

**PRESS RELEASE**

# Justice Department Secures Settlement Agreement with State of New York Executive Chamber to Resolve Sexual Harassment and Retaliation Claims Under Title VII

Friday, January 26, 2024

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**For Immediate Release**

Office of Public Affairs

The Justice Department announced today that it has signed an [agreement](#) with the State of New York Executive Chamber (Executive Chamber) to resolve the department's claims that the Executive Chamber under former Governor Andrew Cuomo engaged in a pattern or practice of sexual harassment and retaliation in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The agreement memorializes the reforms already carried out by current Governor Kathy Hochul as well as additional reforms aimed at preventing sexual harassment and retaliation in the Executive Chamber.

Title VII is a federal law that prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin. Title VII also forbids employers from retaliating against current and former employees for complaining about workplace discrimination or otherwise asserting their Title VII rights.

The department's investigation, conducted jointly by the Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York, found that the Executive Chamber under former Governor Andrew M. Cuomo (1) subjected female employees to a sexually hostile work environment; (2) tolerated that environment and failed to correct the problem on an agency-wide basis and (3) retaliated against employees who spoke out about the harassment.

Former Governor Cuomo and many complicit senior staff left the Executive Chamber in 2021. Since the department's investigation began in August 2021, the Executive Chamber has implemented changes to its policies and practices intended to prevent and address the alleged misconduct. The agreement announced today memorializes these efforts and calls for additional reforms, including:

- Expanding the Executive Chamber's Human Resources Department;
- Creating new policies and procedures for the external reporting, investigation and resolution of complaints involving high-level Executive Chamber employees, including the Governor;
- Developing and implementing robust training and anti-retaliation programs and
- Creating mechanisms to assess the reforms' effectiveness on a systemic basis.

"Executive Chamber employees deserve to work without fear of sexual harassment and harsh reprisal when they oppose that harassment," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "The conduct in the Executive Chamber under the former governor, the state's most powerful elected official, was especially egregious because of the stark power differential involved and the victims' lack of avenues to report and redress harassment. With this settlement agreement, the Executive Chamber under Governor Hochul is undertaking additional actions that will address system failures of the past while helping prevent the recurrence of systemic sexual harassment and retaliation in the future."

"We appreciate the Governor's stated determination to make sure that sexual harassment does not recur at the highest level of New York State government," said U.S. Attorney Breon Peace for the Eastern District of New York. "We share that goal and enter into this agreement to advance our common goal of creating clear, comprehensive and, most importantly, enduring policies preventing sexual harassment in the Executive Chamber."

The enforcement of Title VII and other federal laws against employment discrimination is a top priority of the Justice Department. This agreement is part of the Civil Rights Division's Employment Litigation Section's Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Initiative, which seeks to eradicate sexual harassment in state and local government workplaces. It focuses on litigation, outreach and developing effective remedial measures to address and prevent sex discrimination and harassment.

More information about the work of the Civil Rights Division, the division's Employment Litigation Section and civil rights enforcement at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York is available at [www.justice.gov/crt](https://www.justice.gov/crt), [www.justice.gov/crt/employment-litigation-section](https://www.justice.gov/crt/employment-litigation-section) and [www.justice.gov/usao-edny/civil-rights](https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/civil-rights).

*Updated January 26, 2024*

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**CIVIL RIGHTS**

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