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Shumaker Wins Employment Discrimination Case in Federal Appeals Court

SARASOTA/TAMPA, FL — A team of attorneys from Shumaker has secured a significant win at the federal appellate level, successfully defending a subrogation services company against claims of age and disability discrimination and retaliation.

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Attorneys Jason Collier, Duane Daiker, and Ryan Guerin represented Vengroff Williams, Inc. and its division, Second Look, Inc., in a case that reached the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. The court ultimately upheld a lower court's decision to dismiss the lawsuit, finding no evidence that the employee's termination was based on unlawful discrimination or retaliation.

The case involved Deborah Grey, a former salesperson who alleged she was fired because of her age and lingering health issues following COVID-19. Court records show Grey was hired in 2021 and later raised concerns about returning to in-person work after experiencing COVID-related symptoms. She was terminated shortly thereafter. However, the court found that the company's decision was based on documented concerns about her workplace behavior, attitude, and productivity, not discriminatory intent.

"This decision reinforces an important principle for employers," said Shumaker Partner Jason Collier. "When employment decisions are grounded in legitimate, non-discriminatory reasons, employers have a solid defense. Clear documentation and consistent management practices make all the difference in cases like this."

In its ruling, the Eleventh Circuit agreed that Grey did not present sufficient evidence to support claims of bias. The court also found that her comparisons to other employees were not valid and that there was no pattern of discriminatory treatment.

"The Eleventh Circuit's opinion reflects a thorough and thoughtful review of the record and the relevant law," said Shumaker Partner Duane Daiker. "We're proud to have helped our client achieve a just result."

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