



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Press Release

01-19-2024

Trinity Health–Michigan to Pay \$50,000 to Settle EEOC Religious Discrimination Lawsuit

Hospital Unlawfully Refused Applicant’s Request for Religious Exemption from Flu Shot Requirement and Rescinded Offer of Employment

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – Trinity Health Grand Rapids, formerly known as Mercy Health St. Mary’s, a hospital and member of the Trinity Health-Michigan health system, agreed to pay \$50,000 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.

According to the EEOC’s lawsuit, Trinity Health violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by rescinding a job offer to an applicant who, for religious reasons, refused to receive a flu vaccine. Under Trinity Health’s influenza policy, which has since been rescinded, employees were required to get a flu shot on an annual basis unless granted an exemption. While the applicant’s conditional job offer for the position of business-office coordinator was pending, he applied for an exemption to the flu-shot requirement based on his religious beliefs. Trinity unlawfully denied his request and rescinded the job offer, the EEOC said.

Such alleged conduct violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits religious discrimination. The EEOC filed suit (EEOC v. Trinity Health-Michigan, d/b/a Mercy Health St. Mary's, Case No. 1:23-cv-00435) in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its administrative conciliation process.

Under the consent decree settling the suit, Trinity Health is enjoined from failing to hire applicants because of their sincerely held religious beliefs against taking the flu vaccine or denying religious exemptions from vaccination in the future, unless doing so would pose an undue hardship. The hospital will also train human resources and senior leadership team members at the hospital on Title VII's religious protections for applicants and employees. In addition, the applicant will receive \$11,348 in back pay along with \$38,651 in non-economic damages.

"Employees should not have to check their religious beliefs at the workplace door," said EEOC Senior Trial Attorney Dale Price. "The applicant's objection, which was based on his sincere religious beliefs, could have been easily accommodated. The EEOC will vigorously protect the religious rights of applicants and employees in the workplace."

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

The EEOC's Detroit Field Office is part of the Indianapolis District Office, which oversees Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, and parts of Ohio.

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 Detroit Field Office

[EEOC Sues Alternate Solutions Health Network for Disability Discrimination](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-alternate-solutions-health-network-disability-discrimination) (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-alternate-solutions-health-network-disability-discrimination>)

[EEOC Sues the Phoenix Center for Disability Discrimination \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-phoenix-center-disability-discrimination\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-phoenix-center-disability-discrimination)

[Eden Foods to Pay Over \\$182,500 to Settle EEOC Sexual Harassment Lawsuit \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eden-foods-pay-over-182500-settle-eeoc-sexual-harassment-lawsuit\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eden-foods-pay-over-182500-settle-eeoc-sexual-harassment-lawsuit)

Recent Press Releases on the Subject of Religion, Retaliation

[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)

[EEOC Sues Wheeler Trucking for Race and Religious Discrimination, Retaliation \(https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-wheeler-trucking-race-and-religious-discrimination-retaliation\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-wheeler-trucking-race-and-religious-discrimination-retaliation)