

Nurse sues CMH in Bolivar for sexual harassment, wrongful termination



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BOLIVAR, Mo. - A former employee of Citizens Memorial Hospital says one of CMH's employees – the current mayor of Bolivar -- sexually harassed her on her job and wouldn't stop after she asked repeatedly. Registered nurse Kera Cantrell of Fair Play sued the healthcare company last week because she says she was fired for a "bogus illegitimate reason" after she reported the sexual harassment.

The lawsuit in Polk County Circuit Court says Cantrell worked in CMH's Cardiac Cath Lab, where she worked with Dr. John Best, CMH's lead cardiologist. Best is not named as a defendant in the lawsuit but Cantrell says the two-term mayor "engaged in conduct of the sexual harassment, including direct statements and participation in communications, banter, and an inappropriate environment for females of gender in violation of CMH policy."

The lawsuit describes in graphic detail things that Cantrell says Best said to her, including singing parts of a sexually suggestive song that Cantrell calls "offensive, degrading and inappropriate. No one said anything as they were scared, he was a doctor and in charge."

Cantrell says she asked Best to stop several times, and reported it to Human Resources, where someone said her complaint would be investigated. She said she was "given a written counseling in retaliation for her report" and then fired. Cantrell says "voicing her concern as to sexual harassment and inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature was a contributing factor to the decision of termination."

The lawsuit says Cantrell's complaint of sexual harassment was investigated after she was terminated

and that investigation "determined that inappropriate sexual conduct had occurred."

Cantrell, who is represented by attorney Jay Kirksey, is seeking damages for physical and mental pain, anguish and distress, as well as back pay and benefits that she would have earned if she wasn't fired, and attorney's fees.

A spokeswoman for CMH said the company doesn't comment on personnel issues such as the ones that are at the center of the lawsuit.

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