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Daiichi faces $100 mn law suit for gender discrimination

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Female employees file lawsuit against Daiichi Sankyo for gender discrimination



Singapore: Six current and former female pharmaceutical sales professionals working with Daiichi Sankyo, US, have filed a $100 million class and collective action gender discrimination lawsuit against the firm in the US District Court for the Northern District of California.

Represented by Sanford Heisler, a civil rights law firm that has successfully litigated class action cases in the industry, the women seek to end pervasive gender discrimination in their workplace on behalf of themselves and a class of several hundred female Daiichi Sankyo sales professionals, who have worked for the company in the US.

The complaint alleges that Daiichi Sankyo pays female sales employees less than male employees for doing the same work; promotes or advances female sales employees at a slower rate than male sales employees; treats pregnant employees and working mothers of young children adversely as compared to non-pregnant employees, male employees, or non-caregivers; and subjects women to other discriminatory terms and conditions of employment.

According to the complaint, a discrete group of predominantly male Daiichi executives and senior sales managers keep a tight rein on employment decisions, including decisions regarding sales employees' compensation, advancement, and other terms and conditions of employment. Through this male dominated leadership structure, the company has approved and implemented policies, practices and decisions that have systemically discriminated against female employees.

The Plaintiffs cite Daiichi Sankyo's violations of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the federal Equal Pay Act of 1963, as well as the California Fair Employment and Housing Act, the California Equal Pay Act and the California Unfair Business Practices Act in today's complaint.

Ms Janette Wipper, a San Francisco-based partner at Sanford Heisler and lead attorney on the matter, said that, "Female pharmaceutical sales employees, including the Plaintiffs, have been cautioned against committing 'career suicide' if they choose to have children while working for Daiichi Sankyo. Daiichi Sankyo's female sales reps have also been called 'baby-makers' while pregnant, required to attend meetings in smoke-filled rooms during their pregnancies, and received suspect reductions in compensation after returning from maternity leaves.

Women who have dared to complain about the unequal treatment have been summarily 'managed out' of the company. As a consequence of this company's continuous discriminatory conduct, the plaintiffs and the class are entitled to all legal and equitable remedies available for violations of these laws, especially much needed programmatic change within the company to ensure that going forward women, including women with children, are provided equal employment opportunities at Daiichi."

Ms Felicia Medina, senior litigation counsel, Sanford Heisler's San Francisco office, said that, "Daiichi Sankyo's systemic discriminatory actions span the gamut of prohibited employment practices. The company's behavior, as detailed in the complaint, reads like a primer on how not to treat female employees, particularly those who are pregnant or have caregiving responsibilities for infants.

Plaintiffs' experiences illustrate the lengths Daiichi Sankyo goes to ensure that women remain in their 'place,' especially women who avail themselves of the company's so-called 'flexible work schedule' when they are expecting a child or caring for their newborns."