



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Press Release

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EEOC Sues Swami's Café and Honey's Bistro for Sexual Harassment and Retaliation

Restaurant Chain Allowed Sexual Harassment of Teenage Female Employees, Federal Agency Charges

ENCINITAS, Calif. – Swami's Café and Honey's Bistro, a chain of casual counter and table-service restaurants, violated federal law by allowing a class of female employees to be subjected to sexual harassment and retaliation, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in a lawsuit filed today.

According to the EEOC's lawsuit, beginning as early as 2019, nine locations of the San Diego-based Swami's Café and Honey's Bistro allowed a class of young female employees, including some teenagers, to be subjected to sexual harassment by male supervisors and co-workers. The harassment included repeated, frequent, and offensive sex-based remarks and advances, as well as unwelcome touching. Swami's Café and Honey's Bistro did not properly monitor the workplace, which left the employees vulnerable to ongoing harassment. Female employees who complained were retaliated against or forced to quit their jobs, the EEOC further alleges in its lawsuit.

Such alleged conduct violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits a hostile workplace environment based on sex, including sexual harassment, as well

as retaliation against individuals who complain about sexual harassment or engage in other protected activity. The EEOC filed suit (EEOC v. Swami's 101 LLC, et al., Case No. **3:23-cv-00902-LAB-NLS** (<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fecf.casd.uscourts.gov%2Fcgi-bin%2FDktRpt.pl%3F759239&data=05%7C01%7CNICOLE.STGERMAIN%40EEOC.GOV%7C2f50497acae54cf6f81a08db5700adc3%7C3ba5b9434e564a2f9b91b1f1c37d645b%7C0%7C0%7C638199433011900402%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ikl1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=MtXTSEjREF23bkBYCQu%2BiZH%2BOJJb0a0SiS2vfVx1iLA%3D&reserved=0>)) in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through its voluntary conciliation process. The EEOC seeks monetary damages for the claimants, including compensatory and punitive damages, and injunctive relief against the company to prevent such unlawful conduct in the future.

“We are seeing more cases involving younger workers who may not be aware of their rights, or may be hesitant to report harassment, because this is their first time in the workforce,” said Anna Park, regional attorney for the EEOC’s Los Angeles District Office, whose jurisdiction includes San Diego County. “Employers should take greater care to ensure young workers are protected in the workplace by having effective policies and procedures, training, and accountability measures in place.”

Jacquelyn Famber, district director for the EEOC’s San Diego Office, added, “It is crucial that employers act on reports of harassment in a timely manner and properly investigate all complaints of harassment in the workplace. Retaliating against employees who report discrimination or harassment at work is against the law. The EEOC will continue to protect workers and provide strong enforcement against employers who retaliate against employees for exerting their protected rights in the workplace.”

To learn more about sexual harassment, visit <https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-harassment> (<https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-harassment>). For more information about workplace retaliation, 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 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>).