

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA  
ATLANTA DIVISION**

|                                |   |                                   |
|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| <b>CINDY HAWTHORNE,</b>        | ) |                                   |
|                                | ) |                                   |
| <b>Plaintiff,</b>              | ) |                                   |
|                                | ) | <b>Civil Action No. _____</b>     |
| <b>v.</b>                      | ) |                                   |
|                                | ) |                                   |
| <b>BOARD OF REGENTS of the</b> | ) |                                   |
| <b>UNIVERSITY SYSTEM of</b>    | ) | <b><u>JURY TRIAL DEMANDED</u></b> |
| <b>GEORGIA,</b>                | ) |                                   |
|                                | ) |                                   |
| <b>Defendants.</b>             | ) |                                   |

**COMPLAINT**

Plaintiff **Cindy Hawthorne**, by and through her undersigned attorneys, HKM Employment Attorneys LLP, brings this civil rights action for relief and damages against Defendants **Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia**, based on the following factual allegations and causes of action.

**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

1. Cindy Hawthorne was employed from November 2023 to October 2024 as Assistant Director of Equity and Civil Rights Compliance at Georgia State University (“GSU”), a member of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. She challenges her termination under the retaliation provisions of Title

IX and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as well as the Rehabilitation Act, 29 U.S.C.A. § 794.

2. Hawthorne was diagnosed with cancer within weeks of her hiring at GSU. Initially, her department reacted to her medical crisis with compassion and a series of accommodations including a month of leave, remote work, and a shift to a flex schedule to accommodate her transition to chemotherapy.

3. But by the spring of 2024, Hawthorne’s supervisor Chris Griffin, GSU’s Director of Investigations, and the Executive Director of the Civil Rights Compliance unit Kieran Morrow began raising concerns that Hawthorne was falling behind on internal deadlines. In May 2024, Hawthorne was placed on a performance improvement plan (“PIP”) that overtly described her lack of “productivity” and even cited her delay in completing interviews due to a one week sick leave.

4. In the summer of 2024, Hawthorne faced pressure to return to in-office work despite her compromised immune system as a cancer survivor and chiding from Griffin that she needed to “pull her weight”. As Hawthorne sought to extend her accommodations, GSU contrived grounds to extend the PIP.

5. Hawthorne’s placement on a PIP also coincided with a disagreement with the leadership of her department over the handling of a sexual harassment allegation by a graduate research assistant regarding her supervising faculty

member. In fact, the PIP explicitly faults Hawthorne for her assessment of the evidence regarding the claim and was imposed within weeks of her being directed to change her conclusions regarding potential liability.

6. Hawthorne's claims against the Board of Regents seek back pay and front pay, as well as lost benefits; noneconomic compensatory damages as to her Title VII retaliation claim; as well as her attorneys' fees and costs of litigation.

### **PARTIES**

7. Hawthorne is a citizen of the United States and the State of Georgia and was at all times relevant to this complaint employed by GSU as an investigator of its equity and civil rights compliance office, which is headquartered at GSU's Atlanta campus.

8. GSU, a four year academic institution, is a member of the University System of Georgia. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-3-51, the Board of Regents of the University system is the governing entity of its member institutions and is the party subject to suit for statutory claims by employees of universities within the system.

9. The Board of Regents is subject to suit under Title VII and as a recipient of federal funds is subject to liability under Title IX and the Rehabilitation Act.

**SUBJECT MATTER JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

10. Jurisdiction of this court is invoked pursuant to 28 U.S.C.A. §§ 1331 and 1343.

11. Venue is proper in this district and division under 28 U.S.C.A. § 1391(b)(1)-(2), as Defendant resides in and conducts business in this district and division and the acts or omissions giving rise to the claim occurred in the same venue.

**EXHAUSTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES**

12. On March 13, 2025, Hawthorne filed a charge of disability discrimination and Title VII retaliation against the Board of Regents with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (“EEOC”). A copy is attached as Exhibit A.

