



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

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**Press Release**

02-06-2024

# **EEOC Sues Shane's Rib Shack Franchisee for Sexual Harassment and Retaliation**

Popular Restaurant Franchisee Subjected Teenage Employee to Sexually Hostile Work Environment Then Fired Her for Complaining, Federal Agency Charges

ATLANTA – RSPS Holdings, a franchisee of the popular fast-casual barbeque restaurant, Shane's Rib Shack, violated federal law when it subjected a teenage female employee to a hostile work environment based on her sex, then fired her in retaliation for complaining about it, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in a lawsuit filed today.

According to the EEOC's suit, the female employee — who was a college freshman at the time — was sexually harassed by an older male manager from September to December 2021. During that time, the manager made daily unwanted comments about the female employee's physical appearance and his romantic feelings for her; spread false sexual rumors about her; and cornered her in areas of the restaurant without cameras, demanding a hug or attention from her before allowing her to pass by. The female employee complained about the harassment to her supervisor on multiple occasions, but no effective remedial action was taken in response. Instead, the restaurant terminated her shortly after her last complaint.

Such alleged conduct violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits

sexual harassment and retaliation against those who complain about it. The EEOC filed suit (5:24-CV-00049-TES) in U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Georgia, Macon Division, after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its conciliation process. The EEOC is seeking back pay, compensatory damages, and punitive damages for the employee, as well as injunctive relief to prevent future discrimination.

“Under Title VII, employers have a duty to protect their employees from sexual harassment at work,” said Marcus G. Keegan, regional attorney for the EEOC’s Atlanta District Office. “When the franchisee learned about the misconduct, it should have taken reasonable steps to correct it. Instead, the company punished a teenage employee for exercising her rights, rather than the individual who was harassing her. The EEOC will fight to correct the injustices perpetrated in this case.”

Darrell Graham, district director of the Atlanta office, said, “All employees have the right to be free from sexual harassment in the workplace, and they should not be punished for exercising those rights. The EEOC remains committed to protecting and enforcing these rights, particularly in those cases involving our most vulnerable employees, such as teenage workers in hourly positions.”

For more information on sexual harassment, please visit <https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-harassment> (<https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-harassment>). For more information on retaliation, please visit <https://www.eeoc.gov/retaliation> (<https://www.eeoc.gov/retaliation>).

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 Atlanta District Office has jurisdiction over Georgia and the South Carolina counties of Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Georgetown, Hampton, Jasper, and Williamsburg.

The EEOC prevents and remedies unlawful employment discrimination and advances equal opportunity for all. 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/) (<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/>

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## Recent Press Releases from the Atlanta District Office

**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>)**

**Papa John's Pizza to Pay \$175,000 to Settle Disability Discrimination Lawsuit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/papa-johns-pizza-pay-175000-settle-disability-discrimination-lawsuit>)**

**Landry's Restaurant Chain Subsidiary Pays \$25,000 to Resolve Religious Discrimination Suit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/landrys-restaurant-chain-subsidiary-pays-25000-resolve-religious-discrimination-suit>)**

## Recent Press Releases on the Subject of Sexual Harassment

**Paramount Healthcare Consultants to Pay \$50,000 in EEOC Sex Discrimination and Retaliation Lawsuit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/paramount-healthcare-consultants-pay-50000-eeoc-sex-discrimination-and-retaliation-lawsuit>)**

**Walmart to Pay \$30,000 to Settle EEOC Sexual Harassment Suit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/walmart-pay-30000-settle-eeoc-sexual-harassment-suit>)**

**EEOC Encourages Victims of Sexual Harassment at Local Swami's Restaurants to Come Forward (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-encourages-victims-sexual-harassment-local-swamis-restaurants-come-forward>)**