



News

Trial Spotlight: Defense Verdict in \$8.6 Million Defamation Trial

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A Hinshaw legal team led by Esther Seitz and Paris Glazer secured a complete defense verdict in a defamation trial in Cook County Circuit Court, Chicago, Illinois. The case arose in the employment context after an employer terminated a manager whom several subordinates reported for inappropriate touching and other workplace misbehavior.

The manager sued his former employer for defamation, false light invasion of privacy, and intentional infliction of emotional distress (IIED), claiming that the subordinates' reports were false. He also argued that being accused of sexual harassment damaged him by exacerbating a chronic illness. At trial, the manager sought more than \$8.6 million in damages, including \$1 million in punitive damages.

After an eight-day bench trial featuring testimony from 21 witnesses, the court issued a detailed 26-page opinion in favor of the employer. The court found that the manager did not testify credibly at the trial. The court also ruled that the allegedly defamatory statement—that the manager was terminated for sexual harassment—was substantially true. The judge also found that the employer's response to the subordinates' reports was "reasonable, systematic, appropriate, and measured."

The case is *Hagan v. Brilliance Motor Sales, Inc.*, Case No. 2021 L 007281, in the Circuit Court of Cook County.

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