

LAW OFFICES OF SCOTT R. AMES

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Pre-School Uses Religion As Excuse To Fire Teacher On Maternity Leave

Los Angeles, CA – Pre-School teacher Jeri Gregory has filed a lawsuit in the Los Angeles County Superior Court against her former employer the Shining Stars Christian Pre-School for violating her rights under state and federal family leave laws, and in violation of employment discrimination and retaliation laws. Shining Stars, which is operated by the Los Angeles International Church of Christ, fired Ms. Gregory one day before she was scheduled to return from maternity leave. Ms. Gregory's termination letter states that while "the Church commends you for carrying your baby to term, ... the lifestyle decision to have unmarried sex as evidenced by a baby out of wedlock is not consistent with your obligations as an employee of the Church to live in accordance with the doctrines of the Christian faith." The letter goes on to state: "This termination is effective immediately and you should not report back to work for any reason."

Ms. Gregory had worked for Shining Stars for two years as a Lead Teacher. She was not married during her employment, including when she told her supervisors she was pregnant and when Shining Stars approved her maternity leave. A week before her scheduled return date, Ms. Gregory's supervisor sent her an email that her Lead Teacher position was no longer available but she could return to a less desirable position. When Ms. Gregory responded that California law required Shining Stars to reinstate her to the Lead Teacher position she held prior to her maternity leave, Shining Stars retaliated by terminating her employment five days later.

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“Shining Stars didn’t like it when Ms. Gregory told them she had a legal right to return to her Lead Teacher position,” said Ms. Gregory’s lawyer Scott Ames. “California law prohibits employers from retaliating against employees who assert their legal rights. Shining Stars’ use of religion to justify terminating a single mom supporting a newborn and toddler is particularly disturbing, especially since they knew all along that my client wasn’t married.”

Ms. Gregory said, “I was so hurt and confused when I received that letter. They knew I wasn’t married when I took maternity leave, and out of nowhere they fired me and accused me of not being a good Christian. It still stings.”

A copy of the lawsuit can be downloaded at www.scottameslaw.com.

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