

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 15th JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA**

ABU SUFIYAN,) CASE NO.:
))
 Plaintiff,))
))
vs.))
))
PALM BEACH COUNTY,))
))
))
 Defendant.))
_____)

VERIFIED COMPLAINT

1. Plaintiff, ABU SUFIYAN, sues the Defendant, PALM BEACH COUNTY, for violations of his rights under the Florida Public Sector Whistleblower Act, §112.3187, Fla. Stat. Plaintiff was employed by the Defendant as a Buyer in Defendant's Purchasing Department, when he was unlawfully terminated on October 10, 2025 after making protected disclosures to Human Resources and participating in a subsequent investigation. Said disclosures and investigation were in regards to a workplace directive that Plaintiff believed was in violation of Defendant's work policy. After Plaintiff's disclosures and the subsequent investigation, Defendant issued a department wide e-mail suspending said directive. Less than a month after Plaintiff's protected disclosures and participation in the investigation, he was suddenly terminated. Plaintiff has no record of disciplinary action, was never provided any previous warnings, and has no documented history of performance issues. Following this unlawful termination, Dimitri Cason, Buyer Assistant, began circulating an e-mail wherein he alleged that Plaintiff had driven back to work the day of his termination and assaulted Mr. Cason. This ludicrous allegation was taken as fact by the Defendant, even though the

alleged assault and battery occurred within the workplace, and no video evidence has been provided. Plaintiff has since found it incredibly difficult to find new employment, and Defendant has repeatedly denied his request for a name clearing hearing.

2. Plaintiff is a natural person who resides in Palm Beach County, Florida and was an employee of the Defendant at all times relevant hereto.

3. Defendant PBC is a political subdivision of the State of Florida with offices located at 301 North Olive Avenue, West Palm Beach, FL 33401.

4. Plaintiff engaged in protected activities in accordance with §112.3187, Fla. Stat., by making protected disclosures and participating in an investigation.

5. This is an action for damages in excess of \$75,000, exclusive of attorney's fees and costs.

6. Venue is proper in this Court, because all acts complained of occurred in Palm Beach County, Florida.

7. On belief and information, Defendant does not have a whistleblower ordinance or policy that requires administrative exhaustion, so Plaintiff is filing this action within 180 days of the adverse action in accordance with §112.3187(8)(b), Fla. Stat.

8. On September 11, 2025, Defendant sent a department wide e-mail stating that exempt employees could begin work at 7:00 a.m, while non-exempt employees could not enter until 7:30 a.m. This directive began causing confusion and concern within Defendant's workplace. The rule was based on classification status, not on specific job duties or operational needs. Plaintiff reasonably believed, in good faith, that this directive was inconsistent with and violated County policy by creating unfair and illegal working conditions.

9. The next day, September 12, 2025, Plaintiff e-mailed his supervisor, Zulma Gasca, Procurement Compliance Manager, to report the directive which he believed to be in violation of Defendant's policies and procedures. Plaintiff's intent was to stay compliant with County procedures and avoid any misunderstanding.

10. Between September 17 and 19, 2025, Plaintiff reached out to various other supervisors and employees of the Defendant, looking to clarify if flex-time had a weekly limit, whether the 5:00 p.m. cutoff time applied to everyone, and why certain employees seemed exempt from the new directive. Plaintiff contacted Ms. Gasca and Evathe St. Remy, Human Resources, about these concerns. Ms. Remy told Plaintiff that he would have to speak with leadership about his concerns. Plaintiff also raised the issue that his performance review was overdue and that he had seemingly not received the same training opportunities as some of his other colleagues.

11. On September 25, 2025, Plaintiff met with Eva St. Remy, Human Resources, and his supervisor, Ms. Gasca, as part of an investigation into Plaintiff's September 12, 2025 e-mail. Plaintiff reiterated during this meeting that he only wanted Defendant's policy to be applied fairly. Later that same afternoon, management issued a department wide e-mail announcing that the directive had been suspended immediately. The suspension of the directive came just hours after Plaintiff's meeting with Ms. Remy and Ms. Gasca.

12. On October 7, 2025, Plaintiff received an e-mail from Human Resources that the flex-time policy/directive that he had been inquiring about did not exist in writing and that leadership was now, "making changes", see e-mailed attached **Exhibit A**. This verified Plaintiff's concerns: that the flex-time directive which had been sent out on September 11, 2025, violated Defendant's policies and procedures. This inconsistency in policy led to unfair outcomes, with employees being

improperly disciplined.

