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PRESS RELEASE

**CIVIL RIGHTS INVESTIGATOR FILES SUIT AGAINST STATE
AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR ELIMINATING DISCRIMINATION**

PITTSBURGH, PA, Sep 22, 2014 – Former civil rights investigator Cheryl Williams filed a federal discrimination suit on Monday against the state agency responsible for eliminating discrimination. Williams alleges that the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission discriminated against her on the basis of her disability, race, sex, and age. One side of this case features a hypocritical government agency riddled with mismanagement. The other side features a dedicated champion for civil rights who endured physical pain and humiliating discrimination for years while trying to do her job.

Williams' complaint describes how the Commission's regional director singled her out for discrimination. He bypassed the normal chain of supervision, subjecting her to scrutiny and hostility that other non-minority employees never had to deal with. The regional director's harassment of Williams grew worse whenever Williams attempted to stand up for her rights as an employee. He falsely accused Williams of violating minor policies, and he physically confronted her, looming in her cubicle with such aggression that Williams was afraid to be alone in her own office.

Williams suffers from excruciating and chronic back pain. She knew her rights as an employee in Pennsylvania, and she requested a reasonable accommodation: an adjustable desk that would help reduce her pain while she worked to fight discrimination. The Commission initially approved the request and purchased the desk specifically for Williams, and she was grateful to be relieved of some pain during the day. Later, the Commission abruptly reversed its position. One of the supervisors took the desk for himself as a second table in his office. Williams, again suffering intense pain after being deprived of the medically-required desk, reminded her supervisors multiple times that she was supposed to have the desk. She recalls that when she mentioned the desk and her pain to the regional director, he merely shrugged and changed the subject.

Williams has dedicated her career and her life to civil rights, serving for the last 15 years as an investigator at the Commission. She is a proud African American woman in her fifties, and she suffers pain every day from her medical disabilities. She endured physical pain, psychological



humiliation, and illegal discrimination for years until she was forced to resign. In her legal action against the Commission, she is seeking damages for lost wages, humiliation, and legal fees.

It is sad to know that any employer might treat its employees this way in the twenty first century. It is beyond shameful that Williams suffered this level of discrimination while she was working to fight for other employees' rights. The Commission is entrusted with enforcing Pennsylvania's anti-discrimination laws, and its failure to respect its own employees is a breach of public faith.

Williams is represented by Kraemer, Manes & Associates LLC, a Pittsburgh-based law firm focused on representing employees and protecting employee rights. Lead attorneys on this case are Christi Wallace and David Manes.

The case is filed in the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania with the caption Cheryl Williams v. Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. A digital copy of the filed complaint will be made available at www.lawkm.com/media Monday evening after it is assigned a permanent docket number by the clerk.

For more information about this case, contact David Manes at (412) 626-5570 or at david@lawkm.com.