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JEFFERSON CIRCUIT COURT

DIVISION

JUDGE \_\_\_\_\_

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*Electronically Filed*

SHALANNA TAYLOR

PLAINTIFF

v.

LOUISVILLE METRO GOVERNMENT

Serve:

CRAIG GREENBERG  
LOUISVILLE METRO HALL  
527 WEST JEFFERSON STREET  
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY 40202

and

DAVID JAMES

Serve:

DAVID JAMES  
310 WEST LEE STREET  
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY 40208

and

PHILLIP BAKER

DEFENDANTS

Serve:

PHILLIP BAKER  
1427 SOUTH FOURTH STREET  
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY 40208

**COMPLAINT**

*Jury Trial Demanded*

Plaintiff Shalanna Taylor, for her complaint against Defendants Louisville Metro Government, David James, and Phillip Baker, states as follows:

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**PARTIES**

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- 1. Plaintiff Shalanna Taylor is a resident of Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky.
- 2. Defendant Louisville Metro Government (Metro) is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Kentucky and, until April of 2023, was Plaintiff’s employer.
- 3. Metro’s agent for service of process is Mayor Craig Greenberg, Louisville Metro Hall, 527 West Jefferson Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40202.
- 4. Defendant Phillip Baker is a resident of Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky, residing at 1427 South Fourth Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40208.
- 5. Defendant David James is a resident of Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky, residing at 310 West Lee Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40208.

**JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

- 6. This action is brought under the Kentucky Civil Rights Act, KRS Chapter 344 and the Kentucky common law.
- 7. Jurisdiction is proper in the Jefferson Circuit Court under KRS 23A.010(1), and KRS 454.210(2).
- 8. Venue is proper in the Jefferson Circuit Court under KRS 452.460.
- 9. All complained-of acts and omissions have occurred within three years prior to the filing of this Complaint.

**FACTS**

- 10. Until her termination in 2023, Plaintiff Shalanna Taylor was a Legislative Aide for District Six of Metro Louisville’s Council.
- 11. Plaintiff was a full-time employee of Metro, and she was supervised by the Councilperson for District Six.

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12. For years, Plaintiff served District Six under Defendant David James, who was a Metro Councilman until early 2023.

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13. Plaintiff's performance evaluations were excellent, and she was never disciplined or corrected for misbehavior.

14. Defendant Phillip Baker was appointed to Metro Council on or about February 2, 2023, when Defendant James accepted an appointment to Mayor Craig Greenberg's cabinet as Deputy Mayor of Emergency Services and left the District Six Council seat vacant.

15. On February 4, 2023, Plaintiff met with Defendant Baker for the first time to discuss her Legislative Aide duties for him in his role as a newly appointed Councilman.

16. Defendant Baker was late to the initial meeting. When he showed up, he walked in and immediately took off his jacket, displayed his body, and told Plaintiff, "This is what I really look like. TV made me look fat."

17. Plaintiff politely laughed at the comment, and Defendant Baker sat down very close to Plaintiff.

18. As Plaintiff and Defendant Baker chatted casually, getting to know each other, Defendant Baker asked Plaintiff about her child's father.

19. Defendant Baker commented, "I'll need you to give me a picture of [the child's father], just in case he tries to run up on me in the parking lot."

20. Plaintiff thought that the remark was an odd thing to say, but she brushed it off and continued the conversation.

21. In the same initial conversation, Defendant Baker brought up his "concern" about people likely assuming that he and Plaintiff would be sleeping together because they worked together.

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22. Plaintiff gingerly acknowledged the concern, and she carefully advised Defendant Baker that she had worked in government for almost six years by that point, and that she knew how people could be, but that it would not be a problem – because it would absolutely never be true.

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23. Plaintiff and Defendant Baker moved on from that topic.

24. Eventually, though, as Plaintiff was explaining something legislation-related to Defendant Baker, he abruptly interrupted and blurted out, “And even if we were fucking, it would be none of anyone’s business!”

25. Plaintiff was silent. A very obvious and uncomfortable pause followed, and Defendant Baker then uttered, “I’m sorry – I should not have said that.”

26. Plaintiff agreed that Defendant Baker should not have made his remark, and the conversation moved on to other topics.

