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PRESS RELEASE

COHEN WILLIAMS WINS YET ANOTHER JURY TRIAL IN 2022

On November 17, 2022, Cohen Williams (“CW”) partner Kathleen Erskine and counsel Roya Ladan secured a complete defense verdict in favor of CW’s client, United Teachers Los Angeles (“UTLA”), following an 11-day jury trial in Los Angeles Superior Court. After only approximately 90 minutes of deliberation, the jury rejected the plaintiff’s claims of constructive termination, retaliation, and failure to prevent retaliation and delivered a verdict entirely in favor of UTLA, finding no liability and awarding no damages against UTLA.

Ms. Erskine, the head of CW’s Employment Litigation practice, explained, “[i]t is gratifying that the jury clearly saw that UTLA did nothing to retaliate against the plaintiff, Ms. Astine Suleimanyan, and that her resignation was just that – a voluntary choice to leave UTLA.”

CW was first able to defeat some of the plaintiff’s claims a year prior to the trial through pretrial motions. In Ms. Suleimanyan’s Complaint, she brought claims against UTLA and two individual co-workers for gender-based and sexual harassment, retaliation under various legal theories, gender discrimination based on allegations of unequal pay, violations of the Ralph Civil Rights Act and the Tom Bane Civil Rights Act, and constructive wrongful termination. She sought past and future lost earnings, unspecified damages for emotional distress, and punitive damages.

CW successfully persuaded the Court to dismiss the two former co-workers from the lawsuit. Ms. Ladan noted that, “[w]hittling down Ms. Suleimanyan’s claims before even getting to trial was an important victory. We were able to help the judge focus the case at hand, which ultimately helped the jury see that UTLA should not be held liable.”

Then, during the trial, CW filed a nonsuit motion on UTLA's behalf. Plaintiff responded by withdrawing her gender discrimination and whistleblower retaliation claims, along with two additional retaliation claims.

Ms. Erskine added, "[w]e are extremely happy for UTLA. It is an important organization in Los Angeles dedicated to supporting workers and promoting fairness and respect in the workplace. The jury got it right."