



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Press Release

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Citizens Bank, N.A. to Pay \$100,000 to Settle EEOC Disability Discrimination Lawsuit

Bank Will Offer Reassignment as a Reasonable Accommodation to Employees With Disabilities

NEW YORK – Citizens Bank, N.A., will implement company-wide policy changes and pay \$100,000 to a former employee of its Cranston, Rhode Island call center to resolve a disability discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the federal agency announced today.

According to the EEOC's lawsuit, Citizens Bank refused to accommodate a call center employee after he developed an anxiety disorder and requested to be reassigned to a position that did not require him to field calls with aggravated customers over the phone. Despite having hundreds of nearby job openings, Citizens Bank refused to reassign the employee or discuss alternative accommodations until he returned to his job at the call center, the same position his disability prevented him from performing. As a result, the employee was forced to resign, the EEOC said.

Such alleged conduct violates the Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits

discrimination against employees with disabilities and requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations, including reassignment. The EEOC filed suit (*EEOC v. Citizens Bank, N.A., Civil Action No. 1:19-cv-00362*) in U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its conciliation process.

“An employer cannot refuse to engage in the interactive process until an employee returns to the same job that the employee’s disability precludes him or her from performing,” said EEOC New York District Office Regional Attorney Jeffrey Burstein. “Transferring a qualified employee to a vacant position is a reasonable accommodation under the ADA.”

EEOC Trial Attorney Cara Chomski said, “The ADA requires an employer to provide reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities, which may include reassigning them to a vacant position if they can no longer perform the essential duties of their current job. Refusing to engage in an interactive process with an employee seeking a reasonable accommodation violates federal law.”

In addition to the monetary relief, the 30-month consent decree requires Citizens Bank to provide noncompetitive reassignment as a potential reasonable accommodation for all employees with disabilities. The decree also requires Citizens Bank to revise its reasonable accommodation policy; train its employees that noncompetitive reassignment can be a reasonable accommodation; provide specialized training to members of its human resources department; and appoint an internal monitor to ensure Citizens Bank’s compliance with the decree.

Timothy Riera, Acting District Director for the EEOC’s New York District Office, said,

“The EEOC is committed to enforcing the ADA and ensuring that qualified employees with disabilities can return to work.”

The case was litigated by EEOC Trial Attorneys Cara Chomski and Daniel Seltzer and Assistant Regional Attorney Nora Curtin.

More information about disability discrimination is available at

<https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc-disability-related-resources>
<https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc-disability-related-resources>.

The EEOC’s New York District Office is responsible for processing discrimination charges, administrative enforcement and conducting agency enforcement actions

in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, northern New Jersey, Rhode Island and Vermont.

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).