



CENTRAL HEALTH

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Central Health Board of Managers

FROM: Larry Wallace, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: October 23, 2019

RE: Employment Separation

On September 19, 2019, I attended the 2019 EquitySpace: Designing for an Inclusive Community event at the Downtown Hilton Hotel. During this event, I was honored to receive the Equity Warrior Award for community service.

After receiving the award and returning to my seat, Central Health [REDACTED], [REDACTED], approached my table to congratulate me and requested a photo with me. I complied with her request and two (2) photos were taken. [REDACTED] took the first photo using the selfie mode on her phone and then asked someone at the table to take the second photo. During the second photo, I placed my arm around [REDACTED] waist/mid-back area, which is a common posing position and is in no way sexual. At no time did I feel I was imposing upon her [REDACTED] or acting inappropriately, especially given our history of similar interactions. [REDACTED] never stated she was uncomfortable or offended during the photo shoot and departed my table afterward. I did not see the photos.

Later that afternoon, I attended the breakout session of the event where [REDACTED] was scheduled as a presenter. [REDACTED] informed me earlier that day that she was presenting, so I attended to provide moral support. I would do the same for any Central Health employee or [REDACTED]. Unfortunately, only three people attended her presentation, a person named Nancy, a Seton employee and myself. [REDACTED] was extremely upset and humiliated that no one came to hear her presentation. I encouraged her to proceed with her presentation, however she refused. I attempted to provide moral support, but she was very upset so I departed to attend another session.

On the evening of September 23rd, I was notified by Central Health CEO, Mike Geeslin, that a hostile work environment complaint had been filed against me and that he referred the charge to Travis County Attorneys for investigation. He further stated I was being placed on

administrative leave with pay and directed me not to return to the office until further notice. No other details were provided to me during this call, except that I would be contacted by the Travis County Attorney's Office.

On September 26th, I met with Travis County Attorneys to receive information on the complaint filed against me and to provide comments. During the investigation, I was informed that [REDACTED] filed the complaint and was offended because I had placed my arm around her during the photo shoot. I asked why [REDACTED] did not express her discomfort to me, given our non-threatening relationship, and simply ask me to remove it. The attorneys had no answer. I was asked if [REDACTED] stated I touched her in sensitive areas, such as her breasts or buttocks, and was told no. Under the circumstances I have described, I strongly believe I am the victim and am being targeted. As a friend, and often a mentor, I respectfully complied with [REDACTED] request for a photo, which I still have not seen.

On September 27th, Mr. Geeslin called to discuss the results of the investigation and asked if I felt I was the victim, to which I replied yes. He asked if I would be willing to meet with [REDACTED] to discuss the situation and I stated I would love to sit across from the table from her to learn what I did to offend her. I further stated I was completely confused and baffled by this extreme course of action, especially given the nature of our professional relationship. [REDACTED] has routinely and openly initiated hugs when we greeted each other. At times it felt awkward, especially with the awareness that all eyes are on me. One employee is on record stating she watches me to see if my interactions with female staff are inappropriate. I am very sensitive to perceptions and judgements made by some at Central Health because of my executive role and being African American.

During our offsite meetings, [REDACTED] would always state, "you can be honest with me, I won't burn you" when soliciting information. Our discussion primarily centered around work issues and she was often critical of Central Health leadership and operations policies. At times, these conversations were uncomfortable for me because I am staff and she is a [REDACTED], which could affect my position at Central Health.

I support the MeToo movement and the rights of women to be protected from workplace harassment. I believe I am the victim in this case and to face termination for simply placing my arm around [REDACTED] under these circumstances is more than insulting. There were other ways to handle this matter, however, it would require a mindset of fair treatment from leadership. I believe my rights have been violated and will take any actions necessary to protect my reputation and defend my honor.

This practice is far too common and must be addressed.