Lawsuit Claims Restaurant Worker Was Fired Because He Has HIV

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October 26, 2020 By Trent Straube

A former employee at a restaurant and bar in Texarkana, Texas, filed a federal lawsuit alleging he was fired from the job in March 2019 because he has HIV, reports the Texarkana Gazette.

The lawsuit was filed against Hopkins Icehouse Holdings LLC, the company that managed the restaurant last March (the eatery is now operated under a different name and management).

According to the lawsuit, Nicholas Watson said that when he was terminated from his job at Hopkins Icehouse on Gibson Lane, a general manager referenced Watson's HIV status as a reason for ending his employment. "We're worried it's going to affect business, like revenue," he allegedly told Watson.

Watson seeks compensation for "back pay, front pay, loss of fringe benefits, loss of bonuses and other costs. The complaint asks for punitive damages, attorney fees and court costs as well," reports the Texarkana Gazette.

Watson claims his employer's actions violated the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which prohibits public entities from discriminating against people who have disabilities, including HIV. The Department of Labor and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission help enforce and investigate claims involving the Americans with Disabilities Act. To learn more about the ADA, call the ADA information line at 800-514-0301 or 800-514-0383, or visit ADA.gov.

See our POZ cover story “Defying Discrimination” (pictured above) about taking action against stigma and discrimination. It includes tips on filing an HIV lawsuit.

To be clear, people cannot contract HIV from eating food handled by someone who is HIV positive. For more about that topic, read the POZ Basics "HIV Transmission and Risks."

In other HIV-related news out of Texarkana, see last month's POZ article "Woman With HIV Died Due to Neglect While in Jail, Alleges Lawsuit [VIDEO]." You can get more details and updates about the U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of Texas at txed.uscourts.gov.

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