27. Later during the same meeting, though, Defendant Baker placed his hand on Plaintiff’s thigh at least twice while speaking to her.

28. Defendant Baker also scooted his chair up close to Plaintiff while his hand was on her thigh.

29. Plaintiff was made incredibly uncomfortable at the unwanted touching, and she decided that she would attempt to secure a different position in Metro.

30. Over the next several days, Plaintiff advised Defendant Baker that she intended to leave the District Six role in August of that year, after the annual “Jazz in Central Park” concert that was a major event for District Six.

31. Defendant Baker responded that he did not want Plaintiff to leave, and that he hoped she would change her mind.

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32. Plaintiff could not afford to lose her job at that time, since she had not secured any other employment, and Defendant Baker's behavior gave her grave insecurity.

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33. To make sure that she was reasonably safe in the role, Plaintiff went to Metro's Business Office the following week and disclosed what Defendant Baker had done to her.

34. Plaintiff told Metro's Business Office Manager Edwin Ernest that her reasoning for disclosing the conversation was to let someone in Human Resources know about what was happening to her.

35. Plaintiff asked Ernest who the Human Resources contact person was for her position, and he responded, "I am."

36. At that time, Plaintiff hoped that she could make it to August with no more incidents at her job.

37. In the weeks following, though, Plaintiff experienced multiple inappropriate incidents with Defendant Baker, usually involving unwanted, intimate touchings.

38. Over Plaintiff's objections, and certainly without her consent, Defendant Baker placed his hands on her upper legs.

39. Plaintiff addressed with Defendant Baker how uncomfortable it made her when Defendant Baker put his hands on her body.

40. Defendant Baker began to mock Plaintiff, drawing very close to her and then exclaiming, "Whoa! Let me back up. I know, you like your personal space."

41. Defendant Baker also began to manufacture reasons to "accidentally" touch Plaintiff.

42. On one occasion, while examining something displayed on Plaintiff's computer screen, Defendant Baker would pull up a chair next to Plaintiff and lean his forearm on her thigh

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as though he needed to do that to get a closer look at the screen, causing physical contact with Defendant Baker's body all along Plaintiff's femur, and bringing Defendant Baker's head into extremely close proximity to Plaintiff's chest.

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43. When Defendant Baker committed this touching, Plaintiff raised her arms and brought her hands down hard on her desk, shoving away from the desk and forcing Defendant Baker to stand.

44. Plaintiff yelled at Defendant Baker not to touch her.

45. By that time, Plaintiff had told Defendant Baker multiple times that he was not welcome to touch her.

46. As he moved his chair back away from her desk, Defendant Baker remarked, "I don't even know if I'm your type anyway."

47. Plaintiff responded, as calmly and firmly as she could manage, "You are *not*."

48. Defendant Baker smirked at Plaintiff and retorted, "Well, you don't know what you don't know."

49. In the same period of time, Plaintiff was made aware that Defendant Baker told other Metro workers about Plaintiff, "She's too serious." Plaintiff believes those remarks were intended to portray the workplace tension as Plaintiff's fault for being too uptight.

50. Plaintiff met with Defendant David James, who was the Deputy Mayor in charge of Emergency Services, to discuss details in finalization of his transition from District Six.

51. The meeting took place in the Deputy Mayor's new office.

52. Plaintiff told Defendant James that she needed to discuss something personal with him.

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53. Plaintiff confided in Defendant James that Defendant Baker had touched her and harassed her.

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54. Plaintiff told Defendant James that she wanted to leave her position because of it, but that she was at least going to stay until August.

55. Plaintiff also told Defendant James that she had alerted Human Resources, but she had not filed anything more formal for a complaint.

56. Plaintiff spoke with Defendant James again, over the telephone, during her employment with District Six, and Defendant James inquired about Plaintiff's work atmosphere.

57. Plaintiff responded to Defendant James that nothing had changed, and that she remained in fear of more unwanted contact and overtures.

58. Plaintiff and Defendant James had a third discussion about Defendant Baker, on March 23, 2023. On that date, Plaintiff and Defendant James had lunch together at a restaurant in Louisville's Butchertown neighborhood.

