



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and Co-Counsel File Discrimination Charge Against Georgia Tech & the University System of Georgia Over their Use of Criminal History Records to Deny Jobs

ATLANTA, GA – The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Outten & Golden LLP, and Atlanta-based Buckley Beal LLP recently filed a charge of discrimination with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) against the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech), and the University System of Georgia (USG), alleging that the University's criminal background check policies and practices used to screen job applicants result in unlawful discrimination against African Americans in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The charge was filed on behalf of Mr. Benjamin Paul and similarly situated individuals.

Mr. Paul, a 30-year-old single father, quit his job at Miami Dade College and moved from Florida to Atlanta after Georgia Tech offered him a job as a career advisor. According to the EEOC charge, Georgia Tech rescinded the job offer based on Mr. Paul's criminal history record which stems from incidents that occurred over twelve years ago, when he was 17 or 18 years old. According to his charge, Mr. Paul has worked hard to better himself, and in the twelve years since his convictions has earned a bachelor's and master's degree, acquired years of relevant work experience, and demonstrated his commitment to public service in numerous ways. Most notably, Mr. Paul served with AmeriCorps VISTA and was the recipient of the Corporation for National and Community Service President's Volunteer Service Award.

"For a university system with such a large workforce, it's imperative that fair and lawful background check policies are in place. Mr. Paul turned his life around yet he still suffers the collateral consequences for crimes he committed as a teenager," said Dariely Rodriguez, Director of the Economic Justice Project at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. "Qualified individuals like Mr. Paul, who happen to have a criminal record, deserve a meaningful opportunity for employment."

According to 2016 data from [The Sentencing Project](#), Georgia's incarceration rate per 100,000 inmates was 235 Hispanic, 329 white, and 1,066 black. This makes Georgia one of twelve states where more than half of the prison population is black. And the percentage of black adults with felony convictions has risen much faster among blacks than among whites. In [Georgia](#), the percentage of blacks with a felony conviction grew from an estimated 7 percent in 1980 to 26 percent in 2010.

"I was excited to start the job at Georgia Tech. I have experience doing exactly the kind of work they were hiring me for," Mr. Paul stated. "I have worked diligently over the past decade to

provide for myself and my family while finding ways to give back to my community. I was devastated when Georgia Tech revoked the job offer notwithstanding all of the concrete steps I have taken to demonstrate that my criminal history does not define me.”

“When employers use criminal history to make hiring decisions, they must comply with the law and ensure that the rights of job applicants are protected,” said Ossai Miazad, a partner in Outten & Golden’s New York office.

The USG is composed of twenty-six higher education institutions. According to its [website](#), the USG employs 157,967 individuals representing about 3.6% of all jobs in the state of Georgia.

“Our firm is deeply committed to equal employment opportunity for everyone regardless of race, and we are pleased to partner with Outten & Golden and the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law in the important fight for that fundamental principle,” said Brian J. Sutherland, a partner at Atlanta-based Buckley Beal.

The attorney primarily responsible for this matter at the Lawyers’ Committee is: Dariely Rodriguez, Director, Economic Justice Project, Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, 1500 K Street NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20005, Direct Telephone: (202) 662-8330, Email: drodriguez@lawyerscommittee.org.

The attorneys primarily responsible for this matter at Outten & Golden are: Ossai Miazad, Partner, Outten & Golden LLP, Email: om@outtengolden.com, and Michael C. Danna, Associate, Outten & Golden, LLP, Email: mdanna@outtengolden.com, 685 Third Avenue, 25th Floor, New York, NY 10017, Telephone: (212) 245-1000.

The Georgia licensed attorney primarily responsible for this matter at Buckley Beal is: Brian J. Sutherland, Partner, Buckley Beal LLP, 600 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 3900, Atlanta, GA 30308, Direct Telephone: (404) 920-0318, Email: bsutherland@buckleybeal.com.

If you have had a similar experience or would like to learn more about this case, please visit: <https://www.criminalconvictiondiscrimination.com/case/georgia-tech>

A written retainer agreement signed by an authorized agent of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Outten & Golden, and Buckley Beal will be required in the event that any legal services will be provided to you.

About the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

The Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, was formed in 1963 at the request of President John F. Kennedy to involve the private bar in providing legal services to address racial discrimination. Now in its 56th year, the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law is continuing its quest to “Move America Toward Justice.” The principal mission of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law is to secure, through the rule of law, equal justice for all, particularly in the areas of criminal justice,

fair housing and community development, economic justice, educational opportunities, and voting rights.

Contact

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