13. On December 10, 2025, Hawthorne received a notice of Right-to-Sue. A copy is attached as Exhibit B.

14. Hawthorne timely files her Title VII claim within 90 days of her receipt of a Right to Sue.

**FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

15. Cindy Hawthorne is a licensed attorney in the State of Georgia who is a certified mediator and a former EEO compliance investigator. She was hired in October 2023 as an Assistant Director of Equity and Civil Rights Compliance at GSU.

16. Hawthorne's principal responsibilities involved fact-finding and investigation of employee and student complaints of violations of federal civil rights laws and campus conduct guidelines.

17. Hawthorne reported directly to Chris Griffin, GSU's Director of Investigations. Griffin also serves as Deputy Title IX coordinator.

18. Weeks after joining GSU, Hawthorne learned that she had cancer and began a protracted battle with the disease that consisted of surgery and an ongoing regimen of chemotherapy.

19. Despite receiving a devastating diagnosis, Hawthorne continued work and delayed her surgery until December 2023 to avoid an immediate staffing gap in her department. GSU permitted Hawthorne to take a medical leave of absence until January 2024.

20. When Hawthorne was cleared to return, she was allowed to telework. She also applied for a broader set of scheduling accommodations based on her chemotherapy regimen and the inevitable physical toll treatments took on her.

Hawthorne requested a shift to a seven day flex schedule, and discretion to extend project deadlines as well as excused time off to attend medical appointments.

21. In March 2024, Hawthorne's accommodations were approved through May 2024. But the senior leadership in the Equity and Civil Rights Compliance Unit began holding internal meetings in March about replacing Hawthorne, in part because of concerns about her delayed pace on completing work projects since her return from medical leave.

22. In the March-April time frame, Hawthorne was also assigned to investigate a graduate research assistant's allegation of sexual harassment against her supervising professor in the life sciences department.

23. It was Hawthorne's view that the allegations, which included substantial details and corroborating evidence, merited a full fledged Title IX inquiry. In addition, because the research assistant was a compensated GSU employee, Hawthorne advised that the university's exposure extended to potential Title VII liability.

24. In late April 2024, Hawthorne was directed to revise her findings and rewrite her report regarding the outcome of the harassment investigation. The Executive Director of the Civil Rights Compliance unit Kieran Morrow questioned

the credibility of the allegations and whether the content of the allegations presented an actionable hostile environment claim.

25. At one point in mid April, the Director of the Investigation Unit Chris Griffin advised Hawthorne that Morrow had developed concerns about Hawthorne's job performance.

26. On May 3, 2024, two days after her accommodation expired and less than ten days after the order to revise her investigative findings regarding the harassment allegation, Hawthorne was notified that she would be placed on a 90 day performance improvement plan and that her next investigative report would determine whether she would remain employed.

27. Hawthorne perceived the comment about the importance of the next investigative report to be an implicit warning that she needed to be more cautious about recommending liability in any situation where the leadership of the department was skeptical of her assessment.

28. The contents of the PIP contained repeated references under the heading "productivity" to the time it took Hawthorne to complete investigative interviews and reports with no acknowledgement of the portion of Hawthorne's accommodation that specifically afforded her extended deadlines. At one point, the

PIP even mentioned that after being asked to schedule a round of witness interviews, Hawthorne was out on sick leave for a week.

29. In addition, the PIP discussed in some detail the sexual harassment investigation regarding the research assistant's complaint. Hawthorne was admonished for failing to adequately assess relevance or to properly weigh contested facts.

30. The PIP's critical review of Hawthorne's capacity to perform her job differed from the positive feedback she had received after her 90-day evaluation and in regular meetings with Griffin.

31. Hawthorne immediately raised concerns that the PIP bypassed GSU's normal progressive disciplinary protocol, which includes verbal warnings and written warnings; and that satisfying the PIP might interfere with her capacity to preserve some of the scheduling accommodations she was seeking to extend.

32. The process for renewing Hawthorne's accommodations dragged on for several months during the summer of 2024. In the interim, Griffin inquired several times about whether Hawthorne was able to return to at least a hybrid in-office schedule. At one point during a progress review meeting regarding the PIP, Griffin commented that there was a perspective in the department that Hawthorne was "not pulling her weight", an observation Hawthorne connected to

the continued modifications in her schedule that were still observed while the accommodation extension was under review.