59. On that date, Defendant James was still serving as a Deputy Mayor, an official station that would have involved him receiving training on basic compliance with the Kentucky Civil Rights Act and related anti-harassment and anti-retaliation laws and rules.

60. During the March 23, 2023 lunch, Plaintiff told Defendant James everything that was going on, and she admitted that she was at her breaking point.

61. Plaintiff confided to Defendant James that she had begun to construct Defendant Baker's and her own schedules so that they spent very little time together. She explained that she did so to avoid opportunities for Defendant Baker to touch her.

62. Plaintiff further conveyed that when Plaintiff was required to spend time with Defendant Baker, she adopted a gruff, stern tone so that Defendant Baker would not be able to

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claim any lighthearted atmosphere as an excuse to touch her or harass her verbally. She had noticed that anytime she had taken a soft or kind tone, Defendant Baker had responded with sexual touching and/or verbal overtures.

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63. Plaintiff confided to Defendant James that she did not feel that she could take much more from Defendant Baker.

64. Plaintiff told Defendant James that she was trying to make it in the role, but that she would have to pursue a sexual harassment action if Defendant Baker did not cease his behavior.

65. Plaintiff did not ask Defendant James to tell Defendant Baker anything of her conversations with him or her report to Human Resources.

66. On April 18, 2023, Plaintiff went about her work as usual, preparing Metro Council binders for Defendant Baker's use.

67. Plaintiff walked to Ernest's office for a meeting, believing that she was meeting with to discuss obtaining an extra staff member to assist with District Six duties.

68. When Plaintiff got to the the office, though, she was told there would be a different topic for conversation.

69. Ernest conveyed that Defendant Baker would be "going in a different direction" for his Legislative Aide.

70. As a result, Plaintiff learned, she was being terminated.

71. Metro did not offer any alternative placement, nor any assistance in maintaining employment at Metro.

72. In the months that followed, Plaintiff worked to repair her self-esteem and ability to trust.

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73. On September 23, 2023, Plaintiff got a call from Michelle James, Defendant James's spouse.

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74. Plaintiff had learned earlier that day that a rumor about Defendant James had been broadly disseminated, and she believed that Mrs. James was calling her to discuss it.

75. Plaintiff was not in a position to accept Mrs. James's call for a private conversation, so she sent Mrs. James a text message saying, "I'm at a birthday party. I can't talk right now but I'm sure I know why you're calling and I'm sorry this happened to you. You don't deserve this."

76. Mrs. James responded "You didn't deserve what he did to you[.]"

77. Later that night, Plaintiff called Mrs. James.

78. Mrs. James explained to Plaintiff that Defendant Baker had admitted to her, in August of that year, that he fired Plaintiff at Defendant James's urging.

79. Mrs. James admitted that Defendant James had instructed Defendant Baker to fire Plaintiff because she was going to file a sexual harassment suit against Defendant Baker.

80. Plaintiff asked Mrs. James why Defendant James would do such a thing, and Mrs. James responded that she did not know as a result of firsthand knowledge.

81. Mrs. James added that she had asked Defendant James why he had informed Defendant Baker of Plaintiff's confidences, and he had responded to her, "Bitch shouldn't have been running her mouth."

82. For the next several days, Mrs. James reached out to Plaintiff in search of Plaintiff's emotional support. Eventually, though, Mrs. James and her husband reconciled.

83. After Mrs. James had reconciled with Defendant James, she began to call Plaintiff to discourage her from taking legal action because, as she explained, lawsuits were lengthy and would cost a lot of money.

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84. Mrs. James assured Plaintiff, “Don’t worry about it. I’ll get you a job.”

85. Plaintiff attempted to find replacement work, and she nearly secured a promising

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opportunity with a non-profit based in Louisville. After the hiring manager told Plaintiff that she was a perfect fit, the manager checked Plaintiff’s Metro references – and Plaintiff was not given the job.

86. Plaintiff is informed and believes that Defendants have frustrated her attempts to obtain replacement work, as additional punishment for her opposition to Defendant Baker’s sexual harassment.

87. Plaintiff has attempted to confront Defendant James with her knowledge of his actions, in a text message. He has not denied his role in Plaintiff’s termination.

