Sheriff Sued for HIV Discrimination

He took back a job offer after learning the candidate had HIV, according to a Lambda Legal lawsuit.

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A sheriff in Louisiana is being sued for HIV discrimination after he offered the job of sheriff's deputy to William "Liam" Pierce, only to rescind it upon learning Pierce is living with HIV.

According to a press release from Lambda Legal, which is representing Pierce, the case is Pierce v. Ackal and involves the Iberia Parish Sheriff's Office; it was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana.

Pierce applied for the job in 2012 and filed a discrimination charge with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) when the offer was withdrawn. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), such discrimination is illegal. After reviewing the case, the EEOC found probable cause in 2016.

Pierce had previous work experience as a paramedic, volunteer firefighter and a police officer. He moved to Louisiana from Ohio in 2005 to help relief efforts after Hurricane Katrina.

"When I was offered the job. I was so excited because I would be helping people, and that is what I love to do," Pierce said in the press release. "A job in service to the community has been at the center of my life for as long as I can remember, so when the Iberia Parish Sheriff's Office took the job offer back, I was just devastated. It was a punch to the gut. I couldn't believe it. It's just not right that good, hardworking people are turned away from jobs they are qualified to do because of sheer ignorance. My hope is that what happened to me doesn't happen to anyone else. The Iberia Parish Sheriff and his office need to learn about HIV and understand that it does not disqualify me from doing this job or any other."

Lambda Legal is a national organization that fights for the rights of LGBT people and everyone living with HIV. To read a recent POZ profile on the group, read "Making the Case for Equality."

To read about other HIV-related discrimination cases in POZ, click here.

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