33. Not until August 7 did GSU extend Hawthorne's accommodation.

34. On August 9, when the PIP was set to expire, Griffin extended it for 30 days solely on the grounds that Hawthorne had inserted an inapplicable paragraph from a template into a draft report.

35. Hawthorne encountered another set of health challenges, including a six week round of radiation treatment and stress related anxiety, that required her to return to medical leave from August 20 to September 9, 2024.

36. While Hawthorne was on leave, she received an email from Griffin advising her that the PIP would be extended yet again to late September on the grounds that her medical leave had limited the time for her review.

37. Approximately two weeks after the PIP ended, on October 10, 2024 Hawthorne was notified of her termination, ostensibly for failing to show sustained improvement under the PIP. But at the conclusion of each PIP deadline, GSU failed to offer Hawthorne any meaningful assessment that she had not complied with or demonstrated progress based on the metrics of the PIP.

38. While GSU's position statement to the EEOC touts the fact that the university provided Hawthorne generous accommodations and two periods of

leave during her battle with cancer, the actions of her leadership team paint a less charitable picture: the inevitable slowdown in her production as she endured chemotherapy contributed to her placement on a PIP. Her leaders pressed her to resume a pace for which she was not physically prepared, and twice when she sought to extend her accommodations, her department followed with an extension of the PIP.

## **CAUSES OF ACTION**

### **COUNT ONE**

#### **(discriminatory termination under the Rehabilitation Act, 29 U.S.C.A. § 794)**

39. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates the factual allegations in this complaint as though fully set forth herein.

40. The Rehabilitation Act precludes discrimination based on disability by any entity receiving federal funds.

41. The physical and mental impact of Plaintiff's post operative care and the effects of chemotherapy and radiation constitute a qualifying disability under the Rehabilitation Act.

42. Plaintiff's disability was a determinative, but-for factor in her termination.

43. As a result of Defendant's discriminatory conduct, Plaintiff has suffered economic damages, including lost wages and benefits; Plaintiff is also entitled to recover her attorney's fees and costs as permitted by law.

## **COUNT II**

### **(Title IX retaliation)**

44. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates the factual allegations in this complaint as though fully set forth herein.

45. Under the 1972 Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title IX), "no person...shall, on the basis of sex, be denied participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." 20 U.S.C.A. § 1681(a).

46. Plaintiff possess an implied right of action under Title IX to assert a retaliation claim for opposing intentional discrimination based on sex.

47. Plaintiff engaged in protected activity under Title IX by opposing gender based harassment of a student in a federally funded educational institution.

48. Plaintiff's protected activity is causally connected to her placement on a performance improvement plan that eventually led to her termination.

49. As a result of Defendant's retaliatory conduct, Plaintiff has suffered economic damages, including lost wages and benefits. Plaintiff is also entitled to recover her attorney's fees and costs as permitted by law.

**COUNT III**

**(Title VII retaliation)**

50. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates the factual allegations in this complaint as though fully set forth herein.

51. Plaintiff engaged in protected activity under Title VII by opposing gender based harassment of a research assistant employed by Georgia State University.

52. Plaintiff's protected activity is causally connected to her placement on a performance improvement plan that eventually led to her termination.

53. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's retaliatory conduct, Plaintiff has suffered economic damages, including lost wages and benefits; compensatory damages, including emotional pain and suffering; and embarrassment and humiliation. Plaintiff is also entitled to recover her attorney's fees and costs as permitted by law.

**PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

**WHEREFORE**, Plaintiff respectfully requests that this Court enter judgment in his favor against Defendants and order the following relief as allowed by law:

1. Permanently enjoining Defendant from engaging in said unlawful practices, policies, customs, and usages set forth herein and from

continuing any and all other practices shown to be in violation of applicable law.

2. The award to Plaintiff of economic damages under the Rehabilitation Act and Title IX.
3. The award to Plaintiff of compensatory damages under Title VII.
4. The award to Plaintiff of attorney's fees and costs of this action.
5. The award to Plaintiff of prejudgment and post-judgment interest at the highest rate.
6. The award to Plaintiff of such other equitable relief as the Court may deem justified.

