



Press Release
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Central Health Attorney: Lawsuit Allegations by Former Executive are Baseless
Healthcare District parted ways with the employee due to allegations of sexual harassment substantiated by outside investigations

(Austin) – Responding to a wrongful termination lawsuit filed by Larry Wallace, former chief administrative officer for Central Health, the Travis County Healthcare District’s attorney strongly rejected all claims, describing them, “baseless and false.”

Wallace’s resignation was accepted in September 2019, following an investigation into an accusation of unwanted touching of a member of the Central Health Board of Managers at an Austin conference the same month.

“Central Health takes complaints of sexual harassment, race discrimination, and retaliation seriously,” said Stephanie Rojo, attorney with Thompson, Coe, Cousins & Irons, LLP who is representing Central Health. “However, Mr. Wallace’s separation had nothing to do with race discrimination or retaliation. There were significant factors in Central Health’s decision to part ways with Wallace, including substantiated past instances of inappropriate conduct followed by corrective training. A 2019 independent investigation by the Travis County Attorney’s office along with previously documented instances involving several Central Health employees led to Wallace’s resignation in lieu of termination.”

In early 2020, Central Health’s Board of Managers was asked to review the organization’s decision to part ways with Wallace as part of a grievance filed by the plaintiff. The Board hired outside legal counsel to investigate Wallace’s grievance and report back. In June 2020, that investigation concluded there was no evidence substantiating Mr. Wallace’s allegations of race discrimination and retaliation, and the Central Health Board of Managers subsequently voted to uphold the decision of President & CEO Mike Geeslin.

Wallace began working at Central Health in 2005 and served as acting Chief Executive Officer for approximately five months after the organization’s original CEO Trish Young Brown retired, and before the board of managers hired Geeslin in May 2017. During his time at Central Health, Wallace participated in multiple sexual harassment trainings along with Central Health executives and staff, and after one allegation he was required to participate in personalized one-on-one sexual harassment avoidance training. During this training Wallace was explicitly instructed that touching and sexist comments and jokes were inappropriate in the workplace setting.

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CENTRAL HEALTH

Central Health is committed to maintaining a work environment free of all forms of sexual harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. Central Health will do everything in its power to protect anyone who comes forward to report incidents of sexual harassment and/or discrimination from retaliation, and victim blaming.

“Harassment and discrimination violate federal law, and violate Central Health’s Human Resources Policy, and it cannot, and will not, be tolerated,” Central Health Enterprise VP of Human Resources Susan Lara Willars said. “If there are reports of harassment or discrimination, Central Health will thoroughly investigate the complaint. If the investigation determines an offense occurred, Central Health takes appropriate corrective action, and does everything in our power to protect the person making the report.”

Willars said Central Health conducts sexual harassment training annually for every employee at every level.

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About Central Health

Central Health is the local public agency that connects Travis County residents with low income to quality health care. We work with a network of partners to eliminate health disparities and reach our vision of Travis County becoming a model healthy community.