



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Press Release

03-28-2024

EEOC Sues Sis-Bro, Inc. for Gender Identity Discrimination and Harassment

Hog Farm Owner and Employees Harassed Transgender Employee, Federal Agency Charges

CHICAGO – Sis-Bro, Inc., a hog farm in New Athens, Illinois, violated federal law when it allowed an employee to be harassed because of her sex and gender identity, forcing her to quit, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in a lawsuit filed today.

According to the lawsuit, the targeted employee, who was a high performer, began her transition in 2018. From that time, Sis-Bro’s co-owner made frequent, derogatory comments about the targeted employee’s gender identity; the co-owner refused to call the targeted employee by her name and referred to her by her former name; repeatedly told her she was “a guy”; and criticized her use of employer-provided health insurance and leave for gender affirming care.

Further, Sis-Bro failed to stop aggressive sexual harassment by a fellow employee. Beginning in October 2020, a newly hired employee exposed his genitals to the targeted employee, touched her breasts on one occasion, attempted to touch her

breasts on other occasions and made frequent unwanted comments and sexual advances towards her. Much of this behavior occurred openly in the presence of other employees. Sis-Bro did not have a policy for reporting harassment. Despite this, at least one employee reported the harassment to the co-owner, but the co-owner did not take any steps to address the harassment. This behavior continued until the targeted employee was forced to quit.

Such alleged conduct violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employers from discriminating against employees on the basis of sex. Harassment based on gender identity is a form of sex discrimination prohibited by the statute. The EEOC filed suit (EEOC v. Sis-Bro, Inc., Case No. 3:24-cv-968) in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Illinois, East St. Louis Division, after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its administrative conciliation process.

“The investigation revealed that Sis-Bro Inc., through its co-owner, engaged in and failed to address severe and pervasive harassment over the course of years,” said EEOC Chicago District Director Amrith Kaur Aakre. “The EEOC is committed to ensuring transgender individuals are protected from harassment and other discrimination in the workplace.”

Greg Gochanour, regional attorney for the EEOC’s Chicago District Office, said, “Transgender workers, like all workers, deserve to have a safe workplace free from harassment. Employers have the responsibility to prevent and address harassment based on gender identity, but the EEOC is ready to enforce federal law when they fail to do so.”

For more information on sexual orientation and gender identity 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>). For more information on harassment, please visit <https://www.eeoc.gov/harassment> (<https://www.eeoc.gov/harassment>).

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 prevents and remedies unlawful employment discrimination and advances equal opportunity for all. 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>).

Recent Press Releases from the Chicago District Office

Voyant Beauty Will Pay \$75,000 to Settle EEOC Disability Discrimination Lawsuit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/voyant-beauty-will-pay-75000-settle-eeoc-disability-discrimination-lawsuit>)

Blackwell Security Services Will Pay \$70,000 to Settle EEOC Religious Discrimination Lawsuit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/blackwell-security-services-will-pay-70000-settle-eeoc-religious-discrimination-lawsuit>)

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

Recent Press Releases on the Subject of Sexual Harassment, Retaliation

Shane's Rib Shack Franchisees to Pay \$56,500 in EEOC Sexual Harassment and Retaliation Lawsuit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/shanes-rib-shack-franchisees-pay-56500-eeoc-sexual-harassment-and-retaliation-lawsuit>)

Golden Entertainment, Inc. To Pay \$100,000 To Settle EEOC Sexual Harassment Lawsuit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/golden-entertainment-inc-pay-100000-settle-eeoc-sexual-harassment-lawsuit>)

Ojos Locos Sports Cantina to Pay \$700,000 to Settle EEOC Sexual Harassment and Retaliation Lawsuit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/ojos-locos-sports-cantina-pay-700000-settle-eeoc-sexual-harassment-and-retaliation-lawsuit>)