### **JURY TRIAL DEMAND**

Plaintiff respectfully requests a trial by jury on all issues so triable.

Respectfully submitted this 10th day of March, 2025.

**HKM Employment Attorneys LLP**

*s/Artur Davis*

Artur Davis<sup>1</sup>

ASB-3672-D56A

2024 3rd Ave. North, Suite 212

Birmingham, AL 35203

Direct: 205-881-0935

[adavis@hkm.com](mailto:adavis@hkm.com)

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<sup>1</sup>Artur Davis will promptly file for admission *pro hac vice* as an attorney of record in this action. Mr. Davis is licensed in the state of Alabama and the District of Columbia.

Jerilyn Gardner  
Georgia Bar No. 139779  
3344 Peachtree Rd. NE, Suite 800  
Office #35  
Atlanta, GA 30326  
Direct: 404-446-9544  
[jgardner@hkm.com](mailto:jgardner@hkm.com)

**Counsels for Plaintiff Cindy Hawthorne**

maEEOC Form 5 (11/09)

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>CHARGE OF DISCRIMINATION</b></p> <p style="font-size: small;">This form is affected by the Privacy Act of 1974. See enclosed Privacy Act Statement and other information before completing this form.</p> | <p>Charge Presented To: Agency(ies) Charge No(s):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> FEPA</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EEOC</p> |
|---|--|

\_\_\_\_\_ and EEOC

State or local Agency, if any

|   |   |                                  |
|---|---|----------------------------------|
| Name (indicate Mr., Ms., Mrs.)<br><b>Mrs. Cindy Hawthorne</b> | Home Phone (Incl. Area Code)<br><b>404-396-0865</b> | Date of Birth<br><b>07/02/73</b> |
|---|---|----------------------------------|

Street Address City, State and ZIP Code

**2451 Cumberland Parkway Atlanta GA 30339**

Named is the Employer, Labor Organization, Employment Agency, Apprenticeship Committee, or State or Local Government Agency That I Believe Discriminated Against Me or Others. (If more than two, list under PARTICULARS below.)

|   |                                       |  |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Name<br><b>Board of Regents, University System of Georgia</b> | No. Employees, Members<br><b>500+</b> | Phone No. (Include Area Code)<br><b>404-962-3049</b> |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|

Street Address City, State and ZIP Code

**270 Washington St. SW Atlanta, GA 30334**

|      |                        |                               |
|------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Name | No. Employees, Members | Phone No. (Include Area Code) |
|------|------------------------|-------------------------------|

Street Address City, State and ZIP Code

|  |   |          |        |                |                   |
|--|---|----------|--------|----------------|-------------------|
| <p>DISCRIMINATION BASED ON (Check appropriate box(es).)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> RACE    <input type="checkbox"/> COLOR    <input type="checkbox"/> SEX    <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION    <input type="checkbox"/> NATIONAL ORIGIN</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RETALIATION    <input type="checkbox"/> AGE    <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISABILITY    <input type="checkbox"/> GENETIC INFORMATION</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (Specify)</p> | <p>DATE(S) DISCRIMINATION TOOK PLACE</p> <table style="width:100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; font-size: x-small;">Earliest</td> <td style="text-align: center; font-size: x-small;">Latest</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>04/2024</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>10/13/2024</b></td> </tr> </table> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONTINUING ACTION</p> | Earliest | Latest | <b>04/2024</b> | <b>10/13/2024</b> |
| Earliest   | Latest  |          |        |                |                   |
| <b>04/2024</b>   | <b>10/13/2024</b>   |          |        |                |                   |

THE PARTICULARS ARE (If additional paper is needed, attach extra sheet(s)):

My name is Cindy Hawthorne. I am a mediator, as well as a certified federal EEO investigator. In October 2023, I was hired as an Assistant Director of Equity and Civil Rights Compliance at Georgia State University (“GSU”): my primary responsibilities involved conducting fact-finding and recommending levels of corrective action regarding complaints of unlawful conduct by students or employees under the various federal civil rights statutes and campus conduct guidelines.