88. Plaintiff attempted to secure Defendant Metro’s assistance in investigating her harassment and retaliation. To that end, Plaintiff completed an online inquiry through Metro’s complaint portal. She formalized her complaint to Metro’s Human Resources staff and to the Metro Ethics Commission in August of 2024.

89. Plaintiff was contacted by an outside investigator for Metro, Intrinz Inc., which conveyed that it had been retained to conduct an investigation of Plaintiff’s allegations.

90. The investigator confirmed receipt of Plaintiff’s sworn allegations on August 29, 2024.

91. In the time since, the investigator has made no attempt to gather any further information from Plaintiff. As of the date of this Complaint, there are no pending queries from the investigator of which Plaintiff is aware.

92. Metro does not appear interested in conducting a good faith examination of Plaintiff’s allegations.

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93. Plaintiff's experience of retaliation has continued even after her discharge.

94. Plaintiff was informed in June of 2024 that Defendant Baker had falsely stated to

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people on the executive staff of a major Louisville business earlier that his own dereliction of professional responsibilities (such as missing meetings and appearing late for meetings) was Plaintiff's doing. By that time, though, Plaintiff had been gone from her Metro employment for more than a year, and could not have been in any way responsibility for Defendant Baker's misfeasance.

95. Plaintiff has been alerted that, in the aftermath of Plaintiff's August 2024 Ethics Commission complaint, Defendant Baker has also falsely stated to people throughout the community that Plaintiff was terminated for refusing to do her job while still claiming her pay as though she had earned it.

96. Defendant Baker made these false statements with the intention that listeners would believe them.

97. Plaintiff believes that these defamatory comments have diminished her in the community, as the statements reflect badly upon her as a worker and portray her as lazy, dishonest, and a worker with deficient skills and/or work ethic.

98. Plaintiff believes that the difficulty she has endured in mitigating her wage losses owes, in some part, to Defendant Baker's defamatory comments.

99. Plaintiff is also informed and believes that one or more of the Defendants falsely conveyed to members of the Ethics Commission that Plaintiff was talking to the local press about her allegations in the August 2024 Ethics Commission complaint, for the purpose of discrediting Plaintiff by passing her off as an attention-seeker.

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100. Plaintiff believes that the false statements were made to effectively discredit Plaintiff in the view of the Ethics Commission, so that Plaintiff would not receive the benefit of unbiased review.

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101. Plaintiff has endured severe emotional distress as a result of Defendants' wrongful termination and retaliation, as well as Defendant Baker's defamation.

102. Plaintiff has no faith that her allegations will be meaningfully reviewed unless she secures redress in this Court. For that reason, Plaintiff brings this suit to clear her name and recover appropriate damages for her mistreatment.

**COUNT ONE: HOSTILE WORK ENVIRONMENT/SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

103. Plaintiff restates and incorporates each and every allegation set forth in the foregoing paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

104. Defendant Louisville Metro Government is an employer as the term is defined in KRS 344.030(2).

105. Defendant Phillip Baker also served as a joint employer of Plaintiff, as the term is defined in KRS 344.030(2).

106. Plaintiff is a woman, and she is therefore a member of a Protected Classification under KRS 344.040(1).

107. Plaintiff was subject to unwanted sexual harassment.

108. Plaintiff's gender was a motivating factor in the harassment.

109. The harassment created a hostile work environment.

110. The harassment was severe.

111. The harassment was pervasive.

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112. This harassment was reported and known by Defendant Louisville Metro Government and Phillip Baker, as well as their agents.

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113. Defendants Louisville Metro Government and Phillip Baker failed to promptly and appropriately apply corrective action to address this harassment and prevent its reoccurrence.

114. Defendant Louisville Metro Government authorized, ratified, or should reasonably have anticipated the harasser’s and its agents’ conduct.

115. As a direct and proximate cause of the Defendant’s actions described herein, Plaintiff has suffered from a loss of income and benefits, physical and emotional distress, and mental anxiety, for all of which she should be compensated.

116. Plaintiff is entitled to all relief, legal and equitable, available under the KCRA, including the award of damages and attorneys’ fees and costs, as well as injunctive relief barring further illegal treatment.

