

# Wigdor LLP Files EEOC Charge Of Discrimination On Behalf Of Deborah Dugan Against The Recording Academy

January 23, 2020 • News & Press

On January 21, 2020, Wigdor LLP filed a Charge of Discrimination with the EEOC on behalf of Deborah Dugan, the former CEO and President of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (the "Recording Academy" or, simply, the "Academy") in connection with her claims of unlawful gender discrimination, sexual harassment, unlawful retaliation and unequal pay against the Academy.

Ms. Dugan became the Recording Academy's first female CEO and President in August 2019, according to the EEOC Charge. As alleged, from the outset of her employment with the Academy, Ms. Dugan complained about and attempted to remedy the lack of diversity, sexual harassment and other gender-based improprieties at the Academy. On December 22, 2019, as alleged, Ms. Dugan sent an email complaint to HR detailing a slew of issues arising out of the Academy's "boys' club" mentality and approach to governance, including, among other things:

- Sexual harassment committed against her by Joel Katz, an attorney who is general counsel to the Academy and a former member and Chair of the Academy's Board of Trustees ("the Board");
- Egregious conflicts of interest arising out of the fact that attorneys that represent the Academy also represent individual Board members and members of the Board's Executive Committee;
- Improper self-dealing by Board members, including hundreds of thousands of dollars in payments to themselves for work that was either unnecessary or that was already being performed by outside vendors; and
- Voting irregularities and conflicts with respect to nominations for Grammy Awards.

In addition, Ms. Dugan's email also complained that she had been asked by the Academy to hire her predecessor Neil Portnow as a consultant for \$750,000 after it became aware of allegations that he raped a female recording artist, as set forth in the Charge.

In response to her complaints, as alleged, the Academy unlawfully retaliated against Ms. Dugan by placing her on administrative leave only after she indicated her intent to commence legal action and refused to settle her claims on terms dictated by the Academy. The Charge alleges that the Academy further retaliated against Ms. Dugan by threatening her with termination and publishing false and defamatory statements about Ms. Dugan to the media.

Moreover, as set forth in the Charge, on January 20, 2020, the Academy's interim CEO and President Harvey Mason Jr. penned and published a false, retaliatory and defamatory letter designed to "get out in front" of this Charge and further destroy Ms. Dugan's reputation.

**BREAKING: Wigdor LLP has filed a Charge of Discrimination with the EEOC**

on behalf of Deborah Dugan against the Recording Academy (the Grammys). Below is a statement from her attorneys Douglas H. Wigdor and Michael J. Willemin. [#DeborahDugan #GRAMMYS pic.twitter.com/46CxukAT2V](#)  
– Wigdor LLP (@WigdorLaw) [January 21, 2020](#)

Ms. Dugan is represented by Wigdor LLP Founding Partner [Douglas H. Wigdor](#) and Partner [Michael J. Willemin](#).

Statement from Douglas H. Wigdor and Michael J. Willemin:

*“The complaint that we filed today against the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (the Grammys) highlights tactics reminiscent of those deployed by individuals defending Harvey Weinstein. As we allege, the attempt by the Recording Academy to impugn the character of Deborah Dugan is a transparent effort to shift the focus away from its own unlawful activity. This blatant form of retaliation in corporate America is all too common, even post #MeToo, and we will utilize all lawful means necessary to ensure that those responsible are held accountable for their actions.”*

[Read the Full EEOC Charge Here](#)

#### **NPR**

*“Grammy Awards Will Take Place Under A Cloud Of Allegations”*

January 24, 2020

<http://www.wigdorlaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Deborah-Dugan-NPR-1-24-20.mp3>

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*“Biglaw Partner Accused Of Sexual Harassment By Former Grammys CEO”*

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#### **The Atlantic**

*“The Grammys Controversy Is Bigger Than Any One CEO”*

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*"Deborah Dugan files new charges that cite an attempt to influence Grammy nominations"*

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*"Ousted Grammy Awards boss Deborah Dugan makes corruption claims"*

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*"Expelled Recording Academy CEO Says 'Grammy Voting Process Is Ripe With Corruption': Here's How"*

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*"Grammy Chief Deborah Dugan's Shocking Memo to Recording Academy HR Director: Read in Full"*

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*"Former Grammys Chief Deborah Dugan Files New Charges Against Recording Academy"*

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**CBS News**

*"Suspended Grammys CEO alleges corruption, says former CEO was accused of rape"*

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**CNN**

*"Former Grammys head Deborah Dugan sues recording academy, alleges sexual harassment"*

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### **The Daily Beast**

*"Deborah Dugan Files Discrimination Complaint Against Recording Academy After Termination"*

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### **Daily Mail**

*"Grammys boss Deborah Dugan files a discrimination complaint alleging she was ousted from the Academy after complaining of sexual harassment and pay disparities"*

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### **Deadline Hollywood**

*"Ousted Recording Academy Chief Deborah Dugan Files Sexual Harassment & Gender Bias Labor Claim, Calls Grammy Voting Process 'Ripe With Corruption'"*

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*"Fired Recording Academy Chief Deborah Dugan Adds Retaliation Charges To Her EEOC Claims"*