13. On October 10, 2025, Plaintiff was terminated without any explanation; no cause or reason was provided. That morning, Ms. Gasca had come to Plaintiff's desk and began asking him questions about his work and prior communications. During this conversation, Kenisha James, Fiscal Manager, Irwin Jacobwitz, Deputy Director, and Bridget Williams, Procurement Manager, interjected themselves between Plaintiff and Ms. Gasca and began raising their voices and speaking over Plaintiff. Plaintiff remained calm and attempted to keep the interaction professional. After the discussion ended, Plaintiff went to lunch. When he returned, he was called in and told that he was terminated.

14. That same day, directly after Plaintiff's termination, an e-mail written by Dimitri Cason, Buyer Assistant, began circulating which alleged that Plaintiff had assaulted Mr. Cason following Plaintiff's termination. See e-mailed attached as **Exhibit B**. Plaintiff had no interaction whatsoever with Mr. Cason on October 10, 2025. If the e-mail's allegations were remotely true, that Plaintiff had returned to property just to assault Mr. Cason, then video evidence of said assault would exist, as Mr. Cason alleged that this assault took place in the workplace. This allegation was introduced after the fact to create the appearance that the Plaintiff engaged in misconduct, even though no such conduct had occurred.

COUNT I: §112.3187, Fla. Stat.

15. Plaintiff realleges ¶¶1-14 herein.

16. §112.3187, Fla. Stat., provides that agencies, such as the Defendant, are prohibited from taking retaliatory actions against employees who report violations of the law or who disclose information to appropriate government agencies alleging improper use of governmental office, gross

waste of funds, or any other abuse or gross neglect of duties on the part of an agency, public officer, or employee. §112.3187(2), Fla. Stat.

17. An “agency” is defined as “any...local or municipal government entity.” §112.3187(3)(a), Fla. Stat. The Defendant is an “agency” within the meaning and intent of the statute.

18. §112.3187(4)(a), Fla. Stat., provides that “[a]n agency...shall not dismiss, discipline, or take any other adverse personnel action against an employee for disclosing information pursuant to the provisions of this section.” §112.3187(3)©, Fla. Stat., defines an “adverse action” to include a “termination.”

19. The law prohibits retaliation against any employee who reports: “(a) Any violation or suspected violation of any federal, state, or local law, rule, or regulation committed by an employee or agent of an agency or independent contractor which creates and presents a substantial and specific danger to the public’s health, safety, or welfare. (b) Any act or suspected act of gross mismanagement, malfeasance, misfeasance, gross waste of public funds, suspected or actual Medicaid fraud or abuse, or gross neglect of duty committed by an employee or agent of an agency or independent contractor.”

20. Plaintiff was unlawfully retaliated against by the Defendant following his protected activities. Defendant allowed a number of Plaintiff’s coworkers to berate and antagonize him in front of management and later terminated him without any cause or explanation following his written disclosure and participation in an investigation or other inquiry. These retaliatory acts occurred within weeks after Plaintiff made written disclosures pertaining to what he believed to be an

unlawful directive put forth by the Defendant, and participated in an investigation or other inquiry relating to said disclosures; these activities are protected by §112.3187(6) and (7), Fla. Stat.

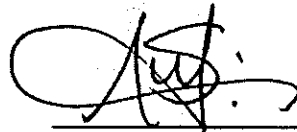
WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests:

- a) An award of damages, including lost wages and benefits;
- b) Compensatory damages for mental anguish, loss of reputation; inconvenience; aggravation of prior existing mental condition; loss of the enjoyment of life;
- c) Attorney's fees and costs;
- d) Any other relief deemed just and proper, including reinstatement or front pay, prejudgment interest on economic damages and fees, and declaratory relief that his rights were violated by the Defendant.

JURY DEMAND

PLAINTIFF DEMANDS A JURY TRIAL ON ALL ISSUES SO TRIABLE.

I DECLARE UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY that the foregoing factual allegations are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.



ABU SUFIYAN

Dated: 04/07/2026

Respectfully submitted,

ISIDRO M. GARCIA
Florida Bar No. 437883
GARCIA LAW FIRM, P.A.
120 S. Olive Avenue, Suite 401
West Palm Beach, FL 33401
Telephone: (561) 832-7732
Telecopier: (561) 832-7137
Designation of email addresses:
E-mail: isidrogarcia@garcialaborlaw.com
E-mail for e-service of court documents:
eservice@garcialaborlaw.com
COUNSEL FOR PLAINTIFF

Dated: April 7, 2026

NOT A CERTIFIED

A S

From: Evathe Saint-Remy
Sent: Tuesday, October 7, 2025 12:13 PM
To: Abu Suflyan
Subject: RE: HR Follow Up

Good afternoon Abu,

Regarding the flex policy that we discussed regarding inconsistency with how management allows staff to flex, this was addressed with the Purchasing Leadership Team, and they are making changes to the policy and will be rolling out the new updated policy soon.

