

March 10, 2021

C&G Helps Secure Critical Policy Changes to Improve County Prison Working Conditions through Pro Bono Sex and Disability Discrimination Matter

C&G partnered with the [National Women's Law Center](#) (NWLC) in pursuing sex and disability discrimination EEOC charges against the Shelby County Division of Corrections on behalf of "Ms. N." and other female prison guards that resulted in a favorable monetary settlement for Ms. N. and the prison's adoption of substantially bolstered sexual harassment and disability accommodation policies and protections.

Ms. N. alleged that she and other female prison guards were subjected to a hostile work environment plagued by pervasive sexual harassment by male inmates for nearly two decades that management repeatedly failed to remedy or prevent. After dozens of incident reports and union grievances remained unaddressed, Ms. N. prepared a petition signed by 100 staff members urging management to adopt corrective measures. Instead, management continued to ignore sexual harassment complaints, and retaliated against Ms. N. and other female prison guards by denying them promotions, subjecting her to unwarranted disciplinary investigations, and denying her reasonable accommodations related to her disabilities.

During the EEOC investigation, C&G worked closely with NWLC and Ms. N. to build the factual record, and pursue her claims that the Division of Corrections (i) fostered a hostile work environment based on sex by failing to take immediate and appropriate remedial steps to both prevent and respond to inmates' sexual harassment of Ms. N. and other female prison guards, (ii) subjected Ms. N. and other female prison guards to disparate treatment on the basis of sex by denying them promotional opportunities, and (iii) illegally retaliated against Ms. N. and other female prison guards who engaged in protected activity by filing grievances through their union and filing EEOC charges. The EEOC investigated the charges and issued a notice authorizing Ms. N. to sue the Division.

After Ms. N. filed suit in the Western District of Tennessee, the parties reached a settlement that included a monetary settlement for Ms. N., and the Division's agreement to clarify its sexual harassment policies, amend its disability and leave policies, train all employees on their rights to request disability-related accommodations, and ensure that managers and supervisors are aware of their obligations to provide such accommodations.

The Washington, D.C.-based team that represented Ms. N. consisted of [Melissa Maxman](#), [Erica Lai](#), and former associate Danielle Morello.

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