

EEOC NEWS



U.S. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

CHARLOTTE DISTRICT OFFICE

129 West Trade Street
Suite 400
Charlotte, NC 28202
Phone (704) 344-6686
TTY (704) 344-6684

CONTACT: LYNETTE BARNES

Regional Attorney
Phone: 704-954-6462
Email: lynette.barnes@eeoc.gov

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ROOMS TO GO TO PAY \$55,000 TO SETTLE EEOC PREGNANCY DISCRIMINATION LAWSUIT

*Furniture Company Fired Employee
After She Disclosed She Was Pregnant, Federal Agency Charged*

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – RTG Furniture Corp. of Georgia, a Florida corporation that operates a chain of Rooms to Go furniture stores and distribution centers nationwide, has agreed to pay \$55,000 and provide other relief to settle a pregnancy discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the agency announced today. The EEOC had charged that Rooms to Go violated federal law when it fired a female employee because she was pregnant.

According to the EEOC's complaint, the company hired Chantoni McBryde on June 1, 2015 and assigned her to work as a shop apprentice at the company's temporary training facility in Dunn, N.C. The job required the use of various chemicals to repair furniture. On June 3, McBryde informed the company's shop trainer that she was pregnant. Later that same day, McBryde was called into a meeting with the company's regional shop manager and others and was asked to confirm that she was pregnant. The EEOC said that during the meeting, the regional shop manager showed McBryde a can of lacquer thinner that contained a warning that the contents could potentially pose a risk to a woman or her unborn child, and discussed the warning with McBryde. The EEOC said that McBryde was then told that because she was pregnant, she could no longer work at the facility.

Such alleged conduct violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended by the Pregnancy Discrimination Act (PDA), which prohibits employers from terminating workers because they are pregnant. EEOC filed suit in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina, Western Division (*Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. RTG Furniture Corp. of Georgia*, Civil Action No 5:16-CV-00663-BO) after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through the agency's conciliation process.

In addition to providing monetary relief to McBryde, the company entered into a three-year consent decree requiring it to develop and implement a policy that prohibits pregnancy-based discrimination. The decree further requires the company to conduct annual training for employees, supervisors, and managers at certain facilities on Title VII and its prohibition against pregnancy

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discrimination in the workplace. Rooms to Go must also post an employee notice about the lawsuit and on employee rights under federal anti-discrimination laws at those same facilities, as well as provide periodic reports to the EEOC.

“Pregnant women have the right to make their own decisions about working while pregnant, including the risks they are willing to assume,” said Lynette A. Barnes, regional attorney for the EEOC’s Charlotte District Office. “If there may be a potential health concern, it is up to the woman and her doctors to evaluate. Companies must not impose paternalistic notions on pregnant women, as doing so can result in unlawful discrimination.”

EEOC is responsible for enforcing federal laws against employment discrimination. Further information is available at www.eeoc.gov.

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