



## Ex-Worker Says DC Teachers' Union Fired Him For Being Gay

By [Braden Campbell](#)

Law360 (September 18, 2018, 10:03 PM EDT) -- A former worker for a union representing Washington, D.C., teachers alleged in a federal suit Tuesday that he was fired for being gay, although the local disputes the authenticity of a seemingly damning email included in the complaint that suggests officials were worried keeping a gay employee would raise health care costs.

Ex-Washington Teachers Union Local 6 receptionist Barry Hobson claims former union Chief of Staff Dorothy Egbufor targeted him for firing over concerns the union's insurer would raise premiums to account for his purported proneness to contracting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. He claims Egbufor harassed him after she learned he had a fiance and ultimately persuaded the union's board to fire him under false pretenses.

The complaint, which alleges the local, Egbufor and union President Elizabeth Davis violated the D.C. Human Rights Act, includes an image of an email Hobson claims Egbufor sent Davis voicing concerns that letting an "openly gay" person onto the union's insurance plan would lead to "significant rate increases" for the union's "regular employees." Egbufor described "AIDS, HIV and STD statistics" as "great pricing factors when considering this community," according to the complaint.

Davis claimed the email was faked in a call with Law360 on Friday, describing it as "conjured up, cut and pasted" and "quite bogus." She also described herself as "an advocate for gay rights."

"We do not discriminate against any employee based on differences. We see differences as assets," she said.

Hobson's attorney, Brian Markovitz of [Joseph Greenwald & Laake PA](#), told Law360 he stands by the email.

Hobson's complaint charts the alleged unraveling of his work relationship with Egbufor and the local following a January 2017 phone call in which he identified the man he had listed as a beneficiary in his new-hire paperwork as his now-husband.

Hobson claims that after the phone call, Egbufor, whom he says was his direct supervisor, would talk to other workers but "purposefully ignore" him, and that she systematically eroded his work responsibilities over the span of a few months. He says Egbufor falsely accused him of botching his role in putting on a WTU-hosted conference, and she threatened to discipline him when he defended himself.

Egbufor would later remove Hobson from his role in putting on the conference, revoke his access to software on which the union stored membership data and change the password he used to log into the union's email system, he claims.

Hobson also claims Egbufor's dodged his requests to be put on the union's health and dental plans and instead told him, through another worker, to sign up for Medicaid. He claims Egbufor soon after asked to "confer" with Davis about how to block Hobson from joining the plans in the email, which the complaint described as "highly confidential and privileged."

Hobson said Davis ignored a handful of requests to meet to address this alleged harassment, but she eventually met and discussed it with him. Rather than hear him out, though, "Davis made excuses for defendant Egbufor's illegal actions," Hobson claims.

The local's board of directors met in early April on Egbufor's recommendation and voted to fire Hobson, he claims.

Markowitz described the suit to Law360 as "one of the most egregious and obvious cases" of discrimination he's seen "in a very long time."

"I think that people should be held accountable for what they did," he said. He declined to say how he obtained the emails included in the complaint.

Hobson's suit includes three claims the union and the officials violated the DCHRA, which makes it illegal for employers to discriminate against gay workers. He seeks damages of at least \$1 million plus costs and fees.

Hobson is represented by Brian Markovitz and Matthew Kreiser of Joseph Greenwald & Laake PA.

Attorney information for the union was not available Tuesday.

The case is Hobson v. Washington Teachers' Union Local 6 et al., case number [1:18-cv-02151](#), in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.