

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

LaRecia Hines v. LeafGuard Holdings Inc.

Hines · No. 25-cv-00306-LKG · Decided March 19, 2026

SUMMARY

The opinion addresses LeafGuard Holdings Inc.’s motion to dismiss LaRecia Hines’s amended complaint asserting pregnancy, race, and sex discrimination, hostile work environment, and retaliation claims under Title VII and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act. The court accepts Hines’s allegation that she was terminated rather than voluntarily resigned for purposes of the motion. It grants the motion in part by dismissing the PDA discrimination claim in Count I, while allowing the hostile work environment and retaliation claims to proceed.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Maryland
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Lydia Kay Griggsby
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Maryland
DECIDED	March 19, 2026
DOCKET	25-cv-00306-LKG
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendant moved under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) to dismiss an amended complaint asserting pregnancy, race, color, and sex discrimination, hostile work environment, and retaliation claims under Title VII and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, the court accepts well-pleaded factual allegations as true and construes them in the plaintiff’s favor. The complaint must contain sufficient factual matter to state a plausible claim for relief and may not rely on legal conclusions or bare assertions. The court also treated the alleged termination as true because resolving whether Hines resigned or was terminated would require resolving a factual dispute inappropriate at the pleading stage.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Nonprecedential district-court memorandum opinion; precedential status not otherwise specified.

TOPICS

pregnancy discrimination

retaliation

hostile work environment

title vii

motions to dismiss

PRACTICE AREAS

employment law

civil rights

civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the amended complaint plausibly alleged satisfactory job performance at the time of the adverse employment action to support the PDA discrimination claim.
2. Whether the amended complaint plausibly alleged Title VII race, color, and sex hostile-work-environment claims and administratively exhausted those claims through the EEOC charge.
3. Whether the amended complaint plausibly alleged PDA and Title VII retaliation claims based on protected activity, an adverse employment action, and causation.
4. Whether the court could resolve the parties' dispute over whether Hines was terminated or voluntarily resigned on a Rule 12(b)(6) motion.

HOLDINGS

1. The court accepted Hines's allegation that LeafGuard terminated her employment because resolving the parties' conflicting accounts would require resolving a factual dispute outside the proper scope of a Rule 12(b)(6) motion.
2. Hines failed to state a PDA discrimination claim because she did not allege nonconclusory facts showing that she was meeting LeafGuard's legitimate expectations at the time of the alleged termination.
3. Hines plausibly stated Title VII hostile-work-environment claims based on race, color, and sex, and sufficiently exhausted those claims through her EEOC charge.
4. Hines plausibly stated retaliation claims under the PDA and Title VII.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“courts do not require a plaintiff to have invoked a hostile work environment claim by name or to use specific ‘magic words’ in order to exhaust it” (Section IV.C)

“a ‘protected activity’ may fall into two categories, opposition and participation.” (Section IV.D)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

LaRecia Hines, an African American woman, worked for LeafGuard beginning in February 2022 and became a Production Manager in August 2022. She alleged that her supervisor made racist and sexist comments, including that women could not perform certain work, expressed disbelief that a Black woman worked in construction, and called her first name a "black ghetto name." Hines complained about the conduct, notified LeafGuard of her pregnancy and planned leave, and participated in additional complaints to company representatives. She alleged that LeafGuard terminated her employment on November 16, 2022, approximately six weeks after those complaints and pregnancy notice, although LeafGuard contended that she voluntarily resigned.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Hines commenced the action on January 30, 2025, and filed an amended complaint on May 12, 2025. LeafGuard filed a renewed motion to dismiss, which was fully briefed. The court granted the motion in part by dismissing Count I, the PDA discrimination claim, and denied it as to the Title VII hostile-work-environment claims and the PDA and Title VII retaliation claims.

DISPOSITION

other

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

No remand. LeafGuard must answer or otherwise respond to the remaining claims by April 19, 2026.