Later in October, 2023, I was diagnosed with cancer and required surgery and chemotherapy from late 2023 to the summer of 2024. After returning from a medical leave in February 2024, I received a scheduling accommodation that permitted me to work remotely and to shift to a seven day flex schedule to enable my chemo schedule and medical followup appointments during the week. These accommodations were periodically extended by the leave and accommodations department through the remainder of my employment

After three months on the job, I received a probationary evaluation that I was told was considered a very high score. My work was regularly praised by peers, including initially Chris Griffin, the Director of my department and Deputy Title IX coordinator at GSU. But in the period between February and April, 2024, on three separate occasions, Griffin and I had differences of opinion regarding three faculty misconduct investigations. Two of them involved student complaints that a faculty member had shown an

inappropriate level of interest in a female student doing a school sponsored trip and that another professor made racially insensitive comments in class criticizing the use of government assistance programs by minorities and the prevalence of poverty in Black and Brown communities. Another involved a female graduate research assistant’s report of sexually harassing conduct by her supervising professor. In each instance, I believed that there was evidence of either culpability that merited discipline or a need for additional investigation. Griffin challenged these conclusions and sought to redirect my findings in a manner that was protective of faculty members.

In April 2024, as these disagreements with Griffin continued, I received my first counseling about performance and in early May 2024, I was placed on a performance improvement plan (“PIP”) that directly cited my handling of two of the cases I described above; I was told in the PIP conference that my next investigative report might well determine whether I retained my job, which sent a signal to me that I needed to be less aggressive in determining possible violations of policy. It was also troubling that the PIP charged that I had missed internal timelines to conduct interviews and conclude investigations when Griffin knew that my leave and treatment schedule coincided with some of the supposed untimeliness.

After the expiration of the PIP after 90 days, I was told that it would be extended for another 30 days; in fact, the PIP was expanded to a 60 day period explicitly because I required more medical leave during August and September 2024. Also during the summer of 2024, I faced repeated pressure to resume at least a partial in-office schedule, which my doctor and the leave and accommodations department opposed in part because my status as a cancer survivor left me at greater risk for infectious diseases. There were remarks from the leadership in my department about my need to “pull my weight” which I took to allude to the time I had cumulatively spent on leave and my treatment accommodations since I joined GSU.

On October 10, 2024, I was terminated ostensibly on performance grounds that specifically referenced my capacity to weigh evidence and legal standards and a lack of productivity. Given the timing of the original PIP, I believe that I was terminated partly because of protected activity under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, such as my recommendation of continued investigation and potential discipline of a faculty member for harassment of a female research assistant under his supervision. I also believe that my termination reflected disability discrimination in that my time off work and my medical accommodation negatively influenced the assessment of my performance, a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

I want this charge filed with both the EEOC and the State or local Agency, if any. I will advise the agencies if I change my address or phone number and I will cooperate fully with them in the processing of my charge in accordance with their procedures.

NOTARY – *When necessary for State and Local Agency Requirements*

I declare under penalty of perjury that the above is true and correct.

I swear or affirm that I have read the above charge and that it is true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

SIGNATURE OF COMPLAINANT

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO BEFORE ME THIS DATE  
(month, day, year)

03 / 13 / 2025



Date

Charging Party Signature

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|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Title                   | EEOC charge, Cindy Hawthorne             |
| File name               | Cindy_Hawthorne_EEOC_charge.docx.pdf     |
| Document ID             | e06d17dd2124a3e393de77a49b1ca465ea368c68 |
| Audit trail date format | MM / DD / YYYY                           |
| Status                  | ● Signed                                 |

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## Document History

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|--|---|--|
| <br>SENT        | <b>03 / 13 / 2025</b><br>13:16:48 UTC-4 | Sent for signature to Cindy Hawthorne<br>(cawhawthorne@gmail.com) from jwalker@hkm.com<br>IP: 70.158.101.148 |
| <br>VIEWED      | <b>03 / 13 / 2025</b><br>21:30:17 UTC-4 | Viewed by Cindy Hawthorne (cawhawthorne@gmail.com)<br>IP: 66.56.8.161  |
| <br>SIGNED    | <b>03 / 13 / 2025</b><br>21:31:22 UTC-4 | Signed by Cindy Hawthorne (cawhawthorne@gmail.com)<br>IP: 66.56.8.161  |
| <br>COMPLETED | <b>03 / 13 / 2025</b><br>21:31:22 UTC-4 | The document has been completed.   |



