



Press Release

04-09-2024

Olive Garden/GMRI Inc. To Pay \$30,000 To Settle EEOC Disability Discrimination Suit

Manager Refused to Hire Job Applicant Because of Disability and Asked Unlawful Questions During Interview, Federal Agency Charged

PITTSBURGH – GMRI, Inc., doing business as Olive Garden, will pay \$30,000 and agreed to significant non-monetary remedies under a consent decree settling a disability discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the federal agency announced today.

According to the EEOC's lawsuit, the general manager of GMRI's Olive Garden restaurant in Tarentum, Pennsylvania interviewed an applicant with a disability for a busser position. During the interview, the general manager asked the applicant various illegal questions related to the applicant's disability, including questions about his use of a cane to walk, what was "wrong with" the applicant, and how "bad" his disability was. The general manager then ended the interview, and the restaurant declined to hire the applicant because of his disability and because of the information it learned from the general manager's illegal questions, the EEOC charged.

The EEOC brought claims against Olive Garden under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), which prohibits disability discrimination in

employment. The EEOC filed suit (U.S. EEOC v. GMRI, Inc. d/b/a Olive Garden, Civil Action No. 2:23-cv-01448-NR in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania in Pittsburgh after first attempting to reach a pre-litigation settlement through the agency's conciliation process.

The EEOC and Olive Garden subsequently agreed to settle the case by consent decree before any findings concerning EEOC's claims. On April 9, 2024, the federal court approved the decree, resolving the litigation. In addition to paying \$30,000 to the job applicant with a disability, Olive Garden is prohibited from engaging in disability discrimination, conducting unlawful disability-related inquiries or medical examination of job applicants, or taking employment actions based on information obtained through such unlawful inquiries in the future. Olive Garden is also required to provide mandatory ADA training to the general manager and certain other personnel at its Tarentum Olive Garden location. Additionally, the decree requires that Olive Garden report various information to the EEOC concerning its employment practices at the Tarentum location.

"Workers with disabilities provide invaluable contributions to their employers and to the American economy when given a fair opportunity to show their job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities," said EEOC Regional Attorney Debra Lawrence. "The EEOC is strongly committed to protecting disabled workers from job discrimination, including illegal disability-related inquiries, which often produce employment decisions rooted in prejudice, implicit bias, unfounded fears or assumptions, or a desire to evade the legal duty to provide reasonable accommodations."

EEOC Philadelphia District Director Jamie Williamson said, "The promise of the Americans with Disabilities Act is that every worker, from the part-time employee earning minimum wage to the corporate CEO, will be treated by employers based on their individual merits and not rejected or dismissed based on their disabilities. The EEOC and its employees will continue to strive every day to make that promise a reality."

For more information on disability discrimination, please visit

<https://www.eeoc.gov/disability-discrimination>
(<https://www.eeoc.gov/disability-discrimination>).

The EEOC's Philadelphia District Office has jurisdiction over Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and parts of New Jersey and Ohio. Attorneys in the

EEOC Philadelphia District Office also prosecute discrimination cases in Washington, D.C., and parts of Virginia.

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**](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**](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEEOC/subscriber/new)).

Recent Press Releases from the Pittsburgh Area Office

EEOC Sues Wrightway Ready-Mix and Wright Concrete & Construction for Disability Discrimination (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-wrightway-ready-mix-and-wright-concrete-construction-disability-discrimination>)

Center One and Capital Management Services to Pay \$60,000 in EEOC Religious Accommodation Suit (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/center-one-and-capital-management-services-pay-60000-eeoc-religious-accommodation-suit>)

EEOC Sues Weis Markets for Sexual Harassment and Unlawful Use of Employee Assistance Program (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-weis-markets-sexual-harassment-and-unlawful-use-employee-assistance-program>)

Recent Press Releases on the Subject of Disability

EEOC Sues Las Vegas Call Center for Disability Discrimination and Retaliation (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-las-vegas-call-center-disability-discrimination-and-retaliation>)

EEOC Sues Hunt Forest Products for Disability Discrimination (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-hunt-forest-products-disability-discrimination>)

EEOC Sues Eastern Shipbuilding Group for Disability Discrimination (<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-eastern-shipbuilding-group>)

disability-discrimination).