



**U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

---

**Press Release**

05-23-2023

# **EEOC Sues Culver's Restaurants of Cottage Grove for Multiple Forms of Harassment**

Workplace Allowed Offensive Conduct Related to Race, Sex, Sexual Orientation, and Disability, Federal Agency Charges

MINNEAPOLIS – R & G Endeavors, Inc., a fast-food franchisee doing business as Culver's Restaurants of Cottage Grove, violated federal law when it subjected employees to a hostile work environment based on race, sex, sexual orientation, and disability, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in two lawsuits filed today. The litigation also charges the Minnesota company with denying a long-serving employee with a disability equal pay and pay raises because of his disability.

According to the EEOC's filings, multiple workers endured harassment at Culver's Cottage Grove restaurant. In one instance, managers and other employees singled out a gay and African American employee for racial and homophobic insults that included the n-word and f-word, discussed his sex life, and referred to him as the restaurant's "adopted African child."

The company also subjected another employee, who also has a disability, to

bullying and disability-related slurs, while paying him less than his co-workers without disabilities. The company also exposed female employees, some as young as 14, to sexual harassment that included unwanted sexual touching, jokes, and propositions. Employees reported these conditions to management, but the company failed to reasonably address the harassment or discipline those responsible. The intolerable working conditions forced one employee to quit, the EEOC alleged.

Such alleged conduct violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employers from creating a hostile workplace based on race and sex, including sexual orientation, as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which prohibits discrimination based on disability. The EEOC filed suit in U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota (Civil Action Nos. 0:23-cv-01501 and 0:23-cv-01506) after first attempting to reach pre-litigation settlements through its conciliation process. The EEOC seeks monetary relief for the affected employees, and an order requiring the company to take steps to stop and prevent future workplace harassment and pay disparities.

“These forms of discriminatory harassment in the workplace are never acceptable,” said Greg Gochanour, regional attorney for the EEOC’s Chicago District Office. “All employees – regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation or disability – should enjoy an equal right to safety, dignity, and respect in their place of work, and the EEOC will vigorously enforce that right, through litigation if necessary.”

Diane Smason, acting district director of the EEOC’s Chicago District, added, “Federal law requires employers to take prompt and effective action to stop harassment on the job. Employers cannot simply ignore repeated reports of harassment, allowing this abusive conduct to continue and spread.”

For more information on race and color discrimination, please visit

**<https://www.eeoc.gov/racecolor-discrimination> (<https://www.eeoc.gov/racecolor-discrimination>)**. For more information on sexual harassment, please visit **<https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-harassment> (<https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-harassment>)**. For more information on sex-based discrimination, please visit **<https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-sogi-discrimination> (<https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-sogi-discrimination>)**.

The EEOC’s Youth@Work website (at **<http://www.eeoc.gov/youth/>**)

**(<http://www.eeoc.gov/youth/>)** presents information for teens and other young workers about employment discrimination, including curriculum guides for students and teachers and videos to help young workers learn about their rights and responsibilities.

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) (<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)**.