I would recommend that you follow up with your chain of command regarding this policy to ensure you understand the new policy and use the opportunity to obtain clarity on what you discussed with me:

- Non-Exempt Employee vs. Exempt Employee – Start Time & End Time

Keep in mind that the Department Head has the authority to change hours of operation based on business needs. Following up with your chain of command is recommended to avoid confusion. This will help you build trust and maintain effective communication.

Warmest Regards,

Evathe Saint-Remy, MSHRM
Human Resources Specialist IV - Employee Relations Consultant
Palm Beach County Human Resources
100 Australian Ave., Suite 300
West Palm Beach, FL 33406
Phone: 561-616-6871
ESaintRemy@pbc.gov



From: Abu Suflyan <ASuflyan@pbc.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 7, 2025 11:54 AM
To: Evathe Saint-Remy <ESaintRemy@pbc.gov>
Subject: HR Follow Up

Hi Evathe,



I am following up regarding our conversation on September 25, 2025, regarding the concerns I raised about management. I wanted to check whether there have been any developments or actions taken since our discussion.

I appreciate your time and continued attention to this matter and look forward to any updates you can share.

Warm Regards,
Abu Sufiyan
Buyer
Palm Beach County Purchasing Department
50 South Military Trail, Suite 110
West Palm Beach, FL 33415-3199
Office: 561-616-6816
Email: ASufiyan@pbc.gov

Purchasing Department Website
<http://discover.pbcgov.org/purchasing>

Vendor Self Service System Website
<https://pbcvssp.co.palm-beach.fl.us/webapp/vssp/AltSelfService>



NOT A CERTIFIED COPY

A S

From: Narumi Vargas <narumivargas@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 24, 2025 1:10 PM
To: asufiyah08@outlook.com
Subject: Fwd: Incident Involving Abu – Urgent Concern

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: LYNN CLAVETTE <laclavette@aol.com>
Date: October 24, 2025 at 9:52:26 AM EDT
To: narumivargas@gmail.com
Subject: Fwd: Incident Involving Abu – Urgent Concern

Lynn Clavette

Begin forwarded message:

From: Lynn Clavette <LClavette@pbc.gov>
Date: October 24, 2025 at 8:45:07 AM EDT
To: LYNN CLAVETTE <laclavette@aol.com>
Subject: FW: Incident Involving Abu – Urgent Concern

Forward

From: Melody Thelwell <MThelwell@pbc.gov>
Sent: Friday, October 10, 2025 6:03 PM
To: Dimitri Cason <casond13@gmail.com>; Lynn Clavette <LClavette@pbc.gov>
Cc: Irwin Jacobowitz <IJacobow@pbc.gov>; Melody Thelwell <MThelwell@pbc.gov>
Subject: Re: Incident Involving Abu – Urgent Concern

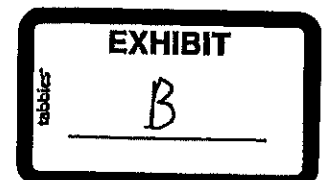
Good evening Dimitri,

I'm sorry to hear this but we will make sure to report this to HR, as well as ESS/FDO.

On Tuesday, please let us know the time so we can give this specifics to HR as well.

We do apologize that this occurred and thank you for telling us.

Sincerely,



Melody Thelwell, MPA
Director, Purchasing
Palm Beach County

From: Dimitri Cason <casond13@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 10, 2025 5:35:00 PM
To: LClavette@pbc.gov <LClavette@pbc.gov>
Cc: lJacobow@pbc.gov <lJacobow@pbc.gov>; MThelwell@pbc.gov
<MThelwell@pbc.gov>
Subject: Incident Involving Abu – Urgent Concern

Good afternoon,

I wanted to bring to your attention a concerning incident that occurred this afternoon.

While I was at my desk, Abu walked into the lobby and asked to be let back into the office. I allowed him in, as I normally do for current employees. Shortly after reentering, he came up behind me and without any warning or provocation put me in a forceful headlock for a few seconds. At the time, I assumed it was meant as a misguided joke, though it was clearly inappropriate.

However, before I left the office, I was informed by Narumi that Abu had been terminated earlier in the day. This context significantly changes how I interpret the interaction. If Abu had indeed been fired, his behavior could have stemmed from frustration or anger, which makes the situation even more serious.

In the past I was informed by a Manager when an employee was terminated and should not be allowed back in the office.

Had I been aware of his termination, I would not have let him back into the office. I believe this incident raises concerns about safety protocols following an employee's dismissal. I could have been seriously hurt.

Please let me know how this will be addressed moving forward.

Respectfully,

Dimitri Cason

Under Florida law, e-mail addresses are public records. If you do not want your e-mail address released in response to a public records request, do not send electronic mail to this entity. Instead, contact this office by phone or in writing.