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Ga. Salon's Ex-Worker Sues Over 'Egregious' Sexual Abuse

By **Chart Riggall**

Law360 (August 19, 2025, 9:44 PM EDT) -- An Atlanta hair salon has been hit with a lawsuit from a former employee alleging that she was "systematically preyed upon and sexually assaulted" by its owner, who she says pressured her into performing sexual favors and retaliated against other workers who tried to intervene.

In a complaint filed in DeKalb County court last week, ex-cosmetologist Stephanie Dhondt said that hairdresser John Siggers exploited her financial precarity to solicit sex from her while his wife and co-owner of his salon, Carol Siggers, looked the other way.

"This is an egregious case of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and battery in violation of federal and state law," Dhondt said. "Mr. Siggers deliberately exploited Ms. Dhondt's financial vulnerability to coerce her ... while threatening her financial security when she resisted his advances."

Rachel Berlin Benjamin of Beal Sutherland Berlin & Brown LLC, Dhondt's attorney, told Law360 in a statement Tuesday, "The conduct detailed in this lawsuit represents some of the most egregious violations of trust and safety an employer can commit. Our client entered this apprenticeship eager to build a career in cosmetology, only to endure sexual harassment, assault and abuse at the hands of those she trusted to guide her."

Dhondt, according to her complaint, joined John Siggers' business, Siggers Hairdressers, in 2023 as a minimum-wage cosmetology apprentice. At the time, Dhondt says, she was raising a young child and struggled to make ends meet.

Several months after joining the salon, Dhondt alleges, John Siggers forcibly groped her, and frequently summoned her to the salon's basement under the pretense of needing to discuss work matters. There — where the defendant had covered the surveillance cameras — he frequently displayed \$100 bills and demanded Dhondt perform sexual favors for him, she said.

After learning that the father of Dhondt's child died in late 2024, "Siggers callously exploited Ms. Dhondt's increased vulnerability by intensifying his sexual harassment and emphasizing that she needed money for her family," Dhondt alleges.

Dhondt says that Siggers' behavior was only the continuation of a pattern of sexually harassing and assaulting female customers and employees, including one who was only 17, which had prompted past reports to DeKalb County law enforcement.

According to the complaint, Carol Siggers was alerted to these incidents but never took action to stop her husband's behavior. And Dhondt says that employees who tried to intervene had their hours cut.

"Despite the overwhelming evidence of Mr. Siggers' pattern of sexual harassment spanning multiple years and involving numerous victims, defendants have failed to take any corrective action or implement policies to prevent such conduct," Dhondt alleges.

"Defendant Carol Siggers, acting as the co-owner, CFO, secretary, and manager of the salon failed to investigate, discipline, or terminate defendant John Siggers," Dhondt adds, "demonstrating her and the business' ratification of his conduct and their deliberate indifference to the safety and welfare of their female employees and customers."

Alleging violations of Title VII under federal law and state law claims for assault, battery, emotional distress, negligent hiring and premises liability, Dhondt asks the court for punitive and compensatory damages, including lost pay.

Siggers Hairdressers did not immediately respond to a request for comment Tuesday.

Dhondt is represented by Rachel Berlin Benjamin and Drew Beal of Beal Sutherland Berlin & Brown LLC.

Counsel information for the defendants was not available.

The case is Dhondt v. John Dekalb Inc. dba Siggers Hairdressers et al., case number 25CV7591, in the Superior Court of DeKalb County, Georgia.

--Editing by Jay Jackson Jr.

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