. Crew of disability discrimination in violation of New York state and city laws, and of retaliation and interference with her right to unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act. She is seeking unspecified damages.

The case is DiLorenzo v. J. Crew Group LLC, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, No. 1:21-cv-10768.

For Di Lorenzo: Douglas Wigdor and Valdi Licul of Wigdor

For J. Crew: Not available

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