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Legal experts and advocates allege further discriminatory harassment by HIV-positive employee's former employer

For Immediate Release

DETROIT, Mich., Dec. 21, 2011 – A Detroit-area HIV-positive man who alleges to have been followed around by coworkers with cans of Lysol to spray his work area, relentlessly harassed and ultimately fired from his job because he revealed his status to a supervisor is being further victimized by his former employer, according to his attorneys.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) recently determined that James White had just cause to file a complaint against Great Expressions Dental Care, a chain with offices in Michigan and six other states. White's attorneys are preparing to file a lawsuit. The EEOC findings read in part:

"The Commission's investigation substantiates the Charging party's allegations that the Respondent organization subjected him to discriminatory discipline, that the Respondent organization denied Charging Party reasonable accommodation, and that the legitimate non-discriminatory reason offered for the Charging Party's discharge was untruthful (i.e. pretextual)."

After recent local and national media interest and a petition created by a student on Change.org, which garnered more than 41,000 votes in a few days, Great Expressions responded with threats of legal action. A civil suit claiming false allegations, a "cease and desist" order to the creator of the original Change.org petition (which was quickly replaced by another supporter), and online statements all occurred Wednesday.

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“We are outraged by the further, relentless discrimination and bullying toward an individual who has been traumatized more than anyone should ever be,” said President of Detroit Legal Services (DLS) Joshua L. Moore.

Detroit Legal Services has been handling the case for White since charges were originally filed several years ago. DLS continues to represent White, along with attorney Nicole Thompson.

Thompson is glad to see that White has so many supporters, as evidenced by the astounding success of the petition on his behalf, adding that she " ... hopes the legal system will provide the ultimate support to James, by ensuring that he receives the justice that he deserves after everything he has suffered."

The law firm of Devaney Jacob and Wilson in Troy, Mich., served White with a civil suit on Wednesday alleging innocence on behalf of Great Expressions, in direct conflict with the findings of the EEOC.

DLS has become a sought-after nationwide expert in HIV/AIDS legal matters. Through its specialized program, DLS has successfully used its expertise and resources to provide personalized legal services for more than 300 clients to date who have found themselves struggling within the system.

The firm, headquartered in Detroit, proudly gives 10 percent of its earnings back to the community via donations to HIV/AIDS nonprofit organizations.

“We strongly suggest Great Expressions require all employees participate in HIV Education courses,” said Moore. “A workplace imbued with ignorance and fear is unacceptable – no one should have to tolerate it, let alone a person with a serious medical condition. The actions of Great Expressions amount to nothing less than a campaign of intimidation and error.”

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For more information:

Detroit Legal Services Blog ([hyperlink](#))

Detroit Legal Services Facebook page ([hyperlink](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Detroit-Legal-Services-PLLC/132227600134175))<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Detroit-Legal-Services-PLLC/132227600134175>

http://www.poz.com/articles/detroit_hiv_lysol_401_21587.shtml

New Change.org petition:

<http://www.change.org/petitions/great-expressions-dental-centers-must-receive-hiv-education>