The Dugger Law Firm, PLLC Has Filed a Disability Discrimination Case on Behalf of Jamal Othman Against NYC Mayoral Candidate and Former DVS Commissioner Loree Sutton

On November 7, 2019, U.S. Marine Corps veteran Jamal Othman filed a disability discrimination, retaliation, and interference complaint against the City of New York’s Department of Veterans’ Services (“DVS”), New York City mayoral candidate and former DVS Commissioner Ret. Gen. Loree Sutton, and current DVS Assistant Commissioner Jason Parker.


Most recently the Assistant Commissioner for Engagement & Community Services for DVS, Mr. Othman worked as an Assistant Commissioner for DVS from 2016-2019. He previously served as the Chief of Staff for Mayor Bloomberg for the New York City Mayor’s Office of Veterans’ Affairs (2012-2014) and the Deputy Director of the New York State Division of Veterans’ Affairs (2014-2016).

Mr. Othman’s complaint alleges that, despite DVS’s stated mission of supporting NYC veterans, including those with mental health disabilities, former Commissioner Sutton engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination against DVS’s military veteran employees with mental health disabilities, including targeting them for termination of employment from DVS.

The complaint alleges that shortly after Mr. Othman disclosed his service-connected mental health disability, former Commissioner Sutton demoted him, pressured him to resign, terminated his employment (by way of an armed escort out of DVS’s offices), and banned him from entering any property under the jurisdiction of DVS.

The complaint further alleges that former Commissioner Sutton created a hostile work environment for veterans with mental health disabilities.

The complaint alleges that her conduct included: (1) telling Mr. Othman that she wanted to find a reason to fire a veteran with a mental health disability in part because of their mental health disability (in addition to their political views); (2) expressing her pleasure, and becoming visibly giddy, after hearing of the departure of a veteran with a mental health disability from DVS; and (3) repeatedly instructing Mr. Othman “no more troubled veterans.”

The complaint additionally alleges that five days after former Commissioner Sutton terminated his employment because of his mental health disability and/or protected activity, she testified about veteran mental health to the New York City Council’s committees on Veterans and Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction, Oversight Hearing on “Veteran Suicide and Mental Health.”

Filed in the Southern District of New York pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”), the Family and Medical Leave Act (“FMLA”), and the New York City Human Rights Law (“NYCHRL”), the fourteen-count complaint’s claims include: (1) disability discrimination; (2) retaliation; (3) harassment and
hostile work environment; (4) failure to accommodate; (5) interference; and (6) aiding and abetting liability. The complaint also utilizes the NYCHRL’s 2017 amendments enacting anti-discrimination protections for uniformed service members (i.e. veterans), which Mr. Othman assisted in passing while at DVS.

Mr. Othman’s complaint seeks back pay, front pay, reinstatement, compensatory damages, declaratory relief, and injunctive relief, as well as punitive damages and FMLA liquidated damages from former Commissioner Sutton and Assistant Commissioner Parker in their individual capacities.

On November 6, 2019, The New York Times reported that former Commissioner Sutton had declared her candidacy for Mayor of New York City.

The case is Othman v. The City of New York et al., No. 19 Civ. 10351, in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York.

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