

Law firm DLA Piper unfairly fired pregnant attorney, EEOC complaint says

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By Chinekwu Osakwe

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Signage is seen outside of the law firm DLA Piper in Washington, D.C., U.S., August 30, 2020.
REUTERS/Andrew Kelly

DLA Piper LLP (us)

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March 14 - A former attorney at DLA Piper accused the law firm of discrimination in a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission made public on Tuesday, claiming the firm fired her rather than allow her to take maternity leave.

Anisha Mehta said in the complaint that she was a senior associate at DLA Piper in New York for one year before she was fired while six months pregnant in October 2022, just six days after she submitted a request to go on leave for part of 2023.

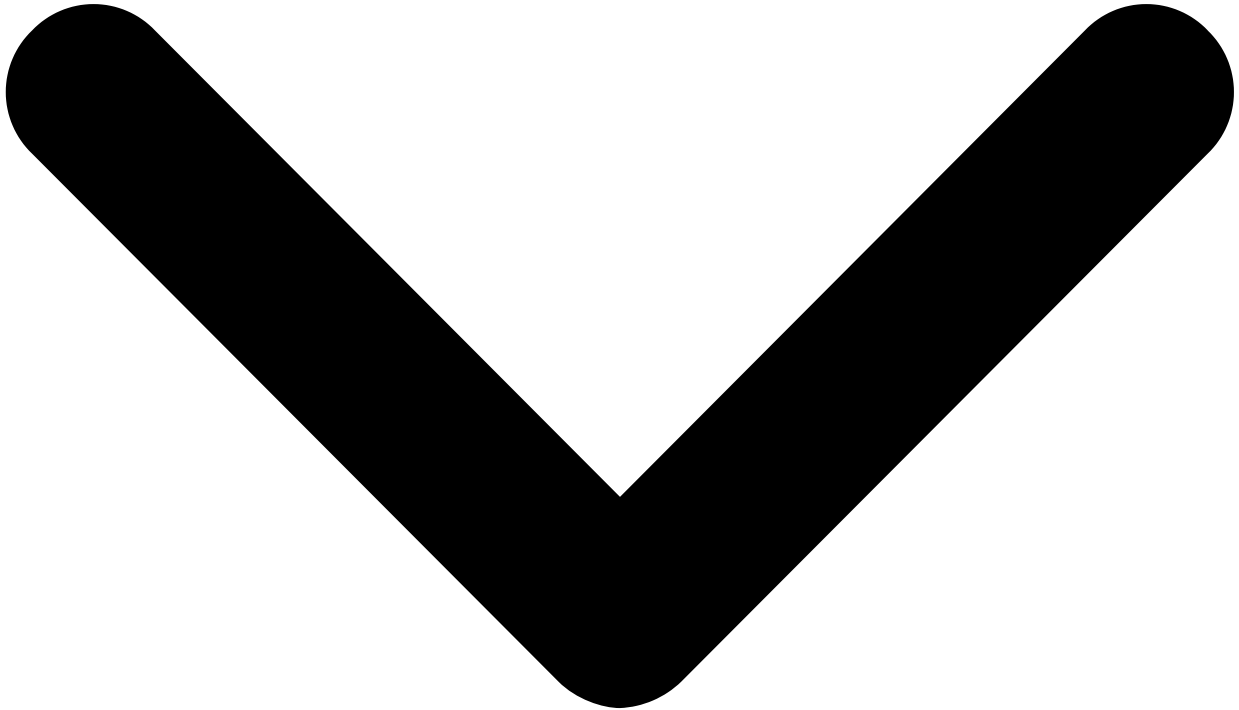
Mehta claims that she had received "overwhelming" praise for her work as an intellectual property lawyer at the firm, as well as three raises and a \$100,000 bonus for her "exemplary" performance.

DLA Piper's "real motive" in firing her was not her performance, but to avoid paying her salary for up to 20 months of leave while it was experiencing a slowdown in client demand, the complaint said.

Michele Maryott, a partner with Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher who is representing DLA Piper, said the firm is looking forward to having the charge reviewed. "DLA Piper has a generous leave policy and a great track record of supporting working parents," she said.

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Mehta is represented by Wigdor, a plaintiffs' law firm that often represents plaintiffs in discrimination and harassment cases.

Wigdor partner Jeanne Christensen said in a statement that DLA Piper's discrimination was "blatant" and faulted the firm for using mandatory arbitration provisions in its employment agreements.

"DLA Piper should do what is right for all of its female employees and litigate these claims in federal court where they belong rather than confidential arbitration," she said.

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