CASES CITED

- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678-79 (2009)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 556, 570 (2007)
- Nemet Chevrolet, Inc. v. Consumeraffairs.com, Inc., 591 F.3d 250, 253, 255 (4th Cir. 2009)
- Lambeth v. Board of Commissioners of Davidson County, 407 F.3d 266, 268 (4th Cir. 2005)
- Goines v. Valley Community Services Board, 822 F.3d 159, 166 (4th Cir. 2016)
- Tellabs, Inc. v. Makor Issues & Rights, Ltd., 551 U.S. 308, 322 (2007)
- Puryear v. County of Roanoke, 214 F.3d 514, 518 (4th Cir. 2000)
- Miles v. Dell, Inc., 429 F.3d 480, 491 (4th Cir. 2005)
- Hentosh v. Old Dominion University, 767 F.3d 413, 417 (4th Cir. 2014)
- Chacko v. Patuxent Institution, 429 F.3d 505, 506, 510 (4th Cir. 2005)
- Balas v. Huntington Ingalls Industries, Inc., 711 F.3d 401, 407-08 (4th Cir. 2013)
- Chris v. Tenet, 221 F.3d 648, 653 (4th Cir. 2000)
- Fort Bend County, Texas v. Davis, 587 U.S. 541, 551 (2019)
- Jones v. Calvert Group, 551 F.3d 297, 300 (4th Cir. 2009)
- Evans v. Technologies Applications & Service Co., 80 F.3d 954, 959, 962-63 (4th Cir. 1996)
- McDonnell Douglas Corp. v. Green, 411 U.S. 792, 802-05 (1973)
- Brinkley v. Harbour Recreation Club, 180 F.3d 598, 606-07 (4th Cir. 1999)
- Tuck v. Henkel Corp., 973 F.2d 371, 374 (4th Cir. 1992)
- Reeves v. Sanderson Plumbing Products, Inc., 530 U.S. 133, 142 (2000)
- Stokes v. Westinghouse Savannah River Co., 206 F.3d 420, 429 (4th Cir. 2000)
- Texas Department of Community Affairs v. Burdine, 450 U.S. 248, 253, 255 n.10 (1981)
- Marie Laurent-Workman v. Wormuth, 54 F.4th 201, 200, 211, 213 (4th Cir. 2022)
- Bazemore v. Best Buy, 957 F.3d 195, 200 (4th Cir. 2020)
- Young v. Giant Food Stores, LLC, 108 F. Supp. 3d 301, 310 (D. Md. 2015)

- *Coleman v. Maryland Court of Appeals*, 626 F.3d 187, 190 (4th Cir. 2010)
- *Swaso v. Onslow County Board of Education*, 698 F. App'x 745, 747 (4th Cir. 2017)
- *Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railway Co. v. White*, 548 U.S. 53, 62, 68 (2006)
- *Holmes v. e.spire Communications*, 135 F. Supp. 2d 657, 661 (D. Md. 2001)
- *Brennan v. Deluxe Corp.*, 361 F. Supp. 3d 494, 501 (D. Md. 2019)
- *Garcia v. Baltimore Police Department*, No. 22-1423, 2023 WL 3043953, at *5 (D. Md. Apr. 21, 2023)
- *Gaines v. Baltimore Gas Department*, No. 21-1211, 2022 WL 1451629, at *8 (D. Md. May 9, 2022)
- *Clarke v. DynCorp International LLC*, 962 F. Supp. 2d 781, 789 (D. Md. 2013)
- *E.E.O.C. v. Navy Federal Credit Union*, 424 F.3d 397, 406 (4th Cir. 2005)
- *Parker v. Children's National Medical Center, Inc.*, No. 20-3523, 2021 WL 5840949, at *21 (D. Md. Dec. 9, 2021)
- *Laughlin v. Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority*, 149 F.3d 253, 259 (4th Cir. 1998)
- *Armstrong v. Index Journal Co.*, 647 F.2d 441, 448 (4th Cir. 1981)
- *Herkert v. Kijakazi*, No. 22-03139, 2024 WL 1050831, at *6 (D. Md. Mar. 11, 2024)
- *Netter v. Barnes*, 908 F.3d 932, 937-38 (4th Cir. 2018)
- *Roberts v. Glenn Industrial Group, Inc.*, 998 F.3d 111, 122 (4th Cir. 2021)

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