## U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division

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Cindy Hawthorne

Washington, DC 20530

cawhawthorne@gmail.com

December 10, 2025

631740-CCF

### **NOTICE OF RIGHT TO SUE WITHIN 90 DAYS**

Dec 10, 2025

Cindy Hawthorne

cawhawthorne@gmail.com

Re: Cindy Hawthorne v. Board Of Regents of the University System of Georgia, et al.,  
EEOC Charge No. 410-2025-06715

Dear Cindy Hawthorne,

You are receiving this notice because you filed the above charge(s) with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), and you or your attorney specifically requested this notice.

Because either 180 days have passed since you filed the above charge(s), or because the EEOC has determined that it will not be able to conclude its administrative process within 180 days of the date it assumed jurisdiction of the charge(s), you are hereby notified that you have the right to file a lawsuit commencing a civil action based on the charge(s) under the following statute(s):

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 USC. 42 U.S.C. § 2000e, et seq.
- Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12111, et seq.

If you decide to file a lawsuit under the statute(s) identified above, **you must file it in the appropriate court within 90 days of receiving this Notice.** This Notice should not be taken to mean that the Department of Justice has made a judgment as to whether your charge is meritorious. If you haven't already, you may want to consult with a private attorney of your own choosing and expense.

If you have questions or wish to inspect the investigative file pertaining to this matter, please address your inquiry to the following EEOC office: Atlanta District Office. Contact information for this office can be located at <https://www.eeoc.gov/field-office/atlanta/location>.

Sincerely,

Complaint Referral Unit  
Employment Litigation Section  
Civil Rights Division

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS

Cindy Hawthorne

(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Fulton  
(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)

(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)

Artur Davis, Jerilyn Gardner, HKM Employment Attorneys, 3344 Peachtree Rd NE Suite 800, Office #35

DEFENDANTS

Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia

County of Residence of First Listed Defendant \_\_\_\_\_  
(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)

NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.

Attorneys (If Known)

II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff
2 U.S. Government Defendant
3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)
4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)

III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)

- Citizen of This State PTF DEF 1 1
Citizen of Another State 2 2
Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country 3 3
Incorporated or Principal Place of Business In This State 4 4
Incorporated and Principal Place of Business In Another State 5 5
Foreign Nation 6 6

IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

Click here for: Nature of Suit Code Descriptions.

Table with 5 columns: CONTRACT, REAL PROPERTY, TORTS, CIVIL RIGHTS, PRISONER PETITIONS, FORFEITURE/PENALTY, LABOR, IMMIGRATION, BANKRUPTCY, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS, SOCIAL SECURITY, FEDERAL TAX SUITS, OTHER STATUTES.

V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- 1 Original Proceeding
2 Removed from State Court
3 Remanded from Appellate Court
4 Reinstated or Reopened
5 Transferred from Another District (specify)
6 Multidistrict Litigation - Transfer
8 Multidistrict Litigation - Direct File

VI. CAUSE OF ACTION

Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity): 29 U.S.C.A. Section 794, 42 U.S.C.A. Section 2000e-3(a), 20 U.S.C.A. Section 1681(a)

Brief description of cause: Plaintiff alleges that she was terminated because of her disability and her protected activity under Title VII and Title IX

VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:

CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P. DEMAND \$ CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint: JURY DEMAND: Yes No

VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY

(See instructions): JUDGE DOCKET NUMBER

DATE: March 10, 2026 SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD: /s/ Jerilyn E. Gardner

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

RECEIPT # AMOUNT APPLYING IFP JUDGE MAG. JUDGE

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTORNEYS COMPLETING CIVIL COVER SHEET FORM JS 44**

## Authority For Civil Cover Sheet

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replaces nor supplements the filings and service of pleading or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. Consequently, a civil cover sheet is submitted to the Clerk of Court for each civil complaint filed. The attorney filing a case should complete the form as follows:

