

Microsoft Settles Fired Trans Engineer's Bias Suit



By [Grace Elletson](#)



Law360 (March 22, 2024, 5:22 PM EDT) -- [Microsoft](#) agreed to settle a transgender former software engineer's Washington state court suit alleging that she was fired after repeatedly raising concerns that her work was unfairly criticized by her colleagues and that she was subjected to bullying due to her gender presentation.

Judge Josephine Wiggs officially [dismissed](#) the suit with prejudice Thursday after Cassandra Granade and Microsoft [notified](#) the court that they had reached a deal to shutter the complaint alleging discrimination, hostile work environment and retaliation claims under Washington state law.

The details of the deal were not shared with the court.

Granade said in her [September suit](#) that she began working for Microsoft's quantum systems group as a senior research software development engineer in July 2017. After a reorganization in 2019, she said she began working under a new manager — and this is when her time at the company began to go south.

She said her new manager started treating her poorly and made unfair and offensive assumptions about her qualifications.

Granade said her new manager didn't seem to recognize that she held a doctorate in quantum information, and he positioned her more toward software development than research. While she said she initially viewed this as a new opportunity, she was concerned to see that "research" had been removed from her title under the assumption she had no experience in the field.

Granade said that another male, cisgender colleague also continued to treat her with "open hostility," going as far as to say she should be fired for coding in the Python programming language. She said she initially complained about his behavior in 2018 after he screamed at her over a technical disagreement and physically prevented her from leaving an office, but no action was taken by the company, and the discrimination continued in 2019.

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Further, she said she filed a complaint against her manager in February 2021 after he required that all team members put forward photos of themselves when being considered for bonuses and raises. Granade said she raised concerns that diverse team members saw their opinions minimized in favor of a straight, white, cisgender man, and that she felt discriminated against due to her transition.

She also raised these concerns with an external consultant, who reported back that no instances of harassment or bullying had been reported by any focus groups, which Granade called false and offensive. Granade said she continued raising similar complaints.

In January 2022, Granade said she officially changed her first name to "Cassandra" on her Teams page and started using she/they pronouns. She also published a piece about her transition in the [Huffington Post](#) around this time, according to her suit.

In May 2022, she said, she received a retaliatory performance evaluation and continued to receive poor performance reviews. Granade said she continued to make discrimination and harassment complaints and was encouraged to switch teams, but her request to do so was denied. In October 2022, she said she was unlawfully fired while she was on vacation.

Claire Cochran, who represents Granade, told Law360 that both parties are satisfied with the resolution of the suit.

Representatives of Microsoft did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Granade is represented by Jordan A. Taren and Robin J. Shishido of [Shishido Taren Goldsworthy PLLC](#) and Claire Cochran of the [Law Offices of Claire Cochran PC](#).

Microsoft is represented by Molly A. Terwilliger and Claire M. Lesikar of [Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP](#).