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### **ELLE**

*"The Biggest Grammys Drama Is Unfolding Offstage. Here's What You Need To Know About Deborah Dugan's Lawsuit."*

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### **Entertainment Weekly**

*"Ousted Grammys CEO Deborah Dugan sues Recording Academy, claims retaliation for exposing 'boys"*

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### **Esquire**

*“The Recording Academy Voting Controversy Questions the Integrity of the Grammy Awards”*

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*“Grammy’s female CEO sues Recording Academy over her dismissal”*

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*“Ousted Grammys CEO Deborah Dugan accuses former Recording Academy chief Neil Portnow of raping female artist: reports”*

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### **The Guardian**

*“Suspended Grammys chief Deborah Dugan alleges sexual misconduct in Recording Academy”*

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### **The Hollywood Reporter**

*“Deborah Dugan Files Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Complaint Against Recording Academy Over Ouster”*

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### **The Hill**

*“Grammy Awards edge closer to ‘existential crisis’ with latest controversies”*

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### **The Hollywood Reporter**

*“Attorneys for Ousted Recording Academy Chief Deborah Dugan Call for Her Reinstatement”*

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*"Deborah Dugan Ramps Up Retaliation Complaint After Recording Academy Termination"*

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### **HuffPost**

*"Deborah Dugan Tried To Fix The Grammys. Instead She Says She Was 'Ruined' By A Boys Club."*

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### **Jezebel**

*"Grammys Chief Rips Racist and Sexist Academy's 'Boys' Club' in Filed Complaint"*

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*"Explosive Claims About Sexual Assault and Voting Irregularities Cast a Pall Over the Grammys"*

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### **Los Angeles Times**

*"Deborah Dugan alleges sexual harassment and gender discrimination against Recording Academy"*

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*"Column: When you oust the first female president of Grammys, she will burn down the house"*

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*"At pre-Grammy parties for rising stars and power players, 'Dugan-gate' is talk of the town"*

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*"Past colleagues stand with Deborah Dugan against bullying claims by Recording Academy"*

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*"Recording Academy proposes new diversity initiatives after outcry over Dugan allegations"*

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*"On eve of Grammys, ousted CEO Deborah Dugan has no regrets: 'I had to defend myself'"*

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**Law360**

*"Ousted Grammy Prez Says BigLaw Atty Sexually Harassed Her"*

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*"Grammy Awards chief files discrimination complaint against Recording Academy"*

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*"Billie Eilish's Grammys and Tyler, the Creator's critiques suggest Deborah Dugan was right"*

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*"Ousted Female Chief Files Discrimination Complaint Against The Grammys"*

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*"The Cloud Over The Grammys: Allegations Of Sexual Misconduct, Vote Rigging"*

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### **New York Daily News**

*"Suspended Grammy boss Deborah Dugan says she was sexually harassed by former chairman who called her 'baby' and tried to kiss her"*

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### **New York Post**

*"Deborah Dugan claims Grammys board tried to rehire her predecessor, Neil Portnow"*

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### **The New York Times**

*"Grammys Chief Calls Her Removal Retaliation for Exposing 'Boys' Club"*

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*"Recording Academy Head Files Complaint After Being Placed on 'Administrative Leave' Days Before Grammys"*

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*"DJ Khaled Supports Diddy Calling Out the Recording Academy: 'We Always Have to Do Better'"*

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*"Grammys CEO says she was ousted after reporting harassment"*

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**Pitchfork**

*"Every Allegation in Former Grammy Chief Deborah Dugan's Recording Academy Complaint"*

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*"Are The Grammys Corrupt? New Complaint Alleges Major Issues With The Recording Academy"*

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*"Former Grammys Chief Deborah Dugan Sues Recording Academy, Claiming Sexual Harassment"*

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*"Greenberg Shareholder Accused of Sexual Harassment by Ousted Grammys Chief"*

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*"What Is Going On With the Grammys?"*

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*"Recording Academy CEO Promises Diversity, but Deborah Dugan Calls It 'Smoke and Mirrors'"*

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*"Deborah Dugan Presents New Evidence of Attempt to 'Influence' Grammy Nominations"*

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**TIME**

*"How the Grammys Descended Into Behind-the-Scenes Chaos"*

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*"Are the Grammys Really Going to Happen on Sunday?"*

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**Variety**

*"Ex-Grammy Boss Neil Portnow Accused of Raping Female Artist in Blockbuster Complaint From Ousted CEO"*

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*"Deborah Dugan Fires Back at Recording Academy, Cites Evidence of Alleged Attempts to 'Influence' Grammy Noms"*

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*"The 2020 Grammys' sexual harassment and corruption controversy, explained"*

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*"Recording Academy CEO Files Discrimination Complaint Days Before Grammy Awards"*

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*"The Recording Academy is imploding the week before the Grammys. Here's what we know."*

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*"Diddy called out the Grammys for ignoring black artists during a pre-awards gala. The issue was still true when the ceremony took place on Sunday."*

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**The Washington Post**

*"Recording Academy fires embattled CEO Deborah Dugan, but she's not going quietly"*

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*"Sean Combs blasts Recording Academy at Clive Davis gala: 'Black music has never been respected by the Grammys'"*

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