



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Press Release

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Blackwell Security Services Will Pay \$70,000 to Settle EEOC Religious Discrimination Lawsuit

Security Company Failed to Provide Religious Accommodation for Muslim Employee

CHICAGO – Blackwell Security Services, Inc. will pay \$70,000 and provide other relief to settle a religious discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the federal agency announced today.

The EEOC charged in its suit that Blackwell refused to accommodate an employee's religious practice, needlessly forcing him to choose between his religion and his livelihood. According to the EEOC's lawsuit, the employee, who worked as a concierge in Chicago, Illinois, is a practicing Muslim who wears a beard in observance of his religious beliefs. Soon after he was hired, he was told by a Blackwell supervisor that it was company policy that all employees be clean-shaven.

The employee requested an exemption from the policy to accommodate his religious practice. However, Blackwell told him to shave his beard or be terminated, even though accommodating his religious practice would impose no cost or operational burden on the business. To avoid losing his job, the employee complied

and shaved his beard, causing him significant distress.

This alleged conduct violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on religion and requires employers to reasonably accommodate an employee's religious observance or practice, unless an accommodation would impose an undue hardship. The EEOC filed suit in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois (Civil Action No.1:23-cv-14110), after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its conciliation process.

Under the consent decree resolving the lawsuit, Blackwell will pay \$70,000 in compensation to the now-former employee. Blackwell will also provide training to relevant management employees on federal laws prohibiting religious discrimination and will report any additional complaints of religious discrimination to the EEOC for the decree's duration.

"Title VII protects Americans of all religious faiths and backgrounds and requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for employees' religious practices when doing so does not impose an undue hardship on the employer's business," said Gregory Gochanour, regional attorney for the EEOC's Chicago District Office. "Here, the accommodation the employee requested—being able to wear a beard at work in observance of his faith—imposed no burden on anyone. There was no need for this employee to be forced to choose between his religion and his livelihood. Employers must ensure that they evaluate accommodation requests in a manner consistent with federal law."

For more information on religious discrimination, please visit <https://www.eeoc.gov/religious-discrimination> (<https://www.eeoc.gov/religious-discrimination>).

The EEOC's Chicago District Office is charged with enforcing federal employment discrimination laws in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Iowa.

The EEOC advances opportunity in the workplace by enforcing federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. More information is available at www.eeoc.gov (<http://www.eeoc.gov>). Stay connected with the latest EEOC news by subscribing to our [email updates](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new) (<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new>).

Recent Press Releases from the Chicago District Office

[Walmart to Pay \\$60,000 to Settle EEOC Sex Discrimination Lawsuit \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/walmart-pay-60000-settle-eeoc-sex-discrimination-lawsuit\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/walmart-pay-60000-settle-eeoc-sex-discrimination-lawsuit)

[In Agreement with EEOC, Groupon to Establish Educational Fund for Black Students Pursuing STEM Careers \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/agreement-eeoc-groupon-establish-educational-fund-black-students-pursuing-stem-careers\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/agreement-eeoc-groupon-establish-educational-fund-black-students-pursuing-stem-careers)

[EEOC Wins Summary Judgment Against Urbana School District No. 116 in Age Discrimination Case \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-wins-summary-judgment-against-urbana-school-district-no-116-age-discrimination-case\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-wins-summary-judgment-against-urbana-school-district-no-116-age-discrimination-case)

Recent Press Releases on the Subject of Religion

[Trinity Health-Michigan to Pay \\$50,000 to Settle EEOC Religious Discrimination Lawsuit \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/trinity-health-michigan-pay-50000-settle-eeoc-religious-discrimination-lawsuit\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/trinity-health-michigan-pay-50000-settle-eeoc-religious-discrimination-lawsuit)

[Triple Canopy, Inc. to Pay \\$110,759 to Settle EEOC Religious Discrimination and Retaliation Lawsuit \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/triple-canopy-inc-pay-110759-settle-eeoc-religious-discrimination-and-retaliation-lawsuit\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/triple-canopy-inc-pay-110759-settle-eeoc-religious-discrimination-and-retaliation-lawsuit)

[Children's Healthcare of Atlanta to Pay \\$45,000 to Settle EEOC Religious Discrimination Lawsuit \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/childrens-healthcare-atlanta-pay-45000-settle-eeoc-religious-discrimination-lawsuit\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/childrens-healthcare-atlanta-pay-45000-settle-eeoc-religious-discrimination-lawsuit)