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NEWS

  **Former DLA Piper Associate Alleges Firm Fired Her for Requesting Maternity Leave**

 Senior associate Anisha Mehta received three raises during her year at DLA Piper, but was fired within six days of requesting maternity leave in October 2022, according to an EEOC complaint.

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 Women in Law



Dan Roe
Reporter



What You Need to Know

- Lawyers representing Mehta allege DLA Piper fired the former associate to avoid paying 18 to 20 months of her salary while she took maternity leave.
- Despite receiving multiple raises during her time at the firm, Mehta's former supervisor cited her lack of preparation for a client call and a sloppy brief as grounds for her termination.
- The EEOC complaint refutes the firm's rationale.

A complaint filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission alleges DLA Piper fired a senior associate in New York because she requested maternity leave.

Former senior associate Anisha Mehta, represented by employment litigation firm Wigdor, claimed she had received no adverse performance reviews or criticism prior to her firing. To the contrary, Mehta left a job at K&L Gates in Chicago to join the firm, relocated to New York and received a \$54,600 signing bonus, and also garnered a six-figure year-end bonus and three substantial raises by October 2022, according to the complaint, which was filed in December and circulated by the associate's attorney this week.

Yet in early October 2022, Mehta was fired six days after she submitted her formal request for maternity leave, which occurred while she was six months pregnant. Reached by phone, Wigdor partner Jeanne Christensen said DLA Piper fired Mehta to avoid paying 18 to 20 months of her salary while she took maternity leave, leaving Mehta with scarce options to attain a job while already six months pregnant. To date, Mehta is still unemployed.

Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher partner Michele Maryott is representing DLA Piper in connection with Mehta's complaint. Reached by email, Maryott cited DLA Piper's "generous leave policy and great track record of supporting working parents," adding that the firm "looks forward to having the EEOC charge reviewed in the normal course."

Mehta's supervisor Gina Durham, partner and deputy practice leader of the intellectual property and technology group, cited Mehta's lack of preparation for a March 2022 client call and a sloppy brief as grounds for her termination. Refuting Durham's alleged rationale, Mehta's complaint states Durham hadn't adequately communicated Mehta's responsibilities for the client call and noted the sloppy brief was in fact the work of a different associate. Meanwhile, partners such as Chicago intellectual property practice co-chair Keith Medansky praised Mehta for her work, per the complaint.

Christensen said DLA Piper should release Mehta of a forced arbitration clause. "This is a case that deserves to be in open court and DLA Piper has the ability to make that happen," she said. "They can let her out and they denied it when she asked."

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