**COUNT TWO: RETALIATION FOR PROTECTED ACTIVITY**

117. Plaintiff restates and incorporates each and every allegation set forth in the foregoing paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

118. Defendant Louisville Metro is an employer as the term is defined in KRS 344.030(2).

119. Plaintiff is a woman, and she is therefore a member of a Protected Classification under KRS 344.040(1).

120. Under KRS 344.280(1), an employer is prohibited from retaliating against a person who makes a good faith complaint of gender discrimination/sexual harassment or hostile work environment on account of sex.

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121. Under the same subsection, individuals such as Defendants David James and Phillip Baker are also prohibited from retaliatory actions in the aftermath of a protected complaint.

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122. In good faith, Plaintiff complained to Defendant Louisville Metro Government and its leadership of sexually hostile behavior and unwanted sexual overtures, conveying her experience of a hostile work environment due to sex.

123. In response to this complaint, and because of it, Defendants conspired to terminate Plaintiff's employment.

124. Plaintiff is entitled to recover from the Defendants such damages as she sustained by reason of the violation, including compensatory wages, losses, and mental and emotional distress damages, as well as her reasonable attorneys' fees and costs, as set forth in the Kentucky Civil Rights Act.

### **COUNT THREE: DEFAMATION**

125. Plaintiff restates and incorporates each and every allegation set forth in the foregoing paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

126. Defendant Baker has, personally and through his agents, knowingly disseminated false statements that Plaintiff committed acts reflecting incompetence, misfeasance, and even dishonesty connected with her work.

127. The intended effect of such statements is to bring Plaintiff into disrepute her profession, thus preventing Plaintiff from obtaining or maintaining replacement work.

128. An additional intended effect of such statements is to bring Plaintiff into disrepute in her community.

129. Defendant Baker was aware that his statements were untrue, but he has made the statements to others in an attempt to damage Plaintiff's reputation.

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130. Defendant Baker further sought to discredit Plaintiff in order to conceal his own violations of law.

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131. Defendant Baker's statements constitute defamation.

132. Defendant Baker's statements have damaged Plaintiff's reputation and impaired her ability to labor and earn.

133. Defendant Baker's defamatory statements have caused Plaintiff emotional and mental distress, hardship, embarrassment, humiliation, stress, trauma, and shame.

134. Plaintiff is entitled to recover from Defendant Baker the damages sustained by reason of the violation.

135. Defendant Baker's actions were intentional, willful, and malicious. These actions were carried out with flagrant indifference to Plaintiff's rights, were effected with an awareness that the conduct would result in physical or emotional injury, and/or were specifically intended to subject Plaintiff to cruel and unjust hardship.

136. At all times relevant to this matter, Defendant Baker's agents' actions that were taken with respect to Plaintiff were authorized, ratified, or should have reasonably been anticipated by Defendant Baker.

137. As a result, Defendant Baker's conduct justifies a judgment of punitive damages, as permitted by applicable law and due process, in an amount to be determined by a jury.

**PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff Shalanna Taylor prays that this Court:

- a. Declare Defendants' conduct in violation of Plaintiff's rights;

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- b. Award Plaintiff compensatory damages, including, but not limited to, back pay and front pay, in such amounts as shall be proved at trial for her economic and other losses;
- c. Award Plaintiff damages against Defendants in an amount to be proven at trial for the humiliation, embarrassment, personal indignity, apprehension about her future, emotional distress, and mental anguish that the Defendants caused Plaintiff by the Defendants' illegal, discriminatory, and/or retaliatory acts toward her;
- d. Award Plaintiff punitive damages against Defendant Baker, in an amount to be assessed by the jury, consistent with due process;
- e. Award Plaintiff pre-judgment and post-judgment interest;
- f. Award Plaintiff her attorneys' fees and costs; and;
- g. Grant Plaintiff such further relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

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**JURY DEMAND**

Plaintiff Shalanna Taylor demands a jury to try all issues triable by jury.

Respectfully submitted,

*/s/ Robyn Smith*  
 Robyn Smith  
 Preston J. Spicer  
 4350 Brownsboro Road  
 Suite 110  
 Louisville, Kentucky 40207  
 firm@robysmithlaw.com  
 (502) 893-4569  
*Counsel for Plaintiff*

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