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Stockton woman says she was fired for reporting sexual harassment – KXTV Channel 10, Sacramento



“A Stockton woman... fired for complaining about a dentist and a hostile work environment full of sexual harassment... filed a lawsuit claiming sexual harassment, retaliation and wrongful termination.”

STOCKTON, CA - A Stockton woman claims she was fired for complaining about a dentist and a hostile work environment full of sexual harassment.

Jessica Ortega said she held off complaining for years because she has kids and didn't want to lose her job But after she stepped up and spoke out, she was terminated.

Ortega said her supervisor, at the Pacific Dental Clinic at University of Pacific - Stockton, Dr. Howard Chi made unwanted sexual references to her, even comparing her work clothes to women's underwear.

"This is the scrub top that reminded him of his ex-girlfriend's underwear," said Ortega referring to her work uniform with a leopard print pattern.

She said Chi's office was a hotbed of sexual harassment and many other women who worked for him also experienced it.

"No one ever had the guts to speak against him because he's the director of a clinic and no one will ever say anything against a person who has power," Ortega said.

Ortega said she let the comments slide at first; but then, Chi made so many more sexual comments in front of her and co-workers.

Some workers, including Ortega, decided to complain to HR. Ortega said HR did nothing about it.

"The university decided to sweep it under the rug and ignore Ms. Ortega and her coworkers complaints about this," Attorney Jason Erlich said.



According to Ortega, after she and other women complained their workloads increased. Ortega also said her performance reviews, which were once glowing turned negative.

This week Ortega filed a lawsuit against Chi, claiming sexual harassment, retaliation and wrongful termination.

"It's not right," Ortega said. "You think, you're working for a university. They're not going to treat you wrong. You are always going to be treated right. For somebody to be treating you that way, is not right."

Ortega had filed multiple complaints against her supervisor. She says nothing was done and she couldn't take it anymore.

"She essentially said, I'm tired. I can't take it anymore. She walked out. The university then used that comment that statement as a pretext to say 'You quit. You resign.' And then terminated her employment, which in the state of California is wrongful termination."

Neither Chi nor his attorney offered a comment. The university wouldn't address this specific case, but did release a statement.

"We take any allegations of sexual harassment extremely seriously, investigate each such complaint, and take action as appropriate."

Ortega's attorney said they are filing for unspecified damages, backpay and lost wages.

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