

EEOC sues Pizza Studio restaurant owner for violating Equal Pay Act

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ST. LOUIS – A Delaware company that until recently operated a Pizza Studio restaurant in Kansas City, Kan., and still owns other restaurants nationwide, violated federal law by withdrawing job offers from two teens after the woman complained about being offered less pay than her male friend, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charged in a lawsuit it filed Sept. 5.



According to the EEOC's lawsuit, two high school friends, Jenson Walcott and Jake Reed, applied to work at Pizza Studio as "pizza artists" in 2016. After both were interviewed and offered jobs, Walcott and Reed discussed their starting wages. Upon learning that Reed was offered 25¢ more per hour, Walcott called the restaurant to complain about the unequal pay. When she did so, the company immediately withdrew its offers of employment from both Walcott and Reed.

Such alleged conduct violates the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which prohibits companies from paying women and men unequally and retaliating against those who complain about or support a claim of unequal pay.

The EEOC filed its lawsuit (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. PS Holding LLC (Pizza Studio), Civil Action No. 2:17-cv-02513 in U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas. The EEOC seeks monetary relief as well as a judgment and order requiring the company to implement policies and

practices to prevent future discrimination.

“The federal law requiring equal pay for jobs requiring the same skill, effort, and responsibility is older than the law which protects employees from discrimination based on race, religion, color, sex, and national origin,” said James R. Neely, Jr., director of EEOC’s St. Louis District Office. “Women must absolutely be paid the same as men for equal work.”

Andrea G. Baran, the EEOC’s regional attorney in St. Louis, said, “Perhaps even worse than offering unequal pay is firing employees when they make a good-faith inquiry regarding the possibility of unfair compensation. Employees need to know that the law protects co-workers who talk about their pay and those who complain if they believe the employer is not paying men and woman equally.”

The EEOC is responsible for enforcing federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. The St. Louis District Office oversees Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and a portion of southern Illinois.

The EEOC’s Youth@Work website (at <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.

For more information on the EEOC, [click here](#).

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