- I.(a) Plaintiffs-Defendants.** Enter names (last, first, middle initial) of plaintiff and defendant. If the plaintiff or defendant is a government agency, use only the full name or standard abbreviations. If the plaintiff or defendant is an official within a government agency, identify first the agency and then the official, giving both name and title.
- (b) County of Residence.** For each civil case filed, except U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county where the first listed plaintiff resides at the time of filing. In U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county in which the first listed defendant resides at the time of filing. (NOTE: In land condemnation cases, the county of residence of the "defendant" is the location of the tract of land involved.)
- (c) Attorneys.** Enter the firm name, address, telephone number, and attorney of record. If there are several attorneys, list them on an attachment, noting in this section "(see attachment)".
- II. Jurisdiction.** The basis of jurisdiction is set forth under Rule 8(a), F.R.Cv.P., which requires that jurisdictions be shown in pleadings. Place an "X" in one of the boxes. If there is more than one basis of jurisdiction, precedence is given in the order shown below.  
 United States plaintiff. (1) Jurisdiction based on 28 U.S.C. 1345 and 1348. Suits by agencies and officers of the United States are included here. United States defendant. (2) When the plaintiff is suing the United States, its officers or agencies, place an "X" in this box.  
 Federal question. (3) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1331, where jurisdiction arises under the Constitution of the United States, an amendment to the Constitution, an act of Congress or a treaty of the United States. In cases where the U.S. is a party, the U.S. plaintiff or defendant code takes precedence, and box 1 or 2 should be marked.  
 Diversity of citizenship. (4) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1332, where parties are citizens of different states. When Box 4 is checked, the citizenship of the different parties must be checked. (See Section III below; **NOTE: federal question actions take precedence over diversity cases.**)
- III. Residence (citizenship) of Principal Parties.** This section of the JS 44 is to be completed if diversity of citizenship was indicated above. Mark this section for each principal party.
- IV. Nature of Suit.** Place an "X" in the appropriate box. If there are multiple nature of suit codes associated with the case, pick the nature of suit code that is most applicable. Click here for: [Nature of Suit Code Descriptions](#).
- V. Origin.** Place an "X" in one of the seven boxes.  
 Original Proceedings. (1) Cases which originate in the United States district courts.  
 Removed from State Court. (2) Proceedings initiated in state courts may be removed to the district courts under Title 28 U.S.C., Section 1441.  
 Remanded from Appellate Court. (3) Check this box for cases remanded to the district court for further action. Use the date of remand as the filing date.  
 Reinstated or Reopened. (4) Check this box for cases reinstated or reopened in the district court. Use the reopening date as the filing date.  
 Transferred from Another District. (5) For cases transferred under Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1404(a). Do not use this for within district transfers or multidistrict litigation transfers.  
 Multidistrict Litigation – Transfer. (6) Check this box when a multidistrict case is transferred into the district under authority of Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1407.  
 Multidistrict Litigation – Direct File. (8) Check this box when a multidistrict case is filed in the same district as the Master MDL docket.  
**PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE IS NOT AN ORIGIN CODE 7.** Origin Code 7 was used for historical records and is no longer relevant due to changes in statute.
- VI. Cause of Action.** Report the civil statute directly related to the cause of action and give a brief description of the cause. **Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity.** Example: U.S. Civil Statute: 47 USC 553 Brief Description: Unauthorized reception of cable service.
- VII. Requested in Complaint.** Class Action. Place an "X" in this box if you are filing a class action under Rule 23, F.R.Cv.P.  
 Demand. In this space enter the actual dollar amount being demanded or indicate other demand, such as a preliminary injunction.  
 Jury Demand. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether or not a jury is being demanded.
- VIII. Related Cases.** This section of the JS 44 is used to reference related cases, if any. If there are related cases, insert the docket numbers and the corresponding judge names for such cases.

**Date and Attorney Signature.** Date and sign the civil cover sheet.